

BUI DOI: VIETNAMESE AMERASIAN EXPERIENCES IN VIETNAM  
AND THE UNITED STATES

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

ELIZABETH OLMSTED B.S.

DENTON, TEXAS

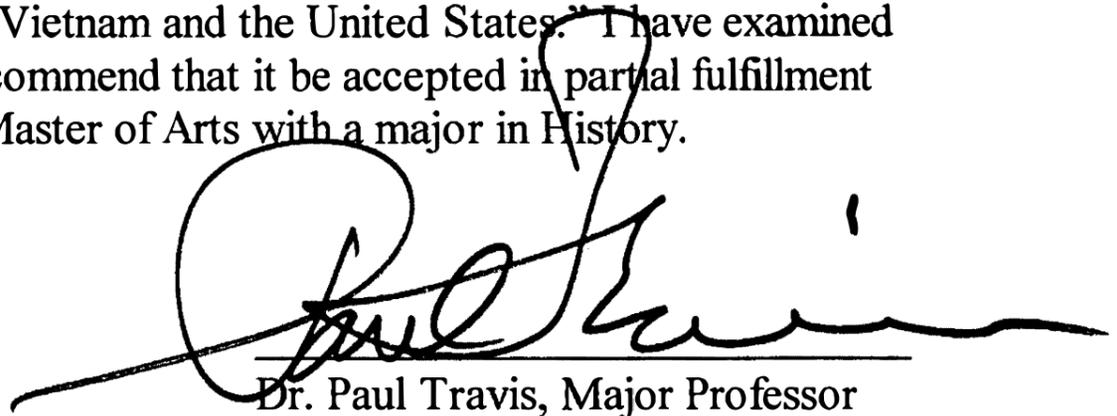
MAY 2004

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY  
DENTON, TEXAS

April 7, 2004  
Date

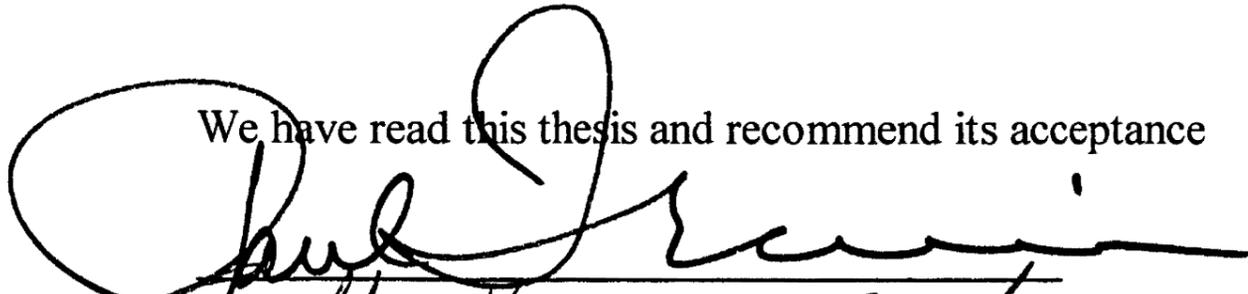
To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Elizabeth Olmsted entitled "Bui Doi: Vietnamese Amerasian Experiences in Vietnam and the United States." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in History.

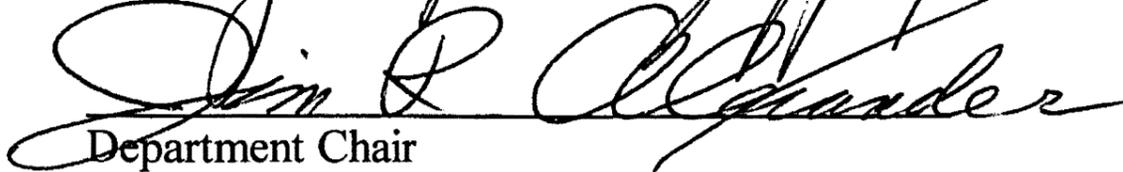


Dr. Paul Travis, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance



Timothy Hoge Jeffrey B. Rott



Department Chair

Accepted:



Dean of the Graduate School

Copyright © (Elizabeth Olmsted) , (2004)  
All rights reserved.

DEDICATED TO  
ARTURO, CHEN AND MEI LI CONTRERAS

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people, without whom the completion of this thesis would not have been possible. I would like to thank all those who participated in this study, specifically Lisa Dixon, Jenny Do and Betty Nguyen. Your insight and participation were of invaluable assistance. I would also like to thank Dr. Paul Travis and my graduate committee, Dr. Travis, Dr. Hoye, Dr. Robb, and Dr. Alexander, for assisting me in the research process. I would especially like to acknowledge Chen and Mei Li Contreras; you are the joy of my life. And above all I would like to thank Arturo Contreras, your wisdom and genius are my eternal inspiration and your support has given me the courage to live in and speak the truth. I thank you all most sincerely.

ABSTRACT

ELIZABETH OLMSTED

BUI DOI: VIETNAMESE AMERASIAN EXPERIENCES IN VIETNAM AND THE  
UNITED STATES

THESIS

MAY 2004

When examining the devastation of the Vietnam War, the experiences of the children of American soldiers and Vietnamese women: the Bui Doi, “children of the dust,” must be considered. Discriminated, ostracized and unwanted because of the origins of their births, Amerasians have suffered racial hatred to an unimaginable extent. In the United States and Vietnam, they have existed as a people without a country, children without a homeland and individuals without a culture.

This is an investigation into the experiences and realities of the Amerasians. By utilizing primary and secondary sources: interviews, government documents, books, articles, and periodicals, this investigation examines the nature of the United States’ involvement in Vietnam, the race relations and oppression in each society, as well as the experiences of Amerasians in both countries. This investigation yields an understanding of the discrimination, oppression and dislocation suffered by Amerasians in Vietnam and the United States.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. Copyright .....	iii
II. Dedication .....	iv
III. Acknowledgements .....	v
IV. Abstract .....	vi
VI. Chapter One <i>The Fighting Season</i> <i>Thirty Years of Conflict in Vietnam</i> .....	1
V. Chapter Two <i>Belonging</i> <i>Race and Racial Oppression in</i> <i>Vietnam and the United States</i> .....	37
VII. Chapter Three <i>Forsaken</i> <i>The Reality of Being</i> <i>Amerasian In Vietnam</i> .....	76
VIII. Chapter Four <i>In Search of Homeland</i> <i>The Reality of Being</i> <i>Amerasian in the United States</i> .....	115
IX. Epilogue <i>The Living Legacy of War</i> .....	157
X. Bibliography .....	167

## CHAPTER ONE

### *The Fighting Season* *Thirty Years of Conflict in Vietnam*

“Our land at war for twenty years. Vietnam, divided land. Vietnam, land of tears. Blood and bones of young and old . . . A country’s beauty torn apart. Tears and blood flowing everywhere. Brothers killing each other for alien seducers.”<sup>1</sup>

The war in Vietnam was the longest and perhaps most controversial American operation in history. “The war killed millions of people, the war brought poverty,” expresses Vietnamese immigrant Henry Mang. Lasting thirty years, from 1945 until 1975, the American war in Vietnam was also the first American involvement that resulted in defeat. As Henry Mang remembers, “the government in Vietnam . . . always says the United States is a poor weak country, that always goes to invade other countries.” More than fifty-six thousand Americans lost their lives during the American involvement, while Vietnam lost exponentially more of its population, a loss so cataclysmic that it is still recovering. As James P. Warburg articulates, “The tragedy of Vietnam illustrates what happens when a foreign power . . . suppresses [a] nationalist revolution.”<sup>2</sup>

The United States first became seriously attracted to Vietnam, the South Country as the Chinese named it, after the Second World War when the modern Vietnamese nationalist movement attempted to maintain its sovereignty in the face of French reoccupation. “When Ho [Chi Minh] . . . captured the nationalist movement after the Second World War,” historian Russell H. Fifield reiterates, “he ignited a flame that

engulfed two major outside powers . . . in a bloody and costly war . . . that threatened to flare into a conflagration of world wide dimensions.”<sup>3</sup>

France was the first Western power to colonize Vietnam. Invading Southeast Asia in 1840, France consolidated the nations of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia into the French colony of Indochina. As Ho Chi Minh characterized it, “French imperialism has transplanted the Annam [Vietnamese people] . . . the Anamese peasant is crucified on the bayonet of capitalist civilization and on the cross of prostituted Christianity.” The Vietnamese, however, did not suffer imperial oppression enthusiastically. “I hated the way the French colonialists treated the Vietnamese people.” Trung-Phap Dam, who grew up in French Indochina, explains, “they were high handed, arrogant, greedy.” Vietnam generally detested the French because of the unpaid toil and injustice foisted upon them by the French regime. “In France I like the French,” expressed Ho Chi Minh, “but Frenchmen here [Vietnam]? I hate them, we all hate them with a hatred that must be inconceivable to you for you have not known what it is to live as a slave under a foreign master.”<sup>4</sup>

Vietnam boasts a history of resistance to foreign oppression. Battling for centuries against Chinese imperial colonization, the Vietnamese did not accept French imperialism meekly. “We have fought for thousands of years,” the Vietnamese freedom fighters expressed, “and we will fight for another thousand.” However, the freedom fighters of ancient times suffered from regionalism and failed to achieve true cohesiveness; lasting victory was elusive during the many centuries of Chinese domination. It was, ironically, contact with French culture and nationalism that afforded

the Vietnamese freedom fighters their first sense of unity. The majority of the Vietnamese people who sojourned in France for schooling returned home as revolutionaries. “Though France naturally never wanted an indigenous nationalist movement to destroy her colonial sovereignty,” explains historian Virginia Thomas, “French institutions were so impregnated with the ideals of 1789 [the French revolution] that they unconsciously fostered in the Indochinese the principles of political liberty.”<sup>5</sup>

The formation of the Vietminh in 1939—Democratic, Socialist, Communist and other freedom groups—introduced the first unified independence movement in Vietnam. The term “Vietminh” is actually a contraction of *Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh*: “The League for the Independence of Vietnam.” The Vietminh’s objective was an independent democratic government in Vietnam. Although weak in the South where France had concentrated its control, by 1940 the Vietminh had raised an army of five thousand men. It was an organization that operated in the villages, known as the *Bo Doi*, or “soldier boys.” The Vietminh were fanatically loyal to Ho Chi Minh, the founder and leader of the modern Vietnamese independence movement.<sup>6</sup>

Although he died in 1969, six years before the conclusion of the revolution, Ho Chi Minh is widely considered the founding father of modern Vietnam. “In Vietnam, all schools, all grades, all ages are taught about Ho Chi Minh,” Henry Mang remembers, “they say Ho Chi Minh is the man everybody has to worship. No God exists, everybody must believe in Ho Chi Minh.” Born Nguyen Van Ba, in the province of Nghe An in northeastern Annam (Vietnam), a region known as the “home of the revolutionaries,” Ho Chi Minh became an insurrectionist at the age of twelve. Minh left Vietnam for Paris in

1912 aboard a merchant steam ship, upon which he began work as a teacher and a sailor.

While in France, Minh was introduced to Socialism. As he expressed:

The reason for my joining the French Socialist party was because . . . my comrades had shown me their sympathy toward the struggle of oppressed people . . . I loved and admired Lenin because he was a great patriot who liberated his compatriots . . . At first patriotism not communism led me to have confidence in Lenin . . . I gradually came upon the fact that Socialism and Communism can liberate the oppressed nations and the working people throughout the world from slavery.<sup>7</sup>

As Nguyen Ai Quoc, “Nguyen the Patriot,” Minh worked in China, the USSR and Thailand as a party organizer. He also formed the Indochinese Communist Party, an organization that was suppressed by the French in Vietnam. When Japan invaded Vietnam in World War Two, he returned and founded the Vietminh in the caves of the Pac Boc Mountains, in a mountain he named Karl Marx. Interestingly, nearby he named a river after Vladimir Ilich Lenin. “He was a regular man like everybody,” Henry Mang articulates, “but he had chances to become a leader.” Minh quickly became an international figure, representing his country’s struggle for independence. “Nguyen Ai Quoc [Ho Chi Minh] was like a shadow across French mastery in Indochina.” Historian Marvin E. Gettleman reveals, “his presence was reported everywhere, his name was spoken in whispers, his influence stirred . . . people.”<sup>8</sup>

The Japanese invasion during the Second World War afforded the Vietminh its first significant gains against the French. During this period the Vietminh operated underground, adopting the slogan, “neither the French nor the Japanese as masters.” In 1945, the Japanese succeeded in seizing hegemony of Vietnam from France, and the Vietminh, backed by the United States, arose in open revolution. Declaring itself

independent on September 2, 1945, the Republic of Vietnam issued its Declaration of Independence to the world, decreeing: “We solemnly proclaim to the entire world: Vietnam has the right to be free and independent.” According to Vietnamese author Vu Ngo Chieu, this was the most crucial period in Vietnamese history hitherto. It was the creation of a sovereign nation. “The truth is,” Chieu expresses, “we have wrested our independence from the Japanese and not from the French.” The Republic of Vietnam quickly restored order to the countryside. The first priority was complete unification of the North and South because the South produced the food surplus that sustained the unindustrialized North.<sup>9</sup>

The coming of the Allied powers at the conclusion of the Second World War signaled ultimate liberation to the Republic of Vietnam. The Americans had aided Ho Chi Minh in his guerilla war against the Japanese and the United States represented to the fledgling nation everything it had fought for: Equality, liberty and justice. The Republic of Vietnam even borrowed the phrase: “All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,” from the American Declaration of Independence for its own declaration in 1945. The Vietnamese believed in the American Declaration of Independence and assumed that the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness applied to all peoples, stating in the second sentence of its declaration: “In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.” As Ho Chi Minh avowed, “we are convinced . . . that the allies who recognized the principles of equality at the Conference of Tehran and San

Francisco cannot fail to recognize the Independence of Vietnam.” Ironically, Ho Chi Minh sent seven letters requesting support of the new republic to the United States but was worried that Vietnam was too insignificant for the United States to focus on it. The occupation of Vietnam by the Japanese, however, had implanted the strategic importance of Vietnam both as a depot of natural resources and as a military foothold in Southeast Asia in the minds of American policy makers. They were reluctant to allow the Republic of Vietnam hegemony over its fertile soil. “Before Pearl Harbor the U.S. manifested little . . . interest in South East Asia,” explain Army Vandebosch and Richard A. Butwell, “when the Japanese occupied . . . and put . . . pressure on the Dutch [who traded with Vietnam] to make . . . commercial concessions the U.S. became aroused.”<sup>10</sup>

However, Great Britain was the first Western power to reenter Vietnam. The three Potsdam Conferences at the close of the Second World War divided the world into regions, each overseen by an Allied power. The regions were to be pacified and evacuated of all Axis troops. England was, therefore, awarded control of Southeast Asia. The former colony of Indochina was divided in half at the sixteenth parallel; China was in charge of the North and England of the South. Both nations were instructed to restore law and order in the wake of the Japanese surrender, and both had contrasting ideas of how this was to be accomplished. The Chinese believed that the restoration of order meant recognizing the Republic of Vietnam as the de facto government. The remaining French and Japanese soldiers were imprisoned or exiled. The Vietnamese and Chinese flags flew next to one another in Hanoi. The English, on the other hand, whose troops were predominately Indian, took this edict to mean a reinstatement of the French

following the overthrow of the Vietminh government. The British refused to recognize the Republic of Vietnam, characterizing it as a “puppet of the Japanese.” Gettleman explains, “the British had come to ‘restore’ order and they began by promptly disrupting the order found prevailing throughout the zone. They declared Martial Law, they suppressed Annamite newspapers. They rearmed the bulk of three thousand French troops . . . they ordered the disarmament of the Vietminh militia and police.” By Christmas 1945, France had fifty thousand troops restationed in South Vietnam and England began to withdraw.<sup>11</sup>

The first sparks of what would become the Vietnam War ignited in November, 1946, when France began an assault against the Vietminh of the North in order to occupy the entire country. During this month, France bombed Haiphong, a city seaport on the delta of the Red River in North Vietnam. The French assaults killed six thousand civilians. The Vietminh retreated to the countryside and began once again to move underground, gaining popular support and utilizing guerilla tactics, attacking important French outposts. This strategy strained French resources and manpower considerably. In 1949 France spent one hundred sixty-seven million dollars on the reoccupation. As Ho Chi Minh theorized, “if ever the Tiger [Vietminh] pauses . . . the Elephant [France] will impale him with his mighty tusks. But the Tiger will not pause, and the Elephant will die of exhaustion and loss of blood.”<sup>12</sup>

France, finding itself unable to directly defeat the Vietminh, resorted to political measures in an attempt to drain the influence of the North Vietnamese by forming a puppet government under Emperor Bao Dai in South Vietnam. A playboy by nature, Bao

Dai failed to win the support of the people because it was widely known that France still maintained control of the treasury and commerce as well as foreign and military policy-making.

The situation became so dire in 1949, that France sued for American aid. Without American military support, Vietnam would fall into the hands of Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Vietminh who were painted as villains. All those who thus desired Vietnamese sovereignty were deemed Communist and malevolent. “When a Vietnamese works for peace he is considered a communist.” Expressed Father Cham in 1974. A South Vietnamese Catholic priest, Cham believed in an independent Vietnam, “the government gave Communism validity because those who fought for independence were considered Communist.”<sup>13</sup>

Also in 1949, Mao Tse Tung defeated Chang Kai Check in China, ushering in a strong Communist regime. Communist China subsequently offered aid to Ho Chi Minh and the Republic of Vietnam. China recognized the strategic importance of Vietnam to the United States and was thus inclined to aid Ho Chi Minh. China, having just found victory in a Communist revolution, also maintained an ideological interest in maintaining the People’s War. China helped Ho Chi Minh, historian Chen Jian explains, but it never owned him. Having first realized the tactical importance of Vietnam at the close of the Second World War, the United States was quick to act. Spouting the ideology of containment and the Domino Theory of Communist global domination, President Truman first called for U.S. support in Vietnam. Thomas West and James Mooney argue that this action was less about Communism and more about the benefit the United States could

garner from the tremendous natural resources of oil, tin and rubber found in Vietnam. Asserting that the United States was also interested in utilizing Camranh Bay, in South Vietnam, as a possible military base. “The more that I puzzle over the great wars of history,” expresses Mooney, “the more I . . . view the causes attributed to them—territory, markets, resources . . . I refer to them as the ‘arrogance of power’—as the psychological need that nations seem to have in order to prove that they are bigger, better or stronger than other nations.”<sup>14</sup>

The Domino Theory proved true in the sense that each succeeding president from Truman to Nixon fell like “Dominos” into the belief that Vietnam was the key to hegemony in Southeast Asia, thus entangling the United States deeper and deeper into the expanding quagmire of the Vietnam War. Historian George C. Herring argues that the United States feared that if the Communists succeeded in Vietnam, Europe could potentially feel threatened by the spread of Communist hegemony and thus strike an economic accord with the Soviet Union, an action that would have deleterious economic consequences for the United States. Daniel Ellsberg, a White House aid that leaked confidential government documents concerning American involvement in Vietnam to the public, stated, “U.S. Communist policy has the underpinnings of an imperialistic policy.” However, the United States supported Bao Dai in Vietnam publicly—at least initially—instead of France. The United States could not overtly support imperialism. Thus it recognized the free nations of Laos, Cambodia and Bao Dai’s Vietnam in 1950.<sup>15</sup>

American propaganda concerning the Domino Theory and Communist world domination was so effective that it caused a panic in the United States. As historians

Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton explain, “the United States had emerged from World War II as the strongest power on earth; yet . . . Americans perceived they were being threatened anew by the spread of communism in Eastern Europe and Asia.” Exemplified by the Communist trials spearheaded by Senator Joseph McCarthy—actively participated in by president Richard Nixon—and crystallizing in the execution of the supposed Communist spies the Rosenbergs. The communist hunts affected the civil liberties of everyone in the nation from government officials to movie actors to ordinary citizens. However, they were effective, to the extent that the American mainstream, adequately terrorized by Communist paranoia, united in support of American action against the malevolent “red devils.”<sup>16</sup>

At the time of the United States’ entrance into Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh controlled two-thirds of the countryside as well as hundreds of thousands of guerilla soldiers operating in both North and South Vietnam. Conscious of France’ inevitable defeat, the United States assisted the government of Bao Dai economically. Herring explains that a popular and secure government in the South was strategically essential for the United States to maintain its presence. As Herring reiterates, “the United States did not stumble into Vietnam. Each step was a deliberate choice by a careful president.” The Korean War intensified American interest in Vietnam. However until 1954 the United States was interested only in assisting the French through Bao Dai financially as well as advising them militarily. The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu on March 13, 1954, would change everything.<sup>17</sup>

Near the Laotian border in a valley surrounded by towering, thousand foot high bluffs, French High Commander General Henri Navarri erected a French garrison in order to tempt the Vietminh into open combat; the stage was set for the battle of Dien Bien Phu and France's ultimate defeat. On March 13, 1954, the Vietminh launched an all out assault on the French. General Giap of the army of the Republic of Vietnam surrounded the garrison. Despite multiple pleas for assistance by the French, the United States refused air support and the garrison was doomed. After a siege lasting fifty-five days the French finally capitulated; pushed below the sixteenth parallel, France granted South Vietnam its independence in June, 1954.

The French officially ceded South Vietnam to the Vietnamese, under the dictatorship of Bao Dai, via the Geneva Agreement of 1954. The Agreement stipulated a free and open election for the entire nation of Vietnam (the North and South) under one elected government. Such an election would never come to fruition. The United States, acting under the leadership of President Eisenhower, blocked the elections because of the knowledge that even though not all Vietnamese people maintained favorable opinions of Ho Chi Minh, "he [Ho Chi Minh] was an opportunist," intones Trung-Phap Dam, "a liar, a disgrace to the Vietnamese people," his popularity was overwhelming and more than likely he would be elected as the leader for the entire nation of Vietnam. "Ho Chi Minh dead could have beat anyone we put up in South Vietnam," Daniel Ellsberg explains. Needing to act quickly, the CIA maneuvered Bao Dai into offering his position to Ngo Dinh Diem.<sup>18</sup>

Born Ngo Dinh Kha, one of nine children, Diem had served as an official to the Imperial Court of Hue, under the Nguyen dynasty, which lasted from 1805 through 1945. He attended French Catholic School in Hue and was stridently anticommunist. Under the French colonial rule Diem had served as the Minister of the Interior, the highest position in the government at that time. He was exiled, however, after refusing to enact certain French legislation. He resettled in New Jersey; he traveled throughout the United States lecturing about the need for a noncommunist free Vietnam and in doing so came to the attention of the American government. The United States strongly supported Diem throughout the 1950s. And yet, that unflagging support for Diem proved regretful to the United States; as French Prime Minister Edgar Faure argued at the time, Diem was “not only incapable but mad.”<sup>19</sup>

Diem was a patriot in his own right but his personality and elitist mentality proved unsuitable for strong leadership. In Herring’s mind, Diem was “a man of principles, he inclined toward an all-or-nothing integrity which deprived him of the flexibility necessary to deal with the intractable problems and deep-seated conflicts he confronted.” He was essentially a dictator and a nepotist. He appointed three of his brothers to key positions in his six-person cabinet. Herring explains that Diem’s government has been termed the darkest hours of the revolution, “the elections were never held, the amnesty promised by Geneva was never granted and Communists and Non-Communists found themselves harassed and threatened by the Diem government.” The antagonism towards Diem was widespread, even anticommunist South Vietnamese people disliked Diem and ironically the formation of the Vietcong in South Vietnam, a group of guerilla freedom

fighters, can be attributed directly to discontent felt toward his oligarchy. “The bombing and strafing of villages suspected of harboring Vietcong,” Herring explains, “and the use of napalm and defoliants turned villages against the government.” In 1957, the Vietminh established intelligence networks in South Vietnam and found that many of the people were enthusiastic about their arrival, as a member of the Vietminh commented, “the peasants were like a mound of straw ready to be ignited.”<sup>20</sup>

Based on the premise that the North Vietnamese had violated the Geneva accords by leaving equipment and troops from Dien Bien Phu in South Vietnam, the United States involved itself in Vietnam on an even grander scale. John F. Kennedy proclaimed in 1956, “the fundamental tenets of this nation’s foreign policy . . . depend in considerable measure upon a strong and free [noncommunist] Vietnamese nation.” From 1955 through 1961 the United States poured one billion dollars into the economy of South Vietnam. By 1961, the Diem government was fifth on the United States’ list of aid recipients. Similarly, in the 1950s there were fifteen thousand Americans in South Vietnam. The United States was pumping eighty-five million dollars annually in equipment, uniforms, small arms, vehicles helicopters and tanks into the South Vietnamese army. Still, Herring argues, the South Vietnamese army was poorly equipped, poorly organized, or trained and suffered from exceedingly low morale. Author Le Hoang Trong opined that “South Vietnamese dependency on American aid created many problems because the implementation of American policies impeded Vietnamese self-sufficiency.” As the maxim of the Colonel in *Tea House of the August*

*Moon* states, “I’ll teach you people democracy even if I have to shoot you in the process.”<sup>21</sup>

The Vietnam War, like all revolutionary wars, separated Vietnam ideologically, between those who supported the nationalist movement of North Vietnam, and those who supported the American involvement. After 1954, thousands of Vietnamese moved from the South to the North and nine hundred thousand North Vietnamese migrated to the South, the result of which sent South Vietnam into chaos as the cultures of the two regions were diametrically contradictory. As Trung-Phap Dam remembers, “some of my relatives joined the Vietminh’s to fight the French and then the Americans. My older brother and I fought the VCs [Vietcong] alongside the American soldiers in South Vietnam.”<sup>22</sup>

The Vietminh did not officially support the Southern Vietcong until the 1960s. The rise in North Vietnamese support for the revolution in the South correlated directly with the intensification of violence. In 1958, the Vietcong assassinated seven hundred government officials, rising to two thousand five hundred in 1960, after which the North openly supported them. In 1960, the South Vietnamese revolutionaries and the North Vietnamese freedom fighters merged to form the National Liberation Front.<sup>23</sup>

The Vietcong proved an enemy seemingly impossible to defeat in South Vietnam because “it was difficult to distinguish between Vietcong and innocent civilians and ARVN [South Vietnamese] soldiers.” Herring explains, “civilians, even women and children were gunned down giving the Vietcong a powerful propaganda weapon.” Diem’s hamlet program of relocating peasants into defensive fortifications meant to

prevent Vietcong intrusion, even though many inhabitants of the hamlets were in fact Vietcong further intensified hatred towards Diem and gave the Vietcong a strong propaganda advantage due to the fact that the programs transformed the peasants into landless nomads. Diem directed other oppressive, and consequently objectively disastrous, policies at the Vietcong. A former political prisoner of South Vietnam remembers, “they said if we were innocent they would beat us until we were guilty.” Thus most of Vietnam and eventually the United States’ government opposed Diem.<sup>24</sup>

Discontent flowed toward Diem and undermined the stability of the fragile South Vietnamese government, and American hegemony seemed in jeopardy. Kennedy realized in 1963 that victory in Vietnam would never come to fruition and was prepared, some argue, after reelection to liquidate the American presence. The United States decided that the need to act against Diem was imperative. “The president . . . said that attacks on the Diem regime in public statements are less effective than actions which we plan to take,” read the Summary Record of the fifty-ninth meeting of the National Security Council. Action was taken. As Central Intelligence Agent Stromberg reported in a Memorandum to Secretaries Lodge, Taylor, McNamara, and Harkins, on March 8, 1964, concerning preparations for the Diem Coup: “Initially we covered the events leading up to the overthrow of the Diem government. He [General Minh—the man who took control of Vietnam for the United States] said he regretted terribly to . . . have to organize a coup as he had the greatest respect and admiration for the president.” Herring illustrates that Kennedy and his staff initially vacillated between openly supporting a coup, since it might fail, and simply not discouraging it. As Deputy Director of the CIA

Cline stated in a memorandum sent to the Director of the CIA in 1963: “In . . . October 1963 . . . just before the ‘Big Minh’ coup [assassination of Diem] . . . I argued against US support for coup plotting on the grounds that: if a coup succeeds it will result in a kind of dislocation and confusion, characteristic of post-coup South Korea and the Dominican Republic.”<sup>25</sup>

Yet the coup proceeded, and on November 1, 1963, South Vietnamese General Minh and his men gunned down South Vietnam’s leader Ngo Dinh Diem. The disposal of Diem was complete. Three weeks later, on November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was also assassinated. While Kennedy’s death was publicly investigated, the assassination of Diem failed to be. Daniel Ellsberg categorizes American action thus:

Eisenhower lied about the reasons for and the nature of our [American] involvement with Diem, in the fact that he was in power essentially because of American support and American money. And for no other reason Kennedy lied about the type of involvement we were doing there, our own combat involvement and about the recommendations being made to him about greater involvement. President Kennedy lied about the degree of our own participation in the overthrow of Diem.

Regardless of American direction for Diem’s assassination, the reaction was one of elation in South Vietnam. “In Saigon jubilant crowds smashed statues of Diem.” Herring describes, “[people] danced in the streets and covered ARVN soldiers with garlands and flowers.” However, just as the Deputy Directory of the CIA feared, Diem’s death left a power vacuum in South Vietnam which the Vietcong took advantage of, launching a full-scale attack in 1963.<sup>26</sup>

Diem’s successor in the chaos was General Nguyen Khan, who served from 1964 through 1965. As he contests, the United States intended to use him as a puppet as well.

