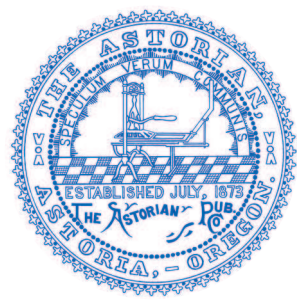


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OUR VIEW



Natalie St. John/EO Media Group

Aida Moradi Ahani's parents encouraged her to overcome limitations imposed on Iranian citizens — particularly women. She seized an opportunity last month to use a valid visa to travel to Oysterville, as the Trump administration tussled with federal courts in an effort to block all citizens from several Muslim-majority nations from coming to the U.S.

Cross-cultural exchanges can strengthen ties

Iranian writer Aida Moradi Ahani's determined effort to come to the U.S. for a writing residency in Oysterville is a perfect example of precisely why we should remain engaged with all the rest of the world, including nations about which we have valid misgivings.

As described in a story Friday, Moradi Ahani was fully authorized by both the U.S. and Iranian governments to come here for a month of work on her second novel, along with conversations and connection-building with American writers. President Donald Trump's ban on all travel from Iran and several other Muslim-majority nations upended her plans. Then, when a Seattle judge temporarily blocked the Trump ban, Moradi Ahani wasted no time in jumping on a plane for the long, multileg flight from Tehran to the outer coast of Washington state.

Such audacity is always to be commended and bodes well for her continuing success as a creative writer, for which courage is an essential trait.

Trump has now revised his travel ban, removing our ally Iraq, but reimposing it on citizens from Iran, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and Libya.

Bunching all a nation's citizens together with its ruling government is always a bad idea. We ourselves bitterly and correctly resent it when an innocent American is held hostage or subjected to indignities in some foreign place as a form of protest against something our government has done. We expect it to be understood that individuals aren't individually responsible for their leaders' deeds and misdeeds.

At the same time, most of us also understand care is warranted in screening travelers, especially from nations where wars and insurrections are ongoing and where enemies of the U.S. may wish to do us harm. A blanket ban on complete nationalities, however, will alienate entire societies in ways that may be hard to overcome. Traveler screening must be smart and narrowly construed to apply to government officials, agents and those specifically identified as posing potential danger.

Our caution must not be so overblown as to prohibit all travel here by neutral and friendly foreigners, no matter where they are from. There is nothing quite so shameful and unchristian (and un-Islamic) as turning away innocents seeking shelter or to learn about our culture. Past mistakes, like internment of Japanese-Americans and our refusal to welcome some European Jewish refugees, must never be repeated.

Generations of cross-cultural exchanges — including formal efforts like the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and informal ones like the Willapa writing workshop — have strengthened our ties to the world, built alliances and dispelled false notions about one another. Such connections do not increase our risk, but diminish it. Few visit the U.S. without being impressed, enlightened and often charmed.

The benefits that accrue to us from foreigners coming here is best exemplified by the fact that repressive regimes go to considerable lengths to keep their citizens from experiencing all we have to offer. We will do well to take the opposite tack, offering our great nation's hospitality to as many who wish to visit in a spirit of friendship.

A 2010 report by the U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy emphasizes this point:

"Given the strategic importance of improving America's relationship with the Muslim world, building bridges and partnerships between citizens of the United States and of predominantly Muslim societies should be accorded the utmost policy priority. Just as U.S. leaders invested heavily following World War II in building ties between emerging leaders in the United States and those in Europe and Japan, so today we need an ambitious undertaking of similar scale and scope — drawing on the energies of governments, private corporations, philanthropic institutions, nonprofit organizations and ordinary citizens — focused on predominantly Muslim societies."

This approach, not slamming our door, is the way to go.



AP Photo/Eric Gay

Jose Gutierrez, center, joins other clergy and supporters during a prayer rally for immigrants on the steps of the Texas Capitol last Tuesday in Austin. Faith leaders and activists gathered to pray that a love of neighbor would guide and shape Texas policies about sanctuary cities.

