

# Did coronavirus spread through a nail salon? Newsom said so, and now owners fear for their business

Christie Nguyen, who co-owns Studio 18 Nail Bar in Tustin, says she's worried about the industry after Gov. Gavin Newsom said the community spread of the coronavirus in California started in a nail salon. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

By ANH DOSTAFF WRITER

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A series of texts interrupted Tam Nguyen just before he sat down for dinner Thursday. The messages shared urgent news: Did he hear California Gov. Gavin Newsom make a **startling** new assertion about how the first person in the state contracted the coronavirus?

"This whole thing started in the state of California, the first community spread, in a nail salon," Newsom said in his daily media briefing on COVID-19 in Sacramento, after being asked why personal services, such as nail salons, should stay closed even as the state starts to slowly open businesses.

"I just want to remind everybody of that and that I'm very worried about that," the governor added.

Soon, the beauty school owner was connecting with Christie Nguyen, his friend and fellow nail salon operator. She, too, was **taken aback** by the governor's words.

Now, both Nguyens are deeply worried for the future of their industry, forcing them to speak up, they said.

On Friday, they joined the Pro Nails Assn. representing nail salon owners, nail techs, distributors, manufacturers, students and schools across the nation, teaming up with officials from the "Nailing It For America," an all-volunteer initiative, to respond to Newsom's remarks at a news conference in Orange County.

"If we don't take action now to protect our investment and livelihoods, people could misunderstand," said Christie Nguyen, who opened Studio 18 Nail Bar in Tustin with her parents in 2017.

“It’s just **baffling** to know why he would come out and say that,” she added. “It could be misleading to the public when we are allowed to open again since everyone’s afraid of COVID.”

In his Thursday remarks, the governor did not identify the nail salon in question or offer evidence to support his assertion.

Tam Nguyen, owner of Advance Beauty College in Garden Grove and Laguna Hills, said the “surprise remarks created a reaction that was more negative than needed.”

“People are asking: ‘Where’s the evidence?’ We realize he’s concerned, but salons are a place where people wear masks and gloves generally.”

Science has shown there are many ways that the virus can be contracted, he said, adding that “from a cultural lens, speaking out of context leads to an atmosphere where we can’t trust each other.”

California is home to 11,000 nail salons, with 80% owned by Vietnamese Americans, Tam Nguyen said.

At a Friday briefing, in reply to reporters’ questions about his earlier comments, Newsom that he’d meant no harm with his previous remarks, describing the nail salon industry as “noble” and as an “exit point out of poverty.”

“I have deep **reverence** for those entrepreneurs and people that put everything on the line. I talk about that often,” he said, adding that **grooming** businesses such as salons are **slated** to reopen in Phase 3 of California’s emergence from lockdown. He didn’t specify a timetable for that phase, but said it “may not even be a month away. We need to have protocols in place “

The governor also said on Friday that his remarks were “not a statement to be **extrapolated** as an **indictment**, quite the contrary, of an industry I deeply respect.”

“We’re trying to do everything we can to **accommodate** the needs of every industry, including the nail salon industry, to make sure we do it in a safe and responsible way,” Newsom said.

He also said “health and personal privacy obligations” along with “legal parameters” prevented him from identifying the business behind the first case.

Christie Nguyen said she’s not looking for an apology from Newsom. Instead, she said, “we invite the governor to come to Orange County and work with us to create an environment safe for everyone.”

“What he said is inconsistent with who he is and his record,” she continued. “His administration is filled with immigrants and refugees, and he has proven that he welcomes everyone.”

Nancy Rodriguez Holberg, an aesthetician and instructor who works with Tam Nguyen at Advance Beauty College, said the school is “doing everything we can in the past to be safe and in the future to be even safer.”

“Targeting nail salons is not about discrimination, like some of the posts we’ve seen on social media. Let’s not go there — let’s just focus on the work,” she added. “We’re going to return to a world where having our temperatures taken is common because our job is to deliver what the clients order.”

At Advance, Tam Nguyen said, workers have installed modern ventilation and UV light systems, bought multiple **autoclaves** to sterilize metal instruments and operate a single-use method of disposing many manicure and pedicure supplies right after servicing each client. “PPE [protective personal equipment] is a new term to many in society, but we’ve always known it and have plenty of it available for our techs.”

Tam Nguyen said that Vietnamese Americans in the industry have mobilized supporters to launch the “Nailing It for America” project, donating more than 120,000 medical-grade masks, 300,000 gloves and tens of thousands of other protective personal equipment to healthcare workers and front-line workers.

Their efforts **garnered** mass publicity at the end of April when they delivered products and meals **in tribute to** Americans for **embracing** refugees after the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, marking the 45th anniversary.

“Nail salons and their supporters are trying to show their compassion for the nation,” Tam Nguyen said. “We take a stance against discrimination and we celebrate everyone’s contributions.”

Windy Olaya, of Orange, a regular customer at Studio 18 Nail Bar, said people “should not feed into any hysteria around this whole issue since every public place is a place where there’s a chance to spread the disease.”

“If you walk into an establishment and workers aren’t wearing masks, it could cause fear, sure,” Olaya said. “But if you see them following guidelines, why wouldn’t you want to support them?”

She said she hasn’t talked to anyone “who can’t wait to get their hair or nails done.”

“Those are just **pampering** things we’re used to, and we need it,” Olaya said.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-05-09/did-community-spread-of-coronavirus-start-at-nail-salon>

Startle: lòng giật mình, làm hoảng hốt, erschrecken

Take aback: làm sửng sốt, làm dụt mình, verdutzen, überraschen

Baffle: gây bối rối, verwirren, verblüffen

Reverence: lòng kính trọng, Hochachtung, Respekt

put everything on the line: đánh cược mọi thứ họ có alles auf Spiel setzen

grooming: chải chuốt, chăm sóc grooming business, pflegend, Körperpflege

slate: dự kiến, dự định, vorschlagen

extrapolate: ngoại suy, ableiten

indictment: sự cáo buộc, Anklage

to accommodate: cung cấp, giúp đỡ, aushelfen, unterbringen, entgegenkommen

autoclave: nồi hấp, Dampfkochtopf

Garner: thu được, nhận được, sammeln, gewinnen

In tribute to: bày tỏ lòng cảm ơn, sự khen ngợi zum Gedenken an

Pamper: nâng niu, nuông chiều, verwöhnen, verhätscheln