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# Freedom of movement

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# FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

By Audra Kincart



America was founded on freedom; the freedom of speech, the freedom of press, the freedom of religion, the freedom to petition, and the freedom to peacefully assemble. Now, some don't have the freedom of movement.

The world's eyes were on America on September 11, 2001, including Vivek Lawana's. The aftermath of that bleak time brought a nation together, and inspired Lawana to keep his eyes on America ever since. "This country doesn't see people from the outside, they see people from the inside," Lawana said. Originally from India, Lawana made the decision to attend graduate school in biomedical sciences at Iowa State University. During his

time here, Lawana has become the president of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate.

On Friday, January 27, 2017, an event occurred that yet again turned the world's eyes on the United States.

President Trump signed the "Protecting the nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States," executive order, banning all entry for peoples from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Yemen and Somalia for 90 days. It also suspended the U.S. Refugee Program for 120 days. The executive order has since changed to include the same group of countries, minus Iraq, and deems them as "Muslim-dominant" countries.

The Monday following January 27, the GPSS meeting had an



### Vivek Lawana

Home country: India  
Graduate student in biomedical sciences

influx of student attendance, as 36 percent of the graduate college at Iowa State is composed of international students, 100 of which are from the banned countries. Students came with many questions, including if they should apply to graduate schools in the U.S.

Lawana encouraged the university to publish a statement saying that graduate admissions doesn't discriminate based off religion, as people are scared to come to America.

"Any kind of ban is a repression of some person's identity," Lawana said.

Lawana made the decision on behalf of affected graduate students, including Vahid Daneshpajoo, a first-year Ph.D. student in electrical and computer engineering from Iran.

Daneshpajoo has been an active protestor on campus, standing with fellow Iranians by Parks Library, holding signs that state "Iran sends U.S. 7,000 students, 5,000 doctors, 0 terrorists."

"I was mad about the executive order," Daneshpajoo said.

Daneshpajoo is frustrated by a number of things. First, he is frustrated at President Trump. Daneshpajoo feels the president is using national security as an excuse to single out his home

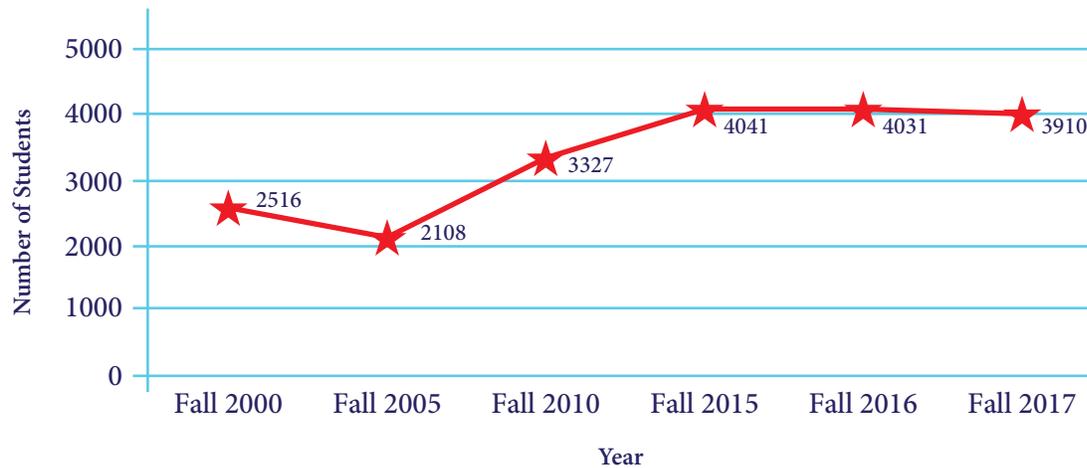
country, stating that Iran hasn't committed a terrorist attack to the United States since 9/11. Even then, Iran was not involved as a state actor in 9/11.

Secondly, Daneshpajoo is frustrated with his friends. Many won't take a stance on the issue, including friends who have had to buy four or five different plane tickets to get their wives to the States at the time the travel ban was signed.

