



EMERGENCY RESPONDER

THE TRUMP EFFECT > On January 27, Trump signs a presidential executive order called “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States.” It’s quickly dubbed the “travel ban.” Chaos ensues at international airports around the country.

THE COLORADO COROLLARY > Amal Kassir is the 22-year-old Aurora native who planned Colorado’s most visible protest of Trump’s travel ban.

There’s more than one way to build a wall—especially when nobody has to pay for it. Trump’s fifth executive order, released on January 27, suspended “aliens” from seven Muslim-majority countries—Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen—from entering the United States for a period of 90 days. (After a federal court approved a restraining order on the ban, Trump issued a second edict, in March, that removed Iraq from the list.) Many viewed the order as discriminatory toward Muslims, which is why Aurora’s Amal Kassir felt compelled to act. A Syrian-American activist, poet, and practicing Muslim whose TED Talk about ethnic divides, “The Muslim on the Airplane,” has been viewed more than a million times on YouTube, Kassir quickly organized a protest of the travel ban at DIA. *5280* talked with Kassir about how she inspired hundreds to join her at the airport, the meaning of the rally, and her continued fight against Trump’s immigration policies. —*AE*

How were you able to organize the DIA protest so quickly?

My friends and I decided to post a Facebook update and go to DIA. We didn’t know what to expect. But at 5 o’clock on the dot, more than a thousand people showed up. [Editors’ note: Local media outlets reported that attendance was in the hundreds.] The Flobots, a local hip-hop group, did a flash mob; the *New York Times* was streaming it on Facebook Live; and people were singing, “Refugees are welcome here.” Everyone was there for the same purpose, and that’s why it was so organized.

Was there an especially profound moment for you that day?

At sunset prayer, there were 20 Muslims praying surrounded by masses of people. When they finished, everyone burst into applause. A lot of people told me they had never seen Muslims pray before. It made me feel proud—not just to be an American, but also to be a Muslim.

Did it make an impact, ultimately?

We are one of the biggest refugee hot spots in the country. We are a vibrant community with so many immigrants and Latinos and black Americans—people who have given Denver the culture that it has. Yet the majority of the people who showed up to the DIA protest were white. I think DIA helped people realize they’ll have to defend something they’ve always taken for granted.

What advocacy work are you doing now?

I’m visiting a lot of universities in the United States and overseas to talk about feminism, the situation in Syria, and Muslims in America. My task is to be able to communicate my story [earlier this year, 11 members of Kassir’s family were killed in a bombing near Damascus] in a way that unifies human empathy.



>THE UPDATE

In late September, the Trump administration announced it will **replace the travel ban with travel restrictions** on certain visitors from eight nations: Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen. The administration says it believes these countries don’t do enough to identify terrorists or criminals before they are permitted to enter the United States.