



Power in Belonging Video Series: Multiracial Bridging and Organizing in Little Saigon

Orange County, CA



I want a better future.
For me, for you, and
for **everyone**.

- Tracy La, VietRISE



[VietRISE](#) and The Network for Transformative Change at the Othering & Belonging Institute invite you to learn from the multiracial and intergenerational bridging between Vietnamese and Latine organizers in Little Saigon, Orange County, California. The Power in Belonging video series provides education on three landmark campaigns in which multiracial organizing and relationship-building led to transformative community change. Each video illustrates the power of bridging across identity-based lines and provides a model of the future when we work toward a bigger ‘we’.

Above and beyond their immediate goals, each campaign depicted in the videos fostered relationships of trust and connection that surpass issue areas and build toward mutual care, empathy, and solidarity.



The videos show how communities can amplify one another’s voices and experiences without diluting or conflating these experiences as the same. The videos further touch on the fact that communities are often weakened by being divided and pitted against one another. By reaching across community divides, we increase our power and can build a shared future.

This guide is designed to help high school and postsecondary students, community members, organizers, and local leaders discuss and reflect upon the themes of belonging and bridging presented in the video series.



Carlos Perea

“The really important part of the bridging that took place is seeing that our communities were showing up for each other. For the first time, they’re seeing a level of solidarity not seen before.”



POWER IN BELONGING

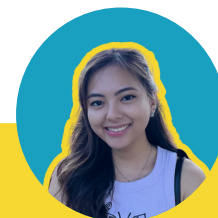
Solidarity in Sanctuary

Solidarity in Sanctuary

California became a “sanctuary state” in 2017, when legislation known as the California Values Act was passed and signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown, after years of advocacy and organizing by immigrant rights groups across the state. This law limits state and local law enforcement and other state resources from being used in federal immigration enforcement.¹ As part of an anti-immigrant push, the Trump Administration sued California in federal court regarding a few provisions in the law. In a coordinated effort, some cities in Orange County sought to join this lawsuit to challenge or opt out of the California Values Act. More than 10 cities in Orange County introduced or passed anti-sanctuary resolutions.² As described in the video, local immigrant rights groups responded by launching the ‘Defend Sanctuary’ campaign, where hundreds of advocates attended city council meetings and spoke against the anti-sanctuary resolutions.

The population of Orange County includes a rich diversity of immigrant communities, not all of whom have had access to the same pathways to “legalizing” their migratory statuses. For example, structures in place for those seeking refugee status from Vietnam in the 1970s were not available to immigrants from Mexico or Central America. This means that Vietnamese communities stood to be less broadly impacted by the effort to end sanctuary than other

immigrant communities. Some anti-sanctuary support even came from leaders in the Vietnamese community, who sought to differentiate Vietnamese immigrants by saying that they came to the United States ‘the right way.’³ Pushing back on this narrative, VietRISE spoke up for the importance of sanctuary and belonging for all immigrant groups by launching the “Bring Human Rights Home” campaign,⁴ and highlighting the fact that there were many Vietnamese immigrants without documentation who were facing deportation. Vietnamese and Latinx organizers cultivated a partnership, building knowledge within their communities of one another’s distinct historical experiences, to create cross-group solidarity that continues to shape the future of California.



Tracy La

“We are not going to stand for these people who are in office, who might look like us, using our identity to harm other communities.”

“There’s a saying that really grounds me in what multiracial solidarity could be - If you’ve come to help me, then you’re wasting your time. But if your liberation is bound with mine, then let us work together.”

1. “CA Values Act: SB 54”, Ice Out of CA, 2017, http://www.iceoutofca.org/uploads/2/5/4/6/25464410/sb54_infosheet12.pdf.
2. Spencer Custodio, “Three More Orange County Cities Oppose State Sanctuary Law”, Voice of OC, April 20, 2018, <https://voiceofoc.org/2018/04/three-more-oc-cities-oppose-state-sanctuary-law/>.
3. Vincent Tran, “Power in Belonging Video Series”, VietRISE, 2024.
4. Tracy La, “Breaking: Little Saigon Protests Demand Local Officials “Bring Human Rights Home”, VietRISE, July 18, 2019, <https://vietrise.org/for-immediate-release-little-saigon-protests-demand-local-officials-bring-human-rights-home/>.



