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STATEMENT FROM ISSTD

Regarding Executive Order banning foreign travel from select countries

The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD) is a global community of mental health practitioners, researchers and teachers whose members are spread throughout the world and have diverse social, cultural and religious perspectives and backgrounds. The ISSTD has grave concerns about the recent Executive Order in the United States banning immigration from select countries.

The ISSTD seeks to advance clinical, scientific, and societal understanding about the prevalence and consequences of chronic trauma and dissociation. We envision a world where social policy and health care will address the prevalence and consequences of chronic trauma and dissociation, making effective treatment available for all who suffer from their effects.

As clinicians we see and hear, all too frequently, the very real human costs of betrayal, abandonment, rejection, and neglect that come from both those who directly abuse people and those who fail to protect. Those who quietly sit by, their silence condoning the suffering, also cause great harm. As researchers, we study the breakdown of interpersonal relationships and social bonds when the people and institutions we trust to protect us fail to respond.

The United States of America has a history of sheltering survivors of foreign struggles. The words engraved in the brass plaque of Lady Liberty extend that promise, that commitment, to the world. Barring the door to the hurt and the hungry, to those seeking shelter, betrays that promise.

Moreover: barring the door on whole nations, and judging millions of individuals to be dangerous and evil on the basis of their place of birth betrays the rights of all humans to be deemed innocent until proven otherwise.

As scientists, we observe that when abuses occur and go unacknowledged, healthy connections with other people breakdown. In their place, hurt turns to anger, and anger can turn to action. We fear that the outcome of the Executive Order will be to create more mistrust, anger, and hostility.

In treatment, we find that compassion and empathy are the key responses to promote healing. We also acknowledge the necessity of limits in treatment and other working relationships to ensure integrity and safety for all involved. Harsh and punitive limits, however, only maintain fear and resentment. The path to peace lies in carefully crafting spaces where negotiation and understanding can take place.

The ISSTD invites dialogue and understanding with and among all people and all nations. We encourage compassion and empathy for those who have been hurt. We value and celebrate the richness and the opportunity that comes from embracing diversity. The ISSTD remains firmly committed to representing all its members, regardless of their race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, or geographic location. Together we are stronger.