

# High school alters trip due to Trump's travel ban

Concerned some would be turned away at U.S. border because of Trump's ban

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Sabrina Jafralie is a high school ethics teacher whose students were recently presented with a real-life test of their character.



Westmount High School had planned a senior trip to Washington, D.C., this spring, but newly imposed travel restrictions by the U.S. government meant some of the students might be turned aside at the border. On Monday, President Donald Trump signed an executive order temporarily barring citizens of six majority Muslim countries from entering the United States.

Because three of Jafralie's students are from Iran — one of the countries subject to the travel ban — she met the senior class before March break and presented them with an ethical predicament: should the entire group make a sacrifice to protect the rights of a handful of their peers?

“If it was a test, they passed it with flying colours,” Jafralie said. “The thought of one of us being left behind just wasn't acceptable to the students. So they decided to change the destination of our trip. The majority stood up for the rights of the minority. It was a sort of ‘all for one and one for all’ moment. They stood up and said: ‘If one of us can't go, we all won't go.’ I'm extremely proud of them.”

Though Jafralie admits the new destination — Toronto and Niagara — doesn't have the same allure as the U.S. capital, she says more students have signed up for the trip since the

change of plans. About 100 students and teachers are on board.

“I think the most important part of any class trip is that we’ll be together,” said Julian Green, a Grade 11 student at Westmount High School.

“It’s not fair if we just tell a couple of kids: ‘Given the circumstances, you just can’t go on this trip, but everyone else can.’ If you put (yourselves) in their shoes, if you’re not allowed going on a trip because of your nationality, that’s incredibly unfair.

“As a group, we decide that if something violates the right of a few people, the majority stands together and makes a decision that works for everyone. It shows a really nice sense of community, it’s a classic Westmount (High School) thing.”

One U.S. group that advocates for Muslim rights in the U.S. said Jafralie’s concerns about the border aren’t ill-founded.

“Muslim Canadian students, athletes and tourists have already been prevented from entering the United States. (Jafralie’s) concerns are legitimate,” said Robert McCaw, who works with the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

“It’s troubling to see our neighbours to the north be prevented from entering the United States because of either their nationality, religion or, in some cases, political views.”

Last week, a Montrealer of Indian descent was turned aside at the Quebec-Vermont border after being told she needed a valid immigrant visa to enter the country.

Manpreet Kooner is a Canadian citizen and says she was held by border agents for six hours before they denied her entry into the U.S.

In February, a Brossard woman was denied entry after she said she was questioned, fingerprinted and asked detailed questions about her religious views by U.S. border agents.

Fadwa Alaoui, a Moroccan-born Canadian citizen, said she felt humiliated by the experience.

Jafralie went to the U.S. for March Break and says she was nervous about crossing the border. Her father is an Indian-Muslim and she worried that might affect her trip.

“I was lucky, the customs agents were really nice, but it can be a scary and degrading experience,” Jafralie said.

“I think for our students to recognize that their peers might be subjected to harsh treatment tells me a lot about who they are as people.

“We want them to leave (high school) as successful students but we also want them to be good citizens.”