



## THE BEST WAY FOR TRUMP TO OFFER "LOVE AND SYMPATHY" IS TO REPEAL THE MUSLIM BAN

*Posted on March 16, 2019 by Cyrus Mehta*

In the aftermath of the [killing of 49 people](#) who were peacefully praying in two mosques in Christchurch by a white supremacist, it is worth [reflecting](#) on Trump's [travel ban](#) again.

Trump's travel ban, also known as the Muslim ban, and all of his other immigration policies, are based on promoting white nationalism. It is thus little surprise that Trump [did not firmly denounce white nationalism](#) and did not view it as a worrying trend in the world and instead blamed a small group of people "with very, very serious problems." He did not show any revulsion for the suspected killer, Brenton Harrison Tarrant, even though in his manifesto Tarrant praised Trump "as a symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose."

When Trump was a candidate he said "I think Islam hates us." He also lied about Muslims across the river in New Jersey celebrating after the September 11 attacks. As a candidate, Trump audaciously called for a "total and complete shutdown for Muslims entering the United States." It was this animus towards Islam that played to Trump's electoral base that served as the backdrop for Trump's executive orders banning people from mostly Muslim countries when he took office. The first two executive orders were struck down by courts. A modified third executive order was fashioned to survive court scrutiny, which was upheld by the Supreme Court in [Trump v. Hawaii](#) even though two lower courts of appeal struck it down as unconstitutional. The ban has empowered extremists and Islamophobes worldwide.

This may also be the reason why Trump did not specifically express empathy with Muslims in his [tweet](#) expressing condolence after the Christchurch massacres, which he tweeted shortly after an [interview with Brietbart News](#)

where he suggested that his supporters would resort to violence:

*My warmest sympathy and best wishes goes out to the people of New Zealand after the horrible massacre in the Mosques. 49 innocent people have so senselessly died, with so many more seriously injured. The U.S. stands by New Zealand for anything we can do. God bless all!*

Neither does Trump condemn the killer in this tweet. He insensitively says "best wishes" as if it is a wedding and ends with "God bless all." One can see white supremacists taking some comfort in this equivocal message. Recall his other infamous equivocal message when he defended neo Nazis in Charlottesville by stating that there are "very fine people on both sides." Compare Trump's statements with those of New Zealand's premier Jacinda Ardern's expressing great solidarity with Muslims while [wearing a dupatta](#). She also [advised](#) Trump to offer Muslim communities "sympathy and love" when he asked her what the United States could do to help New Zealand.

While nobody is expecting Trump to visit a mosque in Muslim dress, the best way for him to take up Ardern's offer of "sympathy and love" is to repeal the Muslim ban. It does not matter that the Supreme Court in *Trump v. Hawaii* upheld the travel ban by a narrow 5-4 majority. The ban has contributed to global Islamophobia, which in turn inspires supremacists like the New Zealand killer to massacre peaceful Muslims during Friday prayer time. There has already been much criticism of the Supreme Court's decision in *Trump v. Hawaii*. Although Trump made various utterances regarding his animus towards Muslims during his campaign and even after he became president, the majority found the third version of the executive order to be neutral on its face and that it did not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of Constitution. Still, ironically, the majority overruled [Korematsu v. United States](#), 323 U.S. 214 (1944), which upheld the forced internment of citizens of Japanese-American origin during World War II, as having no place in the US Constitution. Yet in her powerful dissent, Justice Sotomayor found striking parallels between *Korematsu* and Trump's ban. For example, both executive orders were based on dangerous stereotypes about particular groups' inability to assimilate and their intent to harm the United States. In both cases, there were scant national security justifications. In both cases, there was strong evidence that there was impermissible animus and hostility that motivated the

government's policy. The Supreme Court's decision in *Trump v. Hawaii* is destined to be viewed in the same way as *Korematsu* - a shameful low point in Supreme Court history.

The Muslim ban views every national of a banned country as suspect and as someone who possesses a grave threat to the United States even if this person is a grandmother or a baby. While it is true that nationals of banned countries can seek waivers, such waivers are seldom granted and have been viewed as a farce. The ban separates a foreign national spouse of the banned country from uniting with the US citizen spouse. The ban also prevents a banned country national from studying in a US university, taking up employment as a skilled professional on an H-1B visa or attending an academic conference as a visitor. While one is hard pressed to conclude whether the ban furthers the national security interests of this nation, it definitely inspires white supremacists, who like the Christchurch killer believe that white people will be replaced by Muslims, blacks and Jews who will eventually subordinate them. In his manifesto, the killer referred to himself as a "regular white man" and that he was carrying out this attack to "directly reduce immigration rates to European lands by intimidating and physically removing the invaders themselves." This is so similar to Trump's rhetoric where he refers to the "caravan" of Central American migrants as invaders to justify the Wall, which is lapped up by white nationalists. Trump also falsely claimed when speaking about the dangers of the caravan that prayer rugs were found at the border to keep his base happy but also playing to their basest instincts. How could Trump denounce white nationalism when asked about it in the aftermath of Christchurch when he has the support of white nationalists and his immigration policy promotes white nationalism? White nationalism can only be eradicated if Trump is first universally condemned for inspiring it.

Can Trump rise up to the challenge and repeal the travel ban, and reverse so many other of his harsh immigration policies that do nothing to further America's interests? It is the millions of immigrants who came to America since its inception for a better life that have contributed to the nation's greatness. Trump has nothing to make America great by undermining the notion of America as a nation of immigrants. Instead, his immigration policies have been deployed to please his mostly white voter base who are insecure that immigrants are invading their country. His base does not represent the majority of Americans who have a positive view of immigrants. Trump's slogan

"Make America Great Again" is code for making America white again. Trump likes to cast himself as an incredible leader who has achieved more than any other president in his first two years, but that claim merely exists as fantasy in his mind. A leader can do better than catering to people's vilest and basest fears, as Trump has done so far. A leader must inspire Americans to embrace immigrants who, like sugar dissolving in a bowl of full of milk, have sweetened the nation with their enterprise, talents and culture.

Trump's travel ban is a mere executive order that can be withdrawn with the stroke of a pen. If he does so, it would be a powerful symbolic gesture for expressing solidarity with Muslims after the horrific Christchurch massacres and a blow to the cause of white supremacists and Islamophobes. If Trump cannot rise to the occasion and view white nationalism as a rising global threat, he will deservedly be viewed no better than a vile white supremacist even though he rose to become president of the United States, and consigned to history's garbage bin.