"They just want to keep silent," Daneshpajoo said. "It drives me crazy. In their opinion it shouldn't be changed, you should obey the law always."

Another student affected by the travel ban is a second-year master's student in civil engineering from Iran, who wishes to remain anonymous, and whom I will refer to as Arash. Arash applied for 10 graduate programs in the United States—she graduates in May—but wouldn't have applied to them if the travel ban was signed sooner. Arash traveled to America with her fiancé, and had hopes of going back to Iran for her wedding. Now, her wedding plans are unsure as well as if her parents will be able to attend her graduation. Arash's sister just had a baby, and not being able to visit makes Arash feel as if she is alone and with no family. Arash is hesitant to have her name in media as she would

## International Students at Iowa State



like to return to Iran. Arash said she experienced a strict vetting process to get to America and expects another strict one to leave.

Both students realize they can't currently leave the country and expect to return, but for how long this will be, neither knows. The International Students and Scholars office is advising students affected by the ban to not travel.

Student government also passed a resolution encouraging the university to protect and support students of differing religions, as one in 10 students at Iowa State are from international countries.

Sen. Conner Tillo, and author of the Student Government resolution, said it was important for students to feel safe. Tillo said the executive order was "disrespectful to the Muslim community at Iowa State."

One undergraduate student who is apart of that one in 10 statistic is Paith Philemon, a Sudanese senior in management information systems and biological and premedical illustration, and also president of the South Sudanese Student Association.

"We see America as the land of opportunity," Philemon said. "So many countries are full of war and terror and America welcomes immigrants. Developing countries don't make people feel at home. The United States should be a second voice for that. I can't imagine not being given an opportunity."

Philemon graduates in May, and although she was in Sudan two years ago visiting her mother, she says it is "heart-wrenching" that her mom will not be able to attend her graduation.



**Paith Philemon**

Home country: Sudan  
Undergraduate student in management information systems and biological and premedical illustration

Aside from these, students affected by the travel ban have more concerns.

“Knowing we have students, faculty, and staff that practice the Islam faith, there are concerns of safety and belonging,” said Kenyatta Shamburger, director of multicultural student affairs. “The biggest concern is safety.”

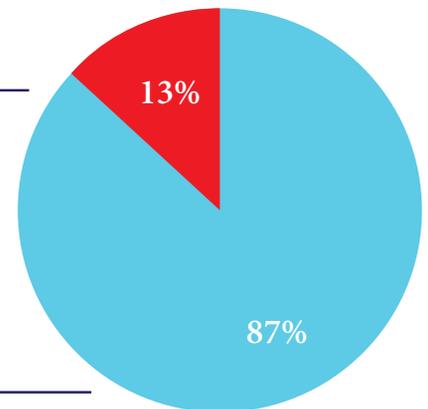
And Dean of the Graduate College, David Holger, Ph.D., said, “Certainly we are concerned with the students who are here.”

Holger sent a letter out to the heads of the graduate departments after the travel ban was signed. The letter addressed Iowa State not discriminating based off national origin and to allow students from the banned countries a delay up to one year if travel into the United States is restricted. Further, accommodations will be made

for students who would have otherwise traveled over the summer, through extended assistantships or internships.

“It was a concern that students outside of the U.S. are uncertain of what they’re going to do, and we wanted to make them comfortable knowing they can come here,” Holger said.

Holger said there is an even bigger problem of “international students here that leave, and international students that won’t come here even if accepted.”



Because of this, the number of graduate applications accepted at Iowa State will increase. Typically, if 10 students are accepted, five will come. Now, if 10 students are accepted, only two or three will attend graduate school. To make up for that, and using Holger’s example, the graduate college will be accepting 15 applications.

“International students add perspective that you might not have otherwise had,” Holger said. “And I understand their level of discomfort.”

## International students add perspective that you might not have otherwise had.

**Dr. David Holger, Ph.D.**

Dean of the graduate college

