



XAVIER

UNIVERSITY of LOUISIANA

Contact: Janella Newsome 520-5120 or Richard Tucker 520-5425



XAVIER MUSLIM STUDENT ASSOCIATION STAGES A 'WE THE PEOPLE' MARCH PROTESTING TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDER

New Orleans LA – On a beautiful and bright Sunday afternoon, chants of, 'tell me what democracy looks like? This is what democracy looks like!' echoed across Xavier University of Louisiana's campus.

Students, faculty and staff participated in a protest march called 'We the People,' spearheaded by the Muslim Student Association (MSA), to voice their displeasure for President Donald Trump's executive order banning all immigrants, refugees, and visitors mainly from Middle Eastern countries entry into the United States for 90 days.

The executive order – enforced on Jan. 27 – hit home for several of Xavier's Muslim students and faculty who have family and friends in those seven designated countries – Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. According to one member of the MSA, the local Muslim and Arabic communities are on edge. This latest push of the president's pen has heightened fear and anxiety nationwide.

"It's really upsetting," said freshman Hana Alkhafaf, an Iraqi-American, majoring in biology with plans of becoming a dentist. "It's blatant discrimination and it hurts that we cannot travel to see our family and friends in Iraq and vice versa. It doesn't make sense."

Alkhafaf said she feels the current administration is divisive and exclusive yet the atmosphere on campus is one of unity and solidarity. She said the march reaffirmed what she already knew about Xavier when she saw the sea of people from all nationalities present at the event.

“It was great. Xavier was the perfect place to have had the march because it’s a very diverse community and welcoming campus. It doesn’t matter your skin color, religion or race, Xavier is a true reflection of a melting pot and the administration support its students,” said Alkhafaf.

“When one member of the community is afflicted, we all share the burden,” said XU President Dr. Reynold Verret, who came to this country as a refugee from Haiti. He has been vocal of late about the executive order and immigration.

In a recent *Black Enterprise* magazine article entitled: *There’s Nothing Christian About Turning Away Muslims*.

“In light of the President’s executive order, we (Xavier) will continue to advocate for our students and support them in accordance with Catholic Social Teachings and American law. Our Muslim students, faculty, and staff are integral members of this community that is historically black and Catholic that is steeped in the American struggle for respect, equality, and dignity. International scholars on campus similarly are core to our global mission.”

Alkhafaf takes comfort in the president’s words, though her parents, both from Iraq who are now American citizens, expressed concern that their daughter might experience backlash from the community because of her outspokenness.

“I’m not afraid to use my voice, especially now,” said Alkhafaf. “How can you expect people to stand up for you if you can’t stand up for yourself?”

The University’s provost and senior vice president for academic affairs, Dr. Ann McCall, marched that day reassuring Alkhafaf and others that Xavier is committed to the cause and movement.

“As our nation’s only Catholic HBCU, we are dedicated to building a more just and humane society through respect for every person’s dignity, unity in our dedication to excellence, and a common struggle against inequities,” said McCall.

“We are encouraged by our students’ commitment to social justice and their readiness to act on their values and beliefs,” she said.

###