“I had two possibilities,” he explains, “either I could submit to Washington’s politics, saying every morning ‘yes sir’ or I would have to resign . . . I chose the second solution, that of resignation.”<sup>27</sup>

In the United States, Lyndon Johnson succeeded Kennedy. It was President Johnson who in 1965 transformed the Vietnam War from covert economic and military assistance into an open-ended commitment utilizing military power. As National Security Memorandum number 273 sent on November 21, 1963 instructed: “Programs of military and economic assistance should be maintained at such levels that their magnitude and effectiveness in the eyes of the Vietnamese government do not fall below the levels . . . of the Diem government.” Anti-American sentiment in both Europe and Latin America impelled Johnson to surmise that a total victory in Vietnam was an absolute necessity. As National Security Memorandum number 263 sent to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff on November 2, 1963, concerning the United States Governmental action in and about South Vietnam after the Diem coup instructs: “It is of the highest importance that the US Government avoid either the appearance or reality of public recrimination [towards American involvement in Vietnam] . . . the government will . . . maintain and . . . defend the unity of the US Government both here and in the field.”<sup>28</sup>

The United States thus utilized the calamity of the Tonkin Gulf Incident in 1964 to mobilize Congressional and popular support for American action in Vietnam. In the words of Daniel Ellsberg, “Johnson of course lied and lied and lied about the provocations against the North Vietnamese prior to and after the Tonkin Gulf Incident . . .

about the nature of the build up of troops in Vietnam.” On August 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> President Johnson turned the events of the Tonkin Gulf—touted as a North Vietnamese attack on American troops—which in actuality did not happen, into the publicity necessary to gain his resolution for unrestricted military action in Vietnam. As he convinced the American populous:

Last night I announced to the American people that the North Vietnamese regime had conducted further deliberate attacks against U.S. naval vessels operating in international waters . . . I further announced a decision to ask the Congress for a resolution expressing the unity and determination of the United States in supporting freedom and in protecting peace in Southeast Asia.<sup>29</sup>

Johnson received the necessary support; it took Congress merely ten hours of deliberation, and American action in Vietnam increased exponentially. At the time of the resolution, Johnson’s approval rating increased from 42 to 72 percent. Johnson escalated the war in four stages: first he commenced air attacks on Vietnam; these were followed by his dispatching small numbers of combat troops in Vietnam; by June of 1965, there were 50,000 American troops in Vietnam; on July 28, 1965, Johnson announced an escalation to 125,000 combat troops. According to Fifield, from 1965 through the American withdrawal in 1972, there were 3, 403,100 American service personnel in Vietnam, 7,484 of which were women, one million of which saw combat, at least 56,000 of whom died, 303,704 of whom were wounded and 23,014 of whom are permanently disabled.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps the greatest escalation of American military involvement thus far in Vietnam was Operation Rolling Thunder, implemented in 1965. A massive bombing campaign, it concentrated on North Vietnam’s war making capabilities. However,

because the Northern army was still mostly underground American bombing extended throughout the countryside, including cities, villages and anywhere suspected of harboring the Northern revolutionaries. Henry Mang recalls, “I have a friend who lost his two legs by bombing.” According to Fifield, from 1965 through 1968 the United States lost 950 aircraft at an estimated cost of six billion dollars in bombing missions. Bombing sorties increased in North Vietnam from 25,000 in 1965 to 79,000 in 1966 and 108,000 in 1967. “People began to scream and thunder broke the sunny sky.” Remembers Le Ly Hayslip, “the ground shook as in an earth quake and giant snakes [bombs] with many heads coughed loudly . . . I knew they were snakes because the villagers shouted that the devils were coming back . . . the snakes spittle flew into the village and splattered people with blood.”<sup>31</sup>

The American government argued that the manner by which to achieve a swift victory was to break the will of the North Vietnamese to fight. As Herring surmises, “the solution to Vietnam is more bombs, more napalm . . . till the other side cracks and gives up.” By 1967, the United States had dropped more bombs on Vietnam than in all of the theaters in the Second World War. And yet, the North Vietnamese revolutionaries vowed, “no matter how many decades America fights it will never defeat Vietnam . . . as long as there is rice to eat we’ll keep fighting and if the rice runs out we’ll plow the fields and fight again.” Every year, Herring explains, the North Vietnamese army was able to recuperate from the attacks because each year at least 200,000 North Vietnamese became eligible to fight. Daniel Ellsberg surmises that “it is no surprise that in a very poor country you can find people who are willing to wear foreign [in this case U.S.] uniforms .

. . . what surprised us . . . is that the Vietnamese Communists can find enough people to live in the tunnels, fighting for nothing, wearing ragged shorts year after year under the American bombs.” In spite of the bombings the National Liberation Front [NLF] remained a viable force. As poet Lien Nam intones:

I am a fighter of the Liberation Army . . . sometimes without shirt or blanket tortured by fever; I walk into the fight without a bitter pill to ease my pain. Sometimes under the burning sun hatless and barefoot I walk . . . but facing the enemy, who destroys everything, even the green of the grass and of the trees, I aim my rifle, for I must kill him . . . I march forward with unshakable will and strong heart . . . I swear to remain . . . I swear to fight till my last breath to erase from the land of the South even the shadow of a foreign soldier.

Despite the constant bombings, the National Liberation Front moved supplies down the Ho Chi Minh trail into the South at will. Historian Wesley R. Fishel explains that the Northern cities were evacuated, which were being targeted. The civilians were scattered in small villages throughout the countryside. They also rebuilt their industries and storage facilities underground and were thus hidden from the bombers. Throughout the course of bombing campaigns the North Vietnamese army constructed over 30,000 miles of tunnels.<sup>32</sup>

Determined to achieve victory against the Vietnamese, the United States also employed Napalm and defoliants. However, the use of such tactics was closely guarded and carefully explained to the American public. “The Secretary of Defense does not believe it is urgent to announce US policy on toxins in the immediate future . . . the president should await the appropriate time and circumstances to announce . . . any policy,” reads Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Al Haig, Subject: Defense Positions on Toxins, February 12, 1970. Napalm was actually invented during the Second World War by a

Professor, Louis Feiser of Harvard University, and refined by Dow Chemical Company. It is an amalgamation of metallic soaps gelled with gas. In conjunction with the Napalm, which was meant to burn and harass the people in the jungles, the United States utilized three different kinds of personnel gasses that were also meant to irritate and harass people. The result of this biological warfare, and the defoliation of the forests, was that of an over infestation of rats; these rodents naturally populate defoliated areas, and carry disease especially the plague. J. B. Neilands cites that in 1965, Vietnam logged twenty-five percent of plague patients in the entire world and that by 1967, there were fifty-five hundred reported cases of plague in Vietnam.<sup>33</sup>

The United States covertly extended the air strikes to Cambodia in 1966, however, as all covert missions, these sorties were kept a secret from the American people. Daniel Ellsberg remembers that “in terms of our bombing of Cambodia and Laos, our ground operations in Laos, the reasons for our invasion of Cambodia . . . the American public was lied to month by month by each of these . . . administrations.” And yet while covertly and overtly bombing most of what had been the French colony of Indochina, the United States made some 2,000 attempts to negotiate peace between 1965 and 1967. The North Vietnamese, however, perceived the American presence as a violation of the Geneva accords and before they would even consider peace talks demanded that the United States completely evacuate the South. Such an arrangement was unacceptable to the leaders of the United States. Historian Marilyn B. Young explains that the American government believed, “peace on terms not dictated by the

United States must be avoided if the demonstration effect of future insurgencies is to work.”<sup>34</sup>

The United States was committed to victory to the extent that a draft was implemented in order to provide the combat troops necessary to achieve such an objective in Vietnam. In 1967 alone, there were 30,000 draft calls per month. Project One Hundred Thousand, spearheaded by Secretary of State McNamara, was instituted to recruit poor Anglo and urban minorities to serve as the men on the front lines. While many resisted, many others believed the government and eagerly participated in Project One Hundred Thousand, and the draft. As a former African American Vietnam veteran who resisted the draft remembers, “the agents said ‘Holcomb, this time we’re gonna make sure you take the oath’ . . . I was sworn into the Army in manacles . . . it was a really strange scene. Because there were a lot of very young Spanish guys who were very proud to be getting inducted into the Marine Corps while this was going on with me.”<sup>35</sup>

By this time, public support for the war began to deteriorate. In 1967, the President announced the instatement of a ten percent surtax in order to cover the cost of the war. The effects and the strain of the war were taking their toll on the American consciousness. And the United States populous was divided between those who supported military action and those who vehemently opposed it. William Marshall, a Vietnam veteran phrased it thus: “You let us all go off to war saying ‘yeah team fighting in Vietnam’ . . . 1965 through 1968, now 1968 comes along and ‘Boo team come on home and don’t say nothing about it because we don’t want to hear about it.’” On

October 21, 1967, 50,000 antiwar protestors demonstrated at the entrance of the Pentagon.<sup>36</sup>

The National Liberation Front's Tet Offensive further exacerbated this dissent. General William C. Westmoreland, the commander of the American forces in Vietnam, who was selected by *Time Magazine* as "man of the year" in 1965, was given a figurine of the eighteenth-century freedom fighter Nguyen Hue in January of 1968, by a Vietnamese acquaintance. Nguyen Hue is renowned for a surprise attack he carried out against the Chinese during Tet, Vietnamese New Year, in 1789, under the banner, "fight to let the Chinese know the South country is its own master." His surprise attack drove the Chinese from Vietnam. Ironically, the same year that Westmoreland received his gift, the National Liberation Front launched a massive coordinated surprise attack during Tet. Young cites that thirty-nine of the forty-four provincial capitals, five of the six major cities and at least seventy-one of the two hundred forty-five district towns in South Vietnam came under attack during Tet: January 30, 1968. Nguyen Thi Tuyet Mai, a freedom fighter in the South remembers the attack: "At the stroke of midnight fire crackers commenced to blast . . . from every house . . . I thought out loud 'what if the Vietcong attacks us? Nobody would hear the guns.'" The military initiative was meant to destroy the South Vietnamese government's political control as well as spark indigenous uprisings in the South and cause disaffection in the South Vietnamese Army. Throughout the war, both sides had traditionally ceased fighting during Tet because it coincided with the American New Year. And yet, just as General Washington had crossed the Potomac and surprised the English during the American Revolution, Ho Chi Minh, nearly two

hundred years later, crossed into South Vietnam and surprised the United States. As General Westmoreland commented, “I frankly did not think that they would assume the psychological disadvantage of hitting at Tet itself.”<sup>37</sup>

Approximately 1,100 Americans were killed during the Tet offensive, as well as an estimated 2,300 South Vietnamese soldiers and 12,500 civilians, cites historian Herbert Y. Schandler. The National Liberation Front was defeated in the Tet Offensive militarily, however it achieved a propaganda victory. “The scope, intensity and strength of the Vietcong attacks,” Schandler explains, “caused extreme surprise and shock throughout the United States.” Following the Tet Offensive President Johnson's approval rating plummeted to twenty-six percent. According to Schandler, the Tet offensive was purposefully planned to unfold during the early stages of the American Presidential election as well as taking advantage of dissent among the American people toward the war. “The Tet Offensive marked the watershed of American effort henceforth,” Henry Kissinger explains, “the prevalent strategy would no longer achieve its objectives within a period or with a force level politically acceptable to the American people.”<sup>38</sup>

By March 1968, both the United States and North Vietnam agreed to peace talks. Formal peace talks began in Paris and immediately came to a deadlock. While the talks were occurring, the United States began to escalate the war with massive search and destroy missions. As Al Haig, who served as Secretary of State, White House chief of staff, and NATO supreme commander, explained in a memorandum sent to Henry Kissinger on March 2, 1969, “the JCS plans, which have been forwarded are . . . more . . . signs of US intent to escalate military operations in Vietnam.” President Richard M.

Nixon attempted to intimidate the National Liberation Front to a greater extent than President Johnson. Herring explains that it was clear to the United States' government, under President Nixon, that victory would never come to pass. Nixon aspired to withdraw from Vietnam at least appearing victorious. As Kissinger noted, "however we got into the war . . . ending the war honorably is essential for the peace of the world."<sup>39</sup>

Nixon thus attempted to gradually minimize the American presence in Vietnam. In March of 1972, the National Liberation Front launched a massive, conventional invasion of the South. According to Herring, by that time there were only 95,000 American troops in Vietnam, 6,000 of whom were combat ready. Nixon attempted to sue for peace but his offer was rejected. Henry Kissinger, in a memorandum sent to President Nixon on October 27, 1970, stated: "If the North Vietnamese tried to force a military solution of South Vietnam we would respond with extremely forceful measures." In May 1972, Nixon announced the most massive escalation of the war since 1968. This offensive included the mining of Haiphong harbor, a naval blockade of North Vietnam and an even more massive bombing campaign. Author James Warburg categorizes the policies under Nixon as, "the voices of men who know of no other way to end it than by doubling and redoubling the stakes in a gamble for total victory through total annihilation."<sup>40</sup>

However, the truth began to finally take hold for the American government. "Wars of liberation, or guerilla wars, are always extraordinarily difficult for soldiers to fight, they are particularly demoralizing," explain Stanley Hoffmann, Samuel P. Huntington, Earnest R. May, Richard N. Neustadt, and Thomas C. Schelling. Many in

the United States acknowledged that victory in Vietnam was not to occur. In 1973, Nixon began to seriously pull American troops from Vietnam. From 1973 through 1975, Congress began restricting financial aid to South Vietnam. The result was that when North Vietnam began its take over of the South, the Northern troops were virtually unopposed. “Two boys are engaged in a deadly fight, each with a weapon in his hands,” Trong articulates, “a superior power takes the weapon from the hands of one of the fighters and says ‘in the name of peace let me take this weapon from you.’” He concludes, “it does not take a great deal of imagination to imagine what will happen to the de-armed boy.”<sup>41</sup>

The last Americans evacuated Saigon as the National Liberation Front advanced, in April of 1975. “[The] President has met with NSC and decided,” Henry Kissinger advised the American Ambassador in Vietnam shortly before the final evacuation, “while you should not say so, this will be that last repeat last day of . . . evacuations.” The North Vietnamese army reached Saigon on April 28, 1975, and the revolution was complete. Kien Nguyen, who experienced the Northern takeover of Saigon, remembers that:

The smell of chaos filled the air, confusion was written all over the faces of the people in the street. Groups of armed convicts were breaking into houses, screaming up and down the streets . . . the streets were blocked by hordes of desperate people, all with the same futile intension of getting to the airport . . . dead bodies lay in contorted positions, grinning horribly at the living. A few steps away . . . a pregnant woman lay dead . . . her stomach had been ripped open by hasty footsteps and next to her lay her dying fetus . . . moving weakly.<sup>42</sup>

There were many in the South who fled Vietnam following the Northern unification. Immediately following the takeover, 5,000,000 refugees left Saigon. “Even more than one year after the fall of Saigon, the flow of refugees continues. More than

four hundred persons are currently in ports in Thailand and other countries following their escape by sea,” wrote ambassador Brent Scowcroft in a memorandum sent to President Ford on July 10, 1976. For those who stayed behind, rebuilding the country after the revolution was another battle in itself. “Some will try to run things the way they had before the war because that’s their only idea of peace. The others will try to run things as if the war was still going on.” Ly Le Hayslip stated following unification, “of course that won’t work either. So gradually, we are discovering that a new approach is needed to make socialism work in Vietnam.”<sup>43</sup>

Vietnam lost millions of people throughout thirty years of war, from 1945 through 1975; South Vietnam lost an estimated 107,504 people, while the North lost at minimally one million. Thirty years of American aid, followed by the quick withdrawal of it created massive inflation in South Vietnam that was virtually impossible to overcome. Phap Dam, who departed Vietnam before the Communist unification, believes that “the Communist regime has turned Vietnam into one of the world’s poorest countries.”<sup>44</sup>

Additionally, the defoliated forests and croplands had to be reclaimed. Unexploded bombs and mines that “stubbed the ground like stones” were ubiquitous; they had to be detected and diffused. Nearly a tenth of all the explosives dropped on Vietnam did not detonate upon contact and were thus a continuing danger to those who were attempting to replant the fields.<sup>45</sup>

In the United States, the Vietnam War remains one of the most controversial American operations in history. “The Vietnam war,” Herring argues, “polarized the American people and poisoned the political atmosphere as no issue since a century

before.” Virtually dividing the American social conscience in two between those who, like Francis Fitzgerald, believe that the United States had “corrupted the Vietnamese and by extension the American soldiers who had to fight . . . involving the United States in a fruitless and immoral war,” to those who, like Phap Dam, believe that “Americans were friends to the Vietnamese. They truly helped the South Vietnamese thwart the Communist aggression.”<sup>46</sup>

And yet there is also the legacy in the aftermath of Vietnam of almost a collective amnesia of the entire operation throughout American society. It was almost as though the war had never happened. As William Marshall exclaimed, “don’t say nothing about it, because we don’t want to hear about it, it’s upsetting around the dinner table, well God damn it was upsetting for me for a whole . . . year . . . you brought me over there and now you want me to forget it so you can do it to someone else.”<sup>47</sup>

It cannot be denied that the Vietnam War was one of the longest and most traumatic wars in the history of the United States. It lasted thirty years, spanning five American presidencies and involving millions of American and Vietnamese lives. It mired the South Country in a conflict from which it still is recovering psychologically, geographically, politically, and economically. While the American veterans of the Vietnam War received little of the pomp and circumstance awarded to the Veterans of previous United States’ engagements, the Vietnamese were left with wounds that would not heal, and bodies, which were too numerous to count. As author J. W. Finn explains, the Vietnam War has become for those who lived through it and those who have come after it, “part of the mythic background of American society . . . similar to the way in

which the Depression of the 1930s influenced the lives of their [Vietnam War generation] parents.” The Vietnam War cannot be forgotten and remains forever implanted within the hearts and minds of those who experienced it, affecting the manner in which the individuals who participated in it are accepted and treated within both Vietnam and the United States, as well as affecting the consciousness of the world, which was born from it. In the words of poet Doan Thi Diem: “The moon darts her last pale rays on the frozen masks of the fighters. How many were you fighters, glorious dead? I pity you for suffering a thousand sores, a thousand dead . . . a thousand times you throw the arrow . . . how difficult to climb the path to glory.”<sup>48</sup>

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Francois Sully. *We The Vietnamese: Voices From Vietnam*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 245, an excellent account of Vietnamese history and culture offering both historical information as well as beautifully written poetry by Vietnamese authors concerning the war, from here forward cited as Sully, *We The Vietnamese*.

Richard R. Lau, Thad A. Brown, and David O. Sears. "Self-Interest and Civilians' Attitudes Toward the Vietnam War." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 42, Issue 4 (Winter, 1978), 464; Henry Mang, Interview by Email, February 5, 2004. Mr. Mang was born in 1972 in Central Vietnam. Although he does not personally remember the war, due to his age, he has family who experienced the war and was able to share some of their experiences. He was also able to offer great insight on Vietnam after the war as well as the government's treatment of the war and the United States. He lived in Vietnam until 1994 and has been back several times. Mr. Mang came to the United States with his entire family and now lives in Denton, Texas with his wife and children, from here forward this interview will be cited as Mang, Henry. Interview; additionally consult Robin Wagner Pacifici and Barry Schwartz. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." *The American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 97, Issue 2 (September, 1991), 376, which offers excellent insight into the effects of the war on American veterans and their families; additionally see Charles Hirschman, Samuel Preston, and Van Manh Loi. "Vietnamese Casualties During the American War: A New Estimate." *Population and Development Review*, Volume 21, Issue 4 (December, 1995), 809, an excellent article that deals with the effects of the war on Vietnam; see also James P. Warburg, *Western Intruders: America's Role in the Far East*. (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 196, a book that deals with America's imperialistic characteristics in the Vietnam War, from here cited as Warburg, *Western Intruders*.

<sup>3</sup> Russell H. Fifield. "The Thirty Years War in Indochina: A Conceptual Framework." *Asian Survey*, Volume 17, Issue 9 (September, 1977): 878, an excellent article for information concerning international involvement in Vietnam, from here on cited as Fifield, "The Thirty Years War."

<sup>4</sup> Marvin E Gettleman. *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*. (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1959), 33, 37, an amazing compilation of primary source material, such as the writings of Ho Chi Minh, from here on cited as Gettleman, *Vietnam*; Dam Trung-Phap. Interview by Email. February 11, 2004. Mr. Dam was born in 1941 in North Vietnam. He lived in many regions of Vietnam and fought with the United States against the North Vietnamese in 1968. He witnessed the Tet offensive and still has nightmares concerning the thousands of dead bodies he saw littering the streets of Saigon following the attacks. Mr. Dam left Vietnam and came to the United States after the conclusion of the war, his family has experienced great success in the United States, and he is currently the head of the Bilingual Education

---

Department at Texas Woman's University. Mr. Dam was able to offer excellent information concerning the war and its effects in both an academic and personal manner, from here forward cited as Dam, Trung Phap. Interview.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen J. Hammer. *The Struggle for Indochina 1940-1955*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), 62. From here cited as Hammer, *The Struggle*; also see Gettleman, *Vietnam*, 37; additionally see Virginia Thomas. *French Indo-China*. (New York: Octagon Books, Inc, 1968), 475.

<sup>6</sup> Gettleman, *Vietnam*, 39; also see George C. Herring. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), 50, an excellent book that investigates the Vietnam War from a political and militaristic perspective, from here forward cited as Herring, *America's Longest War*.

<sup>7</sup> Gettleman, *Vietnam*, 31-32, 49; Mang, Henry. Interview.

<sup>8</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 3; Mang, Henry. Interview; additionally see Gettleman, *Vietnam*, 49.

<sup>9</sup> Gettleman, *Vietnam*, 39, 41, 58; also see Vu Ngo Chieu. "The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution: The Empire of Viet-Nam. March-August 1945." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume 45, Issue 2 (February, 1986), 293, an excellent article that approaches the Vietnam war from the perspectives of North and South Vietnam; additionally consult Herring, *America's Longest War*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Clyde Edwin Pettit. *100 Years of Blunder in Indochina: The Experts, The Book That Proves There Are None*. (Secaucus: Lyle Stuart, INC, 1975), 20, an excellent source that looks at the foreign policy decisions of the Western powers in regards to Vietnam and how these policies proved to be the downfall of both French and American hegemony in Vietnam; also see O'Neill, Patricia. *Vietnam Declaration of Independence*. (February 21, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://web.cocc.edu/ea292po/disc5/00000001.htm>, in order to read Vietnam's declaration of Independence; also consult Gettleman, *Vietnam*, 42; additionally see Peter Davis III. *Hearts and Minds*. (Los Angeles: Home Vision Entertainment, 1974), an amazing documentary made at the conclusion of the Vietnam War that takes an honest look at the war, American reasons for perpetuating it, the effects it had on Vietnam and the United States as well as examining the American culture and treatment of the war and the Vietnamese people, from here further cited as Davis, *Hearts and Minds*; also see Army Vandebosch and Richard A. Butwell. *Southeast Asia Among the World Powers*. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1958), 291, an excellent book that examines the Domino Theory and why Vietnam and South East Asia were deemed important by the United States.

---

<sup>11</sup> Gettleman, *Vietnam*, 43, 44, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 6, 8, 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 10; also consult Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, the comments cited were spoken by Father Cham, a Vietnamese Catholic priest working for independence in South Vietnam.

<sup>14</sup> Chen Jian. "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War." *China Quarterly* Volume 0, Issue 142 (June, 1995), 370, an excellent article for examining the involvement of China, the other major foreign power other than the United States in the Vietnam War, from here on cited as Jian, "China's Involvement;" see also Herring, *America's Longest War*, 8; additionally see James W. Mooney and Thomas West. *Vietnam: A History and Anthology*. (St. James: Brandwine Press, 1994), 98, this is an excellent book that examines the history of Vietnam from its ancient origins through American involvement.

<sup>15</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 8, 11; also see Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, the comment cited came from Daniel Ellsberg, a White House aid who leaked U.S. Government documents concerning American action in Vietnam to the public in 1971, although indicted for leaking the information, the charges were dropped in 1973 due to evidence that showed that President Nixon had ordered Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office raided in order to obtain material that would discredit him.

<sup>16</sup> Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton. *The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Wintson, 1983), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 50.

<sup>18</sup> Jian, "China's Involvement," 356; Dam, Trung Phap. Interview; additionally consult Warburg, *Western Intruders*, 214; also see Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, opinion provided by Daniel Ellsberg; see also Herring, *America's Longest War*, 50.

<sup>19</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 50, 54.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 50, 54, 66.

<sup>21</sup> See *Ibid.*, 43, 55, 56; also see Le Hoang Trong. "Survival and Self Reliance: A Vietnamese Viewpoint." *Asian Survey*, Volume 15, Issue 4 (April 1975), 281 an excellent article that looks at the impact the United States had on Vietnam from the perspective of the Vietnamese, from here on cited as Trong, "Survival;" also see Wesley R. Fishel. *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict*. (Itasca: F.E. Peacock Publishers, INC, 1968), 645, from here forward cited as Fishel, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict*.

---

<sup>22</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 47; Dam, Trung Phap. Interview.

<sup>23</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 67.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 88; also consult Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, comment cited came from the testimony of a former political prisoner in South Vietnam.

<sup>25</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 95; see also Summary Record of the 59<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Security Council. (October 2, 1963). White House: Washington. Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/viet8.htm>, this document is a record of the 59<sup>th</sup> meeting of the NSC in which U.S. policy against Diem and about Vietnam was discussed; additionally consult NSD Papers 233-69. (March 8, 1964). *Memo From Stomberg to Lodge, Taylor, McNamara, Harkins*. Saigon. Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [www.state.gov/www/aboutstate/history/voli/70-107.html](http://www.state.gov/www/aboutstate/history/voli/70-107.html), this is a memorandum that discusses preparations for the coup against Diem; see also Johnson Library NS File Vietnam. (1963). File Volume XXX. CIA Secret Memo For the Deputy Director of Intelligence Cline to Director of CIA, Subject: Recommended Action for South Vietnam. Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [www.state.gov/www/about-state/history/vol\\_i/70-107.htm](http://www.state.gov/www/about-state/history/vol_i/70-107.htm), this memorandum concerns the opinion of Deputy Director Cline in regards to militaristic coup outcomes and his opinion of the consequences of the coup in South Vietnam; for additional reading on the topic consult Robert Dallek. *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1017-1963*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2003), 678, 682-684, an excellent biography about JFK, from here on cited as Dalleck, *Unfinished Life*.

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Karnow. *Vietnam: A History*. (New York: The Viking Press, 1983), 311; additionally consult; Davis *Hearts and Minds*, comment provided by Daniel Ellsberg; also see Herring, *America's Longest War*, 100, 163; additionally see Dalleck *Unfinished Life*, 678, 682-684.

<sup>27</sup> Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, comments provided by former South Vietnamese president General Nguyen Khan, who served from 1964 through 1965; for additional reading on the topic consult Robert Dallek. *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson And His Times, 1961-1973*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Chapter Seven, "Lyndon Johnson's War," 340-390, an excellent source for investigating the Johnson presidency, from here on cited as Dalleck, *Flawed Giant*.

<sup>28</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 158, 163; also consult NS Action Memo No. 273. (November 2, 1963). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/viet15.htm>, this is a memorandum concerning the President's policy decisions in regards to South Vietnam; see additionally National

---

Security Action Memo No. 263. *To Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Subject: South Vietnam.* (1963). Retrieved from the Internet. Website directory: <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/viet14.htm>, this memo discusses the President's policies toward Vietnam; also see Dalleck, *Flawed Giant*, 340-390.

<sup>29</sup> Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, comment provided by Daniel Ellsberg; also see The Avalon Project at Yale Law School. *President Johnson's Message to Congress.* (August 5, 1965). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/tonkin-g.htm>, this is an excellent source that provides the transcript for LBJ's speech about the Tonkin Gulf incident as well as factual information about the Vietnam War; also see Dalleck, *Flawed Giant*, 340-390.

<sup>30</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 123; also see Fifield, "The Thirty Years War," 890; for additional information consult Fifield, *The Thirty Years War*, 868; also consult Peter C. Rollins. "The Vietnam War: Perceptions Through Literature, Film, and Television." *American Quarterly*, Volume 36, Issue 3 (1984), 419, this is an excellent article for examining the perceptions and interpretations of the Vietnam War in the American culture.

<sup>31</sup> Mang, Henry. Interview; also see Herring, *America's Longest War*, 147; also see Fifield, "The Thirty Years War," 879; concurrently consult Le Ly Hayslip with Jay Wurts. *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman's Journey from War to Peace.* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 3, a beautiful memoir that brings the Vietnam War to life in a very personal and intimate fashion, from here on cited as Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*; also see Robert Carroll. *An American Requiem: God, My Father, and the War That Came Between Us.* (New York: Mariner Books, 1997), 29 an amazing memoir of a priest in opposition to the Vietnam war and his struggle with his feelings of disgust concerning his father's involvement in the planning and execution of Operation Rolling Thunder.

<sup>32</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 152, 154; also see Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, first comment provided by a North Vietnamese soldier, second comment by Daniel Ellsberg; for additional information consult Sully, *We The Vietnamese*, 244-245; also consult Fishel, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict*, 647.

<sup>33</sup> Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Al Haig, Subject: Defense Positions on Toxins. (February 12, 1970). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB58/RNCBW19.pdf>; also consult J.B. Neilands. "Vietnam: Progress of the Chemical War". *Asian Survey*, Volume 10, Issue 3 (March, 1970), 209, 211 for information concerning American use of chemical weapons during and before the Vietnam War, including the origins and reasoning behind the use of such weapons; for additional information concerning the United States' use of

---

chemical weapons see Jami Reno, Michael Isikoff, Evan Thomas, and Trent T. Gegax. "Kerry and Agent Orange." *Newsweek* (March 8, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> Arnold R Isaacs. *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 194; also consult Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, comment provided by Daniel Ellsberg; additionally see Marilyn B. Young. *The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990*. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 137, from here further cited as Young, *The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990*.

<sup>35</sup> Wallace Terry. *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*. (New York: Random House, 1984), 206-207, this is an amazing compilation of primary source interviews with African American veterans that focuses specifically on the African American experience in the Vietnam War; for additional reading see Maya MacPherson. *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation*. (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984).

<sup>36</sup> Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, comment provided by William Marshall, a Vietnam veteran.

<sup>37</sup> Time Archive. "1965: William C. Westmoreland." *Time Magazine* (January, 1966). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/poy2001/archive/1965.html>; also see Young, *The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990*, 216; additionally consult Herbert Y. Schandler. *The Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 74, 75, 78 for information concerning Lyndon Johnson's role in the Vietnam War, from here further cited as Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President*; also consult Nguyen Thi Tuyet Mai. *The Rubber Tree: Memoir of a Vietnamese Woman Who Was an Anti-French Guerrilla, a Publisher and a Peace Activist*. (Jefferson: Mcfarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1994), 213, an incredible memoir of the struggle for freedom under the hegemony of France and the United States.

<sup>38</sup> Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President*, 80, 330; also consult Herring, *America's Longest War*, 182.

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Al Haig, Subject: Memo from Secretary Laid Enclosing Preliminary Draft of Potential Military Actions in Vietnam. (March 2, 1969). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEB8//nnp02.pdf>, for correspondence pertaining to the escalation of the Vietnam War under President Nixon; also see Herring, *America's Longest War*, 219.

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum for the President From Henry Kissinger, Subject: My Conversation with President Ceausescu. Tuesday October 27, 1970. Retrieved from the

Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-o4.pdf>; for additional information concerning the bombing of Haipong Harbor see Herring, *America's Longest War*, 241-242; also see Warburg, *Western Intruders*. 218.

<sup>41</sup> Stanley Hoffmann, Samuel P. Huntington, Ernest R May, Richard N. Neustadt, and Thomas C. Schelling. "Vietnam Reappraised." *International Security*, Volume 6, Issue 1 (Summer, 1981), 10 for information concerning American involvement and departure from Vietnam; also see Trong, "Survival," 284-285.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum From Henry Kissinger to the Vietnamese Ambassador in the Saigon Embassy. April 1975. Retrieved from the Internet. Website directory: <http://www.ford.utexas.edu/library/exhibits/vietnam/7504291a.htm>; also see Kien Nguyen. *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood*. (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 2001), 25, an excellent memoir that delves deep into the emotions of post war Vietnam from the perspective of an Amerasian child, from here further cited as Nguyen, *The Unwanted*.

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum for the President from Brent Scowcroft, Subject: Escape from South Vietnam. (July 10, 1976). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.ford.utexas.edu/library/exhibits/vietnam/760710a.htm> for information concerning policies directed at Vietnamese refugees; also see Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, 267.

<sup>44</sup> Dam, Trung Phap. Interview.

<sup>45</sup> Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, 267.

<sup>46</sup> Herring, *America's Longest War*, 250; for arguments concerning the motivation of America's involvement in Vietnam see Frances Fitzgerald. *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), 424; Dam, Trung Phap. Interview.

<sup>47</sup> Davis, *Hearts and Minds*, comment provided by William Marshall.

