

A meager three miles away from my house resides the vibrant Grand Century, a hotspot for all things Vietnamese-- a trendy nước mía shop, the scent of phở tickling your senses. During the weeks of Tết or Tết Trung Thu, Vietnamese families just like mine flood around my city's streets in joyful celebration. We stand in unity beneath a yellow flag with three red stripes, everyone overflowing with pride in the bloodshed in the name of country, our freedom, and our strength.

My paternal grandfather watches today as his children and grandkids flourish. He remembers his days as a noble judge in the rigid courts of Vietnam during the war, a career he largely spent sacrificing his time to help the poor asking for nothing in return. He still has nightmares of his six years as prisoner of war, but smiles at the great luck he had in receiving refuge in America. On this land, my father and five other siblings built the foundation I will grow up to maintain. We were one of the lucky ones.

Like much of my Vietnamese community here, my family made it.

But after so many years of fortune, it's easy to forget about the initial generosity that led us to where we are today. As the political climate is changing, evil finds our roots in this nation of immigrants, and fear and hesitation replace the kindness our community once embodied.

"The situation is different now. They're different." *Different how?*

While we may have made it here, our fight is not over. Millions of people flee from terror every day to seek justice and a place they can call home. With the same dreams and visions of good, there is nothing that sets us apart from them on the most basic human level. Why do we now turn a blind eye to those we once were?

A major part of being Vietnamese-American for me is remembering my roots. My family would not be here today if it weren't for the acceptance of others back then. As refugees, we were vulnerable. As refugees under the protection of collective communities reaching out to help, we were able to find our ground in America and live on to do good.

I believe that it is our responsibility to share the same opportunities with those less fortunate today. I want to pursue immigration law to give a voice to those who cannot do so themselves. As I traverse rugged tides of fear and hostility, I wish to paint the stories of others in colors that the world can more easily understand. I want to tell those stories...stories of the unbreakable pull of familial love, the will to survive, strength in the midst of fear-- stories that deserve to be heard.

The community of my dreams, the community I am in today, knows this all too well.

Today and forward, we do not shy away from embodying what we know best-- love.