POWER IN BELONGING

Bridging for our Homes

Bridging for Our Homes

When Orange County community members in Little Saigon and Santa Ana faced catastrophic rent increases, Tenants United Santa Ana, VietRISE, and Vietnamese community members who were mobile home residents joined together to help protect their homes.

In California, the landlord or corporation that owns a rental unit can increase the monthly cost that the renter pays to live in their home every year. If a renter is unable to pay the newly increased rate, they could be subject to being evicted – that is, being thrown out of the home they have been renting. Many community members in Orange County, some of whom are senior citizens with fixed monthly incomes, struggle to afford dramatic increases in rent and are at risk of being evicted from their home.

This video tells the story of how groups collaborated to address the urgent issue of housing instability and displacement in the city of Santa Ana. Rooted in a deep care for one another, advocates worked together toward successfully passing rent stabilization and eviction protections in this large city that includes many immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and Vietnam.



Tri Le

“We joined forces with the Latino community and local people to fight for rent control to be approved and recognized.”



Universal Suffrage

Universal Suffrage

The ability to meaningfully participate in one’s local community is critical to belonging, and voting is an important part of ensuring that residents have a say in their future. For many community members, the ability to vote is not accessible due to structural barriers that make it impossible for them to achieve citizenship.

There is growing interest in expanding the right to vote in local elections for all community members, whether citizens or not. Such expansiveness in voting has long, but little-known, historical precedence in the United States. During the first 150 years after the country’s founding, 40 states allowed residents who were not citizens to vote.⁵ During the early days of the United States, voting rights were tied to white racial identity, gender, and property ownership, but not to citizenship status. Contrary to widespread belief, though only citizens can now vote in federal elections, federal law does not prohibit noncitizens from voting in local elections if state and local law allows it.⁶

Today, a growing number of cities are codifying the right to local voting for non-citizens in order to promote strong community ties and shared civic responsibility. For example, in San Francisco, those who are the legal parent or guardian of a child enrolled in San Francisco Unified School District are able to vote in local elections, whether or not they have citizenship.⁷ Such policies support shared investment in public institutions and increase local accountability. In Santa Ana, one in four residents do not have citizenship, and thus do not have a way for their voice to be recognized in local governing systems. This video tells the story of the ongoing Universal Suffrage campaign in Santa Ana, and the connection between voting, belonging, and an inclusive future for everyone.

Idalia Rios



“I feel hopeful because if we fight together, we are preparing a better future for everyone.”



5. Ron Hayduk, *Democracy for All: Restoring Immigrant Voting in the United States*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15-31.
6. Stephen Menendian, “Should Non-citizens be Allowed to Vote in Local Elections?”, Othering & Belonging Institute, July 30, 2021, <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/blog-should-non-citizens-be-allowed-vote-local-elections>.
7. “Laws permitting non-citizens to vote in the United States”, *Ballotpedia*, June 3, 2024, https://ballotpedia.org/Laws_permitting_noncitizens_to_vote_in_the_United_States#Details_about_noncitizen_voting_in_local_elections.



