



**Southeast Asia Resource Action Center**  
**Supports a Fair and Just Immigration System that Keeps Families Together**

**Statement from Doua Thor, Executive Director**

Good afternoon, my name is Doua Thor. I am a former refugee and an Asian American woman. I was born in Laos, escaped to Thailand, lived in Ban Vinai refugee camp, and came to the United States with my family, fleeing persecution because my father was a Hmong soldier fighting for the United States. I was able to resettle in the United States because of our immigration system and laws. I was able to resettle because of the belief that my family's contributions, commitments, and sacrifices were valued by America.

I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. We are a national organization fostering the leadership and integration of Southeast Asian refugees and communities in the United States. There are 2 million Southeast Asian Americans in the United States today. Most are refugees or children of refugees who fled their country due to fear of persecution and torture.

As a nation of immigrants, we must realize that detention and deportations are not the answer and in reality are only hurting American families and communities. Across the United States, refugee Cambodian fathers, sons, mothers, and daughters have lost crucial family members due to current unjust laws, detention, and deportation. Many are being deported back to countries that have persecuted their families and where they have no homes or systems of support.

Our communities, along with other immigrant communities across the United States, continue to suffer because our immigration system is broken. Today, there are over 12 million Asian Americans currently living in the United States, and 1.5 million of immigrants from Asian countries are undocumented. Asian American communities continue to be impacted by the immigration debate on issues such as deportation and detention. In addition, immigrants from Asia are the largest users of family-based visas. In 2004, 56% of immigrants from Korea came to the U.S. through family immigration, and 77,000 Koreans are caught in the family immigration backlog system. Vietnamese Americans, of which there are 1.2 million in the United States, are one of the largest users of family-based visas and are lost in the family backlog system now.

As a nation of immigrants, we must continue to support those who have supported our freedom, such as Hmong Americans – allies who fought alongside and were recruited by the United States CIA during the Vietnam War, but are now in fear of deportation back to a country that persecuted them.

As a nation of immigrants, we are in need of and must create a **fair and just** immigration system that supports keeping families together living up to the ideals that were put forth to my own family when we arrived.