<sup>48</sup> J.W. Fenn. *Levitating the Pentagon: Evolutions in the American Theatre of the Vietnam War Era*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 233-234; also consult Sully, *We The Vietnamese*, 242.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Belonging*

#### *Race and Racial Oppression in Vietnam and the United States*

“Race, homeland, nation, unification . . . patriotism, integration, compatriots, goodwill . . . rulers, repression, slaves, no subjects? Aggression, discrimination, exclusion, chosen ones, blood: mixed, pure, union . . . don’t think that I am any different, they call me this.”<sup>1</sup>

The Vietnam War produced many legacies such as social unrest, the loss of irreplaceable human life and tremendous poverty in Vietnam. There is another seldom mentioned legacy left by the Vietnam War: the children of the American Servicemen and Vietnamese women, called Amerasian or Bui Doi—Dust of Life—in Vietnam. Following the conclusion of the Vietnam War in 1975, these “Amerasian” children were ostracized from society, forced to endure lives of horrendous discrimination, oppression and neglect both in the country of their birth and the country of their fathers’ as well. The Amerasians produced by the Vietnam War were hated and feared in Vietnam simply because of the parameters of their birth; those who came to the United States were greeted with discrimination and rejection simply because of the constructs of their races. In order to fully recount and understand the plight of Amerasians in the two countries that created them, Vietnam and the United States, an understanding of the cultures of the two countries and the history of racial interaction, discrimination and oppression in both countries must be explored.

But first, what is race? Why does racism exist? As historian Ronald Takaki asks, “Why are Europeans ‘West’ and Asians ‘East’? Why did empire-minded Englishmen in the sixteenth century determine that Asia was ‘East’ of London? Who decided what names would be given to the different regions and peoples of the world?”<sup>2</sup>

In order to understand how racism affected the Amerasians, the concept of race and racism must first be grasped. Sociologist Howard Winant believes that the concept of race is an enigma that will forever remain undefined despite the study, which has been applied to it. In Arturo Contreras’ opinion “race is the most apparent physical characteristics that one possesses, such as skin tone, bone structure and so on.” Author Maria Root concurs, stating that “race has something to do with blood (today we might say genes) and something to do with skin color and something to do with the geographical origins of one’s ancestors.” She also contests that “at a personal level, race is very much in the eye of the beholder.”<sup>3</sup>

The concept of race has also been used as means through which to organize the modern world. Betty Nguyen believes that, “society wants to continue to categorize us, to put us into groups, to store us away in the memory banks.” Nazli Kibria, an Indian American professor, remembers how persistent her students, in a university class on race relations, were to assign her a racial category: “Aren’t Indians Caucasian?” one student remarked, “I remember reading somewhere that Indians from India are from the same racial stock as Europeans. Their features are white, except for their skin color they’re basically white.” A second student countered, stating, “but skin color is what matters. Asian Indians have dark skin. No one in America would ever look at Professor Kibria

and say she is white.” “The only thing I know about this is from watching Mississippi Masala,” a third student offered, “and from that it seemed to me that Indians don’t see themselves as black.” The final student put it thus: “As far as race, it’s clear that you’re not white, or black or Asian. So what does that leave us with? How do you feel about Latino?”<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, when racial differences are discussed it most often emerges within the context of a superior-inferior relationship. Karl Marx, the father of socialism, believed that it was the European powers that, in the development of capitalism, subjugated the people of the world and invented the concept of race and racial differences in order to rationalize imperialism. Arturo Contreras concurs, citing modern racism as originating with England, “the English being an Empire saw itself as superior, thus enabling it to conquer and govern over others.” As John Alymer, an English clergyman said in 1558, “God is English.” Author Stetson Kennedy agrees, “when the British finally won out over their French and Spanish compatriots for the privilege of exploiting North America,” he argues, “it was only natural that the settlers they dispatched to do the job were preconditioned to look with disdain upon the American Indian and colored peoples.” Ka’ran Bailey, on the other hand, believes that racist thinking originated with Anglo America, “they are the reason for why there is racism and discrimination in this country. This is the only place in the world like it. White people have a great fear of the unknown and they are very competitive and barbaric by nature (ancestry) which gave birth to their superior attitude.” Historian Rudolf Vecoli also sees race as an American invention, “Anglo America . . . refined race into categories of human beings who were to

be admitted or excluded . . . on the basis of skin color.” Author Barbara Fields attributes the concept of race to the American perpetuation of African slavery, “the concept of race arose to meet an ideological need . . . to reconcile freedom and slavery . . . a means of explaining slavery to people whose terrain was a republic founded on radical doctrines of liberty and natural rights.”<sup>5</sup>

And so, is this then a modern phenomenon? Before the eighteenth century, physical characteristics were rarely referred to as a means of differentiating people. The Roman Empire, for example did not differentiate people on the basis of physicality, and in fact supported emperors who ranged in ethnicity from Italian to Spanish and even African.

The term ethnocentrism, an academic idiom for racism, was not coined until 1906. Scholar William Graham Sumner in his book *Folkways* developed it, he described it as “a proclivity of every group or nation to nurture its own vanity, boast its own superiority, exalt its own divinities and look with contempt on outsiders.” If this definition is applied to race and racism then the roots of racial consciousness run far deeper than the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

Sociologists Michael Omi and Winant believe that “before World War Two, before the rise of Nazism, before the end of the great European Empires . . . and the rise of the modern civil rights movement, race was still largely seen . . . as an essence, a natural phenomenon whose meaning was fixed-constant as a southern star.” Scholars Francis Brown and Joseph Slabey Roucet contend that throughout history every group has boasted its own racial superiority based on the inferiority of their neighbors. This is

illustrated, for instance, in an ancient Native American legend, which explains the different races of the world as the mistake of God. When God was creating man, the legend tells, He left him in the oven too long and the man came out burned black and brittle. Thus, God attempted to bake a second man but this time He took him from the oven too early and the man was soft, white and far too frail. Finally, God baked a third man and this time He timed His preparation perfectly and created the honey brown faultless Native American, this man was the epitome of absolute perfection.<sup>7</sup>

The Han Empire of China illustrate ethnocentric thinking in descriptions of a band of “white men,” more than likely Russian, who had settled in Han territory. Brown and Roucet explain that the Han described these white men as having undoubtedly descended from monkeys because the white tribe was barbarous and acted too much like their primate ancestors to be of the same lineage as the Han. Ethnocentrism even manifests itself in the writings of Aristotle. He believed that racial differences were based on climatic variation writing, “those who live in a cold climate as in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill . . . the natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, but they are wanting in spirit . . . but the Hellenic race [Greece], which is situated between them is likewise intermediate in Character, being high-spirited and also intelligent.”<sup>8</sup>

Ethnocentrism has an extensive history, with ancient origins and constant propagation in the modern world. As Fields suggests, “nothing handed down from the past could keep race alive if we did not constantly reinvent and revitalize it to fit our own terrain.” It is something, therefore, that individuals in modern society must maintain and

perpetuate. This concept of racial differences, of “us and them” has also had devastating consequences in the lives of Vietnamese Amerasians who cannot be categorized as belonging to a specific racial group in either the United States or Vietnam. As Betty Nguyen, a Vietnamese Amerasian attests, “when you are a mixed race it is difficult because you are not one thing or another.”<sup>9</sup>

In order to fully appreciate the extent to which Amerasians have been discriminated against an understanding of racial thinking and oppression in Vietnam and the United States must first be ascertained. First, how does Vietnam treat racial differences? Is it an open, equal society that respects and encourages diversity? Or is it a racially oppressive country, which controls and discriminates against all minorities? Understanding the roots of Vietnamese culture, as well as the impact of colonialism and its treatment of minorities today, the answers to such questions can be discovered. Historian Bernard Fall believes that “as one surveys Viet Nam’s somber history over the past two thousand years, one cannot escape the feeling that it seems destined to a course like a Greek drama: dynastic rivalries, deep clan hatreds . . . as well as fortitude in adversity shining heroism and deep love of country.”<sup>10</sup>

The Vietnamese people descend mainly from Thai and Indonesian linguistic groups that settled in central Vietnam during the Neolithic era. Vietnam, like most of Asia, inherited the roots of its culture from China. In the case of Vietnam, this was the result of China’s imperialistic designs for the Southern Country. Vietnam enters recorded history in 208 B. C. when a Chinese general, Trieu Đà, rebelled against the Han Empire in China and after ceasing control of Vietnam, declared himself Emperor of

“Nam-Việt,” or Southern Realm. As discussed in Chapter One, Vietnam did not suffer imperialism passively; its history until the conquest of the French in the nineteenth century was that of constant struggle against Chinese imperialism. As memoirist Nguyễn Đính-Hoá remembers, “whenever my father recounted Vietnam’s history, he always stressed the accomplishments of those leaders who succeeded in repelling the Chinese invasions.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite Vietnam’s constant struggle for independence, the Chinese culture was firmly implanted in Vietnam. “The Mandarin [Chinese],” Fitzgerald explains, “were known as the fathers of the people and they stood in the same relationship to the Emperor (himself the son of Heaven) as the Vietnamese son stood to his father.” Among the Chinese cultural influences that Vietnam embraced was the cult of filial piety, ancestor worship. Nguyễn Đính-Hoá explains: “In Vietnam the people’s rituals and emotional life was [*sic*] structured around ancestor worship, regardless of what religion they followed, the past seemed always present.” “For the majority of people [in Vietnam] this practice makes them feel that they are still connected to their deceased ancestors,” Trung-Phap Dam articulates, “[the] spirits even guide and protect them.”<sup>12</sup>

Inherited from the Qing Dynasty of China after 1644, the cult of filial piety is centered on the father, as author Daniel Goodkind explains, “the idea promoted was the patrilineal family, in which a male head was entrusted with . . . control over the household.” Scholar Ellen Hammer explains that it is the family, not the individual that matters in Vietnamese social structure and “the family included all those who were directly descended through the male line from the same ancestors.” Historians C. D.

Cowan and O. W. Walters suggest, “kinship was the framework of the ancestral cult, which was the mainstay of Vietnamese religion.” As they explain, “a man was supposed to be in touch with all the descendents of his paternal ancestor to the fifth generation.” They continue, “kinship depends on birth and while blood may be thicker than water it cannot be the basis of a highly flexible community in which new followers can enter at will.”<sup>13</sup>

China’s battle for hegemony over Vietnam was halted when Vietnam was invaded and colonized by France in the 1840s. Although French colonial rule lasted for only a century its effects were devastating. “The negative impacts of colonial rule were largely political and cultural.” According to historian John Cady, “they included the discrediting of the indigenous symbols of governmental administration . . . such changes placed foreigners in complete control of all colonized areas and left the mass of the indigenous population socially disrupted.”<sup>14</sup>

Colonial rule and over thirty years of war against Western influence deepened Vietnamese xenophobia. Fitzgerald explains that those who fought against colonial oppression “saw the foreign armies as a threat not only to their national sovereignty, and to their beliefs, but to their entire way of life.” Colonial oppression also introduced racially based—French versus Vietnamese—segregation in urbanized areas. An especially negative impact of French colonial rule was that Vietnamese society developed a negative prejudice against Africans. This was the result of the fact that a great many of the occupying French troops came from North Africa. These soldiers, Steven DeBonis insists, were notorious for being cruel, as well as rapists and pillagers. The memories of

the black soldiers remained deeply implanted in the Vietnamese consciousness even after France was expelled.<sup>15</sup>

Now that an understanding of the central belief system of filial piety and the impact of colonialism had on Vietnam has been attained, an understanding of the concept of race and racial oppression in Vietnam can be undertaken. North and South Vietnam unified in 1975, the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam states that Vietnam is “the unified State of all nationalities living on the territory of Vietnam. The State carries out a policy of equality, solidarity and mutual assistance among all nationalities, and forbids all acts of national discrimination and division.” Does the government of Vietnam hold these words to be true? The answer: The ideals of the Constitution and the reality of ethnic minority treatment are too dichotomous to reconcile. As human rights advocate Nina Shea testified, “Vietnam’s constitution guarantees both freedom of speech and freedom of religion, but Vietnamese law regulates what one can say, what information one can have . . . advocates of freedom of speech and freedom of religion are arrested.”<sup>16</sup>

Although the Vietnamese government denies any abuse of human rights, Vietnam has one of the worst human rights records in regard to its treatment of ethnic minorities. Demographer Jacqueline Desbaratas explains, “Vietnam is a closed society.” It is a one-party nation in which the Vietnamese Communist Party is constitutionally mandated to occupy all senior governmental positions. The control of the government is so absolute that, as demographer Gavin Jones describes, Vietnamese citizens are legally required to

report all “births, deaths, marriages, divorces and permanent movements to the Commune Statistical Officer.”<sup>17</sup>

Currently the Vietnamese government recognizes fifty-four ethno-linguistic minorities, which are distinguished by language, architectural styles, the color of clothing and ornamentation, religion and social organization systems. Unfortunately, the Communist government does not uphold the guaranteed equality to all of its minority groups that is stated in its constitution. “There are racists and bigots everywhere,” Trung-Phap Dam explains, “Vietnam is no exception.” Such oppressive practices are evidenced in the government’s treatment of the Montagnards, the largest ethno-linguistic minority group in Vietnam.<sup>18</sup>

Before French occupation, the Montagnards and other minority groups were virtually left alone in the highlands, provided that they swore allegiance to the Vietnamese Emperor. During the thirty years of war against France and the United States, North and South Vietnam dealt with the minority tribes differently. The North instigated a policy of acceptance in which the minorities would reside in two autonomous zones and would be left essentially independent as long as they did not take sides with the South. According to the Library of Congress 1987 report concerning minorities in Vietnam, Hanoi hoped for a gradual integration of the ethnic minorities into mainstream society. According to the same report, the South, under Ngo Dinh Diem, “opted for direct, centralized control of the tribal minorities and incurred their enduring wrath by seizing ancestral tribal lands for the resettlement of displaced Catholic refugees from the North.” After the overthrow of Diem, the Hamlet programs of forced resettlement of the

South further dislocated the ethnic Vietnamese. Once the Socialist Republic of Vietnam took complete control, it also did not leave the highland minorities alone. According to the *Peoples of the World Foundation*:

In 1975, many indigenous peoples from the Central Highlands were stripped of basic citizenship rights and imprisoned and/or sent to "re-education" (forced labor) camps . . . Much of this persecution by the Vietnamese authorities was effectively retribution because of the alliance between the various ethnic groups and the US forces fighting against the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] during the American war. Afraid of continued alliances with the US after re-unification, Hanoi implemented a policy of outsider settlement (some have called this displacement) in the Central Highlands.<sup>19</sup>

True to fact, after reunification the Vietnamese government embarked upon a policy of population redistribution in the entire country from the urban centers of Hanoi and Saigon into the underdeveloped countryside. The idea was that the resettled population would produce commodity. It was touted as a program meant to strengthen economic growth and strengthen the government's control of the country. As scholars Anh Dang, Sidney Godstien, and James McNally attest, "in Asia . . . populations have been regarded by the government . . . as a resource to be used to achieve certain goals." Since 1975, more than one million ethnic Vietnamese have been resettled in central Vietnam. Dang, Godstien and McNally cite that by 1980, fifty-two percent of the central highland population consisted of ethnically diverse Vietnamese. Today, Vietnam is one of the most densely populated countries in Southeast Asia, however eighty percent of the population live in rural settings.<sup>20</sup>

The massive population shifts caused great dislocation and confusion due to the fact that it brought into contact groups with different cultures, beliefs and behavioral

patterns. Cady surmises, “the post war problem was that the people newly freed from colonial tutelage were understandably concerned to revitalize valued aspects of their traditional cultures.” This forced migration especially angered the aforementioned Montagnards because, as Journalist Nelson Rand states, they viewed the Vietnamese as “invaders of their homeland and a threat to their traditional way of life.” The living conditions of the ethnically diverse Vietnamese also lagged behind the rest of Vietnam. “I see [in Vietnam] people living in grass huts with dirt floors and in monsoon season those floors flood and they are stuck inside their homes and they can’t get out.” Betty Nguyen describes, “I see people fishing in the rice fields because they are stuck and can’t get out and when the fish are gone they eat rats.”<sup>21</sup>

After unification, the Communist government also implemented policies of cultural assimilation for all ethnically diverse minorities. In 1976, all Chinese schools in Vietnam were closed and converted to Vietnamese schools. The use of the Chinese language in instruction was outlawed and, according to analyst E. S. Ungar, Chinese students were barred from the universities. By the 1980s, ethnically diverse Vietnamese peoples remained drastically under represented in local as well as national politics.<sup>22</sup>

Today, the treatment of ethnically diverse minorities is still prejudicial. According to the Bureau of Democracy *Country Reports of Human Rights Practices*, Vietnam still maintains oppressive practices towards ethnically diverse Vietnamese peoples, stating that “the Government continued to repress basic political and some religious freedoms . . . the Government continued to deny citizens the right to change their government,” the report continues, “police sometimes beat suspects during arrest

and arbitrarily arrested and detained citizens . . . The judiciary is not independent, and the Government denied some citizens the right to fair and expeditious trials.” Such abuses have also been reported by the Human Rights Watch Organization who cites that as of March 2003, “hundreds of Montagnards have gone into hiding in Vietnam . . . On March 26 [2003], Vietnamese security police and soldiers shot at a group of Montagnards who had gone into hiding in the forest in Gia Lai province.” The organization continues, “since the beginning of 2003, more than one hundred Montagnards who have tried to flee to Cambodia have been forcibly returned to Vietnam, where some have been arrested and beaten.”<sup>23</sup>

What about the United States? In 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and proclaimed that he had a dream in which, “my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Is this the reality in the United States? Is the United States, whose Declaration of Independence boldly proclaims, “WE hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness,” a nation in which racism and discrimination are nonexistent, in which all peoples are equal and accepted? Or is the United States, a nation with a protracted history of racial oppression and exclusion? A nation which has historically deplored ethnic differences and sought socially, culturally, and legally, to exclude most all the peoples of the world from that pursuit of life, liberty and happiness? The answers to these questions, and a general assessment of the United States’ history in terms of

ethnic acceptance and oppression can be found by examining the immigration policies, history of slavery, and Jim Crow legislation, treatment of interracial unions, as well as contemporary race relations in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

Vecoli states that, “the immigration and naturalization policies pursued by a country are a key to understanding its self-conception as a nation.” The United States, despite the Native Americans, which were systematically exterminated and removed from the common populous, is a country of immigrants. The Statue of Liberty, which stands as a beacon of American idealism has written upon its base: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.” Such a bold statement should give some indication that the United States has historically been a nation which has opened its doors to all peoples and stood like the Statue of Liberty as a beacon of freedom in a world ripe with oppression. However, the truth is far different. “The all-inclusive flag of American nationality,” opinions sociologist Lewis R. Gordon, “turned out on closer inspection to be a clubhouse of a particular ethnic group—the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.” Ka’ran Bailey, an activist in the NAACP, believes that in the United States, “immigration is selective and unequal . . . if you are from the south, say Mexico, of the United States, you have to sneak in [to] the country!” She continues, “however, if you are from Europe, you can fly right in and get the opportunity to become a citizen! We never hear boat stories of Europeans, it is always that of someone from Cuba or Haiti.”<sup>25</sup>

At the time of the American Revolution, one homogenous group did not populate the thirteen colonies. Although the English colonists dominated statistically, Vecoli cites that nineteen percent of the population was comprised of African slaves, twelve percent was made up of Scottish and Scots-Irish immigrants, ten percent of the population were German with the remaining ethnic groups coming from France, Ireland and Wales. “Although the British made up a clear majority,” Vecoli intones, “given the marked differences among English, Scots, Scots-Irish and Welsh it is a fiction to attribute a common nationality . . . in short America was already a complex ethnic mosaic divided into segregated, quarrelsome groups by culture, language, religion and race.”<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, once the American Colonies had wrested their freedom from England and became a sovereign nation, they began denying such freedom to those “tired and huddled masses longing to be free.” The first immigration law was passed in 1790; it granted naturalization, or the process of becoming a citizen, only to Anglo, or English, immigrants. As ethnographer Bonnie Urciuoli explains, “the isomorphism between English-American and non-English-un-American has had a long gestation.” This is illustrated in the fact that many of “America’s Founding Fathers” did not look too favorably on immigration. According to Vecoli, Thomas Jefferson was opposed to any new immigration into the young country because he believed that any immigrant would be coming from a totalitarian state and would thus poison American democracy with totalitarian ideology.<sup>27</sup>

Vecoli also illustrates that George Washington believed that if immigrants were to immigrate to the United States, they must shed their, “language, habits and principles and

assimilate to our customs, measures and laws.” John Quincy Adams was like-minded, stating that all immigrants must, “cast off their European skin, never to resume it. They must look forward to their posterity, rather than backward to their ancestors; they must be sure that whatever their own feelings may be, those of their children will cling to the prejudices of this country.”<sup>28</sup>

Historian George Fredrickson also attests that such sentiment has pervaded Anglo American treatment of all immigration. Immigrants either assimilated or were excluded. “Those capable of being ‘Americanized’ or ‘civilized’ were to be subjected to the process of cultural adaptation and transformation,” he argues, “those deemed essentially and permanently different and inferior were either denied the right to immigrate or . . . were denied citizenship rights and relegated to a lower caste.” Scholar Paul L. Spickard explains that in order to be accepted in American society, immigrants must, “eschew their ethnicity and adopt the culture, values and viewpoints of the dominant Anglo-American groups.”<sup>29</sup>

Betty Nguyen, who immigrated to the United States in 1975, remembers “a lot of Vietnamese Americans teach their children that you must become American, you must sound American, you must take in the new culture and make it a part of your new life because this is your new home.” She continues, “the goal was not to speak Vietnamese, the goal was to speak English, to assimilate, to become American.” Arturo Contreras, who immigrated to the United States in 1990, believes that this emphasis on assimilation is endemic in American society as a whole, “most native-born Americans do not hold

their original culture . . . most immigrants after two generations assimilate to the macro culture of the U.S., thus losing the language and traditions of their original culture.”<sup>30</sup>

Spearheaded by a party known as the Know-Nothings prior to the Civil War, whose slogan was, “Americans must rule America!” the first anti-immigration law was passed in 1882. It forbade all criminals, prostitutes, lunatics, paupers and “idiots” from legal entrance. The initial wave of anti-immigration sentiment was levied against the Polish and Irish Catholics. Vecoli argues that because of their religion, they were deemed a threat. “Our [the United States’] progress into degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid.” President Abraham Lincoln wrote in 1856, “as a nation, we began by declaring, ‘all men are created equal.’ We now practically read it, ‘all men are created equal except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics.’ When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty-to Russia for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, without the base alloy of hypocrisy.” And yet, the greatest and most extensive anti-immigration laws hitherto passed in the United States, were not directed west at Europe but east at Asia.<sup>31</sup>

Famed abolitionist Fredrick Douglas wrote in 1868, “men like bees want elbow room, when the hive is over crowded, the bees will swarm.” Apparently in that same year the hive of the United States became so full that American “elbow-room” was endangered and immigration from the East was disallowed. As President Grant nailed the golden spike in commemoration of the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the Chinese laborers, who had contributed more than any other group to its construction, were being systematically barred from immigration and naturalization in the

country they had helped to connect. Commencing with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which was extended in 1892 and again in 1904 indefinitely, as well as the Greary Bill of 1892, the Chinese were effectively barred from immigrating and becoming new citizens in the land of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.<sup>32</sup>

Professor Augustus Layers in 1876 saw the United States policy against Asian immigration as, “an act of flagrant injustice, which would challenge the condemnation of the whole civilized world. What a sport would monarchical countries make of our boasted freedom, human equality and independence!” The main argument behind these laws was that the Chinese, a term that came to indicate any and all Asian peoples, were a threat to the “American” way of life. Journalist Edward L. Cortage summarized the mainstream American consciousness at the time: “Comparisons are often made as between the Chinese and other foreigners without taking into consideration that Chinese can never assimilate with our people.” He continues, “China can send her millions of men to this country who may become a Trojan horse in time of war.” It was perpetuated by the Know-Nothings and like-minded activists, that the Chinese were a menace that would devour the country. This despite the fact that “eighty percent of the [Chinese] immigrants had to be kidnapped or decoyed,” Kennedy clarifies, “transported to distant shores [the United States] where contracts for their labor were sold as Negro slaves had been sold earlier.”<sup>33</sup>

For the Asian Americans left in the United States, the realities of life were not exactly freedom, equality or justice. Concentrated mainly in urban centers (by 1850 Chinatown had been established in San Francisco) Asian immigrants were subject to

discrimination and tremendous oppression. Mark Twain wrote, for the *New York Tribune* in 1868:

In San Francisco a large part of the . . . local news consists of gorgeous compliments to the able and efficient officer . . . for arresting Ah Foo, or Ching Wang, or Song Hi for stealing a chicken, but when some white brute breaks an unoffending Chinaman's head with a brick, the paper does not compliment any officer for arresting the assaulter, for the simple reason that the officer does not make the arrest, the shedding of Chinese blood only makes him laugh.<sup>34</sup>

In 1906, Congress passed legislation, which afforded citizenship only to those who spoke and read English. In 1907, through the Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan, negotiated by Theodore Roosevelt, the United States agreed not to restrict Japanese immigration as long as Japan agreed not to issue passports for the United States to Japanese laborers. In 1917, Congress extended the exclusion to all Asian immigrants. Asia became known as the "barred zone." The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, restricted European immigration to two percent of the number of the nationality residing in the United States in 1890. The Immigration Act of the same year extended the exclusion of Asian immigrants to include all persons from the subcontinent of India. Through the courts, the prohibition was extended to include Burma, Afghanistan, the Parsees and Polynesian islands. According to Kennedy, the Syrians, Armenians and Persians were deemed white by the courts and were thus eligible for immigration.<sup>35</sup>

During the Second World War, 1942 specifically, as the United States engaged the Japanese in war, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed and for the first time in nearly one hundred years, Asian immigrants were allowed in the country. The War Brides Act of 1945 allowed Asian wives and children of American servicemen to

immigrate to the United States with their husbands. It would not be until the Immigration Law of 1965, however, that all restrictions were removed from immigration. Today the largest groups of immigrants come from the Philippians, Mexico and China.<sup>36</sup>

And yet, at the same time that the prohibition on Asian immigration ceased, it became a crime in the United States to be Japanese. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the FBI began arresting anyone who was of Japanese descent. President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which evacuated one hundred twenty thousand Japanese Americans, sixty percent of which were American citizens by birth, and moved them to concentration camps at the Santa Anita Race Track in California, as well as near San Francisco, California, and in south central Arizona. The Japanese evacuees were allowed to take two suitcases with them. *The Amsterdam News* reported in 1944 that “the land was worth \$24 an acre when they [Japanese] arrived. They are raising now \$250 worth of produce on each acre.”<sup>37</sup>

In 1942 the Attorney General justified Japanese internment stating, “such a distribution of the Japanese population appears to manifest something more than a coincidence . . . the Japanese population of California is, as a whole, ideally situated . . . to carry into execution a tremendous program of sabotage on a massive scale.” However, as historian Edwin Hoyt attests, the internment of an entire race of people based solely on the construct of their ethnicity was undoubtedly racial. General Dewitt testified to this before the House of Representatives Naval Affairs Subcommittee during Japanese internment, “a Jap’s a Jap. They are a dangerous element whether loyal or not.” The reality of the treatment of the Japanese in World War Two is described by The Japanese

Citizens League: “The German Jews experienced the horrors of the Nazi death camps. Japanese Americans experienced the agonies of being incarcerated for an indeterminate period,” the league continues, “both were prisoners of their own country. Both were there without criminal charges, and were completely innocent of any wrong doing. Both were there for only one reason, ancestry.”<sup>38</sup>

When attempting to understand the racial landscape in the United States, the inception and perpetuation of African slavery cannot be ignored. In the words of author Nobuhiro Watsuki, “death no longer terrifies man . . . so he creates slavery, a savagery which surpasses the horror of dieing.” Arturo Contreras surmises, “slavery is one of the most devastating and dehumanizing things anybody can do to another human being. Slavery is robbing a person of their humanity. What are the consequences of slavery? Discrimination, racism, egocentrism, oppression.” Ka’ran Bailey believes that, “slavery was not slavery in the beginning. It turned into the evil and brutal act on human kind when whites in the New World played a part in the transatlantic slave trade. And the curse was unleashed from there in this country [the United States].” American slavery was distinct from any form of slavery, which had heretofore existed, for as historian Melvin Drimmer believes, American capitalism deprived the African slaves of any moral status within society. “Americans,” he argues, “had to develop a scientific theory of African inferiority in order to protect their status and rationalize their ideals of the Declaration of Independence.” Karl Marx theorizes along the same ideology, categorizing Africans in the United States as a “nation within the nation, subject to imperialistic exploitation by the white majority.”<sup>39</sup>

For representational purposes, the United States' Constitution designated slaves as only three fifths of a human being. Otherwise, slaves were seen as chattel, or moveable property. The institution of slavery, although now deemed as commercially disadvantageous to the South, was in the 1860s so fully ensconced in the culture and construct of the United States of America that it resulted in the American Civil War. America's most deadly war it cost the lives of more than six hundred thousand Americans, as Watsuki phrases, "slavery can only be fought with more bloodshed." In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which coupled with the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, converted the slaves from chattel to free people. "We's diggin' potatoes," a freed slave in Texas remembered, "when de Yankees come up with two big wagons and make us come out de fields and free us, dere wasn't no cel'bration."<sup>40</sup>

Yet the reality of that freedom was far from ideal. The promises of liberty and equality were ultimately, "the boon that seemed ever barely to elude their grasp," famed African American scholar W. E. B. Du Bois wrote, "like a tantalizing will-o'-the-wisp maddening and misleading the headless host. The holocaust of war, the terrors of the Ku Klux Klan, the lies of the carpet baggers, the disorganization of industry and the contradictory advice of friends and foes, left the bewildered serf [African slave] with no watchword beyond the old cry for freedom." The mechanism by which equality was denied to African Americans, and all other non-white minorities was Jim Crow. The term "Jim Crow" actually originated from a minstrel song, however in American society the term *Jim Crow* came to represent all laws and policies directed at maintaining the

social stratification of “white superiority” and “non-white inferiority.” As Vecoli argues, Jim Crow essentially created a racial caste system in the United States. Author Oscar Handlin attributes Jim Crow to the invention of the “minority” concept in America. “Minority,” he opinions, “was not given a quantitative meaning, it had no reference to a consciousness of greater or lesser size. Rather it reflected an awareness on the part of some groups in the US that they were underprivileged in access to the opportunity of American life.”<sup>41</sup>

School segregation can best illustrate the reality of Jim Crow, for as historian Harry Ashmore asserts, “in the years after the civil war the freedmen had placed education first among their demands and it was never fully met.” Jim Crow was given federal approval and in effect became national policy by the Supreme Court in the decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, in which the infamous term *separate but equal*, was implemented to justify racial segregation. However, the roots of Jim Crow and *separate but equal* are planted sixteen years before the Civil War, and in the free state of Massachusetts, in the decision of *Roberts v. City of Boston*, 1849. This case set the standard for legal segregation as well as the precedent of separate but equal which was utilized forty-nine years later to cement Jim Crow in the *Plessy* decision. In *Roberts*, Massachusetts ruled that school segregation was legal. Their argument was based on the premise that God had made African Americans and all nonwhite peoples inferior, arguing that, “no legislation, no social customs can efface this distinction . . . here is a race, not only distinct in respect to color, hair and general physiognomy, but possessing physical, mental and moral peculiarities.” Yet, “separate could never mean equal,” historian

