

BIO OF ANH "JOSEPH" CAO

In December of 2008, Anh "Joseph" Cao became the first Vietnamese-American to be elected to the U.S. Congress, representing the 2nd Congressional District of Louisiana. His dual commitment to building a strong America and to defending the rights of millions of Vietnamese left behind under the Communist regime exemplifies the bridging roles of Vietnamese Americans.

As the Communist troops advanced towards Saigon in April of 1975, Joseph, age eight, his brother, age four, and his sister, age fourteen, were placed by their mother onto a U.S-bound plane. She stayed behind to raise five children while her husband spent seven years in "re-education" camps where he was tortured repeatedly.

In the US, Joseph was separated from his siblings and was raised by an uncle.

After completing his B.S. in Physics from Baylor University in 1990, Joseph entered the Society of Jesus hoping to bring social justice to the poor. During his time with the Jesuits he was sent to work with Vietnamese refugees in the camps of Hong Kong in the summer of 1994. He was also sent to live and work with the poor in Mexico where he learned the importance of social and political activism. After completing his M.A. in Philosophy from Fordham University in 1995, he was sent by the Society of Jesus to teach Philosophy at Loyola University in New Orleans where he taught Moral Philosophy for one year. In the summer of 1996 Joseph left the Society of Jesus and returned to secular life. He left New Orleans and moved to Falls Church, Virginia, where he volunteered with BPSOS, working to protect the last boat people stranded in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong and to secure the resettlement of "re-education" camp survivors. In the fall of 1997, Joseph returned to New Orleans to attend law school and joined the Board of Directors of BPSOS. In New Orleans, he met and married Hieu Phuong Hoang, a doctor of pharmacy, with whom he had two daughters.

His election to the U.S. Congress in 2008 continues to inspire many young Vietnamese Americans to seek public office. Joseph continues to travel the country, encouraging Vietnamese refugees and immigrants to participate in the American mainstream politics.