



December 20, 2018 --

JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS STATEMENT ON THE PROPOSED DEPORTATION OF VIETNAMESE IMMIGRANTS

The Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans strongly disagrees with the Administration's renewed effort to deport law-abiding Vietnamese immigrants from the United States in large numbers. The new proposal radically reverses course on a decade-old agreement that explicitly bars the deportation of Vietnamese people who arrived in the U.S. before July 12, 1995 – the date on which the U.S. and Vietnam re-established diplomatic relations following the Vietnam War.

We specifically take issue with the Administration re-interpreting the 2008 agreement to exempt undocumented Vietnamese migrants who arrived before the above-mentioned date from its protections. The agreement has, from its inception, widely been accepted by all involved parties to shield such individuals from deportation. In fact, many of these Vietnamese immigrants – some of whom were just children – arrived in the U.S. as refugees fleeing the Vietnam War, and some even fought alongside the U.S. military during the war. Moreover, many of the individuals who may be targeted by the new policy have lived in the U.S. for years and have contributed substantially to the social, cultural, and economic life of our country.

This is especially true in Greater New Orleans, home to a thriving community of Vietnamese immigrants and their descendants dating back at least to 1975, when the Roman Catholic Church brought 2,100 refugees to the region after the fall of Saigon. The 2010 Census listed 15,800 people of Vietnamese descent living in the area. Coincidentally, it was also in 2008 that we became the first region to elect a Vietnamese-American to the U.S. Congress, a historic achievement of which the local Vietnamese community was and is rightfully proud.

The American people opened their arms to Vietnamese immigrants in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, and we should continue to support this community today. We feel fortunate to have the Vietnamese people of Greater New Orleans as our neighbors and partners.

Arnie D. Fielkow | Chief Executive Officer

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