Douglas Ficker argues, “when this segregation was established and kept by the white majority.” Analysts Reynaldo Contreras and Leonard Valverde add that the practice of school segregation “resulted in the exclusion of non-white students from a fundamentally adequate education.”<sup>42</sup>

Despite the fact that Jim Crow and school segregation were detrimental to the United States economically, socially and morally, the practice continued for well over a century after *Roberts*, stretching over the entire country and including every non-white minority. Segregation was so widespread and ingrained in the United States that Malcolm X held in 1965: “America is a society where there is no brotherhood. This society is controlled primarily by the racists and segregationists.” He continues, “America is worse than South Africa because not only is America racist but she also is deceitful, and hypocritical . . . America preaches integration but practices segregation.” It was viewed, by the federal government, that school segregation, like slavery, was an issue that fell under the jurisdiction of the state not the federal government. But, in 1878 Congress passed legislation requiring all children who were one sixteenth or more African American to attend a segregated school. Kennedy argues that American race laws were more strict than those of Nazi Germany. “In the view of the Nazis,” he explains, “persons having less than one fourth Jewish blood could qualify as Aryan [German], whereas many of the persons having one eighth or one sixteenth or any ascertainable Negro blood are Negro in the eyes of the law and subject to all the restrictions governing the conduct of Negroes.”<sup>43</sup>

In 1906 the San Francisco school board ordered all “oriental” students to attend separate schools in Chinatown. Language was utilized to justify the segregation of Hispanic students. This, despite the fact that *Mendez v. Westminster School District*, a federal ruling in 1946, interpreted the segregation of Mexican children unconstitutional. It is important to note that the segregation of Asian and Hispanic children was based mainly on their last names and not necessarily their language skills. In 1920, President Wilson outlawed all bilingual education, which would not resurface again until 1963. It became a criminal offense to speak Spanish in school in Texas. Until 1959, Native American children were segregated in Arizona, New Mexico, Maryland and Wyoming in what were known as “Indian Schools.”<sup>44</sup>

Segregation proved not to be equal. Kennedy cites that only ten percent of African American children completed ten years of school in the 1950s. African American school property was worth one-fourth that of white school property. African American teachers earned less than half the salary of their white counterparts. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Florida, Oklahoma, Kansas, Tennessee and other states made it a criminal offense to allow non-white students in the same building as white students. Georgia school districts would not pay a teacher who taught an integrated classroom. In Texas, segregation was such that white and black student names could not appear on the same rosters. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, most private and public colleges prohibited African American enrollment. As Kennedy wrote in 1959, “some colleges may bar you solely on the basis of your name as indicating that you belong to some religious or national minority.”<sup>45</sup>

In 1954, in the Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, school segregation was deemed unconstitutional, and Jim Crow began to crumble. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote the majority opinion, stating: “Does the segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though physical facilities and other ‘tangible’ factors may be equal, deprive the children of equal education opportunities? We believe that it does.” The ruling failed to receive support from the Executive; Ashmore contests that President Eisenhower may even have attempted to persuade the Justices against the ruling they made. “I think it makes no difference whether or not I endorse it,” the president intoned at the time of ruling.<sup>46</sup>

In historian Donald Howie’s opinion the *Brown* decision was simply a perpetuation of white oppression. “[It] magnifies the fully incredible plight of peoples of non-European descent.” Howie argues that “Brown inseminates our souls, minds, hearts, consciousness, unconscious with the preposterous extent to which the legal process has been instrumental in solidifying the oppression of non-Europeans.” “Don’t let yourself be lulled into a false sense of security by the . . . court decisions against race segregation as ushering in the millennium in race relations.” Kennedy wrote in 1959, “the American republic has often committed itself to the ideal of equality—and almost as often backslid into the theory and practice of inequality.” And that is almost exactly how school integration was treated. The South openly condemned it, forcing the use of federal troops to enforce school integration. Many white parents threatened to pull their children from any integrated school. Concurrently, after *Brown*, Hispanic students were converted to the racial category of “White Hispanic,” thus enabling many school districts to send the

African American, Asian, and all other non-Anglo students to the former Mexican schools, thereby meeting the stipulation of “integration” without actually integrating the white (non-Hispanic) students. Angela Roberson surmises that this inequality persists today, “I think the United States also has an unwritten rule of ‘it does not matter what you know, but who you know.’ I do not believe that education is emphasized equally across the board. At times, I believe the United States is a ‘dog eat dog’ world and some individuals are just left in the dust.”<sup>47</sup>

As virulent as the backlash of racial integration became, so too was the taboo against miscegenation in the United States. During most of the Vietnam War, until 1967, the American fathers of the Amerasian children would have been prosecuted, fined and even imprisoned in twenty-nine states of the United States for their conception *if it had happened in America*. Miscegenation was seen in much of American society as a criminal offense. “If you believe that any two people have an inalienable right to fall in love, marry and have children regardless of race,” Kennedy wrote in 1959, “it is only fair to warn you that the constitutionality of laws forbidding interracial marriage has been upheld by the US Supreme Court.” Until the last laws were repealed in 1967, it was illegal in twenty-nine states for black and white people to fall in love; in fourteen states it was illegal for a white person to marry a “Mongolian.” It was also illegal for a white to marry a Native American in nine states. In two states it was criminal for a white person to love a “mestizo,” and illegal for whites to marry any Asian person. In Mississippi, it was even illegal in 1959 to espouse interracial coupling. One could be imprisoned for six months or fined five hundred dollars for “printing, publishing or circulating matter,”

Kennedy explains, “[that is] in favor of social equality, or intermarriage between whites and Negroes.” In twenty-seven states a marriage between a white American and anyone of foreign birth was not recognized. An interracial couple in Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, or Virginia, could be prosecuted, their children taken by the state and the couple exiled from that state for life.<sup>48</sup>

President Johnson’s Great Society and the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s and 1970s eradicated most institutional and legal Jim Crowism. Integration was spurred not only in school but also in all public and private businesses. The implementation of Affirmative Action programs and the reinstatement of bilingual education supposedly meant that society now was equal and integrated. However, as author Charles Willie articulates, “despite the decline of both legal and physical segregation, blacks are still in a grossly unequal position.” Arturo Contreras believes that “like in any other society in the world, there is the elite and then there is the poor. I do not think that there is equality in the U.S. when it comes to race I can honestly say that it is not equal.” He continues, “I have seen many people treated badly because they look different or looked down upon because they speak a different language than English.” As African American studies scholar Richard Lowy explains, “racism does not vanish when whites are able to convince themselves that they are no longer villains, consciously promoting negative attitudes about minorities.” Ka’ran Bailey says that there is evidence of racism everywhere in the United States of America. She remembers, “the black man who was dragged from a truck by some white men in Waco or Jasper, Texas. That happened in this millennium! What about the black family who moved to the Highland Park area of

Dallas [Texas] this year? Someone burned a cross on their lawn, their house was egged, they received threats that if they did not move, etc. Yes, a few months ago!” Angela Roberson believes that the perpetuation of racism today is due to the fact that, “the belief that ‘all men are created equal’ has not been grasped by everyone. There are still individuals who believe their race is the supreme race and they teach this to their children, causing interracial relations to continue to suffer . . . not to mention the resentment felt by those who have been mistreated. All of this tension between the races effects interracial relations.”<sup>49</sup>

“A quick glance at the local eatery on campus is more suggestive of segregation than integration,” argues Asian American studies scholar Glenn Omatsu, “blacks sit with blacks, whites with whites, Asians with Asians, and each group clustered at separate tables.” Frank Wu, of Howard University, asserts that to be Japanese American means to be a label, “I could turn around and find myself transformed into Genghis Khan . . . Fu Manchu, Hopsing, Mr. Zulu . . . Bruce Lee . . . intoning ‘Ah So,’ bending at the waist and shuffling backwards out of the room, with opium smoking, incense burning and ancestor worship . . . accompanied by an obedient wife, helpless with her bound feet.”<sup>50</sup>

Henry Mang, who immigrated to the United States from Vietnam in 1994, changed his name from his birth name, Mang Tien Dung to Henry. He did so in order to “make it easy for American people to call my name. Secondly, some people made fun of my name.”<sup>51</sup>

Angela Roberson, an African American, knows that she is “treated differently in department stores or restaurants in a negative fashion because of my race. I have also

been approached for certain jobs because of my race.” Ka’ran Bailey who is half African American and French Creole, has also been treated differently due to her race, “such as at a department store when I was the first in line and the sales clerk knowingly took the white woman behind me. Being referred to as a pronoun ‘you people.’” She also explains that because she is racially mixed, “I have experienced more reverse racism and discrimination than anything. Some blacks have called me ‘white’ and other names signifying whiteness.”<sup>52</sup>

Arturo Contreras immigrated to the United States from Guatemala in 1990. He remembers: “Once, I called a hospital to get a balance on a bill and the operator, after hearing my accent and name said this: Can you repeat your name in English? I don’t speak Mexican. I got really offended; I asked her if I could talk to her manager and she hung up the phone.” He concludes, “the fact that she did that and felt like she could get away with it is proof enough that there is a discriminatory attitude [in the United States] towards people of obvious different cultures.”<sup>53</sup>

Vietnam and the United States both contend that they are nations of liberty, equality and justice. The reality, however, is much different from the proclamations stated in each nations’ constitution and declaration of independence. Both countries maintain a history of racial oppression and exclusion. Neither has embraced the diversity of humanity, but have rather repressed it and buried it under legislation, policy and social custom. Both are guilty of harboring racial hatred, denying human justice and excluding those deemed different from the benefits of society. Neither the United States nor

Vietnam can reconcile its ideals and professed values of liberty, justice and equality, with the realities of policies of extermination and racial oppression that pervade their histories.

The people of Vietnam and the United States united to create the Amerasians but neither society could boast a history that would accept them. The two parent countries of the Amerasians are therefore places in which the Amerasians would and could not belong for the simple fact that they represent everything that both countries have historically attempted to repress, diversity. As lyricist John Rzenik laments, “I am a question to the world . . . I want to feel I belong . . . they don’t know me . . . I want to tell you who I am. They can’t break me as long as I know who I am they can’t tell me what to be ‘cause I’m not what they see.”<sup>54</sup>

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Isao Yukisa. *Go*. (Tokyo: Toei Company, LTD, 2002), an amazing film that deals with race, miscegenation, and acceptance, opening comment provided by Yosuke Kobezuka.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald Takaki. *Strangers From a Distant Shore: A History of Asian Life in America*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 487, for information concerning the assimilation process of Asian immigrants as well as Asian Americans.

<sup>3</sup> Tricia Rose, Andrew Ross, Robin D. G. Kelley, Joe Wood, Howard Winant, Jacquie Jones, Michael Eric Dyson, Phillip Brian Harper, Steven Gregory, Grant Farred, Gina Dent, David Roediger, Amiri Baraka, Stanley Aronowitz, and Lewis R. Gordon, and Kevin Gaines. "Race and Racism: A Symposium." *Social Text*, No. 42 (Spring 1995), 7, an excellent discussion of race and race relations in contemporary America, from here further cited as Rose, "Race and Racism;" Arturo Contreras. Interview, Denton, Texas. January 23, 2004. Mr. Contreras is an immigrant to the United States from Guatemala. He was born in Antigua, Guatemala and moved to the United States thirteen years ago. Since the age of sixteen he has been living permanently in the United States. He graduated from Texas Woman's University, and is currently working on his Masters degree and working as a bilingual teacher in Denton, Texas. Mr. Contreras was able to offer excellent insight into the acceptance of immigrants in the United States as well as modern racism and discrimination, from here on cited as Contreras, Arturo. Interview; also consult Maria P.P. Root. *Racially Mixed People in America*. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992), 7, 12 for information concerning the manner in which racially mixed individuals are treated in the United States, from here on cited as Root, *Racially Mixed People*.

<sup>4</sup> Betty Nguyen. Interview, Fort Worth, Texas. January 26, 2004. Ms. Nguyen is an Amerasian woman. She left Vietnam in April 1975 shortly before the Communist unification and immigrated to the United States with her Vietnamese mother and American father. Ms. Nguyen graduated from the University of Texas and is currently an anchorperson for CBS 11 News in Dallas, Texas. She is the first Asian American individual to anchor in the Dallas Fort Worth, Texas area. Ms. Nguyen was able to offer unique insight as an Amerasian woman who grew up in the United States, from here cited as Nguyen, Betty. Interview; also see, Jean Yu-Wen, Shen Wu, and Min Song. *Asian American Studies: A Reader*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 11, 248 an excellent source book consisting of essays written by Asian and Asian American scholars dealing with the history and experiences of Asian individuals in the United States, from here further cited as Yu-Wen, *Asian American Studies*.

---

<sup>5</sup> Yu-Wen, *Asian American Studies*, 199, 201, 206; Contreras, Arturo. Interview; also see Gray B. Nash. *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early America*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc, 1974), 1; also see Stetson Kennedy. *Jim Crow Guide: The Way It Was*. (Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University Press, 1959), 37, an excellent source for investigating race laws in the United States, from here on cited as Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide*; also see Rudolph J. Vecoli. "The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of an American Identity." *The History Teacher*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (November 1996): 9-27, for information concerning US immigration policy history and how immigrants have been assimilated into the American culture, from here on cited as Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration;" Bailey, Ka'ran. Interview by Email. January 27, 2004. Miss Bailey is a French Creole and African American woman who is active in the NAACP at Texas Woman's University. She moved with her English husband from the northeastern United States to Texas in 2001 and now lives in Flower Mound Texas. Ms. Bailey offered valuable insight into what it is like to be an ethnically mixed person in the United States, as well as information relating to racism and discrimination, from here further cited as Bailey, Ka'ran. Interview; also consult Francis J. Brown and Joseph Slabey Roucek. *Our Racial Minorities: Their History, Contributions, and Present Problems*. (New York: Prentice-Hall, INC, 1937), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Gettleman, *Vietnam*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Rose, "Race and Racism," 8; also see Brown, Francis J. and Roucek, Joseph Slabey. *Our Racial Minorities: Their History, Contributions, and Present Problems*. (New York: Prentice-Hall, INC, 1937), 50, excellent source for examining the historical context of race thinking.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas F. Gossett. *Race: The History of and Idea in America*. (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963), 7 for information concerning the historical roots of racism in the United States consult.

<sup>9</sup> Yu-Wen, *Asian American Studies*, 199; Nguyen, Betty. Interview.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard B. Fall. *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-66*. (New York: Frederisck A. Praeger, *Publishers*, 1966) an excellent source for examining the nature of the Vietnam War and how it effected the culture of Vietnam.

<sup>11</sup> Hammer, *The Struggle*, 30; also consult Nguyễn Đính-Hoá. *From the City Inside the Red River: A Cultural Memoir of Mid-Century Vietnam*. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., *Publishers*, 1999), 174, 176, an amazing memoir of life in Vietnam during the French and American conflicts from the perspective of a Vietnamese person, from here on cited as Đính-Hoá, *From the City Inside the Red River*.

---

<sup>12</sup> Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake*, 15; also consult Đinh-Hoá, *From the City Inside the Red River*, 164; Dam, Trung Phap. Interview.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel M. Goodkind. "Rising Gender Inequality in Vietnam Since Reunification." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Autumn 1995), 86, from here further cited as Goodkind, "Rising Gender Inequality;" for information concerning the equality of women in Vietnam also consult Hammer, *The Struggle*, 209; for additional information consult C.D. Cowan, and O. W. Wolters. *Southeast Asian History and Historiography*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 244.

<sup>14</sup> John F. Cady. *The History of Post-War Southeast Asia*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974), XIX, for information concerning the manner by which Vietnam has recovered from the Vietnam War, from here on cited as Cady, *The History of Post-War Southeast Asia*.

<sup>15</sup> Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake*, 15; also see Steven DeBonis. *Children of the Enemy: Oral Histories of Vietnamese Amerasians and Their Mothers*. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1995), 5 an amazing account of the Amerasian experience in Vietnam and the United States. Filled with oral accounts from Amerasians and their mothers concerning life in the Post Vietnam War era, from here further cited as DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*.

<sup>16</sup> Veit-Ventures. *Vietnam History: Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992*. (April 1992). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [http://www.vietventures.com/viet\\_constitution.htm](http://www.vietventures.com/viet_constitution.htm) in order to read Vietnam's constitution; also see Nina Shea. *The United States' Commission on International Religious Freedom: Testimony Before the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam-A People Silenced: The Vietnamese Government's Assault on the Media and Access to Information*. Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/religion/pdfdocs/vietnam%20Testimony%20vietnam%20caucus.pdf> for information on the government of Vietnam's human rights violations.

<sup>17</sup> Jacqueline Desbaratas. "Population Redistribution in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (March 1987), 43 for information on modern Vietnam; also consult also consult Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-2000*. (2001). Retrieved from the Internet Website directory: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eap/819.htm>, from here on cited as Bureau of Democracy; also see Gavin W. Jones. "Population Trends and Policies in Vietnam." *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (December 1982.), 806 for information concerning population trends and government policies in Vietnam.

<sup>18</sup> Dam, Trung Phap, Personal Interview.

---

<sup>19</sup> See Library of Congress Country Studies. *Vietnam Minorities*. (1987). Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+vn0048\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+vn0048)) for information concerning Vietnam's treatment of its ethnic minorities, from here on cited as Library of Congress Country Studies; additionally consult Peoples of the World Foundation. *Travel and Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam*. 2003. Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: <http://www.peoplesoftheworld.org/vietnam.jsp> for information concerning Vietnamese governmental treatment of Ethnic Vietnamese.

<sup>20</sup> Anh Dang, Sidney Godstien and James McNally. "Internal Migration and Development in Vietnam." *International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer 1997), 314 for information concerning Vietnam's Governmental policies in terms of economic development since the close of the Vietnam War.

<sup>21</sup> Library of Congress Country Studies; also consult Cady, *The History of Post-War Southeast Asia*, XXII; additionally see Magali Barbieri, James Sam Allman, Bich Pham and Nguyen Minh Thang. "Demographic Trends in Vietnam." *Population: An English Selection*, Vol. 8, (1996), 209 for statistics concerning Vietnam's population and urbanization; for information concerning the oppression of Vietnamese ethnic minorities consult Nelson Rand. "The trials of Vietnam's ethnic minorities." *Asia Times* (August 2003), retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: [http://coranet.radicalparty.org/pressreview/print\\_right.php?func=detail&par=6597](http://coranet.radicalparty.org/pressreview/print_right.php?func=detail&par=6597); Nguyen, Betty. Interview.

<sup>22</sup> E. S. Ungar. "The Struggle Over the Chinese Community in Vietnam, 1946-1986." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Winter), 605 an excellent source for information concerning ethnic Chinese in Vietnam.

<sup>23</sup> Library of Congress Country Studies; additionally consult Bureau of Democracy; for information on recent oppression of ethnic Vietnamese see Human Rights Watch. "Vietnam: New Documents Reveal Escalating Repression." *Human Rights News* (April 2003.). Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/04/vietnam042103.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Luther King. *I Have Dream*. (1963). Transcript of speech obtained from the University of Minnesota website. Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/units/diversity/mlk/mlk.html>; also see Thomas Jefferson. *Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies*. (1776). Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: <http://www.basicclassics.com/index.php?tid=8>.

<sup>25</sup> Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration," 10, 12; also consult Emma Lazarus. *The New Colossus*. (1883). Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory:

---

<http://www.umkc.edu/imc/statlib.htm>, this is the poem that is inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty, from here cited as Lazarus, *The New Colossus*; also see Rose, "Race and Racism;" Bailey, Ka'ran. Interview.

<sup>26</sup> Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration," 10, 12

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin B. Ringer, *"We The People and Others": Duality and America's Treatment of Its Racial Minorities*. (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1983), 30 for information concerning the United States treatment of immigrants and minorities, from here further cited as Ringer, *"We The People and Others"*; also consult Bonnie Urciuoli. "Language and Borders." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 24 (1995), 537 an excellent article concerning "English Only" in American education as well as American laws and statutes concerning English; also see Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration," 13, 17, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration," 13, 17, 18.

<sup>29</sup> George M. Fredrickson. "Presidential Address: America's Diversity in Comparative Perspective." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (December 1998), 859 for an excellent perspective of modern minority treatment in the United States; also see Yu-Wen, *Asian American Studies*, 255.

<sup>30</sup> Nguyen, Betty. Interview; Contreras, Arturo. Interview.

<sup>31</sup> Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration," 14; also see Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide*, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Philip S. Foner and Daniel Rosenberg. *Racism, dissent, and Asian Americans from 1850 to the present: a documentary history*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 31, 93, 211 an amazing compilation of primary source material concerning the Chinese exclusion Act, from here cited as Foner and Rosenberg, *Racism*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Edwin P. Hoyt. *Asians in the West*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson INC., Publishers, 1974), 21 for information involving Asian American assimilation and restricted immigration, from here on cited as Hoyt, *Asians in the West*; also see Foner and Rosenberg, *Racism*, 78.

<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide*, 41; also see Hoyt, *Asians in the West*, 25.

<sup>36</sup> Yu-Wen, *Asian American Studies*, 3; also see James H. Johnson, Walter C. Farrel and Chandra Guinn. "Immigration Reform and the Browning of America:

---

Tensions, Conflicts and Community Instability in Metropolitan Los Angeles.” *International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Winter 1997), 1057 an excellent source for information pertaining to recent immigration statistics and trends.

<sup>37</sup> Yu-Wen, *Asian American Studies*, 31; also consult Foner and Roseberg, *Racism*, 280.

<sup>38</sup> Hoyt, *Asians in the West*, 67; also see Ringer, “*We The People and Others*”, 865; additionally consult Foner and Rosenberg, *Racism*, 291.

<sup>39</sup> Nobuhiro Watsuki. *Rurouni Kenshin Trust and Betrayal*. (Tokyo: Shueisha, SME Visual works, 2003,) from here cited as Watsuki, *Rurouni Kenshin*; Contreras, Arturo. Interview; Bailey, Ka’ran. Interview; also see Melvin Drimmer. “Neither Black nor White: Carl Degler’s Study of Slavery in Two Societies.” *Phylon*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, 1979), 96, 105 an excellent source for an informative comparison between the slave trade in the United States and Brazil; also see Harry S. Ashmore. *Hearts and Minds: A Personal Chronicle of Race in America*. (Washington D.C.: Steven Locks Press, 1988), 49, from here further cited as Ashmore, *Hearts and Minds*.

<sup>40</sup> Leon F. Litwack. *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 181, an excellent compilation of primary source accounts concerning the experience of African Americans in the United States, from here further cited as Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*; also see Watsuki, *Rurouni Kenshin*.

<sup>41</sup> Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, XI; also consult W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 4. Du Bois was one of the preeminent African American scholars of his time, this is an excellent source for exploring the history of African Americans after the Civil War; additionally see Oscar Handlin. *Race and Nationality in American Life*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1957).

<sup>42</sup> Ashmore, *Hearts and Minds*, 146; also see Donald L. W. Howie. “The Image of Black People in Brown V. Board of Education.” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (March, 1973), 380, an excellent article concerning the effects and truth behind the Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education, from here on cited as Howie, “The Image of Black People;” additionally consult Douglas J. Ficker. “From Roberts to Plessy: Educational Segregation and the ‘Separate but Equal’ Doctrine.” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (Autumn, 1999), 302, 303, 304 for information concerning the origins of the separate but equal doctrine; also see Reynaldo A Contreras and Leonard A. Valverde. “The Impact of Brown on the Education of Latinos.” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Summer 1994), 470 an excellent article concerning the effects of the Brown decision on non African American minorities in the United States, from here forward cited as Contreras and Valverde, “The Impact of Brown;” for additional

---

reading on the effect of Jim Crow on non African American minorities consult Nancy A. Hewitt. *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism In Tampa, Florida, 1880S-1920S*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 219, an excellent source for investigating new historiography concerning the conundrum faced in the South as to how to accommodate non African American minorities in Jim Crow policies.

<sup>43</sup> Ringer, "We The People and Others," 495; also see Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide*, 48, 86; also see Hoyt, *Asians in the West*, 25.

<sup>44</sup> Contreras and Valverde, "The Impact of Brown," 471; concurrently consult David W. Bishop. "Plessy V. Ferguson: A Reinterpretation." *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 1977), 129, an excellent source for exploring the implication and events surrounding the watershed case and decision in Plessy v. Furgusson, such as the fact that Homer Plessy never said he was black during the trial; also see Charles V. Willie. *Black/Brown/White Relations: Race Relations in The 1970s*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1977), 169, from here on cited as Wille, *Black/Brown/White*; for additional information concerning the American Civil Rights Movement see Woody King Jr. *The Last Days of Malcolm X: Death of a Prophet*. (Los Angeles: Leisure Entertainment, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide*, 88, 89, 90.

<sup>46</sup> Ashmore, *Hearts and Minds*, 1, 217, 218.

<sup>47</sup> Howie, "The Image of Black People," 383; additionally consult Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide*, 34; Roberson, Angela. Interview by Email, January 30, 2004. Ms. Roberson is a Graduate student of Government at Texas Woman's University. She also works as a U.S. Pretrial Services Officer for the United States District Court of Northern Texas. She was able to provide excellent information and insight concerning the effects of racism and discrimination in contemporary American society. From here on cited as Roberson, Angela. Interview.

<sup>48</sup> Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide*, 58, 59, 61

<sup>49</sup> Willie, *Black/Brown/White*, 121; Contreras, Arturo. Interview; also see Richard Lowy. "Yuppie Racism: Race Relations in the 1980s." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (June 1991), 453 an excellent article on how modern racism functions in American society; Bailey, Ka'ran. Interview; Roberson, Angela. Interview; for additional information concerning the prevailing existence of racism in the United States consult Tony Horwitz. *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*. (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, INC., 1998) an amazing memoir that documents Horwitz's journey throughout the South and his encounters with the prevailing Confederate culture that still exists.

---

<sup>50</sup> Yu-Wen, *Asian American Studies*, 185; also see Frank H. Wu. *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 5, an amazing memoir of race relations in the United States and what it feels like to be a Japanese American.

<sup>51</sup> Mang, Henry. Interview.

<sup>52</sup> Roberson, Angela. Interview; Bailey, Ka'ran. Interview.

<sup>53</sup> Contreras, Arturo. Interview.

<sup>54</sup> John Rzenik. *I'm Still Here (Jim's Theme)*. Treasure Planet. (Los Angeles: Walt Disney Records, 2003).

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Forsaken The Reality of Being Amerasian in Vietnam*

“I am not the war, just the product of the war.”<sup>1</sup>

In the center of Ho Chi Minh city, formerly Saigon, close to the old American Embassy, now a molded pock-marked ghost of the American presence in Vietnam, buffeted on the west by the former Presidential Palace, on the north by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to the south by the Cathedral of Notre Dame and Gustave Eiffel’s belle époque post office, stands Amerasian Park. This park has been home to hundreds of destitute, abandoned and homeless Amerasians since the Communist unification of Vietnam in 1975. As author and Amerasian chronicler Thomas Bass describes, bands of “gap toothed kids covered with burn marks and tattoos,” have positioned themselves in the park, crying to the world for attention, help and understanding.

