



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jesse Hamilton

## In Solidarity with Immigrant Communities

JESSE HAMILTON January 30, 2017

| ISSUE: IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, IMMIGRATION



Bigotry in the rarefied legalese of an executive order is still bigotry. It has the same corrosive impact on the lives of those it touches. Its cruel consequences can be seen in reporting from around the world. An Iraqi translator, who served with our armed forces during the war, stranded with his family in Egypt - Fuad Sharef. An Iraqi mother of a sergeant in the 82nd Airborne, a mom who hasn't seen her son in five years, held at JFK airport - Hamidyah Al Saeedi. A Syrian daughter, a first grade teacher, planning to visit an ill mother who has just had surgery denied entry having reached O'Hare - Sahar Algonaimi. An Iranian CUNY

student, who used winter break to see family, attempting to return to her studies unable to do so - Saira Rafiee.

Imagine the uncertainty, the tears, the heartache engendered by this poisonous act – unnecessary, arbitrary, and gratuitously cruel.

Our country is stronger because of people like Mr. Sharef who served at risk to himself and his family in aid of our country in our time of need, people like Sergeant Alsaedy who sought to be reunited with his mom after years of paperwork and waiting, of people like Ms. Rafiee, whose talents have brought her to pursue a PhD in our City of New York. And our country is more humane when we allow Ms. Algonaimi to visit with her convalescing mother.

The Trump administration's treatment of these individuals and the thousands more with similar experiences has been abominable. These individuals are not stand-ins for the nations whose passports they happen to hold, not props in a pantomime of security. These are people, fellow human beings whose experiences matter.

I stand with Saira Rafiee and all those subject to this mistreatment because it is my duty to stand up against bigotry, against prejudice, and for fairness, and for justice. Our national motto, is not “Fear the foreigner, fear the Muslim, fear the Other” as the Trump administration would have us believe. Our national motto is “E pluribus unum” - "Out of Many, One."

The greatness of our country lay not in the divisive bigotry at the heart of Trump's executive order, but in the spirit of our national motto. This country will be greater still when we live up to that spirit. The spirit that says the persecuted have a home here. The spirit that says Ms. Rafiee has a place amongst the students at CUNY. The spirit that celebrates the service of Sergeant Alsaedy and welcomes his mom to our shores. That's the generous spirit, the

humane spirit, the just spirit we must fight to uphold.