

**A Resolution to Commemorate
the 25th Death Anniversary of Former Vietnamese Student Union President
Thien Minh Ly and Condemn Hate Crimes**

WHEREAS, the 1970's marked the diaspora of Southeast Asian refugees who fled their homelands from the Vietnam War, Khmer Rouge Genocide, and Secret War. They were forcefully displaced and forced to resettle in places with high poverty and little to no social or economic support; and

WHEREAS, Southeast Asian immigrants, including Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao, and Hmong immigrants, represent the largest refugee community ever to be resettled in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Vietnamese Student Union (VSU) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), formerly known as the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA), was established in 1977 to advocate for the social, cultural, political, and educational needs of the Vietnamese community at UCLA and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Thien Minh Ly was a former undergraduate student and beloved member of the Vietnamese community at UCLA. He was himself a refugee, escaping Vietnam by boat in 1983, and was a first-generation student at UCLA who received degrees in biology and English. While at UCLA, he was a valued student leader, serving as the director of Vietnamese Cultural Night and as the President of VSA in the 1992-1993 Academic Term; and

WHEREAS, on January 28th, 1996, Thien Minh Ly was murdered in a case of racially motivated violence perpetrated by two white supremacists in his hometown of Tustin, California. He was brutally stabbed over 40 times after being called a "Jap" and beaten. His killer, Gunner Lindberg, boasted in a letter to a friend that he "killed a Jap," in part to celebrate that the Dallas Cowboys had won earlier that evening;¹ and

WHEREAS, despite the circumstances of the case, the District Attorney initially dismissed race as a motivation for the killing;² and

¹ <https://www.ocweekly.com/when-gunner-jay-lindberg-killed-thien-minh-ly-was-it-actually-a-hate-crime-6402055/>

² <https://www.advancingjustice-la.org/history/thien-minh-ly-case>

WHEREAS, Thien Minh Ly's tragic death, as well as the initial dismissal of its status as a hate crime, sparked major outcry from the Vietnamese American and larger Asian American community not only at UCLA but throughout the U.S; and

WHEREAS, the passing of Thien Minh Ly helped to mobilize the Vietnamese community at UCLA to recognize the importance of unity and self-empowerment, leading to the unification of VSA with the Vietnamese Reaching Out to Aid the Community (VRAC) organization to form VSU; and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 1996, VSU further amplified its voice by gaining recognition as a Student Advocacy Group (SAG) with the assistance of USAC and other communities of color on campus;³ and

WHEREAS, in 1999, leaders in VSU such as Tram Linh Ho helped to initiate the USAC "Week of Remembrance" campaign to raise awareness about hate crimes, such as the one that killed Thien Minh Ly, culminating in a candle-light vigil held in his memory as well as all victims of discrimination⁴; and

WHEREAS, the spirit of the "Week of Remembrance" campaign was kept alive in subsequent years through VSU's "Where's the Love" event, which honors the memory of Ly and further brings attention to the issues of prejudice and violence affecting communities of color today; and

WHEREAS, this past year has been marked by the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Nina Pop, James Scurlock, and countless other Black lives lost at the hands of police brutality and white supremacy. Furthermore, under the ongoing global pandemic, anti-Asian hate crimes have been on the rise with the false and dangerous association of the COVID-19 virus with APIDA community members; and

WHEREAS, VSU at UCLA strives to build a resilient and empowered community that is committed to solidarity with other marginalized communities of color in advocacy and collaboration in the fight for equity and justice; and

³ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/19VqBhfzyrec1qHsuv4zjKa7GqkiuLrw6qlw2-G4scE/edit>

⁴ *ibid.*

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the Undergraduate Students Association Council formally honors the 25th death anniversary of Thien Minh Ly.

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the USAC commemorates the Vietnamese Student Union for its work supporting the Vietnamese and greater Southeast Asian communities at UCLA, and for its commitment to the empowerment and liberation of all communities of color.

LET IT BE FINALLY BE RESOLVED, that the USAC joins the Vietnamese Student Union and the Mother Organizations Coalition in condemning hateful acts of violence against marginalized communities.