These wandering children, progeny of the United States and Vietnam, exist, in author and Amerasian chronicler Robert Mckelvey’s words, as “a living legacy of America’s longest and least popular war.” Unrecognized by the United States until 1987, and scorned as the enemy by Vietnam, these children of the Vietnam War are known as Bui Doi “the dust of life” or Con Lai “half-breeds.” They have been systematically denied education, employment, family and sometimes freedom in the land of their mothers. They have lived lives of poverty, oppression, discrimination, neglect and abandonment in Vietnam due to the origins of their births and the constructs of their

racess. In the words of composers Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schonberg, “they don’t belong in any place, their secret they can’t hide: it is printed on their face.”<sup>2</sup>

Mckelvey explains that the Amerasian story is replete with many universal themes. In his words, “the neglect of the human by-product of war, the destructiveness of prejudice and racism, the impact of losing one’s mother and father, the pain of abandonment and the horrors of life amidst grinding poverty,” all of which are part of the Amerasian reality. In historian John Shades’ opinion the Amerasian story is one of “more than eighty years of American child abuse in Asia.” He explains that Amerasians exist in every Asian country in which the United States has been involved, from Japan to Thailand. In fact, he says, beginning with the Spanish-American war in 1898, in which the United States gained control of the Philippines, there have been more than two million Amerasians born in Asian countries, over two hundred fifty thousand of which are still alive today.<sup>3</sup>

Amerasian Jenny Do explains that the discrimination suffered by Amerasians in Vietnam is common throughout Asia. Shade articulates that these children of Americans are despised throughout that sector of the world. Almost every Asian country assigns Amerasians derogatory classifications similar to those suffered by Amerasians in Vietnam where they are referred to as Bui Doi “the dust of life,” and Con Lai “half-breeds.” Shade explains that in Japan, Amerasians are called *hanyo* or half-people, in Korea they are termed *panjant* or half-breeds, and in Thailand, *faranj* or foreigners. He states that “everywhere in Asia Amerasians are non-persons.” Throughout most of Asia,

Amerasians are forbidden schooling, employment, and other human rights because of, as Mckelvey argues, “their mixed race and obvious connection to the American enemy.”<sup>4</sup>

In Vietnam, the hatred and discrimination of Amerasians is especially pronounced. As Ha-Hoa Dang, of the Boat People SOS—an organization dedicated to assisting the Boat People, Vietnamese refugees who illegally departed Vietnam by watercraft, explains, the Amerasians “were caught in the middle of post-war negotiations that shuffled responsibility of over twenty thousand children between two very different countries.” Nguyen Thi Ngoc Thuy, an African American Amerasian with a dusky complexion and full cheeks, contests, “all children of Americans were considered children of the enemy. We could not find work or a place to live.” Le Ha, a Caucasian Amerasian, says that in Vietnam, “people treat Amerasians like slaves or animals, as if they had no heart or soul or feelings. You make your family look bad,” she continues, “we remind people of the things they want to forget—the war, the bombs, the killings and suffering. We carry bad memories.” Journalist Edward Hegstrom, explains that the Amerasians, “became a symbol of impurity, defined as half-breed children of the enemy . . . they were considered foreigners.” Ha-Hoa Dang concurs, stating that, “they [Amerasians] faced discrimination and shame in Vietnam. Because their fathers were American, the enemy.”<sup>5</sup>

As author and Amerasian chronicler, Steven DeBonis explains, Amerasians are phenotypically more American in appearance than Vietnamese; he describes that Amerasians are “freckle-faced girls, lanky young black men, blondes, red heads—one expected to hear Brooklyn rasps or Southern drawls.” Tall, slender, and pale, Caucasian

Amerasian Jenny Do concurs, explaining, “it was too obvious, I have lots of freckles . . . in Vietnam I stand out because I am so tall and fair skinned and have freckles.” DeBonis also believes that it is precisely the “foreign blood” of the Amerasians that qualifies them for scorn in Vietnam. As previously discussed, Vietnam is relatively homogenous society, and “foreign blood” harbors a stigma; in fact, there is an ancient Vietnamese proverb that teaches that it is “better to marry a village dog than a rich man elsewhere.” Joe Nguyen, a Caucasian Amerasian, accepts his genetic plight: “I am Amerasian, you know, but I’m no different than anybody else . . . I consider the Vietnamese my family, but they don’t think of me the same way. They always think of me as a stranger.” Raymond, an African American Amerasian with a broad smile and long square jaw, who speaks English fluently and in DeBonis’ opinion is the most interviewed Vietnamese Amerasian in the world, states that “the Amerasians feel upset . . . these people [Vietnamese] don’t call you by name. They call you Con Lai—that means mixed blood . . . this hurts the Amerasians.”<sup>6</sup>

DeBonis also maintains that traditional Vietnamese society lacks the capacity to accept the Amerasians because they are fatherless. As he explains, “in a culture where identity flows from the father, Amerasians were generally relegated to the fringe of society.” Ha-Hoa Dang also believes that Amerasians were shunned in part because Vietnam “is a homogenous and very patriarchal society, because of the absence of their fathers, their problems were further intensified.” “Vietnamese Amerasians are basically the lowest rung of society in Vietnam.” Clint Haines, cofounder of Amerasian Child Find Network—an organization dedicated to assisting Amerasians and their American

fathers reunite, emphasizes that “the Vietnamese culture is one where you derive your sense of being from your father and most of these kids don’t know where their fathers are and therefore they are individuals who are in their culture without any identity.”<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of the reasons for the discrimination and oppression suffered by the Amerasians in Vietnam, the treatment they have received has had deleterious effects on their self-esteem, self-concepts and functionality in life. Journalist Gaiutra Bahadur describes Amerasians as individuals who “carry the psychological baggage of poor self-esteem and torn identities brought about by name-calling, poverty and physical and sexual abuse.” Jenny Do concurs, explaining that the post-war era brought, “the feeling of shamefulness, you begin to recognize that you are not as worthy, you’re not as normal and that brought about an acute awareness that you are lower class. It makes you feel that you are not good enough to be in that society.”<sup>8</sup>

Mckelvey cites that as a group, Vietnamese Amerasians report a higher percentage of alcohol and drug dependency, as well as a higher percentage of trauma symptoms and depression than do other Vietnamese groups. “I have an inferiority complex.” Vu, an African American Amerasian, who stands five feet nine inches tall, testifies, “I am looked down upon by the people who live around me, little by little, day by day it is impressed into my memory.” Raymond explains that many Amerasians—mostly those who, as DeBonis clarifies, are “forced into the underworld,” also suffer from self-destructive behavior in the form of self-mutilation. “They got scars on their arms.” Raymond articulates, “they do drugs, then they cut themselves up.” “A substantial number have mutilated themselves grotesquely.” DeBonis explains,

“cigarette burns and razor slashes on the arms, legs and occasionally torso are common among both males and females.”<sup>9</sup>

“Also not unusual among men is the lopping off of a digit, generally the pinky, occasionally the index finger,” DeBonis explains. Raymond believes that this behavior is a demonstration to Vietnamese society that “they [Amerasians] aren’t scared of anything.” A Vietnamese social worker believes that such mutilation is an externalization of inner pain. My, a Caucasian Amerasian with wavy light brown hair and long lanky arms and legs, articulates, “you want to know about these scars on my arms and legs? Well in Vietnam I was suffering and depressed, and I would take some pills and take a razor blade and just cut myself.” DeBonis describes My’s mutilated physique: “My’s legs and left arm are a mass of scars from self-inflicted knife wounds. His left forearm is unmarked, but above the elbow, the scars are uncountable, one leading to the next, forming a solid mass of tissue, which almost encircles the biceps. His legs are almost completely covered with scar tissue from razor slashes.”<sup>10</sup>

Hung, an African American Amerasian with dark black skin, a flat broad nose and tight curling hair, also fell victim to self-mutilation, scarring his chest. “Self-inflicted burns and slash marks are common among Amerasians, but never had I seen them to this extent.” According to DeBonis Hung mutilated most of his body: “This young man’s torso, arms and legs [all] . . . terribly mutilated. Raised lines of scar tissue overlay his body, one slash criss-crossing into the next.” “All my life people despised me,” Hung relates. “They called me a bastard, a nigger. I didn’t care about myself I wanted to die. So I took a razor and slashed myself all over . . . I just wanted to die.”<sup>11</sup>

This self-destructive behavior can obviously have adverse consequences for the Amerasians, not only emotionally and psychologically but in society as well. Nguyen Tien Dung's self-mutilation caused him problems in his attempt to immigrate to the United States. Nguyen is an African American Amerasian. "An intensely handsome young man," DeBonis describes, with curly black hair, a broad flat nose and a capacious smile of white teeth. He has many tattoos: "Running down his right calf is a tattooed message in Vietnamese, roughly translatable as, 'if your lover betrays you, be true to yourself.' On the inside of the left calf, [another calls out] 'life is unjust, hatred everlasting.'"<sup>12</sup>

Nguyen was twice sent to prison without a trial; he mutilated both of his arms with a razor blade while there. "Raised, pendant-shaped burns define the length of his arms in neat, grisly rows of three." DeBonis articulates as he describes Nguyen's mutilated appearance: "They [the scars] were self inflicted with a lit cigarette . . . his right forearm has been slashed into a mass of scar tissue." In 1988, Nguyen was accepted, under the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987, for immigration to the United States and entered into immigration procedures. During his processing, the first Vietnamese doctor who examined him believed that the scars on his arms meant that he was crazy and delayed his departure. He explains: "A month later I had to come down and see an American doctor. He didn't say I was crazy, but he thought that my scars were a cover for hidden needle tracks." Nguyen adds, the doctor "thought I might be a junkie, so I had to come down every month to have my blood tested, to make sure I was clean. I had to wait months before we were able to leave Vietnam."<sup>13</sup>

Since the Communist unification of Vietnam in 1975, the children of American servicemen and Vietnamese women have been relegated to the bottom of Vietnamese society. As alluded to previously, discrimination is a part of Vietnamese society. Clint Haines explains that Vietnam is a socially stratified culture in which the ethnic Vietnamese maintain hegemony and are seconded by the ethnic Chinese. Third in the social strata are the Khmer, a people who were at one time part of Cambodia. He explains that the Montgrads are fourth, followed by the Eurasians-the children of the French. Below the Eurasians are the Hispanic and Caucasian Amerasians.<sup>14</sup>

The lowest class in Vietnam's social strata is the African American Amerasians. Henry Mang explains, "some Vietnamese people have different opinions between white-Amerasian and black-Amerasian like the U.S. [there are] different opinions between white and black." Clint Haines notes, "they [African American Amerasians] are treated the worst." In DeBonis' opinion, the extreme exclusion and discrimination suffered by African American Amerasians is directly correlated, as previously discussed in Chapter Two, to the Vietnamese dislike of Africans. This prejudice arises from the North African French troops who were once stationed in French Indochina.<sup>15</sup>

Huong, an African American Amerasian with dark skin, laments that "all my life people have been mean to me because of my color." Than Thi, the mother of an African American Amerasian testifies that "no one would trust me, because I had a black boy in the family." Mai Linh, an African American Amerasian with curly black hair and angular face, remembers that when she attempted to go to school a Vietnamese couple, parents of another child, slapped her and told her, "you are black, you can't sit down with

my child.” Pha, also African American Amerasian, explains that in Vietnam, “Amerasians are not friends with each other. Black Amerasians are embarrassed by the way they look. They don’t like to play together.”<sup>16</sup>

Nguyen Thi Ngoc Thuy is an African American Amerasian, with a dusty complexion. She concurs that African American Amerasians are more discriminated against in Vietnam than any other group. She explains that until the early 1990s, “the black and white Amerasians stayed separately, not like now. Now they mix freely, but then white Amerasians didn’t want to be friends with me.” Clint Haines illustrates the unique discrimination suffered by African American Amerasians in his reminiscences of an African American Amerasian farm laborer. Because the man cannot read or write he works as a farm laborer in the rice fields that pepper, as Interknowledge Corp describes, Vietnam’s “verdant tapestry of soaring mountains, fertile deltas, primeval forests . . . sinuous rivers, mysterious caves, otherworldly rock formations, and heavenly waterfalls and beaches.” All of which are slowly recovering from thirty years of American tactical devastation. Many farmers have told him that he is the best farm laborer they employ.<sup>17</sup>

Each day, the farm laborers in the area gather at a specific location and the farmers select those they need. Clint Haines says that typically the farmers “won’t pick him [the African American Amerasian] because of societal pressures, unless all of the ethnic Vietnamese and Caucasian Amerasians have been selected; in other words only if he is one of the last ones left.” Occasionally, one farmer will contact him, according to Haines, the night before and inform him that “I am going to come half an hour late and so you just stay there and when I get there you will be the only one and I will pick you.”

This allows the farmer to employ the best farm laborer in the region without “being ostracized by the other farmers for picking him,” Haines states.<sup>18</sup>

The most common manifestation of maltreatment suffered by the Vietnamese Amerasians—African, Hispanic or Caucasian—occurs in the form of physical and verbal abuse within Vietnamese society. Jenny Do reports, “anybody could spot us, and we were treated differently . . . children would throw stones at you, it can be very humiliating. The children would scream Mi Lie and laugh, you would feel like you’re a freak of some sort.” Kien Nguyen, a Caucasian Amerasian with blonde hair, light eyes and alabaster skin, remembers that, “their [Vietnamese] teasing was cruel, though perhaps inevitable. Jimmy [his Amerasian brother] and I got into fist fights with other children almost as often as we had lunch.”<sup>19</sup>

DeBonis explains that the Vietnamese have a saying (according to Clint Haines it rhymes in Vietnamese) with which they taunt the Amerasians. DeBonis translates it as, “Amerasians have twelve assholes, if you plug one, gas and shit come out the others.” Joe Nguyen adds, “that’s their [Vietnamese] game . . . finding us, teasing us and beating on us.” It is Clint Haines’ opinion that Amerasians are constantly told to return to their own country. Hoa, the mother of a two Amerasians, remembers her children being told, “you go back to America, you dirty American . . . you lose the war already.” Tung Joe Nguyen, Caucasian Amerasian, remembers, “little kids that lived nearby . . . would pick on me and throw rocks at me . . . their parents will see their kids abusing Amerasians, and they just stand there . . . they think that that’s just the daughter or son of a hooker, a whore or a prostitute, so it’s right for them to get hit.”<sup>20</sup>

Memoirist and teacher of Amerasian children in Vietnam Katie Kelly argues that there is a common misperception, on both sides of the Pacific Ocean that the mothers of Amerasians were prostitutes or bar girls. While some were, she observes that “most of the women who bore Amerasian children were hard working women . . . many established long-term relationships with the Americans they lived with.” DeBonis explains that many of the relationships between the mothers and fathers of Amerasians lasted for years and were in fact closer to marriages than affairs. In fact, eighty-one percent of the mothers of Amerasians he interviewed in 1992, testified to having lived with the American father of their children. Clint Haines adds that in Vietnam, if an American wanted to live with a Vietnamese woman, he had to file a cohabitation paper; without doing so, the woman could be arrested for prostitution. Cohabitation documentation is “akin to being married.” Once the documents are filed, he says, “the Vietnamese woman will refer to herself as the wife of this man.”<sup>21</sup>

Clint Haines insists that those women who worked as prostitutes did so mainly out of coercion or indebtedness. They worked for what was called a *momasan*, who supplied them with food, housing, cigarettes and whatever they wanted, but the women were charged a high premium. The *momasan* would hold their ID cards, without which the women could not leave the premises. Haines indicates that they were essentially “stuck working for the momasan until they paid off their debt, you know owing your soul to the company store, that was basically the scenario here.” Often when an American GI became involved with a prostitute, he would pay her debt, in Haines’ words, five or six hundred dollars. He would then rent an apartment and the couple would live there

together. When the GI was sent back to the United States, “the girl would go back and work for the momasan in servitude. It was kind of a vicious circle,” Haines explains.<sup>22</sup>

Commonly, the mothers of Amerasians worked at or near the American military bases. In DeBonis’ experience, American military bases were ideal locations for poor Vietnamese girls to find jobs as maids, laundresses, waitresses, or if they were educated, secretaries and clerks. “Whatever their work,” he explains, “the jobs of Vietnamese women put them into contact with Americans who in many cases eventually fathered their children.” Mei, the mother of an Amerasian who was working on an American base, remembers that the father of her Amerasian daughter, her boss, “approached me slowly. He called an interpreter over to tell me that if I loved him he would take care of me and all my children, [but] he left four months after I got pregnant.” The contact between American men and Vietnamese women, facilitated by the American military bases, sometimes also resulted in rape. For instance, an American GI who gave her rides to and from the American base where she worked raped Anh, the mother of an Amerasian. “One day there was a heavy rain.” She remembers, “he turned into an isolated area and he raped me in the car. Then he drove me home.” Anh explains, “rape is a terrible shame for a girl in Vietnam. I couldn’t tell anyone what happened, not even my mother. Finally, when she saw I was pregnant, I told her what happened, she was furious, she blamed me, she beat me and sent me to a church in Saigon.”<sup>23</sup>

Clint Haines, who served in Vietnam from 1970 until 1971, explains that the United States’ military, though it did not discourage or inhibit American servicemen from

becoming involved with Vietnamese women, made it virtually impossible for the relationships to last outside of Vietnam. He recalls:

We [U.S. soldiers] were all being told the same thing, I was talking to a guy who was on the complete opposite side of the country from where I was and he was told exactly the same thing from the Chaplain. Basically if you bring your girlfriend home people are going to think she is a prostitute and it is going to be hard and she won't know the language, bad culture shock. And we were all told the same kind of thing apparently, and I am sure the different Chaplains did not come up with this on their own, I am sure it was the army line. I think the [American] government actively was trying to dissuade GI's from bringing their girlfriends home.

He further clarifies that for U.S. Military officers, attaining a marriage certificate and the proper documentation for the evacuation of their Vietnamese wives and possible children, was much simpler and easier than for enlisted men. A select number of American servicemen were thus able to take their Vietnamese wives and children to the United States. Caucasian Amerasian Betty Nguyen left Vietnam with her father and mother in 1975. She remembers vividly how, "my father was leaving, he was taking us." For the majority of Amerasian parents, however, the end of the soldier's tour in Vietnam meant the conclusion of the relationship. Mei, introduced earlier, recalls that when her American husband left Vietnam, at which time she was four months pregnant with their daughter, he informed her that he had a family in the United States and could not take care of her or the child. Even for those American servicemen who were desirous of maintaining their relationships with the mothers of their Amerasian children, the distance and military conflict between the two countries made it nearly impossible. Clint Haines, who attempted to keep in contact with his Vietnamese paramour through another GI, testifies: "I never heard from her. So I sent another letter and never heard from her. At

first I figured, well she probably got another American boyfriend, but she was really pregnant. When I got out of the service,” he maintains, “the North Vietnamese had taken over that part of South Vietnam already, so there was no going back.”<sup>24</sup>

Several parents of Amerasians, such as Nguyen and Lloyd Land, were fortunate enough to reunite after the passage of the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987. Nguyen gave birth to Lloyd’s son in 1972. For twenty years Nguyen told her son, who she says, “has many problems because he is Amerasian,” that she had his father’s address and one day she would write to him and he would take them to the United States, even though she “never really believed this.” The Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987 prompted her son to challenge her to write to his father. Her long lost husband responded and sponsored Nguyen, their son and Nguyen’s other children in the immigration process. She still loved him and wanted to be with him. “I recognized my husband immediately,” She remembers, “we looked at each other but couldn’t speak . . . he told me that . . . fifteen years ago he decided that he would wait for me on the chance that we could be together again . . . he told me he loved me as before . . . now we are living happily;” Nguyen and Lloyd were married on December 26, 1992.<sup>25</sup>

For the mothers who remained in Vietnam the southward advance of the Communist regime was anything but welcome news. “I knew the Vietcong were coming,” Mei remembers, “they said that racially mixed children would be gathered up, they would be soaked in gasoline and burned.” Although that never actually happened, the realities faced by the mothers and families of Amerasians were often as harsh as those faced by the Amerasians. Betty Nguyen recalls, “in Vietnam if your husband or the

father of your child leaves you there [Vietnam], you are virtually ostracized, you're looked down upon, you can't get work you're basically left to your own devices and people won't help you." Lai My Troung's family suffered on the edge of starvation. Jonathon Fox says it was "because of Lai My, [that] his stepfather lost a teaching job; his mother was shunned."<sup>26</sup>

Jenny Do remembers "after the fall of Saigon [Jenny was nine years old], the financial situation turned upside down, from a very wealthy, middle-class family we became the poorest in the neighborhood. My mother had to send me out to go to work." She also recalls that her family was barred from purchasing the government-rationed necessities, which, after the Communist unification, was the only source for food in Vietnam. Her family was forced to buy food—rice and powdered milk—on the black market. "I can't stress enough," she laments, "the degree and level of poverty that we were in. The condition was extremely grave."<sup>27</sup>

DeBonis maintains that the mothers of Amerasians were harassed, dragged from sleep in the middle of the night, questioned, and sometimes imprisoned for arbitrary amounts of time. The "mothers of Amerasians were lumped together," he adds "in the national eye as whores, and their children as bastards. The oppression of Amerasians and their mothers intensified after the war . . . [for they were perceived as] the children and mistresses of the enemy." Pha, mentioned earlier, remembers, "around 1977 the government told all the mothers of Amerasians to come to a meeting. Some they sent home, some they sent to jail." Kien Nguyen reminisces that his mother, the co-president of a bank in the city of Nhatrang, and one of richest and most respected women in her

town before the Communist unification, was coerced to appear publicly and was ridiculed by her neighbors and townspeople. She was forced before them all to confess her sins—her Amerasian children—against the new Communist government. He recounts:

The Communist leader warned my mother,” ‘behave yourself lady. This isn’t a night club.’ The butcher’s wife turned red [saying] . . . ‘under the imperialist government . . . there are two ways for a person to have mixed-blood children: through prostitution or adoption. You have admitted earlier that fucking was how you got them, so you must be a hooker’ . . . ‘yes I was,’ she said, ‘a prostitute is exactly what I was.’”

Kien Nguyen explains this episode: “They wanted to label her so that later they could justify actions taken against her.”<sup>28</sup>

The mothers of Amerasians were the first persons targeted for the repopulation into economic zone programs initiated by the new Communist government. As a result, many mothers and families of Amerasians were taken from cities and relocated as farmers in rural areas. “They sent me and my kids to Tay Ninh [a rural area].” Chau, the mother of three Amerasian children remembers, “I stayed there two years and worked as a farmer. There was no school, no hospital, nothing . . . the kids just stayed in the house all day . . . everybody go to work, but they don’t give us no rice, no nothing.” Dung, also a mother of two Amerasian boys, recalls being forced to relocate: “Before 1975 I had everything [including] my own house, papers [for residing in Saigon], ID card, my babies’ papers and ID cards. When the VC came to Saigon, they took it all.” Dung adds, “the VC tell me ‘get out, you have two American babies, you have two American boyfriends. Get out, you have to go away.’”<sup>29</sup>

DeBonis emphasizes that this discriminatory treatment was extended to the adopted families of Amerasians. He relates the story of Mr. Loi, a Vietnamese man who found and adopted the aforementioned Nguyen Tien Dung and an Amerasian girl, Bich Dung. Loi was shunned by the Communist government and discriminated against as a result of adopting these Amerasian Children. And yet in the face of discriminatory treatment, he asserts, "I raised them as if they were my own, according to Vietnamese custom, and I love them as they were my own children." Journalist, Chris Vaughn testifies about the seriousness of adoption of an Amerasian to the Communist regime; it sometimes was a criminal offence. Nhieu Dang, for example, an adopted parent of an Amerasian, was sentenced to one year in prison for the adoption of his Amerasian son.<sup>30</sup>

Unfortunately, due to the pressures placed upon the families who adopted Amerasians in Vietnam, some parents resented and even further ostracized their adopted Amerasian children. Julie Nguyen, adopted after her mother abandoned her, serves as only one example of many. The reality of Julie's life within that family was anything but caring. "If I did something just a little bad or broke something," she recalls, "they yell for one or two days and hit me." Her husband Joe Nguyen, also Amerasian, reveals that scars across her head and hands remain from being beaten. "Her step-dad was fist fighting her, beating her with elbows, fists and kicking her, even her older brother hit her," he explains.<sup>31</sup>

To alleviate some of the societal pressures that resulted from the intense discrimination meted out upon Amerasians and their families, some attempted to hide their children or disguise their Amerasian features. Huynh, an African American

Amerasian, pretended to be from India because she says, “it’s easier to be Indian than Amerasian.” DeBonis offers evidence that mothers would cut or dye their children’s hair or, if they were Caucasian, rub them with dirt to darken their fair skin. Huong Do remembers her mother shaving her head bald to hide her light brown hair. For Kien Nguyen, disguising his American features was traumatic. He recounts the first time his mother darkened his and his brother’s blonde hair:

My mother sent Loan [the maid] to the market to bring back black dye. Without warning she swooped over our hiding corner and seized us with her sharp fingernails . . . ignoring our frightened cries, she pulled us along the cold ground into the bathroom. As we kicked and screamed she poured the dark liquid over us and marinated our blonde heads for what seemed a long time. I remember sitting next to my brother in the bathroom, trying to cover my bare chest with my thin arms. Her roughness as she tussed at our hair and her silence burned a panic in us. Both of us were crying from the sting of the dye . . . “listen you two, shut up men don’t cry! Remember that,” and she added more dye to our hair.<sup>32</sup>

To further safeguard their families after 1975, many mothers of Amerasians destroyed any evidence that associated them with the United States. This destruction included letters, documents, pictures and sometimes even the dog tags their husbands had given them; an ironic action—this would prove a detriment when their Amerasian children began the application process for departure from Vietnam under the Amerasian Homecoming Act twelve years later. They would not possess any evidence, save their American features, that could connect them with their fathers and the United States.<sup>33</sup>

Certain mothers and families of Amerasians, however, chose not to withstand the discrimination foisted upon their Amerasian children. Vaughn relates, “most [Amerasians] already knew about abandonment. Their fathers had left them in order to

return to America. In many cases, their mothers were gone too, leaving them adrift in a country where family gives a person status and respect.” One such Amerasian was Nga Tuyet Pham, Ann Marie Pham, today living in the United States. She explains, “I never saw my mother. I remember people telling me my mom threw me in the garbage can.” Mei gave her daughter Hiep to Operation Baby Lift, an American program, which airlifted over two thousand Vietnamese orphans in C-40 cargo planes from Vietnam to the United States in 1975. She was told by the Baby Lift officials that the Americans would be returning to Vietnam in a couple of months and they would bring her daughter home after keeping her safe from the Communists. This was a myth; the United States did not return and thus neither did Hiep. Mei remembers, “my head went crazy in those days, like a mad woman. I was determined to find Hiep, I ask every Westerner I see to help me get to the USA.”<sup>34</sup>

Nguyen Tien Dung’s story is similar. He knows that he was born in a hospital in Da Nang. “My mother abandoned me,” he asserts, “she refused to pick me up or feed me.” Nguyen was fortunate, however, and was adopted and loved by the aforementioned Mr. Loi. Minh Ha was told that her American father was killed in combat two years after she was born. Her mother left her with an aunt, who had two Amerasian children of her own, after becoming engaged to a Communist official. Minh Ha’s mother did not want any connection to her American past or Amerasian child, even altering Minh Ha’s birth certificate. Changing her birth date as well as listing the first wife of Minh’s uncle as Minh’s biological mother because, Minh Ha explains, “she was afraid I would grow up and find her. So she changed everything.”<sup>35</sup>

Many abandoned Amerasians were cast out to become street children; American soldiers cared for a number while the Americans were in Vietnam only to return them to the street when the military personnel departed for the United States. Still others were placed in orphanages, and many were literally left with their babysitters.

Charlie Brown did not have a name until he was six years of age. Born in 1959 in Da Nang, he was told that his father was an advisor for the Diem regime. He never came to know his father or mother. “She threw me away,” he sadly recalls. He lived on the street until the age of six when he entered an American military camp. There, soldiers took care of him and gave him a “snoopy dog,” thus naming him Charlie Brown. “Everybody [on the base] loved Charlie Brown.” He remembers, “I needed a name in this world, so I became Charlie Brown.”<sup>36</sup>

Nguyen Thi Ngoc Thuy lived with her babysitter until she was twelve. In 1973, she left for Ho Chi Minh City in search of her biological mother. Once there she ended up living on the streets. “I went to Ba Chieu market and begged for scraps,” she explains. “I slept in the market with some other beggars. After about a week,” she laments, “I went over to Quach Thi Trang Park and began shining shoes. I worked with a group of Amerasians—two boys and four girls, all black, like me . . . we slept in the bus station, or if it was not raining we sometimes slept in the park.” Working hard, she and her six African American Amerasian counterparts pooled the money they earned shining shoes and collectively spent it to survive. Nguyen bathed and washed her clothes in a public faucet, a dangerous endeavor. “One time, I washed my clothes and hung them up on a fence near a gas station,” she recalls, “I sat down to keep an eye on them. But I got

sleepy, and as much as I tried I couldn't help dosing off. When I woke up, my clothes weren't there."<sup>37</sup>

Betty Nguyen believes that many Amerasian children were placed in orphanages because "their mothers were so ashamed of having an Amerasian child, with no father it only made their life difficult. By putting the child in an orphanage at least one of them might have a chance at a normal life." Bernard Nguyen, a Vietnamese Amerasian activist, visited an orphanage near an American military installation in 1967 as a student in a Catholic Seminary. He remembers, "one hundred, two hundred children crying for your attention." Lisa Dixon, born Nguyen-Thi-Loum "Princess Flower," who was told she was found in the street in a village near Saigon, spent the first three and one-half years of her life in an orphanage. The orphanage had once served as the American embassy. It resembled more of a cage to hold unwanted children than a temporary home for those in need of adoption. "The children were only allowed to go into the court yard, it was mostly cement and very little shade." She remembers, "it had black wrought iron [fences] encasing the orphanage. In the courtyard, in the back on top of the walls was wrought iron and it had razor wire . . . where we slept was a very large room with high walls with some windows. We slept on the floor on small bamboo mats."<sup>38</sup>

Lisa was the smallest child at the orphanage. She remembers that the older children "took care of me from what I know. I was given their food and they would catch me bugs. We only had a bowl of rice with water in it." Lisa adds that the orphanage also served another function for the American troops: "The GI's, they were from all services, would arrive there [at the orphanage] for R and R [rest and relaxation] with Vietnamese

women. These people would go up to the third floor. The kids were not allowed to go up to that floor-where they were at.” She also remembers that “the GI's sometimes would watch a box that probably was a black and white TV and you could see people on [it]. They would scream at it with excited enjoyment, they were watching football on the only small TV.”<sup>39</sup>

Since most mothers of Amerasian children were working women, many of their offspring were cared for by babysitters while their mothers worked. With the Communist unification of Vietnam in 1975, however, those babysitters, in some instances, became “default-adopted” parents. “One day my mother just dropped me off there [with the babysitter] and never came back.” Tuan Den remembers, “when I was a teenager I went to live on the street . . . I got into street crime.” The aforementioned Nguyen Thi Ngoc Thuy, too, was deposited with her babysitter. Nguyen remembers her life there as bitter and lonely: “My stepmother had three children, and she made me take care of them. I received little affection from that family . . . my stepmother tormented me. She hated me because I was black. She thought I was dumb. She called me stupid, and she beat me. One time she hung me upside down. When I was [eight] she made me strip to the skin and stand in the hot sun.” Similarly, Thi Hong Hanh recounts that when he was four years old his father returned to the United States. “My mother went away. She left me with the babysitter and that babysitter became my stepmother . . . my mother did not tell the babysitter she was leaving. She just abandoned me there.” He continues, “my step-parents were teachers but they never sent me to school or taught me at home. They just made me work.”<sup>40</sup>

Education was one of many human rights and necessities denied to Amerasians. Most did not attend school in Vietnam, because the teachers, students and parents at the school systematically pushed them out; others departed voluntarily as a result of unbearable harassment. One method by which the government could disallow Amerasians their education was by barring them from school because they lacked the proper documentation. Tung Joe Nguyen explains, “I tried to go to school . . . but they said, ‘no you can’t go, you don’t have any paperwork, plus you’re Mi Lai, you’re half-American’ . . . so I had no choice but to work all day, selling food on the street.” Jenny Do’s mother pleaded with the government to allow her daughter to attend school despite her lack of documentation. Jenny remembers her mother telling government officials, “you won’t give us food but at least give my daughter an education.” Through the testimony of countless Amerasians, Mckelvey contends that the Vietnamese government did not allow Amerasians to advance beyond high school. Amerasian Yen Lee concurs. Having endured the hardships, Yen finished high school in Vietnam but the school officials would not allow her to take the college entrance exams because of her American father, “a man whose name,” explains Bahadur, Yen Lee “had heard only thrice.”<sup>41</sup>

DeBonis reiterates that many Amerasians failed to attend school in Vietnam because they “lacked the willingness to endure the taunting that Amerasians are often subjected to from their classmates.” The story of Tu is revealing of this fact. An Amerasian girl who lived with her grandparents in a small farming village, Tu briefly attended the local school that was three hundred yards from her house. Even though she enjoyed the lessons taught there, Tu ceased attending classes because of constant

harassment. Her classmates told her such things as, “Amerasians should live in the pig pen.” They pulled out her brown hair and called her derogatory names. The treatment was injurious to Tu. She shaved her head bald twice.<sup>42</sup>

Hung tells a similar story. He attended school through the second grade: “The students don’t like black skin, they hate it. They like to play with the fair-skinned people. They never let me forget that I was black and that I had no father. They always called me names and made me feel ashamed, so I stopped going.” Kien Nguyen, like Tu, was an intelligent boy who desired to do well in school; he also remembers the treatment his classmates heaped upon him. As he explains, when he recited the teachings of Ho Chi Minh perfectly at the request of his teacher and was asked his name one of the other students injected, “[even] before I had a chance to answer her . . . ‘Half-breed.’ The rest of the children laughed.” Jenny Do suffered, as others did, but more from the teachers than the students. “Some of the teachers from the north,” she explains, “they were not really friendly to me, the teachers didn’t like me of course because they fought against the Americans for so long so of course they hate me.” Tien Dung’s education, like so many, was brief. He attended school for five years, leaving because he could not endure the continual harassment. “I was the only Amerasian in the class. I couldn’t stand the taunts, [such as] Mi Lai [half American], [or] Mi Den [half African American]. I had many fights. The Vietnamese would gang up on me and beat me up. I couldn’t take any more abuse so I stopped going.”<sup>43</sup>

In Clint Haines’ opinion, since Amerasians as a group lack any kind of formal education, they are relegated to menial labor in Vietnam. “Their lot in life is not very

good,” Haines explains, “because they are unskilled.” In addition, “the majority of them do not read or write so they are basically illiterate . . . relegated to the kind of work that is very unskilled: tearing down buildings, carrying bricks, working in rice paddies.” He concludes, “the average wage for an Amerasian currently is right around two dollars a day.” In journalist Indira Lackshmanan’s words, Amerasians are legally prohibited from government and military jobs and training, as well as most factory labor.<sup>44</sup>

Thi Hong Hanh, attests, as do many others, that the Vietnamese, “wouldn’t even let me work for them.” “I looked for work.” Tien Nguyen Dung also recollects, “the man told me straight out that he wouldn’t hire an Amerasian. I wound up working at the Da Nang train station . . . I just waited on the platforms and helped people unload crates, luggage, sacks of rice and they would pay me whatever. I was discriminated against at every level.” “The police and government didn’t want me,” he adds, “people don’t want to hire Amerasians, and don’t want to socialize with them.” Thus with little education or hope for gainful employment, the Amerasians faced a bleak future.<sup>45</sup>

