



## LAOTIAN AMERICAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE HONORED TO ASSIST WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA'S SPEECH IN LAOS

LANA Board of Directors and Board Advisor Ryan Khamkongsay assisted in developing notes for President Obama's historic speech delivered in Laos on September 5, 2016.

### SEPTEMBER 2016

The Laotian American National Alliance is the oldest and only Laotian American non-partisan, non-religious, 501c3 non-profit, advocacy group dedicated to advancing the social and economic well-being by inspiring, uplifting, and providing visibility for the entire community.

As part of the White House's outreach to the Laotian American community in advance of this historic visit, LANA was honored to offer our perspective and ideas for how President Obama could celebrate the contributions of Laotian Americans to the United States. On August 29, 2016, LANA offered our perspective on the sacrifices, the challenges and the accomplishments of the Laotian American community.

Please read below for some excerpts that we shared with the White House:

"We highlighted our history, culture, traditions and values. One of the most important things to know about Lao people is that we respect our roots, we love to express our culture, honor our traditions, and express our values and beliefs. We are a peace loving people who strive to treat everyone as our equal wherever we may originate from. We are well known for our friendliness and hospitality."

"Transitioning to becoming an American has not been easy for many Laotians since resettling in the U.S. these past 40 years, but we continue to persevere. The second generation of Laotian Americans is empowered to create positive change, inspire, and live that American Dream that their parents have sacrificed so much to obtain. There are Laotian American doctors and nurses, lawyers, educators, artists, and business owners all across the United States."

"We specialize in various sectors of the US economy like the auto industry, aerospace, entertainment (NEA award 2009 Bryan Thao Worra, Krysada Binly Phounsiri and his crew representing Laotian Americans at the 2010 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, NEA award 2016 the Khene with Bounxeung Synanonh of Fresno), fashion (Chloe Dao, Monica Phromsavanh), finance, healthcare, technology, and hospitality (foods with Thip Khao with Chef Seng, a restaurant in Washington DC and Khe-Yo with Chef Phet in NYC; Lao rice Wine "LaoLao" at White Tiger Distillery in Maryland, Khao Laam, Cooking with Nana, Kohk & Sahk and many others)."

“For the very first time, a Laotian American, Matthew Rizzie is running for Lieutenant Governor of California because he wants to bring visibility to the Laotian American community as well as making a difference in the local sector. Several Lao-Hmong Americans currently serve at the local, state, national levels of government.”

“Our elders continue to face their greatest challenges because language barriers are still prevalent in preventive health care, understanding of the banking industry, social and economic issues. LANA has long been an active advocate for language accessibility.”

“We still struggle in achieving what other Asian American Pacific Islander groups have achieved in educational attainment, economic equality, and political influence. Only 15% of Laotian Americans are college graduates. More than 60% are high school dropouts. LANA actively advocates for more funding to scholarships and to programs that support the educational success of the younger generation.”

“Many of us have made great strides in carving out a little piece of the American Dream, in communities like California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, New York, to name a few. Others still need and look for support as many live with PTSD. The Royal Lao Veterans, a US non-profit organization, has been requesting for the last 40 years to be recognized by the US Congress through House Resolution 210, for their sacrifice during the Secret War. LANA continues to advocate for veterans to join in those efforts for their recognition as surrogates of the US Armed Forces during the Secret War.”

“The distress in migrating as refugees has caused unforeseen intergenerational issues, culminating in the formation of 1Love Movement, which advocates for immigration reform to keep families together. LANA supports all actions to keep families from refugees united.”

“We thank President Obama for his support on legislation to help advocate and address the mission of Legacies of War with education and clearance of unexploded ordnances throughout Laos as an ongoing effort to help save lives and stimulate economic growth. We are grateful for these supportive actions as it is one of the greatest aspect of our traditions: forgiveness through acts of valor. We are looking forward to celebrating all the efforts by Legacies of War at Lao Now event in NYC on October 15, 2016.”

“We believe that this historic journey is a turning point of hope and perseverance, as President Obama already embodies several of our values and beliefs: his humbleness, his love of people especially family, and the strong women by his side.”

“One of many things we are taught as children is to “huk pang gun” which means to love and be precious to or care for one another. And it is never goodbye or farewell with Laotians. We wish each other well by saying “Sok dee,” good luck or “Paw gun mai,” until we meet again.”

If you wish to learn more about LANA, please visit our website at [www.lana-usa.org](http://www.lana-usa.org).