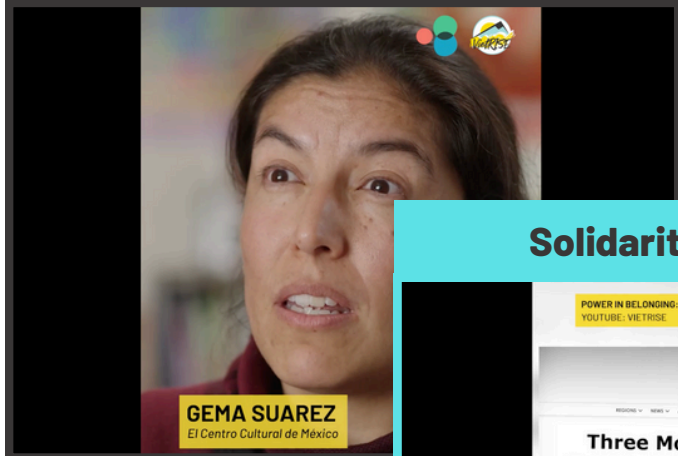
The Power in Belonging project was created in partnership with VietRISE and The Network for Transformative Change at the Othering & Belonging Institute. We thank Time of Day Media for producing the three-part video series.



Bridging for our Homes

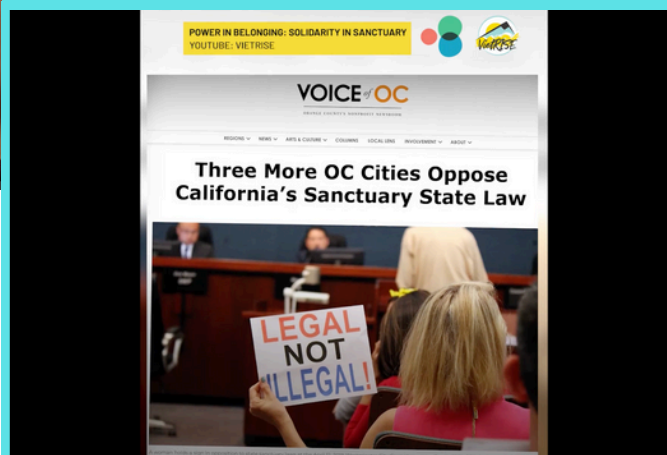


Universal Suffrage



GEMA SUAREZ
El Centro Cultural de México

Solidarity in Sanctuary



Discussion questions

1. The name of the video series is, "Power in Belonging." What do you imagine when you picture a community where everyone belongs?
2. What is bridging? What is one example of how Tenants United Santa Ana, Harbor Institute for Immigrant and Economic Justice, and/or VietRISE practice bridging? What types of challenges do you think might arise during the bridging process?
3. During the Solidarity in Sanctuary video, Vincent (VietRISE) describes how this campaign is pushing back on the language of "othering." What does he mean by this? What is an example of othering discussed in the videos?
4. Have you ever worked alongside others from different racial and/or cultural backgrounds than your own to accomplish a new goal? What did you learn from that experience?
5. What is one issue in your community that you would like to change or improve? How might multi-racial organizing and bridging be a part of helping to solve this issue?

Diving Deeper

VietRISE and OBI partner through the [Blueprint for Belonging \(B4B\) project](#). B4B is a collaborative that was founded in 2014 and has included more than 50 community organizations committed to eliminating racialized inequality, creating empathetic identities that bridge differences, and promoting an inclusive and responsive government. In Orange County, the project develops research-based interventions that promote bridging across divides and greater civic engagement to expand belonging and power building. Please see below for past work, related projects, and VietRISE resources.

OBI and VietRISE Past Projects:

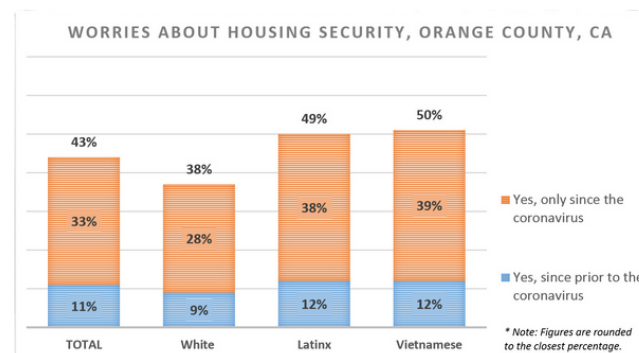
[Vietnamese Voices from Orange County, CA: Narratives of Community, Government, and Change](#)

This research brief reveals prevailing beliefs, policy preferences, and narratives among Vietnamese residents in Orange County on topics related to economic inequality, the role of government, generational change, and the idea of community.