Because of the challenges in acquiring education and gainful employment, many Amerasians are forced to endure lives of unimaginable poverty. “Here [in the United States], you see people on welfare and public housing,” Clint Haines reminds, “they get food stamps, certainly it is not the best life in the world but they get welfare and they get decent housing. Well in Vietnam, they don’t have any of that so basically if they don’t work they don’t eat.” He concludes, “it is not a very good situation for them over there. I have got better housing for my goats than some of them live in.”<sup>46</sup>

Mckelvey and DeBonis illustrate yet another problem for Amerasians in Vietnam. The over abundance of discrimination and societal pressure against Amerasians, pursuing education or employment, often forces many into dangerous and perilous situations. Jenny Do concurs. Most of the Amerasian women she has worked with sold their bodies in Vietnam. Tay Thi, for example is not unique. A young Amerasian woman, she worked as a taxi dancer, dancing with men for money at local night clubs, in Vietnam until she saved enough money to open her own silk store. As a child, like so many with familiar stories, she was forced out of school. "They cursed me, even my teachers," she remembers. Tay then wandered to Ho Chi Minh City where she stayed with a friend until her "money ran out. A neighbor approached me and said she could help me get money. She sold me to a [Chinese man] for two hundred fifty dollars. She gave me twenty dollars and kept the rest. [He] locked me in a hotel room for three days until I was able to break out."<sup>47</sup>

Other Amerasians, like Charlie, reveal heartbreaking experiences. He attempted to find work in Ho Chi Minh City but to no avail. "I tried to work as a mason," he explains, "but I was too weak, I just couldn't do it." Attempting to become a beggar in the Ba Chieu market, he was forced out by the Vietnamese beggars. He then turned to stealing. "I would steal fish and vegetables and sell them and get money to buy rice. I was hungry. I became part of a gang," he remembers, "we would wait until someone wasn't paying attention, and then we would steal their goods, their fish or vegetables." He became very adept at his role, "I began to steal chains and watches from people, from passengers on buses or pedicabs. When people were not paying attention I would tear

their chain off and run.” He concludes, “I got away with it until one time I snatched a chain, and a plain-clothes cop was right there and nabbed me, he arrested me, and I was sent to Mac Dinh Chi prison.” Such a fate was foisted upon many in the Vietnamese Amerasian community; great suffering for the Amerasians ensued.<sup>48</sup>

Many Amerasians suffered incarceration in prisons as well as in work and reeducation camps throughout Vietnam. Amerasians were arrested for various reasons; many were imprisoned because they refused to be ruled by the new government, or because they were attempting to illegally leave the country, and some were simply incarcerated because they were Amerasian. Still others were sent to prison by their families. In the poignant words of Boubilil and Schonberg, “[we] saw a camp for children whose crime was being born.”<sup>49</sup>

Raymond became a convict when he was arrested and sent to a prison camp for twelve years in 1975 without any explanation. He rationalizes, “after Saigon fell, people was [*sic*] breakin’ into houses and takin’ everything. So the police arrested vendors, beggars, criminals, anybody.” Hung was also incarcerated after he turned seventeen because he refused to join the military. In Vietnam, Chinese and Amerasian soldiers are not allowed to carry guns or receive military training, and instead become laborers for the government. He was instructed to join the fire prevention and security teams that arrested and confiscated illegal street vendors’ wares. “I refused to join the in the harassment of vendors. I wouldn’t do it. One day,” he explains, “the authorities came to my house and told me to go to the police station. When they call you, you have to go. I went down there, and they arrested me.”<sup>50</sup>

Kien Nguyen was imprisoned at the age of fourteen for attempting to leave Vietnam by boat. “The policeman cuffed my hands behind my back, shoved me in the back seat, and drove off,” Kien remembers, “a few feet behind, the policemen stabbed the tips of their guns into one bush after the next as their search for runaways continued.” My, imprisoned by his uncle, claims that his relative did not like him because of his Amerasian mixed blood. “He [the uncle] called the police and claimed that I had stolen some things from my stepmother. He also complained that I had left the house without [government] permission.” My relates, “the police came to arrest me. My stepmother defended me. She told them that I had not stolen anything that I had not done anything wrong, but they took me away anyway. They [the police] hate Amerasians,” as did the majority of Vietnamese society.<sup>51</sup>

Those viewed as “collaborators” with the United States, both Amerasians and Vietnamese, were sent to what were referred to as reeducation camps. Often they were imprisoned without trials, Raymond reiterates. The camps were in truth more labor camps or, “a prison, [for] hard labor, [and] working.” Reeducation camps were located throughout Vietnam. They were ubiquitous, along the “alpine peaks, the Red River Delta, the plains of Cao Bang and Vinh Yen, and enchanting Halong Bay,” as described by Interknowledge Corporation. Camps were also located in the “high temperate plateaus rich in volcanic soil . . . [along the] spectacular beaches, dunes, and lagoons . . . and the fertile alluvial delta of the Mekong River.” Documentation reveals that reeducation camps existed for all those persons whom the Vietnamese government felt needed Communist training. Wherever the new government was fighting to recapture the

land that had once been ablaze with American napalm and land mines, prison enclosures were constructed to reeducate the Amerasians and Vietnamese at large. Few comprehend the suffering imposed on these unfortunate people who suffered greatly in these camps.<sup>52</sup>

Amerasians were assigned unsanitary camps and most were uncomfortable. Kien Nguyen describes his camp: It was reserved for women and children, of the boat people who were illegally exiting Vietnam. “Surrounded by barbed-wire fences,” he remembers, and, “I later learned, land mines.” Raymond, similar to Kien, lived for twelve horrific years in a reeducation camp. There were “no trees and all this hot sun. And you cannot go inside the hut where we sleep. If you go inside the hut they beat you up and they give you a punishment.” Hung’s experience mirrors the others. “We sleep in huts, about twenty to thirty prisoners to a hut. The huts are pretty flimsy,” Hung remembers, “we sleep on big bamboo pallets, and at night they chain our legs to an iron bar.” Vu, fortunately incarcerated for only one year, remembers that there were forty inmates to a cell. Kien Nguyen’s reformatory was devoid of electricity and the barracks were windowless. To him, the camp was, “a perfect environment for starving rats . . . a pair of them attacked my feet, making a tic-tic sound with their teeth. The other children who shared my cell slept on, making little noises as the rats pricked their hair and scratched their skin.” Under such conditions, it is a testament to the Amerasian will to survive that any escaped with their lives.<sup>53</sup>

Rules prevailed, Raymond asserts. In the camps, prisoners were instructed not to “speak any language except Vietnamese [there], [or] practice any religion or create any group for praying . . . [we were forbidden to] fight, [or] talk about politics. Three

people cannot group together talking, [the guards] think you may be trying to escape.” Residents labored all day, everyday, beginning at six in the morning. Hung’s camp, like all others, required backbreaking labor. “We had to dig canals to channel the sea water into fields,” he remembers. Raymond and Hung concur that there was not much to eat, usually only rice. “Sometimes we try to find some leaves we can eat in the forest, but if the guards catch you, they’ll beat you,” Hung recalls.<sup>54</sup>

The incarceration period was long and sentences were in many cases undetermined. Vu exhorts that “they never told my family where I was . . . I never knew when they would release me.” Until 1987, visitation was strictly prohibited. Raymond, whose adopted mother died while he was in the camp (a fact which he did not learn until after his release), explains, “in the prison camp if you die, you die. They don’t even report it to your parents . . . you could not even write a letter.” Kien Nguyen remembers Amerasian prisoners were allowed to write one letter home a month, but the warden cautioned, “I don’t guarantee that it will get delivered, but feel free to write if you like.”<sup>55</sup>

Thus it is true that discrimination and oppression of Amerasians in Vietnamese society was extended to prisons; prisons reflected the culture at large. In the camp, Raymond recalls, “they always tell me-‘you are the enemy.’ So I was treated worse, just like an enemy.” Kien Nguyen was labeled “half-breed” by camp guards, just as he was labeled outside of prison. Incarcerated for a year, Vu, like Kien, remembers the first three months of his confinement; he was abused by the guards simply because he was Amerasian. “They beat me; they tell me that I am the son of an American. They call me a reactionary element. They beat me with their hands and the handle of the gun.

Sometimes,” Vu speaking for many states, “they beat me Monday and not Tuesday, then maybe Wednesday they beat me and again Friday or Saturday . . . they broke this one [pointing to his collar bone] . . . after three months they left me alone. He concludes, “my legs were paralyzed from the beatings.” The physical damage to Vu was complete, and with it Vu was left with the deep scars, unhealable both on his body and in his psyche.<sup>56</sup>

Ironically, one regimen of reeducation camps was indeed education! Raymond categorizes his training as, “Communist . . . especially for minors like me.” He explains that “they [camp instructors] point at an American and they say, ‘that’s the enemy. They are the reason that our country became so poor and [it] suffers.’” However, other Amerasians were able to benefit from the lessons and education provided for in the camp. For instance, My, who spent four years at a reeducation camp, explains, “I had to work but they also let me study . . . they taught me how to read and write Vietnamese, how to do some math, and their history and about how the Communists defeated the Americans and the French.”<sup>57</sup>

Whether incarcerated in reeducation camps or living free, Amerasians were discriminated against in society; Vietnam was not a benevolent country in which the Vietnamese Amerasians could find understanding, assistance or acceptance. The Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987 finally did allow Vietnamese Amerasians to immigrate to the United States. Immigration to the United States was based upon their American parentage. In reality, they were allowed entrance into the United States as refugees—allowed to participate in an alternative to their miserable existence in Vietnam;

they were given permission to settle in their fatherland. Lost, oppressed and discriminated against, the Amerasians were hated in Vietnam because they did not have fathers. They were segregated because they were half foreign, and especially because they were a constant reminder of the American presence in Vietnam. Their suffering was immeasurable. Denied education, despite the rudimentary Communist training required in the reeducation camps, many remained illiterate. Employment too, often became an unattainable dream and in many cases freedom remained illusory. Amerasian mothers were, for the most part, respectable members of Vietnamese culture when they became involved with United States military personnel. With the conception and birth of their children, however, their status was altered and they were relegated along with their children (and those associated with the Amerasians) to the periphery of Vietnamese society. Once marginalized, Amerasians were forced out or denied education and penalized, paradoxically, for being uneducated.

Often, through the process of guilt by association, the relatives and associates of Amerasians were frequently denied employment or a place of status within Vietnamese society. Amerasians often were subjected to incarceration without trial and for indeterminate periods in work camps where the oppression continued; again they suffered discrimination and maltreatment simply for their “American connection.” Their lives of oppression were to be memories of the past due to the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987. Dreams sometimes do come true; Amerasians could after 1987 move to the land of life and liberty, and pursue happiness. Initially, this seemed a welcome relief for many Amerasians. But their hopes were dashed.

The reality of life in the United States and the corruption that would categorize Amerasian immigration and the resettlement process mirrored that which had hitherto befallen Amerasians in Vietnam. Perceived as oppressed refugees and not as America's long lost children, Amerasians failed to receive the understanding and acceptance for which they longed in the United States. The homecoming legislation and the immigration of thousands of Amerasians and their families to the United States, therefore, offered yet another harsh existence to them.

In the United States, they entered a country, which had its own particular history of oppression and discrimination against ethnically diverse peoples. Once immigrated, the Amerasians faced the obstacles of adapting to a culture that perceived them simply as yet another mixed race, a foreign-born minority group. An American culture of racial bias prevailed—the new Amerasian nation was unable to understand or accept them. Instead of finding a conclusion to a history of discrimination and pain, immigration into the United States became a new and yet different chapter in the Amerasian quest for (and denial) of belonging. In the words of lyricist Vienna Teng, “They’ve given up believing . . . they’ve turned aside our stories . . . these are the scars words carved on me . . . these are the scars silence carved on me . . . this is the fate [that has been] carved on me.”<sup>58</sup>

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Lisa Dixon. Interview by Email and telephone, January 27, 2004. Lisa Dixon, born Nguyen-Thi-Loum, is a Vietnamese Amerasian, Caucasian. Born in Vietnam during the early 1960s, Mrs. Dixon spent the first three years of her life in an orphanage. Brought to the United States in 1964 for adoption, Mrs. Dixon lived with her adopted family, possibly her aunt and uncle, until she was 18. Mrs. Dixon is now in her forties, is married and putting herself through college. She was able to provide invaluable insight as to the effects of discrimination against Amerasians in the United States, as well as the effects of being a racially mixed person in an adopted family, from here on cited as Dixon, Lisa. Interview.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas A. Bass. *Vietnamerica: The Children of America's Soldiers Battle for a Decent Homecoming*. (New York: Soho, 1996), 21, an amazing account of Bass' own experiences in dealing with the Amerasian quest for acceptance and home, from here on cited as Bass, *Vietnamerica*; also see Robert S. Mckelvey. *The Dust of Life: America's Children Abandoned in Vietnam*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 3, an excellent source for examining first hand testimony from Amerasians as to their lives and experiences, from here further cited as Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*; additionally consult Alain Boubilil and Claude-Michel Schonberg. *Miss Saigon*. (New York: 1989), an incredible tribute to the Vietnam War and the neglect suffered by the Amerasians in Vietnam, from here further cited as Boubilil and Schonberg, *Miss Saigon*.

<sup>3</sup> Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 40; for additional reading see Associated Press. "Editorials: Deadbeat U.S. Dads an International Issue." *The San Antonio Express News*, (July 4, 1993), an excellent article for examining the ramifications of the United States' historical unwillingness to recognize Vietnamese Amerasians as well as their Asian counterparts throughout the world, from here on cited as Press, "Deadbeat U.S. Dads;" Jenny Do. Interview by telephone. January 23, 2004. Mrs. Do is an Amerasian woman who immigrated to the United States when she was eighteen in 1984. She put herself through college and now works as a lawyer, representing as well as aiding Vietnamese Amerasians attain U.S. citizenship in the United States. She was able to provide insight into the life of an Amerasian in Vietnam and the United States as well as the deleterious effects that discrimination in both countries on the Amerasian psyche, from here further cited as Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>5</sup> Ha-Hoa Dang Interview by Email. January 23, 2004. Ms. Dang is instrumental in the Boat People SOS, an organization dedicated to helping Vietnamese refugees as well as Amerasians settle in the United States. The organization helps Amerasians immigrate into the United States and is currently very instrumental in organizing the Vietnamese Amerasian community in order to lobby U.S. Congress for the passage of

---

legislation that will grant Vietnamese Amerasians, who have U.S. citizen fathers, automatic U.S. citizenship as the children of Americans. Ms. Dang was able to provide information concerning the situation of Amerasians in Vietnam and the United States as well as the current lobby for Amerasian citizenship, from here further cited as Dang, Ha-Hoa. Interview; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 5, 32, 65, 84; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 181; additionally consult Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 3, 36; also see Edward Hegstrom. "Relocated Amerasians Find Opportunity in Port Arthur." *The Houston Chronicle* (October 13, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 3; Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>7</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 84; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 181; additionally consult Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 37; Dang, Ha-Hoa. Interview; Clint Haines. Interview by telephone. March 1, 2004. Mr. Haines served in the United States military during the Vietnam War, from 1970-1971, primarily in an Aviation unit. He is the father of an Amerasian that he is still searching for. In his search for his child Mr. Haines co-founded the Amerasian Child Find Network, an organization that assists Amerasians and reunite with their fathers. He is also instrumental in the current lobby for passage of legislation that will grant Amerasians automatic U.S. citizenship. Mr. Haines offered valuable information both as an Amerasian activist and father, and as a former Vietnam War veteran concerning his relationship with a Vietnamese woman while stationed in Vietnam, from here on cited as Haines, Clint. Interview; for additional information see Indira AR Lackshmanan. "The Children They Left Behind." *The Boston Globe* (October 26, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2003/10/26/the children they left behind/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2003/10/26/the_children_they_left_behind/), an excellent article dealing with the need that many perceive for Amerasian U.S. citizenship, from here on cited as Lackshmanan, "The Children They Left Behind"; concurrently see David Gonzalez. "For Afro-Amerasians, Tangled Emotions." *The New York Times* (November 16, 1992), an excellent source to examine the African American Amerasian experience, from here on cited as Gonzalez, "For Afro-Amerasians."

<sup>8</sup> Gaiutra Bahadur. "Citizenship Bill Holds Promise for Disenfranchised Amerasians." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (October 27, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.ledger-inquirer.com/mld/ledgerinquirer/news/7114364.htm>, an excellent article for examining the importance of U.S. citizenship for the Amerasians, from here on cited as Bahadur, "Citizenship Bill Holds Promise."

<sup>9</sup> Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 69; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 7, 32, 98.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

- 
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.
- <sup>14</sup> Haines, Clint. Interview.
- <sup>15</sup> Mang, Henry. Interview; Haines, Clint. Interview; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 5.
- <sup>16</sup> Interknowledge Corp. "Vietnam." *Asia Geographia* (February 2004). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.interknowledge.com/vietnam/>, an excellent source for investigating Vietnam's geography, history and culture, from here on cited as Interknowledge, "Vietnam;" additionally consult Jonathon Fox. "Lost Son: The Vietnamese Son of a Black American Soldier Faces a Long Trip Home." *The Dallas Observer* (June 21, 2001). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.dallasobserver.com/issues/2001-06-21/news.html>, an excellent article for examining the treatment of African American Amerasians, as well as growing up Amerasian in Vietnam and the traumas of moving to the United States, from here further cited as Fox, "Lost Son."
- <sup>17</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 60; Haines, Clint. Interview.
- <sup>18</sup> Haines, Clint. Interview.
- <sup>19</sup> Do, Jenny. Interview; also see Nguyen, *The Unwanted*, 277.
- <sup>20</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 5, 6, 60.
- <sup>21</sup> Katie Kelly. *A Year in Saigon: How I Gave Up My Glitzy Job in Television to Have the Time of My Life Teaching Amerasian Kids in Vietnam*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 220, an excellent memoir detailing the experiences of Amerasians in Vietnam from the viewpoint of their American teacher in Vietnam, filled with personal observations, commentaries and pictures of the author and her Amerasian students, from here on cited as Kelly, *A Year in Saigon*; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 8; Haines, Clint. Interview.
- <sup>22</sup> Haines, Clint. Interview.
- <sup>23</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 8, 10; also see Gaff Dolgin and Vincent Franco. *Daughter of Danang*. (Los Angeles: Interfaze Productions, 2002), an amazing documentary that chronicles an Amerasian woman's reunion with her

---

mother who sent her to the United States through Operation Baby Lift. Beautifully and accurately portraying the pain and trauma that occurs when the daughter and the mother reunite, from here on cited as Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*.

<sup>24</sup> Haines, Clint. Interview; Nguyen, Betty. Interview; also see Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*.

<sup>25</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 240-247.

<sup>26</sup> Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*; Nguyen, Betty. Interview; additionally see Fox, "Lost Son."

<sup>27</sup> Do, Jenny. Interview

<sup>28</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 11; also see Nguyen, *The Unwanted*, 45, 110-115.

<sup>29</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 10, 250-253.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69; also consult Chris Vaughn. "In Their Father's Land: Left in Vietnam Years Ago, Many Children of U.S. Soldiers are Struggling to Make New Lives in America." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 9, 2003), an excellent article for examining the pressures placed upon the families of Amerasians by the society and government of Vietnam, from here on cited as Vaughn, "In Their Father's Land."

<sup>31</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 128-129.

<sup>32</sup> Nguyen, *The Unwanted*, 45.

<sup>33</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 6, 9; also see Gaiutra Bahadur. "The Legacy of Vietnam, Lost in Translation." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (October 22, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/7070603.htm>, an excellent article concerning the experiences of Vietnamese Amerasians, their mothers and fathers who are searching for them.

<sup>34</sup> Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 69; also see Chris Vaughn. "Children of U.S. Soldiers in Vietnam come to U.S. to Find Dream." *The Sun Herald* (November 21, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/news/nation/7317855.htm>; additionally consult Dale M. Simmons. "Amerasians from Vietnam Seeking New Life in Austin." *The Austin American Statesman* (July 3, 1989), an excellent article concerning the transition

---

of Amerasians when coming to the United States as well as the impact their lives in Vietnam have had on their emotional well being.

<sup>35</sup> Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 123; concurrently see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 210.

<sup>36</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 19, 24, 84, 146; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Nguyen, Betty. Interview; additionally consult Chris Vaughn. "Refugee Dedicated to Easing Citizenship for GI Kids from Vietnam." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 21, 2003), an excellent article concerning the Amerasian situation in Vietnam and the United States, from here further cited as Vaughn, "Refugee;" Dixon, Lisa. Interview.

<sup>39</sup> Dixon, Lisa. Interview.

<sup>40</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 46-47, 54, 82.

<sup>41</sup> Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 36, 39; Do, Jenny. Interview; additionally consult Bahadur, "Citizenship Bill Holds Promise."

<sup>42</sup> Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 36, 39.

<sup>43</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 4, 61, 123; Do, Jenny. Interview; concurrently see Nguyen, *The Unwanted*, 103.

<sup>44</sup> Haines, Clint. Interview; also see Lackshmanan, "The Children They Left Behind."

<sup>45</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 46-47, 123-124; for additional information see George Esper. "Children of War Caught Between Cultures: Born to U.S. Servicemen and Vietnamese Women in Wartime, Amerasian Children are the Products of Two Worlds-and Scorned by Both." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (June 26, 1994), an excellent article for examining the Amerasian situation, from here on cited as Esper, "Children of War."

<sup>46</sup> Haines, Clint. Interview.

<sup>47</sup> Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 45; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 149; Do, Jenny. Interview; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 104-105.

---

<sup>48</sup> Do, Jenny. Interview; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 104-105; additionally consult DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 149.

<sup>49</sup> Boubilil and Schonberg, *Miss Saigon*.

<sup>50</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 26, 74.

<sup>51</sup> Nguyen, *The Unwanted*, 240-241; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 99.

<sup>52</sup> Interknowledge, "Vietnam;" also consult DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 27-28.

<sup>53</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 100; also see Nguyen, *The Unwanted*, 251.

<sup>54</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 29, 102; also see Nguyen, *The Unwanted*, 251.

<sup>55</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 30; also see Nguyen, *The Unwanted*, 250.

<sup>56</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 29, 118; also see Nguyen, *The Unwanted*, 249.

<sup>57</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 29, 74.

<sup>58</sup> Vienna Teng. *Gravity*. (Tokyo: Vince Mercer, 2003).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *In Search of Homeland The Reality of Being Amerasian in the United States*

“Sometimes you feel, gosh I want to go home, but then you realize, there is no such thing as home.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1992, seventy-four Vietnamese Amerasians, as part of an experimental refugee resettlement program, *Welcome House*, were taken directly from Vietnam to the United States without the traditional six-month respite in the Philippines. Bass witnessed their arrival in Utica, New York, and remembers that one woman was in tears as she exited the plane. A local American news stations covering the arrival reported that the woman was shedding tears of joy because she was overwhelmingly happy to arrive, as Bass phrases it, in the “land of dreams.” In actuality, “the girl was crying because she was forced to leave her husband behind in Vietnam,” remembers Bass. Allowed entrance into the United States as refugees under the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987, the children of the Vietnam War, now adults, were faced with the nearly impossible challenge of assimilating into a country that did not understand them and for twelve years had refused to even recognize them.<sup>2</sup>

The reality of life in the United States, a country that has traditionally been unfavorably disposed towards immigrants as well as ethnically diverse and mixed race people, was in many cases as harsh as it had been in Vietnam. Unaccepted by the American mainstream, unaided by the American government that only assists the

Amerasians financially for six months as refugees, uneducated and with many unable to learn English, the United States is for the majority of Amerasians an isolated lonely existence. “They [Amerasians] are denied legitimacy as Vietnamese persons,” Anita Menghetti, of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, explains, “hope has been beaten out of them. [Bringing Amerasians to the United States] is just like taking any group of disenfranchised people from the United States and plopping them in a foreign culture and asking them to adapt.”<sup>3</sup>

France, Vietnam’s first Western trespasser, legitimized all Eurasian children in 1928. The French government granted them French citizenship, even if their fathers would not recognize them. When the French troops retreated from Vietnam in 1954, they took twenty-five thousand Eurasian children with them to France, all of whom were granted automatic French citizenship.

Conversely, France’s imperial successor waited twelve years to acknowledge the existence of the Vietnamese Amerasians. The thirty-year American presence in Vietnam is the largest contributing factor in the creation of the Vietnamese Amerasians and yet for twelve years, following the United States’ withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975, the government of the United States refused to recognize the Amerasians as children of Americans. Additionally, the United States refused to shoulder any responsibility for their plight in Vietnam; the government was especially reluctant to permit Amerasian immigration to the United States. “The care and welfare of these unfortunate children,” James Reston, from the Department of Defense, verbalized in a statement issued in 1970,

“has never been and is not now considered an area of [U.S.] government responsibility, nor an appropriate mission for the Department of Defense to assume.”<sup>4</sup>

The United States’ State Department also issued a similar statement at the conclusion of the Vietnam War that read: “they [Amerasians] could be children of British or Russians, or Africans. We weren’t the only ones in Vietnam.” The Amerasians were, “branded bastards in the country of their mothers,” journalist Indira AR Lackshmanan expresses, “[and] all but forgotten in the country of their fathers.” In fact, Bass asserts, leaving the Amerasians in Vietnam where they were discriminated against and ostracized, was actually beneficial in the United States’ “battle against Communism.” The government of the United States, Bass insists, “seemed pleased that American citizens were being held in Vietnam, since it offered yet more proof of Communist villainy.” “I think that the [U.S.] government and army did a lot to allow the situation of all those Amerasians being stuck in Vietnam to exist,” Clint Haines agrees, “and [the United States] even facilitated it to some extent.”<sup>5</sup>

Until 1979, only Vietnamese Amerasians with American passports or birth certificates, classified as Presumed Americans (PAMS) and American Citizens (AMCITS) were allowed to immigrate into the United States. In 1980, the United States, in conjunction with forty countries, initiated the Orderly Departure Program. This program allowed any individual, in the forty associated countries, who could prove political subjugation by his or her government to immigrate to the United States legally as refugees. In Vietnam, this program also applied to the PAMS and AMCITS Amerasians who qualified.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the lack of diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam, however, American processing offices for refugees exiting Vietnam were located in Thailand. Upon departure, refugees were detained in the Philippines where they were processed in centers designed to provide them with cultural, rudimentary English language and job training. Once processed, the refugees were resettled at designated cities throughout the United States.<sup>7</sup>

In 1982, the United States passed an Amerasian act that allowed immigration of Amerasians into the United States. The act was effective for all Asian nations save Vietnam. As of 1982, the United States and Vietnam did not maintain diplomatic ties and, according to Bass, the United States refused to communicate directly with the Vietnamese government—still perceived as the enemy. “They [the United States] sent a message to the Vietnamese.” Explains Kyle Hörst, a United Nation’s Repopulation Officer: “If we have to talk to you directly about Amerasians we don’t want ‘em.” According to Bass, until 1987 the United States’ State Department placed heavy quotas on Vietnamese Amerasian immigration. Concurrently, the State Department succeeded in killing two bills in Congress designed to ease Amerasian immigration into the United States. By 1986, there was a backlog of twenty-five thousand Vietnamese refugee applications in the Orderly Departure Program, DeBonis charges, and thus Amerasian applications were removed; they were effectively prohibited from leaving Vietnam. In 1985, he adds, one thousand four hundred ninety-eight Amerasians immigrated to the United States through the Orderly Departure Program. But in 1986, the number had

fallen to five hundred seventy-eight, with only two hundred thirteen Amerasians departing Vietnam for the United States in 1987.<sup>8</sup>

In 1987, students at Huntington High School in Long Island, New York, read an article in *Newsday Magazine* that featured a disabled Vietnamese Amerasian named Le Van Minh. He lived on the streets of Ho Chi Minh City and survived by begging. These students were moved by the account of Le Van Minh. So much so that they began petitioning their congressman, Robert Mrazek, a former Vietnam War veteran to help the Amerasians in Vietnam. Mrazek served on the House Appropriations Committee that oversaw the Orderly Departure Program. Their letters as well as the plight of Le Van Minh moved him so profoundly that he flew to Vietnam. There he found Le Van Minh and transported him to the United States, where Minh was adopted by a family in New York State. Mrazek, moved by this experience, drafted what would become the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987.<sup>9</sup>

Public opinion across the United States was stirred by journalists' accounts of the Amerasians in Vietnam and a number of Americans began calling for the government to take action and ease the suffering of the Amerasians. Dewey Pendergass, an official in the U.S. State Department, issued these words in 1987: "It's a pity that they [Amerasians] were left there in the first place to languish . . . we can't do anything about that now, but we're trying to make things as right as we can."<sup>10</sup>

The Amerasian Homecoming Act went into effect on March 21, 1988. Under its provisions, Vietnamese Amerasians could immigrate to the United States as refugees based on their American paternity. An amendment in 1990, allowed Amerasian families

and spouses to immigrate as well. The act was enforced for any Vietnamese Amerasian born between January 1, 1952, and January 1, 1976. As mentioned earlier, because they were treated as refugees, they spent an initial six months in the Philippine Refugee Processing center. Again English instruction was provided as well as job training after which they were settled in twenty designated cities throughout the United States. Unfortunately, and ironically, as the number of Amerasian refugees increased, the promised programs decreased. The Philippine refugee centers degenerated into crime-ridden holding camps. There, the Amerasians were left for long, sometimes undetermined amounts of time in small unsanitary row houses. Malnutrition, dehydration, illness and crime were common. “The Amerasians were hurt more in these refugee centers,” attests Jenny Do, “than many had been in Vietnam.”<sup>11</sup>

The Amerasian Homecoming Act evolved in much the same manner as the refugee centers. Initially promising salvation, it eroded into a breeding ground for corruption, lies, and false promises—“a good piece of legislation that for a number of reasons has not worked well,” Clint Haines attests. One of the main failures of the legislation, asserts *International Adoption Agency*, is that it fails to address “the sexual behavior of overseas American servicemen and [or] seek to prevent more Amerasians from being born into a life of illegitimacy and poverty.”<sup>12</sup>

Another major malfunction in the act is the procedure by which Amerasians are processed. “There are three ways you can be declared Amerasian,” Clint Haines explains, “one is to have affidavits from your father. The second is documents, letters, and third the appearance of being Amerasian.” Bass, witnessed the procedure by which

the American processing centers determine whether an applicant is half-American and accepted for immigration or only half-Vietnamese and thus rejected. He explains the incredible and absurd procedure:

The first interviewee is a nineteen year old boy . . . he is questioned about his birth certificate, which bears his mother's but not his father's name . . . the mother is questioned about her relationship with Sambuno [the father] . . . the two interviewers squint at the family, trying to pick out the resemblances and disparities. Their future hangs on whether an olive-skinned kid with black hair and eyes is going to pass for being half-Hawaiian . . . she [interviewer] leads him down the corridor, taking him from office to office, where he gets a thumbs-up or thumbs-down signal from the five other interviewers. "He's probably a Filipino," she says. Young Sambuno and his family are rejected.<sup>13</sup>

