

## **AAAS Statement on Immigration Executive Orders**

**1/31/17**

Over the last several days our nation has witnessed the imposition of a series of draconian presidential executive orders on immigration. Orders authorizing the building of a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico, ramping up deportations of undocumented workers, penalizing sanctuary cities, and most recently barring residents from seven predominantly Muslim countries and refugees from around the world from entering the United States take their place among some of the most shameful acts in this nation's history.

The faculty of the Department of African and Afro-American Studies at Brandeis University condemns in the strongest terms these orders, which must be unequivocally denounced for what they are: racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia dressed up in the guise of national security. As an interdisciplinary field, African and Afro-American Studies is defined by a strong tradition of intellectual and political engagement, radical inclusion, and an abiding commitment to social justice from the local level to the global. Informed by the histories and intellectual aspirations of the African Diaspora, our department recognizes the centuries long presence and contributions of Islam in the Americas. We extend our support for and stand in solidarity with Muslims on campus and around the world who have been unjustly demonized by Trump's executive order. We affirm that every student, staff, and faculty member at Brandeis University has the unassailable right to study, work, and live in an environment free from threat, fear, intimidation, and discrimination. As a faculty we are committed to protecting all members of our community, at Brandeis and beyond, who are now at risk.

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Given the unique founding and history of Brandeis, combined with the fact that the latest executive order explicitly discriminates on the basis of religion, we are heartened that President Liebowitz and other senior administrators have issued a statement "voicing their deep concern and dismay" about these events. President Liebowitz also reaffirmed the university's current policy on the sharing of information about immigration status as follows:

- Brandeis University will not permit immigration enforcement on our campus with respect to our students, faculty or staff without a warrant or a clear demonstration of exigent circumstances, such as imminent risk to the health and safety of others.
- Brandeis University Public Safety officers will not act on behalf of federal agents in the enforcement of immigration laws.
- Brandeis University will not release immigration status information with respect to students, faculty or staff to the federal government unless mandated by court order or other valid legal instrument.

While we applaud the university's commitment to upholding these policies, we also believe it can and should do more. A statement, posted on the Brandeis website, publicly declaring the university's position and its support for students, faculty, and staff impacted by recent events would not only be an important show of support for our campus community, it would also reaffirm Brandeis' commitment to stand against all acts of discrimination based on religion, race, gender, sexuality, and nationality whenever and wherever they occur. In addition to the counseling services that Brandeis is already providing, we urge the university to provide pro bono legal aid and assistance to students, staff, and faculty who are affected by these orders.

We hope, too, that these unfolding events will spur an ongoing campus-wide discussion about sanctuary campuses; about how the university plans to protect Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students, if the Trump administration makes good on its promise to end the program; about the wider implications of the culture of fear, intimidation, hate, and violence that this wave of executive orders has unleashed; and, crucially, the special responsibility of Brandeis University and its faculty to exert moral leadership at this defining historical moment.

**Faculty of the Department of African and Afro-American Studies  
Brandeis University**