[Poll: OC Residents want more housing support for homeless](#)

OBI's 2020 Blueprint for Belonging survey of more than 1,500 Orange County residents revealed that across lines of race and ethnicity, majorities of Orange County residents say they support building housing with supportive services for people experiencing homelessness. The survey covered a range of topics including inter-group attitudes, views on the proper role of government, economic policy issues, and experiences with the Covid-19 crisis.



Related Projects:

[Housing Insecurity and Policy Views in Orange County, CA](#)

Housing unaffordability is a statewide crisis across California, and Orange County is no exception. Since 2020, the Othering and Belonging Institute (OBI) has worked with community-based organizations in Orange County to carry out research on a range of issues related to inclusion, access, and belonging. This brief summarizes findings from our survey research with Orange County residents on their experiences of housing insecurity and housing policy views.



[Xenophobia, Resistance, and the Future of the Immigrant Rights Movement](#)

This 2024 Othering & Belonging Conference panel discussion features immigrant rights advocates from Mexican, Latin American, Vietnamese, Jamaican, and Chinese migrant communities who have been instrumental in organizing for the rights of immigrants and refugees in the United States. Through short presentations, panelists share lessons learned from the past 15 years of organizing in the immigrant rights movement.

[Single Family Zoning in California: A Statewide Analysis, May 2024](#)

This report is the final and culminating report of a six year investigation into the extent, correlates, and putative effects of single-family-only residential zoning in California.



VietRISE in the Media:

- Tracy La, [“Breaking: Little Saigon Protests Demand Local Officials ‘Bring Human Rights Home’”](#), VietRISE, July 18, 2019. “Human rights means sanctuary for all of us” - Niki Nguyen, VietRISE
- Hairo Cortes, [“Little Saigon Becomes Hub of Cross-Cultural Pro-Sanctuary Activism”](#), OC Weekly, October 20, 2019.
- Katelyn Monaco and Samson Zhang, [“Preventing ‘double punishment’: Inside the campaign to end California’s prison-to-deportation pipeline”](#), The Yappie, May 18, 2022.
- Lâm Hoài Thạch, [“VietRISE họp mặt, tiếp tục thúc đẩy công bằng xã hội”](#), Người Việt, January 29, 2024.
- Jannah Pante, [“Santa Ana, California to vote on expanding voter access to noncitizens in 2024 elections”](#), Liberation, February 29, 2024.
- Ascend Gives Back, [“One City, Many Voices: The Push for Universal Suffrage in Santa Ana, CA,”](#) Irvine Weekly, September 19, 2023.



Glossary

Belonging The concept of belonging as developed by the Othering and Belonging Institute and its partners includes several elements. To enjoy belonging, one must feel connected, safe, and comfortable; be included on a fair and equitable basis; and be recognized and respected for who they are. But importantly, full belonging also entails having a voice and the opportunity to use it to make demands upon society and political institutions. Belonging is more than having access; it is about the power to co-create the structures that shape a community and the life choices available.

Othering A set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities. In opposition to belonging, othering is a frame that captures the many forms of prejudice and persistent marginality such as race, gender, sexuality, religion, income, and disability. The term also explains and analyzes a set of common policies and practices that engender othering.

Bridging A project aimed at crossing identity-based lines. To bridge involves two or more groups coming together across acknowledged lines of difference in a way that both affirms their distinct identities and creates a new, more expansive identity. Bridging addresses tensions or “breaking” dynamics that sustain division in order to develop a new “we” that is not only more inclusive, but cohesive, durable, and consistent with bringing about belonging and greater social justice. The new “we” that results need not agree on everything, or even very much, but its members should have a shared empathy and lasting stake in one another. Bridging rejects all strict “us” versus “them” framings, but without erasing what is different and unique in each party.

Glossary terms adapted from [Redefining Who Belongs](#)