



Statement on Anti-Asian Public Comments at Irvine City Council Meeting

Asian Americans in Action believes in the democratic ideals of respectful public debate. Unfortunately, at a City of Irvine City Council meeting this week (10-26-21), one resident used racist tropes instead of thoughtful inquiry to discredit a City Councilmember.

During the meeting, this Irvine resident rudely addressed Vice Mayor Tammy Kim, saying, “You come from South Korea. How do you feel about the 36,574 Americans who died trying to save your country for freedom, to allow you to come here.” The use of Vice Mayor Kim’s place of birth to question her patriotism is an example of a ubiquitous anti-Asian trope--that Asian Americans are perpetual foreigners who should feel grateful to be allowed to live in the U.S. and should not overstep the bounds of second-class citizenry.

The comments also reflect a common misunderstanding of historical U.S. foreign policy that perpetuates a “white savior” narrative of U.S. history. The U.S. military has never gone into Asia to help Asian people. The U.S. military has always gone into Asia to pursue its own military and political self-interest.

In the presence of such overt racism, two Councilmembers on the dais, Vice Mayor Kim and Councilmember Mike Carroll, demonstrated admirable leadership by speaking out strongly against the old and tired stereotypes expressed by the commenter.

Asian Americans in Action condemns all forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination. We call on community leaders, including elected officials, to denounce acts of anti-Asian racism in public discourse. We also encourage our Orange County neighbors and friends to learn about the history of Asian Americans and U.S. colonialism in Asia.

Asian Americans in Action is a progressive, nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(4) organization that seeks to elevate the political voice and impact of the AAPI community in Orange County, CA.