

The hypocrisy of Trump's ban on refugees

Patris Kaseta fled Lithuania for the United States in 1890 to escape conscription in the Russian army and to practice his Catholic faith free from the pogroms ordered by Tsar Alexander Romanov III.

Stowing away on a German steamship, the Lithuanian refugee landed in New York City two weeks later. Somehow he evaded naturalization officials at Castle Garden, the first U.S. immigration station located in Manhattan's Battery Park.

Kaseta settled in northeast Pennsylvania where he spent the next 30 years as a wage slave for the Susquehanna Coal Company, mining the black diamond in the anthracite pits near Wilkes-Barre.

He and his wife, Maggie, also raised five children who became responsible American citizens, as well as laborers who helped make America the envy of every industrialized nation in the 20th century.

I guess I'm pretty lucky. Historical circumstance and plain dumb luck allowed my great-grandfather to find a sanctuary in this country, raise a family and begin the process of upward economic and social mobility known as the "American Dream."

If President Donald Trump had been president, he would have done everything in his power to keep Kaseta, an undocumented refugee, out of the United States. Today's refugees are not as fortunate as my great-

grandfather.

President Trump's recent executive order to ban more than 218 million people from the United States and to deny entry to all refugees disregards America's historic legacy as a safe haven for those persecuted in other countries for their religious and political convictions and/or their ethnicity. It also ignores the careful deliberation presidents engage in with other federal agencies and stakeholders whenever they propose a change in policy.

The order, which has recently been overturned in court, targeted three groups: refugees from any country, who were blocked from entering the United States for the next 120 days; refugees from Syria, who were barred indefinitely; and citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries, who were barred from entering the United States for at least 90 days. Those countries are Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

It's not only convenient for Trump to ban those refugees, it's also hypocritical. The United States created the refugee crisis by waging war in Iraq after 9/11; funding Saudi Arabia, who is fighting a catastrophic war against Yemen; and being a proxy participant in Syria's bloody civil war.

Yet our president refuses to accept the moral



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obligation we have to accept those refugees.

Despite the fact that last month a federal court issued an emergency stay halting deportations under the ban and, last week, a federal appeals panel unanimously rejected Trump's

bid to reinstate his ban, the president angrily vowed to fight it, presumably in an appeal to the Supreme Court.

He defends the ban on the grounds of "national security" during a "War on Terrorism." That would be understandable if Congress had declared a war. But the "Authorization for Use of Military Force," Public Law 107-40, passed by the United States Congress on Sept. 14, 2001 is a resolution; not a declaration of war.

And only in wartime would Trump's ban be justified as an act of national security under the president's constitutional war powers.

Just as troubling is the arbitrary manner in which Trump issued the executive order. Although the president enjoys broad constitutional powers to regulate and restrict immigration without congressional approval, there is a long tradition of consulting with Congress, other federal agencies and even stakeholders outside of the federal government whenever he drafts policy changes.

This is an extremely important process meant

to vet a proposed policy in order to determine its legality and enforcement as well as to consider any alternatives that may be necessary in the event of unforeseen circumstances. It is also a time-consuming process that can take weeks, sometimes months, so that the appropriate agencies can plan how to implement the change.

But Trump took all of one week after his inauguration to issue his executive order and with little to no consultation with anyone else inside or outside of the government.

No wonder there is so much confusion throughout the federal and state bureaucracies on the meaning, intent and execution of the executive order, especially among Customs and Border Protection officials who continue to struggle in order to enforce the order.

Fortunately, the patriarch of my family arrived at the turn of the 19th century when almost 9 million immigrants were welcomed into the United States. They, too, fled war-ravaged counties, religious and political persecution.

They became the backbone of labor during the Industrial Revolution.

I am ashamed that the president of my country refuses to give other refugees that same opportunity.

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