



美洲同源總會

Chinese American Citizens Alliance

~ National ~

1044 Stockton Street, San Francisco, California 94108 • Telephone/Fax (415)829-9332

National Lodge
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CONTACT: info@cacanational.org

Thumbs Down to Roanoke Mayor for Invoking Japanese American Internment as Justification for Refusing Syrian Refugees

San Francisco, November 19, 2015—With the senseless and abhorrent killings of 130 victims, including California college student Nohemi Gonzales, and over 300 seriously injured in Paris and now over 20 more victims, including American citizen Anita Datar, in Mali coupled with extreme conflicts in the Middle East and Syria, it's no surprise that a public official would find a way to step on his own words as our country considers the fate and future of Syrian refugees seeking settlement. While Roanoke Mayor David A. Bowers has subsequently apologized for clearly rekindling a dark and shameful chapter in our history¹ by invoking the Japanese internment as justification for refusing Syrian refugees, Chinese American Citizens Alliance has not only rejected Mayor Bowers' comparison, but is ready to challenge future statements of this ilk that do not bring substance to meaningful discussions of principle and policy to these events.

C.A.C.A. believes this ill-conceived comparison diminishes and further divides the country's debate on how best to accommodate the mostly innocent Syrians seeking safety, shelter and sustenance. The focus should be the foremost and genuine concerns voiced that we are a country whose principles and culture of open arms and humanitarian assistance are likewise given to genuine concerns for the safety and security of our country's citizens and way of life.

Both voices are genuine and both are real given the conflicts and killings in the Middle East and Europe. This should not be the time to be dividing ourselves as American citizens. One voice is not more American or patriotic because it believes the country ought to pave a clear path for resettlement nor is the other voice less compassionate for refugees because they wish to have safety and security without fear of being a soft target for injury or death. There is compassion in both voices as both have compassion for the innocent refugees who are victims of warring nations, but both also have compassion for the families of Nohemi Gonzelez and Anita Datar and over 100 others who were just going about their daily life and want this to be prevented from happening here.

The Alliance urges our elected officials at every level to tamp down the divisive rhetoric and guilt-shaming and give the American public more information about how both the crisis of terrorism is being dealt with and how the humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees can be balanced



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with the public's concerns of an inadequate vetting process that could jeopardize public safety. The power of the people's vote demands that our elected officials represent us better by coming together to deliver thoughtfully, well-conceived policies and procedures that reflect the will of the citizens and clearly demonstrate our country's place as a world leader.

¹ *In an one-page, official statement issued on November 18, Mayor Bowers wrote, "I am reminded that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt felt compelled to sequester Japanese foreign nationals after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and it appears that the threat of harm to America by Isis now is just as real and serious as that from our enemies within."*

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1044 Stockton St.
San Francisco, CA.

Web: www.CACAnational.org

Chinese American Citizens Alliance

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance, established in 1895, is among the oldest civil rights organizations in the United States. Headquartered in San Francisco with chapter/lodges in Albuquerque (NM), Boston (MA), Chicago (IL), Greater San Gabriel Valley (CA), Houston (TX), Las Vegas (NV), Los Angeles (CA), Mississippi, Oakland (CA), Peninsula (CA), Portland (OR), Phoenix (AZ), Salinas (CA), San Antonio (TX), San Francisco (CA), Seattle (WA), Tucson (AZ), and Washington, D.C., the Alliance addresses issues regarding voter education, political participation, racial discrimination and hate crimes, youth leadership training programs and equal employment opportunities for all Chinese Americans.