



September 3, 2020

Below is a joint statement from Santa Ana City Council Member Vicente Sarmiento and Vietnamese American community group VietRISE on recent incidents that created harm and division in the Vietnamese Community

SANTA ANA, CA - I have proudly represented many Vietnamese Americans in my role as a member of the Santa Ana City Council since 2007. Through the relationships I built with Vietnamese residents in the city, I know that Vietnamese Americans have endured a painful history and prolonged trauma as a result of the war in Vietnam and their settlement in the United States.

I'm deeply saddened by the ill-advised remarks made earlier this week by a member of the Democratic Party of Orange County and all of the subsequent statements from leaders from both the Republican and Democratic Party that have reopened old wounds for many Vietnamese Americans. I condemn all comments that are insensitive and highly offensive towards any community, and in this case, these statements harmed members of the Vietnamese community. I commit to continue learning about the histories and experiences of Vietnamese residents and engaging directly with them in order to better understand and serve our residents.

I am joining with Vietnamese residents from community group VietRISE, a nonprofit community organization that works with residents in our city and the Little Saigon community to share this message: I implore us all to not use this incident to advance an agenda that does not center what Vietnamese residents are saying they need from us as elected officials in Orange County today, especially in the middle of a public health crisis. We have a collective obligation as a society to be more thoughtful in our comments. Consequently, we must demand that our leaders be held to a higher standard when using their platforms in the public square.

From VietRISE, "We appreciate Council member Sarmiento for listening to Vietnamese residents and centering our voices as members of the community and the issues we are facing. Our elected leaders need to stop using our trauma for political gain, and to instead use their platforms and collective voices to commit to uplifting the socio-economic issues impacting working class Vietnamese residents everyday. These include enacting affordable housing, rent control, protections for immigrants, and protecting working class residents impacted by COVID-19. This is exactly the areas of change that many Vietnamese residents have said they need from our leaders in the city and across Orange County."