A 'sanctuary city' seizes the moment

By LAWRENCE DOWNES
New York Times News Service

SANTA ANA, Calif. — Cities of immigrants, it's time. Time to declare yourselves sanctuaries. To wear the label proudly, defiantly, even if the White House and its allies threaten you and utter all kinds of falsehoods against you.

President Donald Trump is in power; his nativist ideology is now fully armed and operational. He laid it out with alarming clarity in his "America first" address to Congress last week, painting unauthorized immigrants as vicious criminals, and refugees as dangerous undesirables, using both groups as scapegoats and targets. The homeland security secretary, John Kelly, has given his boss a battle plan. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Border Patrol are carrying it out, combing the country, seizing and terrifying the innocent.

The sweeps, arrests and intimidation share a brutal randomness. A young "Dreamer" gives a news conference after her father and brother are detained — and is arrested herself. ICE stakes out a courthouse to grab a survivor of domestic violence. Border agents ask a planeload of passengers — on a domestic flight — to show their papers.

Many people are confused by the term "sanctuary city," which has no strict definition. Trump uses it as an epithet to mean immigrant-loving communities that allow alien criminals to roam free. Used that way, the label is false; no city can suspend the rule of law or keep out the feds. But rather than tolerating such slander, cities should seize back the term, defining sanctuaries as places that stand for reason in the face of overreaching, unjust and often lawless federal enforcement.

They should do what Santa Ana, California, has done. It is a city of 335,000, in the heart of Orange County, whose City Council has passed one of the boldest and most far-reaching sanctuary ordinances in the state. In a county that has long been known as a haven of white Republicans, Santa Ana is a mixed-race, mixed-income, All-American

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town. Its population is about 46 percent immigrant, and its mayor and its six City Council members are all Latino.

When the council gave final approval to its sanctuary ordinance in January, by a 6-0 vote, it was the culmination of months of persuasion by residents who feel the force of Trump's anti-immigrant threats intimately. They argued that Latino and Asian families, including many unauthorized immigrants with citizen children, have fought for a foothold in this country and deserve to live in safety and peace. They pointed out that using the local police as immigration enforcers takes them away from their primary responsibility, the safety of the community. It wastes crime-fighting resources. It costs too much. And it's constitutionally dubious for localities to detain people for no other reason than an administrative request from ICE.

The ordinance is duly respectful of the law, in a spirit that honors the Constitution and residents' civil rights. It declares that none of its provisions are to conflict with "any valid and enforceable duty and obligation imposed by a court order or any federal or applicable law." But it also makes clear that the city will not cooperate in any federal immigration dragnet. The feds may do what they will, but Santa Ana wants no part of it. It will not allow the use of city resources or personnel to assist in these efforts unless required by state or federal law. Nor will the city share "sensitive information," protecting the privacy of its residents, whatever their immigration status.

Police chiefs and sheriffs across the country understand such reasoning; 63 of them recently sent a letter opposing Trump's effort to conscript

them for his immigration crackdown.

Santa Ana's decision took courage, given Trump's heated language about "vicious" immigrant criminals and his threat to rob sanctuary cities of federal funds. It's not clear that he can or will follow through. But for Santa Ana, other financial implications were more immediate: The city had a deal with ICE to house immigrant detainees in its jail for \$340,000 a month; that contract has been canceled. The city accepted the hit, realizing how inappropriate it would be to call itself a sanctuary while profiting from Trump's deportation policies.

Success has encouraged the residents of Santa Ana to consider the next steps. Now that we're a sanctuary city, what else should we do? How about finding lawyers to help people in detention fight deportation? A resolution to examine the issue came before the council the other night. Students, lawyers and community members waited through hours of legislative minutiae for a chance to testify. At about 12:30 in the morning, the resolution passed unanimously.

The opposition in California to the Trump administration goes well beyond a blue island in historically red Orange County. The state Legislature is considering a strong sanctuary bill, the California Values Act, to prohibit the use of state resources for immigration enforcement. Like Santa Ana's ordinance, the Values Act would have the force of law. Pressure for sanctuary policies is strong in Los Angeles, too, even though its mayor, Eric Garcetti, has at times been wary of the label. Nervous politicians should get over their qualms. While they have been tiptoeing, the Trump administration has been moving.