

An open letter to my newborn twins

Som Subedi lives in Southeast Portland

BY SOM SUBEDI
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My dear newborn twins, You were born just 76 days after the swearing in of the 45th president of the United States. Your daddy came to Portland with \$10 and a plastic bag under the Federal Refugee Resettlement program in 2008, when George W. Bush was still President, after living for almost two decades in a confined Bhutanese refugee camp in Nepal. During the Obama administration, I was hard at work building a new life to achieve the “American Dream” and proudly became a U.S. citizen in 2013.

When I immigrated with my family nine years ago next month, we were welcomed at the airport by members of the faith community, volunteers and fellow refugees. Uncertain, tired, scared and hungry, we were taken to our new home and fed; then our new friends showed us how the appliances worked and left us to rest. Since then, I have welcomed hundreds of other immigrants in the same way.

But all that has been jeopardized in this new anti-immigration era. So, I feel even more strongly that I need to give back to the community that welcomed me and commit myself to helping others in need.

Our family is lucky. Born in America, you are automatically U.S. citizens, so the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) people won't show up to separate you, Mom and me. Undocumented parents are scared to come to

the hospital where you were born, go to the school your big sister will be attending, or to even shop at the grocery store. There is a lot of fear in our community right now.

All refugees and immigrants do their best to be a part of the system and the community. The latest Syrian refugees are the victims of terrorism like I was, brutalized by the despotic ruler of Bhutan, who is 10 years younger than Trump. They need a safe harbor, too.

Trump voters, I understand that your vote doesn't necessarily mean you hate refugees and immigrants. So I appeal to Trump voters, “Would you please share your positive immigrant stories? Can you show your compassion and generosity? Could you tell Mr. Trump that refugees and immigrants are welcome in your country?”

Better yet, Mr. Trump, I urge you and your family to meet a refugee family or invite a refugee family to the White House. I guarantee you will completely change your mind about us. We are not terrorists; we have been terrorized ourselves. And all we want is to be safe and free.

My dearest twins, President Trump and his team should exemplify American values and what we stand for: freedom. Refugees and immigrants are not a threat to America; they built this country and made it great. As a former refugee and now a proud American citizen, I am profoundly grateful.

Despite the president's new anti-refugee and immigrant policies and practices, I will keep



Som with Suvam and Suruwa.

working to create a safe and welcoming place for New Americans in our community locally and nationally. And I will do this until you twins, my future community builders, move this country forward with your generation, carrying on a legacy against ignorance and hate.

Mr. Trump could help a lot more desperate children stay alive by keeping America's doors open for the world's most vulnerable refugees – rather than bombing their homelands. As for me, I will continue to remind you and our nation of my story of struggle, refugee camp life, and the promise and salvation of the United States of America.



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