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US IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY LAW

IMMIGRANT POWER THROUGH MAMDANI'S HISTORIC WIN AS NYC MAYOR

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When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it - always.

MK Gandhi

Zohran Mamdani has made history. He will be New York City's youngest mayor since the 19th century, and its first Muslim and first South Asian mayor. He is also an immigrant. Born in Uganda to parents of Indian descent (his mother is Mira Nair - a famous filmmaker) he will be the first naturalized immigrant to serve as mayor since Abraham Beame in the 1970s.

President Trump has vilified immigrants. He rose to power by demonizing them. Since his second inauguration in January 2025, Trump has even taken great pride in being cruel to them. He has allowed his minions like Steven Miller and Kristi Noem to unleash ICE agents who have mercilessly detained noncitizens even based on free speech that his administration has disfavored. Foreign students at prestigious US universities have been picked up by masked ICE agents without warning only for protesting against Israel's military operation in Gaza that has resulted in over 65,000 deaths. More recently, the administration has also revoked the visas of people, including Nobel laureates, who have been critical of the administration or the visas of those who expressed critical views of Charlie Kirk after his death. All such speech that resulted in people being penalized is protected under the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Even US citizens have been caught up in these ICE roundups causing great fear in people, irrespective of whether they are citizens or noncitizens. This sort of fear has never been experienced before in America, which has before Trump been revered as the cradle of democracy and a

beacon of freedom.

Trump and some Republican members of Congress have even threatened to deport naturalized citizens. Even Mamdani has been and continues to be subject to such threats. He has also been subjected to the most vile racist attacks and Islamophobia.

Trump has sought to expand executive power as much as he can, and this overreach has caused noncitizens to fear that they live in a police state as the administration has the power to detain and deport them under US immigration laws. It can also detain them at remote detention centers and also at the prisons of other countries that have made arrangements with the United States.

Trump and his cabinet officials have repeatedly stated on social media that immigrants even lawful permanent residents are guests in the country, and can be removed or banned from entering for speech that is disfavored by the administration, including posts on social media. The current administration has viewed immigrants as being unwelcomed, stealing the jobs of Americans and even as dangerous criminals. Through its social media posts, the Trump administration claims that they have been given a mandate to take back America from immigrants by portraying the US labor force as dominated by white people. This is so far removed from reality as the labor force at a construction site or farm is dominated by immigrants, but this administration lives in a fantasy world of an America that is devoid of immigrants who have in fact always been present and built the country from its very founding.

It is against this back drop that Mamdani through this historic victory offers a glimpse of what America can become after Trump. Voting for him was an act of defiance and hope reflective of the New York spirit that may not currently epitomize all of America but lays the groundwork for its transformation. Mamdani ran a joyous campaign that celebrated the wonderful diversity of New York and mingled with immigrant communities by dining and dancing with them in a most down to earth manner. He had late night dinners with taxi drivers while Trump held an over the top Great Gatsby-themed party in Mar-a-Lago as SNAP benefits ran out due to the shut down. Indeed, it was voter dissatisfaction with Trump that helped fuel Democratic wins in New Jersey, Virginia and other key races across the country. Even the newly elected Virginia Lt Governor Ghazala Hashmi is an Indian born Muslim.

Mamdani's election proves that immigrants have power, and no matter what this administration claims to the contrary, America has been and will continue to be a nation of immigrants. Immigrants have not just contributed to America through their achievements, hard work and ingenuity, but by voting for Mamdani they have also in this election put the brakes on Trump's growing authoritarianism.

As Mamdani aptly said in his victory speech: "New York will remain a city of immigrants, a city built by immigrants, powered by immigrants, and as of tonight led by an immigrant."