

Orozco, Norma

From: Vincent Tran <vincent@vietrise.org>
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2023 3:07 PM
To: eComment; Bacerra, Phil
Cc: Tracy La
Subject: Public Comment - Agenda Item #9
Attachments: VietRISE Letter to Santa Ana City Council (re_Redbaiting).pdf.pdf

Categories: Correspondence, Complete

Hello,

Below I have attached my public comment on behalf of VietRISE. Thank you.

Best,

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OF ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE & BUILDING WORKING-CLASS
POWER WITH VIETNAMESE & IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN OC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, April 17, 2023

Contact: general@vietrise.org



**STATEMENT: VIETRISE CONDEMNS THE USAGE OF RED-BAITING TACTICS BY
SANTA ANA COUNCILMEMBER PHIL BACCERA**

In response to Councilmember Baccera exploiting the traumas of the Vietnam War during a City Council meeting to keep a former school teacher and activist from being appointed to the city's Police Oversight Commission, VietRISE has released the following statement.

SANTA ANA, CA – VietRISE condemns the usage of red-baiting tactics by Santa Ana City Councilmember Phil Baccera. The Councilmember exploited the traumas of the Vietnam War during the March 21 and April 4 Santa Ana City Council meetings to keep a former school teacher and community activist from being appointed to the city's Police Oversight Commission.

As an organization advancing social justice and building power with working-class Vietnamese and immigrant communities in Orange County, we know all too well the damaging and life-altering effects of red-baiting tactics used by local politicians to attack their political opponents. Politicians shroud their political motives under the guise of “care” and “concern” for the traumas of the Vietnamese people. Yet evident by the lack of policy change that has improved the lives of the community, their “care” often does not extend beyond seeing the community as a tool to further their political goal. They fail to acknowledge or even care about the nuance of Vietnamese lived experiences unless it suits their political agenda.

Councilmember Phil Baccera disingenuously attempted to show his “care” for the Vietnamese community by showcasing the picture of Colonel Dewey Waddell being captured by a Vietnamese woman during the Vietnam War in order to prove the bias of a nominee and to stop their appointment to the Police Oversight Commission. However he incorrectly called the Vietnamese woman in the picture a “Viet Cong.” If the Councilmember took even 5 minutes to Google search the image, he would quickly realize his mistake. The image he referred to was captured approximately 40 miles from Hanoi, making the woman a member of the North Vietnamese Army, not a “Viet Cong.” The term “Viet Cong” is commonly used to describe members of the National Liberation Front who operated in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. The Councilmember's oversight on the term he chose to use reveals his own bias, his disregard for the nuanced lived experiences of the Vietnamese community, and his motive to use Vietnamese traumas as a tool for his skewed political agenda.

This attempt at red-baiting and exploiting Vietnamese traumas to win political brownie points is an all too common occurrence. During the 2022 General Election, Đỗ Dzũng, the editor-in-chief of Người Việt Daily News, [decried the red-baiting tactics](#) used by then-candidate Michelle Steel against her opponent Jay Chen and railed against “people taking advantage of anti-communist sentiment.” And in 2020, then-Santa Ana City Councilmember Vicente Sarmiento and VietRISE [denounced](#) the attempts of various political and elected leaders to exploit Vietnamese traumas for political gain. It becomes unnecessary clockwork for elected leaders to say a lot but do very little.

If the topic of bias is to be discussed, can city councilmembers who received over \$100,000 in campaign support from the Police Officers Association make unbiased decisions about which residents can serve on the Police Oversight Commission? It is time to stop the red-baiting. If the Councilmember really cared about the Vietnamese community, he would have supported issues that Vietnamese residents have been raising, such as rent stabilization and voting yes on the rent board and rent registry. But he voted no on those policies. Moreover, the Vietnamese community is complex and nuanced. We are not a monolithic community for anyone to weaponize. Before commenting on the Vietnamese community, the Councilmember should actually engage with residents in meaningful and thoughtful ways. **If the Councilmember has respect for our community, he would apologize** and stop using our history and trauma for his political gain or agendas.

We invite Councilmember Baccera to meet with us to engage in further discussion and education on the Vietnamese community and the issues impacting our community in Santa Ana.