

The President and the Board of Directors of the International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education (IFPE) are deeply troubled by the recent executive order of the President of the United States regarding travelers from seven predominantly Muslim countries. We see these restrictions as anathema to our mission and educational purposes, both within the field of psychoanalysis and within the global society at large. At IFPE we foster an ethos that values openness, inclusivity and egalitarianism.

IFPE's annual conferences support dialogue that furthers our understanding of the human condition – in the clinical setting, in the community, in the arts and in our own lives. Our conferences welcome presenters and attendees from many countries. A psychoanalytic viewpoint suggests that, rather than serving to make the world a safer place, the new restrictions and the underlying fearful attitude that they convey, will increase the danger to people throughout the world. At IFPE, we endeavor to discourage activity that will lead to increased fear of the “other,” and instead, to promote dialogue about the human experience.

IFPE's mission for the past 25 years has been to increase consciousness, dialogue and insight, while reducing disenfranchisement, silencing, alienation and the traumatizing acting-out of aggression. IFPE conferences have promoted compassion, understanding and share about our work to heal trauma through both treatment and prevention. Our honored award winners over the years have included those who crossed barriers and borders to bring people together, and those who have practiced psychoanalytic activism. Such activism has included spearheading the fight against the complicity of mental health professionals in the torture of detainees, supporting our LGBT community, and working for the release colleagues wrongly imprisoned by repressive governments who saw them as a threat.

Over the years, our Social Responsibility and our Inclusiveness and Diversity committees have sponsored presentations reflecting upon the intergenerational trauma that comes from the refugee experience and upon the process of healing that trauma. We have had a filmmaker present on psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan's warnings about how fear of the “other” has led to horrific mass violence throughout history. IFPE's most recent conference on the topic of “Skin” brought attendees into very meaningful dialogue about overcoming prejudice and building bridges for the common good, as opposed to building walls (literally and figuratively) that serve to increase projections and feed divisiveness.

The ban on immigration is just that—a wall. Whereas, in IFPE's open forum, we are devoted to bringing down the walls that impede mutual understanding and respect. We choose to move away from primitive and regressive attitudes that tear at the very fabric of society. We choose to move towards peace and compassion in our work to continually mend that fabric for the benefit of all.

*Statement respectfully posted by IFPE's President and Board of Directors on February 2, 2017.*