American public opinion was initially overpoweringly in favor (perhaps superficially) of Amerasian immigration, Clint Haines asserts, and the American processors and their Vietnamese staff were incredibly lenient in letting Amerasians into the program. Customarily, they would base the evidence simply on appearance and therefore many non-Amerasians were accepted into the program. In fact, Bass cites that one man chosen for the previously mentioned *Welcome House* program in 1992, was clearly Chinese in appearance and in his late sixties.<sup>14</sup>

This leniency naturally created a great deal of corruption. Haines asserts that many times acceptance into the Homecoming program was contingent more on bribery than evidence of Amerasian genetics. "You can raise a dog with food [as] you can raise a human with money," author Nobuhiro Watsuki emphasizes. In 2002, Amerasian Activist Gil Watts collected over one hundred Amerasian files that had been rejected because the Amerasian were too poor "to pay their way through," Johnson reveals. Subsequently for

those Amerasians who are homeless, illiterate or too poor to pay for processing, immigration to the United States is an almost unimaginable fantasy.<sup>15</sup>

Another form of corruption “infected” the Homecoming program. Acceptance under the Homecoming Act was based on the American appearance of the Amerasian. This provided the Amerasians and (as of 1990 their families) the opportunity to immigrate to the United States. Amerasians in Vietnam “went from being Bui Doi, ‘the dust of life’ to ‘golden children,’” Bass articulates, “endowed with the power to fly themselves and their family members around the world.” Many Vietnamese families, Clint Haines believes, literally bought Amerasians as passports to the United States. “Let me give you the scenario,” he explains, “I am an Amerasian, I want to go to the States, but I have no money, so I go and apply and I get denied, or I want to apply but I can’t because I don’t have the money. So two things happen,” he suggests. “I am contacted directly by a family or a person we call a fixer, typically a woman, who will arrange for me to become part of a family.” Haines continues, “what they do is, they go in and talk to the people that take care of the family registry books, next thing you know I . . . [an] Amerasian . . . [am] now on their book as their child. Next thing you know this family’s children, the mother and father, they all get to go to the United States, they have money and they basically have bought this Amerasian.”<sup>16</sup>

Kim an Amerasian was taunted and ostracized throughout her entire life in her village because she was Amerasian. When the Amerasian Homecoming Act was passed, she became, as Mckelvey reveals, the most sought after individual in her village. Almost every family, he asserts, was courting her, attempting to persuade her to marry into their

family. “Whoever married her,” Mckelvey explains, “could take his family to the United States.” DeBonis insists that a number of Amerasians complete the processing procedure with their real families and then pass the forms to another family at the airport. “In this way,” he asserts, “an Amerasian, changing his [or her] name and using easily obtainable falsified documents, can sell himself [or herself] many times and realize a tidy profit.”<sup>17</sup>

And yet, this “golden status” for Amerasians, as human passports under the Amerasian Homecoming Act, was swift to disappear once the families exited Vietnam. “Many of these people [Amerasians] came over here with paper families.” Jenny Do recalls, “and once they were out of Vietnam they [the Vietnamese family] would abandon them [Amerasian].” “Suddenly the little princes and princesses were turned out of their houses to return to their wandering lives,” Bass insists. “Families that were warm and caring in Vietnam, when their own interests were at stake, often turn hostile and abusive now that the Amerasians have served their purposes.” DeBonis adds, “the Amerasians who have often left their real families behind once again find themselves ostracized.” Amerasian Loc, who immigrated to the United States with a “paper family” testifies, “as soon as we got to California, they turned on me and threw me out. I feel like I’m in Hell.”<sup>18</sup>

Corruption and behind the scenes exchanges of money became so blatant that acceptance into the Amerasian program became an arbitrary, unscientific endeavor. “These people [Amerasians] arrive with documents that are so new they are still wet, and we’re supposed to believe that it’s a birth certificate from 1967?” Cuu Long, an Orderly Departure Program officer explains procedures in this manner: “It gets so confusing that

sometimes we just sit there and say, ‘ok you and you and you have permission to leave, you and you and you don’t.’”<sup>19</sup>

Amerasian immigration became common in the late 1990s, and the American public lost the fervent passion with which it had initially greeted Amerasian immigrants. Immigration policies were under scrutiny in the late 1990s; the leniency ingrained in the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987 was deemed unacceptable. Clint Haines refers to it as the pendulum swinging in the opposite direction and acceptance became extraordinarily strict, to the point that even obviously legitimate Amerasians were denied. “I have seen pictures of people, Amerasians, who have been denied [entry into the United States] based on the fact that they do not appear to be Amerasian,” Haines explains, “and there is no way in God’s green earth that I can legitimately say that they are not Amerasian.”<sup>20</sup>

In order to qualify as refugees for American immigration, most Amerasians were thus required to have additional proof, such as letter, pictures, and documents from the father proving paternity. As previously discussed, the majority of Amerasian mothers destroyed such evidence in order to escape persecution in Vietnam, and therefore their children could not prove an “American connection.” They were denied immigration to the United States.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, under the Homeland Security legislation, entrance into the United States requires an FBI background check. Their investigation requires six months and up to a year to complete. As of January 2003, the Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987, which was originally only intended to last two

years, was canceled. “It has to do somewhat with the whole issue of terrorism, they don’t know how to proceed.” Clint Haines clarifies, “the State Department would like to do away with whole thing; they were opposed to it initially. So I don’t really trust the State Department and I would certainly believe that their agenda is to get rid of it and get it out of their hair.”<sup>21</sup>

Far from experiencing the American dream, the crushing lack of education and inability to attain gainful employment has relegated the majority of those Vietnamese Amerasians who immigrated, “to America’s inner-cities,” according to Bass. “For the majority [of Amerasians] that have returned to the U.S.” *Amerasian World.com* notes, “life in the ‘Amerasian Fatherland’ has not been easy.” “When they came here,” professor Fredrick Bemak, of George Mason University, insists, “they had the dreams of having a new life, but they found that often times things were quite difficult, they did not have the skills to become economically self-sufficient.” He continues, “many of them fell into much deeper psychological turmoil, we did not in the United States support them enough to get them on their feet.”<sup>22</sup>

Forced to work as factory laborers, fast food attendants, hotel maids, construction workers (or other menial labor) because of their lack of English language skills and education, the majority of Amerasians still struggle. Just as in Vietnam, they remain on the edge of poverty. Mckelvey reports the testimony of one Amerasian living in New York City. “From the time I landed at Kennedy airport, I have seen no pretty white houses, or clean green streets only this, the South Bronx. I live with three other Amerasians in a small, dirty apartment,” he laments, “we can’t find jobs because we

speak English so poorly. I am afraid to walk around because it's so dangerous. I wish I had known what it would be like." Ha-Hoa Dang explains, "a large number of Amerasians possess the same characteristics as other low-income communities across the U.S. They have little to no education, limited job skills, and work multiple jobs so they are unable to gain valuable skills to get out of the vicious cycle." "Once here," Bass continues, "their options are limited by language, finances and a lack of familiarity with American culture. Many find themselves in an ironic predicament of having left Vietnam to escape a life on the fringe of Vietnamese society to find themselves in the same situation in one of the various little Saigon's around the United States."<sup>23</sup>

"I thought no one worked in America and still had lots of money," Caucasian Amerasian Thang, residing in Utica, New York, and working in a factory testifies, "but now I see that most people work all the time and are still poor." Tam, a homeless Amerasian, sleeps in shelters or on the street—a personification of the Amerasians' unfulfilled American dreams. "A street urchin in Vietnam," Mydans articulates, "he became a homeless man in this country [United States]." He continues, "the closest [Tam] came to finding the father or the identity he sought was the recent night he shared with two Vietnam veterans at a homeless shelter." "I wanted a new life here [United States]," Tam expresses, "but I didn't go up. I went down." Tam, disillusioned, saved money, paid the seventy-dollar processing fee and returned to Vietnam.<sup>24</sup>

"Everywhere in the world is exactly the same," Amerasian Thay Thi believes. She refuses to emigrate from Vietnam because, as she says, "I would have to do the same work in the United States." Lisa Dixon, a Caucasian Amerasian who was adopted by an

American family when she was three years old, concurs. “I had to work harder,” she explains, “because the standards of Americans are that of a good ol’ boy society.” Jenny Do, also Caucasian Amerasian, immigrated to the United States at the age of eighteen in the early 1980s. She worked herself through a university and is now a lawyer. She explains that many of her Amerasian peers in the United States are now on welfare or, perhaps in prison. “I am one of the few that survived growing up and [who] is not permanently damaged.” She adds, “there are many of my Amerasian peers who were so damaged in Vietnam, they were beaten so badly that they cannot cope with being in a foreign country. They come from a broken family and they came to another broken family, their lives are permanently shattered.” She sadly concludes, “there are very few Amerasians, you can name it on your fingers who actually made it, who can say yes I am Amerasian, but I am ok.”<sup>25</sup>

Life in the American fatherland, therefore, is for many Amerasians a lonely and isolated existence. Vaughn reports that for the majority of Amerasians, “finding a home in the United States has, in many ways been as elusive as it was in Vietnam. The exuberant optimism faded quickly into the reality that being accepted by American society, gaining U.S. citizenship and finding the father are probably fantasies.” “Here I know nobody,” Amerasian Nguyen states with sadness. In the United States he is a box stacker at a pretzel factory. In the United States he feels, “very alone, one day I’m sick, nobody here for me, my family is in Vietnam.”<sup>26</sup>

DeBonis cites a study conducted in 1989 that illustrates the tragedy of those Amerasians who immigrated to the United States without their mothers. These

Amerasians have an especially difficult time assimilating to life in the American fatherland. The stress of being in a country that fails to understand what the Amerasians experienced in Vietnam, or how to racially categorize and accept them is exacerbated by their lack of familial support. Tue Dinh, an Amerasian program director for YMCA International Services explains that, “many [Amerasians] feel alone—they feel that there is no one that loves them.” Lisa Dixon, who has lived in the United States for most of her life expresses, “I have not yet found somebody who will offer me their friendship.”<sup>27</sup>

The 1989 report cited by DeBonis also reveals that those Amerasians whose fathers extend from American minority groups, specifically African American, have a more difficult time finding acceptance within the American culture. “Almost a quarter of Amerasians were fathered by African Americans.” Ha-Hoa Dang explains, “they are more harshly discriminated against [in the United States] because of their dark skin.” Hispanic Amerasian Anh Thi Lopez, who immigrated to the United States in 1975 and works as an at home English as a Second Language instructor for the Dallas Independent School District in Dallas, Texas, relates that she is not accepted by either the Vietnamese community or the American mainstream. As others, she adds, “growing up as an Amerasian in the States is a lonely world.”<sup>28</sup>

But many Amerasians refer to a lack of acceptance and understanding in the United States. Betty Nguyen, who immigrated with her parents to the United States from Vietnam in 1975, does not feel she has been the victim of racism but remembers being called “chink” by the other students and, “in school I was teased a little bit because my eyes were a little more slanted than the other kids.” She continues, “it’s hard, the

discrimination comes on both sides, one I am not Asian enough. Two I am Asian, so what is it? It is amazing!” She exclaims, “in this society in which we are supposed to embrace everyone when you are a mixed race it is difficult because most folks don’t [know] how to look at you, what to put you in, how to file you away, the discrimination comes at both ends.” “I have people on a daily basis [who] ask me my nationality.” Lisa Dixon agrees, “there are people who think that I am Hispanic and speak to me in Spanish and I don’t understand, or people from Thailand, the Philippines or Japan who will speak to me in their native language and I won’t understand.” David Dixon, Lisa’s husband, explains, “because she was Amerasian, Lisa did not fit the mold of the community she was growing up in, she had to try harder to fit in because her race was not part of the good old boy network.” Program Director for Child Services at the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Dr. Jolie Maconald offers this perspective: “When the [Amerasians] come here, they find that their fantasies that they are American are untrue.” “There is no place in the American framework where people who are multiracial and multiethnic background can be acknowledged,” according to Ramona Douglas, of the Association of Multi-ethnic America.<sup>29</sup>

Gaff Dolgin and Vincent Franco interviewed the second grade teacher of Amerasian Heidi Bub for their documentary *Daughter from Danang*. She spoke frankly: “We had black children and we had white children, but we had not ever had one like Heidi before.” The inability for the United States of America to accept the mixed race Amerasians from Vietnam extends even into the prison system. Amerasian Nguyen, imprisoned in Fort Worth, Texas, is “caught between the Hispanic and African American

gangs who view him as Asian,” journalist Barry Schatler contends, “he also has faced open enmity from Cambodian and Laotian detainees who see him as Anglo.” In the words of Amerasian My, “I don’t know what nationality I am—I’m Amerasian.” This confusion over categorizing Amerasians is so deeply ingrained in American society that sometimes even the parents of Amerasians cannot agree on the ethnicity or nationality of their Amerasian child. Pham and John Yankevich, Bass writes, were reunited and married after a fifteen-year separation. The ethnic identity of their son Manh had caused a rupture, however.<sup>30</sup>

Pham believes that her son is an American because his father is, but “the only American food he likes is Jell-O,” argues John. He rationalizes that his son Manh is not American because “he has Vietnamese table manners, a big slab of meat on his plate grosses him out. He doesn’t like loud behavior or boisterous physical gestures, I think he thinks of himself as Vietnamese.” Such feelings are pervasive throughout the Amerasian American reality. Caucasian Amerasian Tran Van Hai says that the biggest irony in his life is that he is seen as “American by the Vietnamese and Vietnamese by the Americans.” “When I lived in my country, people say I’m not Vietnamese.” Recalls Amerasian Ann Marie Pham, “when I came to America, the American people don’t think I’m American. So I have a question: ‘Who am I?’” To Jenny Do, “the thing with Amerasians is that we have a problem with identity, we can’t select one or the other. The way I feel, I am a mixed person, I am an Amerasian, Vietnamese Amerasian. I have both cultures within me.” Thus irrevocably caught between two different cultures, the struggle for identity continues.<sup>31</sup>

Lisa Dixon explains that because she is Amerasian in the United States, “I have to work harder than most people to just get the very basics things in life.” Jenny Do also asserts, “my life has always been that you have to prove yourself, you constantly have to prove that you are worthy just to stand side by side with another human being.” She continues, “sometimes I forget that I am not American; sometimes you assimilate so well that you feel you are a part of this huge group, you forget that you are different. It is how people treat you that reminds you that you are [different].” Amerasians were “shunned in their motherland, where they are deemed ‘the dust of life,’ and ignored in their fatherland, where they are regarded as an embarrassment,” verbalizes Ha-Hoa Dang. “Even today I have a hard time adjusting.” Hispanic Amerasian Ann Thi Lopez, who has lived in the United States since 1975, reiterates, “I can’t relate to the Caucasian race, and I can’t relate to the Vietnamese race.” She asserts, “it just seems like you are by yourself, and no one understands you except another Amerasian.” Amerasian activist Than Tran speaks for many when he relates that in the United States, Amerasians “needed to work twice as hard because first they were seen as ‘foreigners’ in a foreign land, and second, they were considered just another minority.” “They are stuck, they are all stuck,” concludes Mydans, “to the extent that they find an identity here [United States], the identity is: unwanted.” Such words ring with irony in the shadow of the American promise: “Give me your tired, your poor. Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”<sup>32</sup>

Immigration from Vietnam to the United States, therefore, was not an escape from discrimination, but simply an introduction to a new form of it. As African American

Amerasian Vu commented before immigrating to the United States, “I worry about discrimination in America from Americans. I have seen it in the TV and I read about it in the newspaper. I am very worried about that. I have seen the white and the black people fighting together.” Lisa Dixon, who came to the United States in the 1960s, remembers being harassed daily because of her connection to the Vietnam War. “I had my hair pulled, spat on, racial remarks, such as: Go home and kill your own kind, go back you boat person [and] racial jokes about my eyes.” Lily Dam, a Vietnamese American who worked with Amerasian students as an ESL instructor in Dallas, Texas, recalls that “one assistant principal made the comment that these children were ‘results of some GIs’ one-time past time deals,’ implying they were children of prostitutes.” Even as an adult Lisa Dixon has been subjected to discrimination. “I have been followed in mall stores, as an adult in suspicion of theft by store detectives. I wait longer in lines even if there are only two of us, if the other is Caucasian, I definitely wait longer.” She explains, “when I go to restaurants they always place me near the back of the restaurant no matter where I am in the States or the amount of people that are in the place.” Jenny Do explains that in American society it is not so much her mixed race that triggers the discrimination, but that she is an immigrant and Vietnamese:

You are constantly being reminded about your ethnic identity. Anything at all that comes up and does not make sense your ethnic background comes out first and people make you conscious of yourself. Sometimes when I am at work and encounter problems people say, “oh the culture differences.” If there is a disagreement I say, “I disagree because I disagree it has nothing to do with my ethnic background.” When people lose a debate they bring that out, they say “oh you don’t understand, this is how we do it in this country.”<sup>33</sup>

Not only are Amerasians subjected to discrimination in mainstream American society, but also the resentment against the Vietnamese by Amerasians and the prejudices and exclusion suffered by Amerasians by Vietnamese are ever present in the American fatherland. “The Vietnamese refugees did not welcome them into the community in the United States because they were Vietnamese Amerasian.” Explains Fredrick Bemak, “but the only language they spoke was Vietnamese so that was their community.” Tung Joe Nguyen remembers that after resettling in the United States he became involved with a Vietnamese girl, but her family, “kept tellin’ her not to see me because I’m Amerasian. They put me down, they put my mom down. They say that we are nothing, and she [his Vietnamese girlfriend] deserves better.” He explains, “they were saying that my family is low, that my mom had been with an American . . . she must have been a bar girl, we broke up and I left school.” In the words of Amerasian Charlie Brown, “I hate the Vietnamese. If I had a gun, I’d shoot them all.”<sup>34</sup>

African American Amerasian Dang also refuses to live near other Vietnamese Americans. “Inside them,” he asserts, “I know they think the same as the people in Vietnam.” In fact, Vaughn remembers walking with Dang on a street in Fort Worth, Texas, when a Vietnamese boy rode past them, yelling obscenities at Dang and screaming that he was ugly.<sup>35</sup>

Lisa Dixon explains that she only receives acceptance from those from South Vietnam; she refers to them as “natural Vietnamese.” The ongoing exclusion from the Vietnamese community in the United States foisted upon Amerasians, like Jenny Do, is crystallized in her reminiscence of her college experiences as compared to those of a

Vietnamese female friend who immigrated to the United States after her. “I never met any Vietnamese classmates who would be friends with me and I had to work really hard.” Jenny remembers, “I made friends with other non-Vietnamese Asian people.”<sup>36</sup>

In contrast, when Jenny’s friend from Vietnam immigrated to the United States and enrolled in the same university she was bombarded with support from Vietnamese students. Jenny explains that she was stunned by the amount of Vietnamese comrades her friend had made. To Jenny, her friend is a very shy, reserved individual and “Vietnamese would approach her, come to her and be her friend and tell her ‘oh you’re a new comer, you need this and this’ and she would automatically have support.” Jenny Do remembers, “we had the same classes, the same teachers and yet [my friend] collected all this data about who [to] take this class from or who [to] avoid, the ins and outs, campus clues about how to survive on campus [provided for her by] the Vietnamese students.” Jenny laments, “I never got that, she [the friend] got all this support and I would ask, ‘what the heck, how did you get that?’” Her friend, “would just sit in the cafeteria and people would approach her, and I realized that I never got that from the Vietnamese.” Jenny concludes that as an Amerasian, “in order to be part of the Vietnamese community, I have to consciously inject myself to get accepted; you don’t automatically get the acceptance.”<sup>37</sup>

As the Vietnam War came to a conclusion, Amerasian activist Mary Nguyen explains, “the U.S. government allowed seven adoption agencies to bring children out of Vietnam.” The Amerasian children, granted passage to the United States for adoption also suffered the feelings of isolation and seclusion from the lack of American acceptance

and understanding, endemic in adult Amerasians immigrants. “I always wanted the feeling of being loved no matter what,” Heidi Bub, an adopted Amerasian explains, “I never got that with Anne [adopted mother]. I didn’t have a loving parent.” Heidi Bub, born Hiep, came to the United States as part of Operation Baby Lift. An American woman adopted her at the age of seven. “They put us in a room, you know kinda like the rooms you go in when you go to the pet store and you go see the pets.” Heidi describes as she remembers the building in which she met her American mother: “[A pet store is] what it felt like to me, and of course I didn’t understand a word she said.” Heidi summarizes her early relationship with her adopted mother: “I used to ask her for my mother.”<sup>38</sup>

Caucasian Amerasian Lisa Dixon was also adopted—in 1965, at the age of three. Lisa believes that her “new” parents are possibly her aunt and uncle because of “Christmas letters that my adopted parents talk of me in, in 1960.” She explains, “they [adopted parents] knew about me clearly before I was born.” Her adopted mother, Judy Coddington, refutes this. She is not sure that Lisa, who has a large flat nose, long square jaw and wavy hair, is even Amerasian. She remembers that she and her husband chose Lisa from a picture because, as she told reporter Zoë Von Ende, in 1965, “she was small and pathetic and seemed to say, ‘I need somebody to love me.’” Lisa’s adopted mother recalls that conveying Lisa to the United States was nearly impossible. Lisa was evacuated from Vietnam with all American civilians in 1965, before the adoption was final. In Judy Coddington’s words the adoption of Lisa was, “a miracle really.”<sup>39</sup>

Both Lisa and Heidi admit that life with an American adopted family was, as Heidi phrases it, “lonely.” “She [adopted mother] hardly ever told me she loved me. I was never hugged,” remembers Heidi. Unfortunately, Lisa Dixon’s story is similar: “I was constantly reminded I was not a natural child and that I came over from Vietnam.” She exudes heartache: “I was never hugged.” Punishments by her adopted mother were harsh, according to Heidi, “spankings were with a belt or what was the closest thing she could reach.” She continues, “she told me she felt like I owed her the life she had given me.” Her adopted family meted out abuse and maltreatment to Lisa Dixon. “I was harshly punished if I did not comply with the demands of [my] adopted mom.” Lisa, likewise remembers that her adopted mother, “would lock me in the basement without food, no lights. This occurred for hours at a time. My friend told me to stand up to them. This is when all hell broke loose. I was beaten by the adopted brothers and mom more and more.” “Her adopted family basically has a double standard for how they treat their own natural kids versus Lisa who they adopted.” David Dixon explains, “Lisa had to earn her keep; she had to do things the natural [born] kids did not have to do. And then they would parade Lisa as an act of publicity like a token to say ‘we adopted somebody look we are special.’” “I was not allowed to use the credit cards or go shopping at the mall and buy new clothes. The adopted mom shopped at discount stores or the Goodwill for my clothes,” Lisa explains. “I have three other Adopted siblings. They did not have to do chores ever.” Lisa recalls, and “I had to polish the silver when the adopted parents had to entertain. I had to clean the three-story house. I was made to cook for the adopted

brothers when adopted mom was not around,” she continues. “If I did not comply, they would pull my hair and smack me around.”<sup>40</sup>

Frequently, adopted families failed to understand the discrimination and lack of acceptance suffered by their Amerasian adopted children. “Many of these children had a hard time finding acceptance in the United States,” Mary Nguyen explains, adding, “these children were painful reminders of the war. They were truly the children of the dust.” Her mother moved Heidi, who as a child is described by her husband and Girl Scout Leader as “very oriental,” to Pulaski, Tennessee, ironically the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan—an event which is annually celebrated with a parade and town fair. She remembers that her mother “would tell me I’m not supposed to talk about this [being Amerasian]. This is not something you tell anybody; if anybody asks you where you were born,” Heidi recalls, “you tell them Columbia, South Carolina.”<sup>41</sup>

Judy Coddington, on the other hand, fails to remember Lisa’s maltreatment in Littleton, Colorado, “I only had one neighbor who behaved strangely and said odd things. She was a really odd woman,” Judy states. “But we were active in our church and they were very supportive.” Lisa’s adopted father, Dean Coddington, affirmed that Lisa was accepted and did not encounter any discrimination because of her ethnicity. In an article for the local newspaper in 1968, he notes that “almost from the day she came, she has been the best adjusted member of the family.” He admits that because Lisa is, “so different looking” she received more attention. “That was a problem for our other children,” but, as journalist Zoë Von Ende reported, the Coddington’s “corrected it by making sure the others get their share.” Lisa remembers that she was maltreated in

school because of her ethnicity and that her adopted mother, unsympathetically “would tell me to shrug it off,” Lisa explains, “even when the ridiculing became physical.” The Coddingtons and Lisa offer far different perceptions about Lisa’s coming of age in Colorado. Perhaps the Coddingtons opted to overlook certain aspects of Lisa’s maltreatment and hardships as an Amerasian child in the United States.<sup>42</sup>

“In Vietnam, many people told me, ‘you get out of our country. You are dirty.’” Amerasian Ngoc Hieu remembers, “I tell them, ‘how do you know that? I am somebody. I have my dream father.’” “Many [Amerasians] have had the impression that once they get to the United States,” DeBonis writes that “waving snapshots [of their fathers] will almost cause their fathers to appear.” Finding their American fathers rests in the hearts of many Amerasians—it was their ultimate goal. “It is very important to find the father,” Lisa Dixon believes, “for medical reasons, if you don’t know the medical history of your parents it makes it very hard to diagnose what’s wrong with you. Also for the value of who you are as a person, you need to know who your parents are and why you came into this world.” Amerasian My Len Ly agrees, stating, “I always want to know who my father is . . . even if he is homeless, if he has his own family, his own life and whether he loves me or not I would like to know him.” Clint Haines, who helps Amerasians locate their fathers, explains that many Amerasians “just want a picture so [they] can show [their] kids.” He confers, “they are not insisting that they meet their father, but they would love to.”<sup>43</sup>

Even though, as Haines states, “there are a lot of fathers that want to find their kids and there are a lot of kids who want to find their fathers,” the realities of finding

their American fathers are for many Amerasians hopeless fantasies left unfulfilled. The reality of having to find employment, learn English, and survive in their new homeland usurps the priority of finding the father. “At the beginning they really had high hope that they would find their fathers,” explains Lily Dam, “after reality sank in, they seemed to be resign[ed] to the fact that they had to help their mothers cope with life here.”

Unfortunately for Amerasians, DeBonis insists that for many Vietnam War veterans, “the appearance of a child and spouse from twenty years past is not welcome.” He concludes that only two percent of Amerasian father searches end happily.<sup>44</sup>

The United States’ Veteran’s Administration issued an affidavit in the 1980s, concerning Amerasian family reunification that states: “All precautions should be taken to protect the veterans from unwanted and embarrassing information.” It was not until 1990, when Shirly McGlade, director of War Babes, a British organization that assists English-American children of American servicemen conceived during the Second World War reunite with their fathers, sued the U.S. Department of Defense in U.S. District Court that the United States government allowed Amerasians access to information concerning former veterans. During the trial the Pentagon’s defense council stated: “Fatherhood of an illegitimate child during youth is at worst embarrassing and at minimum highly personal. Contact by an individual, particularly a long-lost illegitimate child is clearly intrusive.” Sexual relationships, however are also “intrusive,” particularly those from which children are conceived. McGlade’s victory overturned the oath of silence that had hitherto been applied by the United States government concerning paternity issues of any American serviceman.<sup>45</sup>

The decision to release paternal information, based on a child's right to know his or her family's medical history, a child's right to possible inheritance, as well as a child's right to establish his or her identity, was a class action case. All files concerning wartime paternity, including the Vietnam War, were opened. But still, the task of finding the father proved unattainable for many Amerasians. Amerasian Manivong lives in New York State, works in a factory and resides in a tiny apartment. He attempted to contact his father multiple times but failed to receive any response. Clint Haines warns his Amerasian clients that even if the father is found, he could still refuse contact. Amerasian Ngoc Minh, who simply wanted to know who his father was, attempted to contact this man sixteen times. He was finally able to find him, but his father refused to talk to him. Ngoc contacted him again and remembers that his father, "yelled, 'don't ever call me again.'" To paraphrase William Faulkner, our past is never really past—but certain individuals, in this case the American fathers of Amerasians, seek to erase it, or at least escape it.<sup>46</sup>

Vaughn claims that the majority of Amerasians in the United States, "lead shadow lives, isolated from American life and Vietnamese communities by a chasm of illiteracy, language barriers, distrust, and discrimination." The lack of education prevalent in the Amerasian community segregates many from mainstream American society as well as opportunity in the United States. Journalist Sarah Moore documents that the majority of Amerasians arrive in the United States without the ability to read or write in Vietnamese. She describes a meeting that took place in Port Arthur, Texas, in which United States' Representative Nickolas Lampson polled a group of Vietnamese Amerasians asking how

many were computer literate. Moore explains that a small number of them raised their hands. The Representative next asked, “how many of them were unable to read or write in any language. More than half the people in the room raised their hands.” “Their eyes—speaking of both their Vietnamese and American heritage—are awash in desperation and sadness.” Describes Schatler, “‘I’ve always been neglected,’ says one Amerasian ‘and here, I can’t even speak the language.’”<sup>47</sup>

The harassment and discrimination, which prohibited many Amerasians from attending school in Vietnam, has long reaching ramifications in the United States. Isolated, they are unable to enter the majority culture in the United States because without a literate knowledge of Vietnamese, the task of learning the English language is virtually impossible. Unable to receive training for advanced careers, Amerasians in the United States, as in Vietnam, are relegated to the lowest strata of society. Their literacy deficiency also means that they are unable to become U.S. citizens. Since they cannot read or write, Amerasians cannot take the American citizenship test. In short, their futures in the fatherland are bleak.

