

The American Moms: America's response to refugees

By Andrea Candrian Reeve

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“All Mormons are welcome in Missouri! You’re welcome, too!”

I giggled a little bit as I listened to Senator Kit Bond, a Republican senator from Missouri, warmly invite me to his home state. He reeked of tobacco and his thick midwest accent made his invitation sound more like, “All Marmons are welcome in Missouri-a!”

I was interviewing him for a legacy video I was creating for my boss, Sen. Bob Bennett, whose term was coming to an end that year. Sen. Bond was one of about forty senators and congressman I sat down and chatted with that fall day in 2010.

It seemed like an odd thing to say, but there was a lot of history behind his invitation.

Yes, I’m a Mormon (a nickname for members of my church). And my church has a tragic history of seeking refuge. Back in the 1800’s, a large group of Mormons were forced to flee Missouri after the governor issued an extermination order on Mormons. They were heavily persecuted, I’m talking severe violence and murders. They fled from one state to another in America before finally settling in the Utah territory in 1847.

Turns out though, the order in Missouri was never lifted... until Kit Bond fixed the error more than a century later in 1976 while serving as governor. He was proud to tell me so.

While our day and age is vastly different from what it once was in the 1800’s, there are many places all over our world where people shockingly aren’t treated much differently than they were back in the nineteenth century. People are persecuted and punished for their beliefs, religious, or otherwise and are consequently being forced from their own country, seeking a safer home. It’s hard to envision human treatment of such low caliber when most of us live lives of comparative luxury.

For those of you not up to par on current events, let me briefly bring you up to speed. Over the weekend, President Trump signed an executive order, which temporarily stops refugees from coming into the U.S. for 120 days to improve the vetting process. It also stops immigrants from coming in for 90 days from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia, all predominately Muslim nations with terrorist concerns. The order is part of the “extreme vetting” the President promised he’d make happen during his campaign.

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The response to the order has been felt across the country where protestors have taken to major international airports and the White House in outrage, fear and simply standing up for humanity and American values. There's been a lot of confusion in the process. People arriving with green cards have been sent away, others detained. Federal judges across the country have already stepped in. There is so much confusion with the order, and points still to be clarified.

There are enough people, websites and political pundits who will tell you what's right and wrong here. Just like every issue ever brought to the light of day, there are those who favor the order and those who oppose it. *Sometimes*, it's helpful to see both sides. Especially before jumping down the throats of those who don't see eye to eye with us.

Those in favor of the President's order believe in what it might accomplish: a safer, more secure America for everyone, one where terrorists are few and far between because our leaders are putting every effort forth to make sure of that. Those in favor recognize the ban isn't an eternal order. The ban is simply for a matter of months while the government works out a way to better vet those who are coming to our country. Borders are made to have limits and regulations. That's why they exist. Crossing country lines means there is a level of scrutiny involved. Every country has *something* in place. It's to keep all

of us safe. Me, you, our kids. In the meantime, refugees needing a place to flee, can seek assistance from numerous other countries. And when the ban is lifted, America will once again welcome refugees with open arms and resources.

On the flip side, those who are angry over this order believe it goes against everything our country stands for. We are having a hard time grasping what this order means for America, for the very treatment of humanity. "Give me your tired, your poor / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Its the very mantra of America, scripted on the Statue of Liberty, a landmark that has welcomed immigrants for more than a century. We are Americans. Our ancestors were immigrants, perhaps refugees themselves, seeking for religious freedom and a better way of life for themselves and their families. We exist here because of them. Acceptance of anyone into our country is the very heart and soul of America. President Trump's executive order is a discrimination against a religious group, the majority of which are no threat to our country.

So, what do you do now? If you are concerned, call your congressman or senator. If you support the order, call your congressman or senator. They like to be informed on where their constituents stand. And while you're waiting for whatever happens next, visit this website. Maybe there's something you can do in the meantime to help someone suffering. These beautiful words from Elder Patrick Kearon might also inspire you to do your part as well: "This moment does not define (the refugees), but our response will help define us."

If you're still confused about what's happening, this article helped me hash out a lot of what the President's executive order means (and what it doesn't mean). Perhaps you might find it helpful too.

Whether refugees begin to come into our country again in three or four months, or sometime sooner, recognize our role as Americans, as human beings, in helping ease someone's burdens whose lives are immeasurably tougher than our own.

We all have a history. What's yours?

Andrea Candrian Reeve is a former news reporter and served as press secretary in the United States Senate to Senator Bob Bennett and Sen. Pat Roberts.