“Here [United States-Dallas, Texas], they [Amerasians] were ridiculed by other students due to their poor English skills,” remembers Lily Dam. “‘You look American and you don’t know English?’ was the frequent remark.” Incidents unfolded in which Amerasian students were not allowed to participate in such programs as free lunches. The “language barrier,” she explains, “prevented them from completing the required forms to qualify for the program.” Nguyen Dinh Thang, Director of Boat People SOS, reinforces the idea that “Amerasians are totally excluded from mainstream society in the

United States. They cannot sign a check, read street signs, and cannot take the test to drive.” Bass states: “Quoc asks me to help him learn English. Being illiterate in the language of the world around him is starting to get to him. He is looking for a different kind of power than that offered by the tough guy swagger.” Amerasians who learn English are empowered: they possess, “the power to make a doctor’s appointment, buy a car, rent an apartment.” Bass concludes: “Quoc is asking me to help him become an American.”<sup>48</sup>

The task is so great it is overwhelming. Learning English and attending ESL programs are enormously difficult for most Vietnamese Amerasians. Vietnamese and English are markedly divergent languages: Bang, the mother of an Amerasian, explains, “when I got to America, the language sounded like barking dogs.” American high school and adult ESL programs, explain DeBonis and Bahadur, are not designed for individuals who are illiterate in their native tongue. English as a Second Language programs are also often located in remote locations that require access to long distance transportation. For many Amerasians transportation remains luxurious and they frequently are forced to work many hours at multiple jobs simply to live. Attending classes is virtually impossible. Jenny Do reminisces that in order to attend ESL courses, at night after work, she would have to take a bus two and a half hours to and from the language center. She describes the ordeal as “a five hour bus ride for an hour and a half of studying.” Thanh, an Amerasian, came to the United States alone; he was sent to Washington D.C. to work for ten dollars a week by the refugee center. Because he was only financially assisted under the refugee program for six months and was then placed on a waiting list for

Welfare support, he was forced to beg for food. He remembers that in order to attend ESL courses he had to walk an hour. Heidi Bub, who immigrated to the United States at the age of seven, was placed in kindergarten. Her Girl Scout leader remembers, “Heidi spent an extra year in Kinder because she no speak the English good.” Without English language skills, Amerasians are presented an unusual difficulty in attempting to assimilate into the American mainstream.<sup>49</sup>

Edward Hegestrom speaks to the issue in this manner: “Education appears to have come too late. Almost all of the Amerasians are now in their thirties, and after being told they were inferior throughout their childhood, some seem resigned to remain illiterate the rest of their lives.” Jenny Do taught an ESL course in which, “many [Amerasians] did not have any concept of school, what it is like to sit in the classroom. I found out that many of them had no clue how to study.” She remembers, “if I teach them a set of vocabulary, the next day even though they want to learn they come in and they just draw a blank and I said ‘why just blank pages, why can’t you recall even one word I taught you,’ and they said, ‘you told us to go home and study but you did not tell us how to study. How do you study? We never learned this before!’” She expounds, “the concept of holding a pen and paper is foreign to them [Amerasians]. Many of them are no longer young . . . they had already survived living on the streets of Saigon; they already smoke twelve cigarette packs a day, and they had to fight each night to find a place to sleep. And here,” she laments, “they are told to go to school and not smoke, that does not work!”<sup>50</sup>

Consider the life of Duc, an Amerasian, he immigrated to the United States at the age of nineteen in 1989. In Vietnam, he was not allowed an education. Once in the United States, Duc was given one month of English instruction at the refugee center and then placed in the tenth grade. “It was too hard for me,” he explains, “I couldn’t understand anything.” He dropped out of school, and was convicted of “fighting an American,” he says, “who called me a chink on the street.” Upon his release from prison, Duc failed to find work because he could not read nor speak English. His prison term made matters even more difficult, for as a convict many were wary of employing him. Tung Joe Nguyen says that when he arrived in the United States, he was placed in middle school, “they say I have to take this test, but I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t read, I couldn’t write . . . I couldn’t speak a word of English. They put me in this class to try to teach me English, but I had no idea what they were talking about. I stayed in the seventh grade two months, because we got here in April,” he recalls, “the following year they just pushed me up to the eighth grade.” Tung Joe Nguyen was fortunate, however, and was tutored individually by a man who saw him in the street and became his Boy Scout leader. “He came to my house everyday and sat there teaching me one thing at a time.” Joe explains, “He is like a father to me because he taught me everything I know.” Compassion, however, for young men like Joe, was a sparse commodity.<sup>51</sup>

Amerasians who immigrated to the United States as children (either with their American fathers or as adopted orphans) often lost familiarity with their Vietnamese heritage. Many can neither remember the Vietnamese language nor relate to the culture. Heidi Bub’s Girl Scout leader boasts flippantly, “we made a Southerner out of her real

quick!” In fact, Dolgin and Franco document that Heidi, who professes that she is, “one hundred and one percent Americanized,” was completely disconnected from her Vietnamese culture. When she was reunited with her Vietnamese mother, she was unable to comprehend the values of her family and the demands that the Vietnamese culture placed upon her. She did not have any concept of filial piety and thus felt offended that her family expected her to recall her cultural roots and support the family’s efforts to honor ancestors. She was truly a child of the United States, and failed to comprehend that to her family she was also responsible for the funds necessary to build a shrine for her deceased grandmother. The loss of her Vietnamese roots is so extensive that she refuses to be bound by Vietnamese mores; she has repudiated all contact with her Vietnamese family.<sup>52</sup>

Betty Nguyen, who immigrated to the United States as an infant, relates a similar story: “I was very little when we came over to the United States and [I] don’t really remember much of my childhood in Vietnam.” She explains that when she and her family immigrated to the United States, “the goal was to speak English, to assimilate, to become American.” The excising of her Vietnamese culture, however, has left a void within her and her peers. She explains, “my generation and the younger generations have been given a big disservice because they have not been given their language; they have been taken from their culture.” She believes that “you need to learn to speak Vietnamese, you need to learn the culture because that is who you are.” Lisa Dixon, who came to the United States at the age of three, and was adopted by an American family, also professes that she has endured suffering from the lack of contact with her Vietnamese culture. “It

feels like you do not fit in ‘their’ [Vietnamese] culture or in the culture I was brought up. I have only learned about ‘their’ culture by watching, reading, through the internet and books.” Lisa explains, “I feel like I don’t have the feeling of ‘belonging’ or as a ‘participant’ of any society . . . I cannot even have dialect with my own culture.” Lisa continues, “so this has put me at odds with them as well. They see [me] more as a Vietnamese who’s racially mixed and given up her culture and is more American than anything else.” David Dixon injects that “her cultural disconnect is where she is hurting, whenever she goes to fill out an [employment, medical or government] application for personal history she has to put [that] she doesn’t know.”<sup>53</sup>

There are many Vietnamese Amerasians, however, who have found great success in the United States. “Many go through skill training programs at Job Corps and get good jobs.” According to DeBonis, “some have graduated from high school with honors and even college.” Caucasian Amerasian Kien Nguyen arrived in the United States in the early 1990s. According to journalist Hieu Tran Pham, Nguyen had two dollars in his pocket. He lived at the YMCA in New York City and worked as a waiter for fifty dollars a day. Diligently saving his earnings, he brought his mother and siblings to New York City. He worked his way through college, graduating from New York University College of Dentistry in 1998. In his memoir, *Unwanted*, Kien writes about his life. His story has been translated into fourteen languages.<sup>54</sup>

At the age of eighteen, Jenny Do immigrated to the United States from Vietnam. She moved to California, and worked her way through college. “After a year of being here, I enrolled in college. Beginning with ESL and then G. E. D. classes,” she explains,

“then I selected my major and kept going.” As a result of her determination she graduated from Law School, passed the Bar Exam and is now an attorney; she also assists other Amerasians in the immigration and naturalization process. Caucasian Amerasian Le Ha, a single mother who receives two hundred dollars a month for rent in public assistance, attended college and graduated with a degree in Human Resources. Betty Nguyen’s story is also that of success. She immigrated to the United States in 1975 with her parents; she now holds a degree in journalism. Subsequently she is “the first Asian anchor person in the Dallas Fort Worth [Texas] area.”<sup>55</sup>

For many Amerasians the road to success occurred in the ranks of the United States military. “That’s [joining the military] what I promised to do when I became a U.S. citizen—defend my country.” Anh Dung explains. Also Amerasian, Anh intended to join the United States’ Air Force but was foiled because in order to do so he had to lose twenty pounds. He relinquished his desire to fight for his new homeland and instead accepted an offer from MCI. His Master’s Degree in engineering was funded by the company.<sup>56</sup>

For the majority of Amerasians, however, life in the United States affords little upward mobility. “Although there are many success stories,” Mydans maintains that “many more of the stories are sad. Poorly educated and often abandoned because of discrimination in Vietnam, many Amerasians arrived here [United States] without the skills to adapt to a new society or settle down with jobs or families.” Charlie Brown, who moved to Hawaii on the promise of a job and home from a Vietnam War veteran, is one of many examples:

The man I came to live with did not keep his promises. He forced me to work everyday in the rain and sun that burned me . . . sometimes he became dangerous. Four weeks after I came here I let him know I did not want to live there anymore . . . he took me down to the city and threw me in the Maui shelter. I lived in this shelter for three weeks until I got a job at seven dollars an hour doing heavy lumber handling . . . now I am living here in a small room with nothing. Five days ago I got into an accident. Now my face is broke. I cannot go anywhere or eat. I don't know what will happen to me next . . . how come people keep trying to hurt me, when I never wanted to hurt anybody?<sup>57</sup>

Crime becomes the main vocation for many Amerasians in the United States just as in Vietnam. Duc was sent to prison a third time for shooting a police officer. Others become entangled in street gangs due in large measure to the lack of successful assimilation. Journalist Peter Finn explains that Vietnamese gang leaders in the refugee centers seduce many Amerasians during immigration processing. Due to their lack of acceptance, many Amerasians develop strong ties to the gang who offers them a place in which to belong. Jenny Do believes many Amerasian women engage in serial monogamy—it is common. “The girls had mental problems, low self esteem. Many had multiple partners.” She explains, “you know the longing for acceptance, the longing for a father. And they got treated like crap.” The propensity to mutilate themselves and engage in self-destructive behavior still persists among Amerasians in the United States. “They have been so damaged it is beyond anyone’s repair. Many of them don’t want to remember that they are Amerasians. Nobody is proud of us. The women would just bang [their heads] against the wall. They hurt themselves constantly.” She concludes, “the sense of helplessness is very high. With Amerasians the subject of suicide comes up

so often. There is nothing left for them.” Thus shackled still by oppression in the United States, many Amerasians embark upon lives of self-destruction.<sup>58</sup>

The majority of Amerasians subsist in minimum wage jobs, in American inner cities, dependent on welfare. Anh Dung surmises, “all around me Amerasians are going to work instead of going to school. That’s what the refugee centers want. It fills their quotas. The Amerasians want it too. Right away they can send money back to Vietnam. So they hustle,” he says, “down to the CONMED [factory], which is like going to the slaughter house. No matter how long they stay, they’re never going to earn more than five or six dollars an hour. In the future,” he adds, “nobody will have gone to school. Ten years from now we’ll look back and see that all we did was work, work, work for minimum wage.” He concludes, “we’ve become Americanized. We stay in our houses and no longer reach out to each other . . . always wandering, homeless Amerasians.”<sup>59</sup>

Whether in Vietnam or the United States, the Vietnamese Amerasians exist as a tragic reminder that “war isn’t over when it ends,” as Boubilil and Schonberg suggest. Since the American exodus from Vietnam in 1975, clearly Amerasians have existed as a people without acceptance, or understanding, and a people without hope. The Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987 initiated a wave of Amerasian immigration into the United States. They were America’s children, but they came as Vietnam’s refugees. As Mckelvey surmises, Vietnamese Amerasians represent everything he remembers of the United States’ relationship with Vietnam, “the fleeting interest, the broken promises, the abandonment.” In the land of their fathers the Amerasians became wandering people once again. Manacled by the chains of illiteracy, emotional damage, and the inability of

American society to recognize them as anything but a new minority group, the Amerasians are marginalized—on the fringe of society.<sup>60</sup>

Again, an important factor to consider is that many Amerasians are unable to attend university or receive job training because they are unable to learn English. In the United States, with so many dreams forgotten and hopes dashed, they perform the same menial labor and often live in the same poverty as in Vietnam. Although there exist a number of Amerasians who have found success in the United States, few, if any, have lived without suffering. The search for “homeland” has, for many Amerasians, become futile. Their longing for understanding remains unrequited. In the words of Jenny Do, many Amerasians are, “beyond anyone’s help.” America’s most personal legacy of the Vietnam War is its forgotten children; Amerasians have, with great difficulty, finally immigrated to the American shores in search of the proverbial “light at the end of the tunnel.” Yet many have yet to find a home within the nation’s boundaries.

In the United States as in Vietnam, the Amerasians are thus lost—a wandering people—still unwanted still the dust of life. It seems true that the “evil men do lives long after them.” That “evil,” or the Vietnam War, keeps the children of that conflict trapped within the “whirlwind” of American imperialism—Amerasians remain the victims of that thirty-year lost cause. They still wander in a “no mans’ land” of a war whose wounds refuse to heal. Sam, an Amerasian concludes, “I thought I was going to write my life story when I came to America. I bought a hardbound book with a beautiful brown cover . . . but if you open this book, all the pages are blank.”<sup>61</sup>

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>2</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Seth Mydans. "Amerasians: Finding it Difficult to Adjust to New Life in America." *The New York Times* (July 9, 1995), an excellent article that examines the reality of life for Amerasians in the United States, from here forward cited as Mydans, "Amerasians."

<sup>4</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 34, 85-86; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 5; concurrently consult Lackshmanan, "The Children They Left Behind;" Haines, Clint. Interview.

<sup>6</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 39; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 3, 35, 39; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 2-3.

<sup>9</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 45; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 3; also see Dale M. Simmons. "Amerasians from Vietnam Seeking New Life in Austin." *The Austin American Statesman* (July 3, 1989); additionally consult International Adoption Agency. "Information on Amerasian Homecoming Act." *Amerasian Legislation*. (December 15, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [http://www.i-a-a.org/amerasian\\_legislation.htm](http://www.i-a-a.org/amerasian_legislation.htm), an excellent source for examining the evolution of the Homecoming Act, from here on cited as International, "Information."

<sup>10</sup> International, "Information."

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*; Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>12</sup> International, "Information." Haines, Clint. Interview.

<sup>13</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 57-58.

<sup>14</sup> Kay Johnson. "Children of the Dust." *Time Magazine/Asia*, Vol. 159, No. 19 (May 20, 2002). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673,501020520-237115,00.html>, an

---

excellent article for examining the corruption incipit in the Amerasian Homecoming Act; Haines, Clint. Interview; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Haines, Clint. Interview; also see Nobuhiro Watsuki. *Rurouni Kenshin*, Vol. 5. (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1995), 164; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 3; Haines, Clint. Interview.

<sup>17</sup> Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 5; additionally consult DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Do, Jenny. Interview; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 136; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Kelley, *A Year in Saigon*, 242-243.

<sup>20</sup> Haines, Clint. Interview.

<sup>21</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 270.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 105; also see Kevin Miller Jr. *Amerasian World.com* (1997-2004). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.amerasianworld.com>, an excellent source for investigating the realities of Amerasians and Eurasians around the world, from here onward cited as Miller, *Amerasian World.com*; Fredrick Bemak. Interview by telephone. February 13, 2004. Dr. Bemak is a professor at George Mason University. He is also the program coordinator for George Mason University's Counseling and Development Program. In the late 1980s, he was asked by the United States Department of Health to conduct the first psychological analysis of Amerasians residing in the twenty cluster cities in the United States. He was able to provide insight as an individual who has worked closely with Amerasians, from here onward cited as Bemak, Fredrick. Interview.

<sup>23</sup> Mckelvey, *Children of the Dust*, 23; Ha-Hoa. Interview; Do, Jenny. Interview; Dixon, Lisa. Interview; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 12-14; also see Vaughn, "In Their Father's Land."

<sup>24</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 6, 105; also see Mydans, "Amerasians."

<sup>25</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 6, 105; also see Miller, *Amerasian World.com*; Dang, Ha-Hoa. Interview; Bemak, Fredrick. Interview; Do, Jenny. Interview; Dixon, Lisa. Interview; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 12-14; also see Vaughn, "In Their Father's Land."

---

<sup>26</sup> Vaughn, "In Their Father's Land;" also see DeBonis 12-14; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 70.

<sup>27</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 12; also see Associated Press. "Amerasian Kids Seen as Passport to the U.S." *The Dallas Morning News* (October 19, 2003); Dixon, Lisa. Interview.

<sup>28</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 12-14; Dang, Ha-Hoa. Interview; additionally consult see Esper, "Children of War."

<sup>29</sup> Nguyen, Betty. Interview; also consult Maria T. Pasdilla. "Old Racial Categories Losing Meaning: Tiger Woods' Situation Shows the Nation's Ethnic Palette Includes Many Shades of Brown." *The Orlando Sentinel* (May 16, 1997); Dixon, Lisa. Interview; David Dixon. Interview by telephone. January 27, 2004. Mr. Dixon is the husband of Lisa Dixon. He was able to provide excellent information regarding life with an Amerasian as well as the effects of abuse and discrimination on Lisa's emotional consciousness, from here cited as Dixon, David. Interview; also consult Barry Schatler. "In Limbo: Unwanted at Home or in U.S. Immigrants Held." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (July 4, 1993), an excellent article for examining the plight of Amerasians without U.S. citizenship, from here forward cited as Schatler, "In Limbo."

<sup>30</sup> Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 16, 76; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 199.

<sup>31</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 199; also consult Ed Timms. "Amerasians Seek Connection with Their Heritage: For Many Born to Vietnamese Mothers and U.S. Servicemen, Life Means Existing Outside Their Culture." *The Dallas Morning News* (April 24, 1995), an excellent article for examining the Amerasian lack of acceptance, from here on cited as Timms, "Amerasians Seek;" also see Lackshmanan, "The Children They Left Behind;" Nguyen, Betty. Interview; Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>32</sup> Dixon, Lisa. Interview; Do, Jenny. Interview; Dang, Ha-Hoa. Interview; Nguyen, Betty. Interview; also consult Timms, "Amerasians Seek;" also see Than Tran. "Vietnamese-Amerasian: Where Do They Belong?" *Vietnamese Amerasians* (December 15, 2003). Retrieved From the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~thantran/Amerasian.html>; also see Mydans, "Amerasians;" concurrently consult Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*; also see Lazarus, *The New Colossus*.

<sup>33</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 121; Dixon, Lisa. Interview; Dam, Lily. Interview by Email. January 28, 2004. Mrs. Dam emigrated from Vietnam to the United States in 1975. In the 1980's Mrs. Dam worked as an ESL teacher at Alex Spence Middle School in Dallas ISD, half of her students were Amerasian. At which time she also led a

---

Vietnamese dance troupe and most of the Amerasian girls from her ESL class were in it. She was able to provide information as an individual who has worked closely with Amerasians, from here on cited as Dam, Lily. Interview; Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>34</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 63-64; also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 70; Bemak, Fredrick. Interview.

<sup>35</sup> Chris Vaughn. "Vietnamese Children of U.S. Soldiers Struggle to Make New Lives in America." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 10, 2003), an excellent article that discusses the struggles of Amerasians in the United States.

<sup>36</sup> Dixon, Lisa. Interview; Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>37</sup> Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>38</sup> Esther Wu. "'Miss Saigon' Comes to an End, Moral Lives On." *The Dallas Morning News* (January 4, 2001), an excellent article for examining the legacies of the Vietnam War, from here on cited as, Wu, 'Miss Saigon'; also see Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*.

<sup>39</sup> Wu, 'Miss Saigon'; also see Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*; Dixon, Lisa. Interview; Coddington, Judy. Interview by telephone. January 30, 2004. Mrs. Coddington is the adopted mother of Lisa Dixon. She and her husband Dean adopted Lisa when she was three and one-half years old. She remembers that one of the main reasons she wanted to adopt a child was because she is adopted, the reason she remembers choosing to adopt an orphan from Vietnam was to help at least one person in the Vietnam War. She was able to provide information concerning the adoption process, also the acceptance of Lisa by the community, from here on cited as Coddington, Judy. Interview; also see Zoë Von Ende. "Denverites Adopt Viet Girl: Nguyen-thi-Luom, three and a half, Is Just Lisa Now." *The Denver Post*, Vol. 73 No. 202 (February 19, 1965), an article written about Lisa Dixon's adoption; adoption information for Lisa Dixon also extracted from State of Colorado County of Arapahoe District Court. *Affidavit: In the Matter of the Petition of Dean C. Coddington and Judy L. Coddington for the Adoption of a Child, Nguyen-Thi-Luom*. (May 17, 1965); concurrently naturalization information for Lisa Dixon extracted from Coddington, Lisa. *Certificate of Naturalization*. Denver: U.S. District Court. (June, 21, 1968); also see Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*.

<sup>40</sup> Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*; Coddington, Judy. Interview; Dixon, Lisa. Interview.

<sup>41</sup> Wu, 'Miss Saigon'; also see Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*.

---

<sup>42</sup> Coddington, Judy. Interview; also see Zoë Von Ende. “Adopted Viet Girl Happy in Colorado.” *The Denver Post* (August 19, 1968), an article, which documents Lisa Dixon, and her family’s adjustments to, adopted life; for more information also see Sidney Fields. “Rosemary’s Babies.” *The Denver Post* (December 13, 1970); Dixon, Lisa. Interview; Dixon, David. Interview.

<sup>43</sup> Chris Vaughn. “Life in the Homeland of an Unknown Father.” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 9, 2003); also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 1-2; Dixon, Lisa. Interview; also see Wu, ‘Miss Saigon.’

<sup>44</sup> Haines, Clint. Interview; Dam, Lily. Interview; also see DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 15.

<sup>45</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 190-191, 200.

<sup>46</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 15; concurrently see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 190-191, 200.

<sup>47</sup> Chris Vaughn. “In Their Father’s Land;” also see Sarah Moore. “Looking for Their Own Home: Amerasians Struggle to Gain Acceptance, U.S. Citizenship.” *The Beaumont Enterprise* (September 15, 2003); concurrently see Schatler, “In Limbo.”

<sup>48</sup> Dam, Lily. Interview; also see Bahadur, “Citizenship Bill Holds Promise;” also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 241.

<sup>49</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 62-63; also see Bahadur, “Citizenship Bill Holds Promise;” see as well Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 239-240, 266; also see Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*; also see Hegestrom, “Relocated Amerasians;” Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>50</sup> Hegestrom, “Relocated Amerasians;” Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>51</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 62-63; also see Bahadur, “Citizenship Bill Holds Promise;” see as well Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 239-240, 266; also see Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*; also see Hegestrom, “Relocated Amerasians;” Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>52</sup> Dolgin and Franco, *Daughter of Danang*.

<sup>53</sup> Nguyen, Betty. Interview; Dixon, Lisa. Interview; Dixon, David. Interview.

<sup>54</sup> DeBonis, *Children of the Enemy*, 15; also see Hieu Tran Pham. “‘Unwanted’ Child Makes His Place in the World.” *Orange County Register* (May 14, 2001).

---

<sup>55</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 254; Do, Jenny. Interview; Nguyen, Betty. Interview.

<sup>56</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 274.

<sup>57</sup> Mydans, “Amerasians;” also see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 242.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Finn. “Horror Walks in the Door: Area Families Live in Constant Fear of an Increasingly Common but Unreported Crime, Home Invasion Robberies by Vietnamese Gangs.” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (July 19, 1993); Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>59</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 270.

<sup>60</sup> Boubilil and Schonberg, *Miss Saigon*; also see Mckelvey, *The Dust of Life*, 96.

<sup>61</sup> Boubilil and Schonberg, *Miss Saigon*; also see Vaughn, “In Their Father’s Land;” comment taken from Do, Jenny. Interview; see Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 242.

## Epilogue

### *The Living Legacy of War*

“War isn’t over when it ends.”<sup>1</sup>

“Wars have a way of being romanticized through time,” *Time Magazine News File* affirms, “but decades after the U.S. pulled out of Vietnam in 1975, the bitter taste resonates.” The Vietnam War was the longest and arguably the most controversial war in the history of the United States. To Vietnam, it was an extension of their two thousand year fight for political independence. To the United States, it was the jewel in the crown of anti-Communist American imperialism. “It was a defining time in American History,” according to *Time Magazine*.<sup>2</sup>

A polarizing war, it divided both Vietnam and the United States ideologically; those who supported the American presence in Vietnam, on the one hand, and on the other, those who, like Richard Maltby—principal composer of the lyrics to the musical *Miss Saigon*, believed that “Vietnam was the dark mirror image of the American Dream.” From 1954 until 1975, millions of Vietnamese (estimated at three point four million) and over fifty thousand American soldiers and civilians surrendered their lives to decide who would gain hegemony, the Communists or the Americans over the one hundred twenty-eight thousand square miles of Vietnam—an area that Interknowledge Corporation cites is roughly the size of New Mexico. Five American presidents maintained an American presence, covertly and overtly, in Vietnam, yet in 1975 the Communists wrested victory from the United States and unified their country.<sup>3</sup>

Although the fighting came to a close in 1975, the ramifications and implications of the Vietnam War continue to haunt both countries. The legacy of unexploded bombs and land mines and the lasting biological effects of American napalm and Agent Orange are pervasive in Vietnam. In this context, journalist Boonthan Sakanond writes that Agent Orange alone is responsible for at least eight diseases including soft tissue cancer, as well as the birth of over fifty thousand deformed Vietnamese children. “Extraordinary levels of poisonous dioxins [reside] in the soil,” he adds, “and [in] the food chain and even in children's bloodstreams.” There is also the legacy of political divisiveness in the United States as well as the effect of post-traumatic stress disorder among many veterans who survived. The most human and neglected legacy of the Vietnam War, however, is the children of American Servicemen and the Vietnamese Women, the Bui Doi, “the dust of life.” Shunned in both cultures, Amerasian children, also victims of the Vietnam War, have been forced to fight for acceptance, understanding, and survival in both cultures.<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, Vietnam and the United States were both born out of revolution. Each withstood foreign oppression and wrested independence through combat; and both countries made declarations concerning freedom, equality and justice in their most sacred political founding documents. Neither country, paradoxically, can boast of a history that is congruous to each nation's creed of racial and political equality.

In Vietnam, political freedom is nonexistent. Henry Mang maintains that religious freedom is also unknown. A homogenous society, the ethnic Vietnamese maintain hegemony in Vietnam and foster resentment towards the United States, reports Johnson. Vietnam's leading movie star Don Duong was barred for five years in 2002,

from acting in Vietnamese films because he accepted a role as a North Vietnamese general in the American film, *We Were Soldiers*. The Vietnamese government feels that the film, and his performance “[paint] the North Vietnamese as merciless killers.”<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Jefferson’s conviction that all men are created equal gave birth to the United States. And yet three hundred-years of racial, and gender oppression, segregation and immigration exclusion are the reality. The Civil Rights movements of the 1960s supposedly ended institutional segregation. Feelings of racism have not yet subsided, however, and are still ingrained in the American consciousness. Vietnamese immigrant Henry Mang attests that “some Americans lack respect, laughing at me because of my poor English and my culture.” Sadly, Henry is only one among many who share similar experiences. Ron Stodghill and Amanda Bower report that the 2000 U.S. census was the first to include the category of mixed race in its survey. Such data reveal that American society is still segregated—in which ninety-percent of Americans, “worship primarily with members of their race or ethnicity.” Similarly, another observer, journalist Jo Napolitano, reports that in November of 2003, The National Holocaust Museum was burned to the ground. The FBI categorized the destruction as “domestic terrorism and a possible hate crime because ‘Remember Timmy McVeigh’ was found scrawled on a wall of the museum.” Yet another indicator of what war, memory and hatred perpetuate in future generations.<sup>6</sup>

Neither the United States nor Vietnam could accept or welcome the Amerasians. Barred from education, employment, acceptance and often freedom in Vietnam, the Amerasians faced lives of poverty, exclusion and oppression in the land of their mothers.

In 1987, many Amerasians immigrated to the United States. The Amerasian Homecoming Act offered the dream of a better existence. But in the United States, Amerasians faced lives of poverty and isolation—the dream turned out to be another nightmare—illiteracy, lack of job skills, and the inability of many to learn English relegated the majority once again to the fringe of society. The Amerasians were perceived simply as yet another racially mixed foreign minority group that the American mainstream failed to understand. Amerasian needs failed to be considered by most, and the nation at large failed to accept them. Amerasians were perceived as a disenfranchised refugee group, not as America's returning children.

October 2003, California Congresswoman Zoë Lofgren and Texas' Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee introduced the Amerasian Naturalization Act of 2003 in Congress. The legislation, once it passed both houses, would grant Amerasians U.S. citizenship without a test. Congresswoman Lofgren asserts, "it is time to close a chapter in our history that has too long denied Amerasians the opportunity to be recognized as the American citizens they are."<sup>7</sup>

Currently in the United States, the children of American servicemen and Vietnamese women are considered immigrants with refugee status. In order to attain citizenship, they must apply and pass the written English language citizenship test. "Although the United States has acknowledged the paternity of these children as American," Ha-Hoa Dang suggests, "we have not formally recognized them as fellow citizens." Amerasians find this legal stipulation troublesome and unacceptable. "Once a child is conceived [by] a US citizen, even outside the United States, they are a U.S.

citizen[s]. That has been the law.” Jenny Do protests. “So why do Amerasians get treated differently?” She asks. “There is a problem with this legislation, the Homecoming Act, because why are we being treated as a refugee? You recognize us as the children of U.S. servicemen so the same law should apply to us. That’s called equal treatment, right?” Fredrick Bemak asserts, “it is the responsibility of the United States of America to welcome these individuals, whose fathers are Americans and are the result of a war fought on their home grounds in Vietnam, to grant them automatic U.S. citizenship.”<sup>8</sup>

In a press release, Congresswoman Lofgren states: “Amerasians are the only foreign born Americans who have to file for naturalization like other immigrants.” Clint Haines also notices the irony: “The government in allowing them to come here [under the Amerasian Homecoming Act] has said we recognize you as children of Americans. If the government recognizes that they are children of Americans why are they not given automatic citizenship as any child of an American born outside the United States?” Amerasian activist Bernard Nguyen agrees with Haines: “We bring them here under the Homecoming Act and then we don’t recognize them. Why is that a homecoming?”<sup>9</sup>

According to Pearl Buck, of the Pearl Buck Foundation, Amerasians are caught between two conflicting concepts of American citizenship, *jus sanguinis*, or the right of descent by blood in which citizenship is based on the nationality of the child’s parent. The other is *jus soli*, or the right of soil in which citizenship is based on place of birth regardless of the parent’s nationality. Bahadur’s study reveals that in 2003 sixty percent of Amerasians were not American citizens. Vaughn, in turn suggests that at least twenty-

six thousand Amerasians have immigrated to the United States and only an estimated one hundred have proved their paternity. And since many cannot prove paternity, if they want U.S. citizenship, they must take the test. “These individuals are American citizens except by accident of where they were born.” Haines emphasizes, “if some of us had registered them at the consul or at the embassy they would have been legitimate American citizens.” Since they were not registered they are not considered American citizens.<sup>10</sup>

Many have not been able to attain citizenship because of poor English skills. Many fail to be literate in any language. Amerasian factory worker Dang Phuong Thao, living in Texas asks, “why should I take a test I know I can’t read?” Bernard Nguyen agrees: “They don’t have a gram of education . . . how can you expect them to learn a foreign language and pass a test on U.S. history?” Bahadur asserts that there is an alternative. In 2000, Congress passed legislation that permits Hmong people from Laos—a people who do not have a written language—to take the citizenship test orally through interpreters. She believes that if Amerasians were given the same provision, many would be able to take the citizenship test and become citizens in their fatherland.<sup>11</sup>

Bahadur believes that U.S. citizenship would benefit the Amerasians immensely. Citizenship would make Amerasians eligible for employment, which is only available to American citizens, such as federal and airport security jobs, the military, as well as making them eligible to be deck hands on Gulf Coast shrimp boats, seventy-five percent of whose crew must be legal U.S. citizens. U.S. citizenship would also mean that when an Amerasian commits a crime he or she, will not, as occurs at present, face deportation.

Becoming U.S. citizens would also afford Amerasians the right to vote; this is a privilege coveted by many Amerasians. “We had to put our faces down and go through everyday.” Amerasian Yen Lee asserts, “I wanted to go to my father’s country, to live the life that’s supposed to be mine . . . I want to be a good citizen, I want to get a chance to vote.” Ha-Hoa Dang explains, “U.S. citizenship also communicates to Amerasians that they are accepted, that they belong.” She continues, “acknowledging their U.S. citizenship would confer a long-awaited, absolute identity to them.” Jenny Do believes that U.S. citizenship would also signal to the world that the United States takes responsibility for the procreation of Amerasians as well as for the actions of its servicemen. “I wish that Americans recognized us so that we don’t make the same mistakes elsewhere.” She laments. “So other children don’t have to go through the same thing—what we had to pay for.”<sup>12</sup>

The Amerasian story falls short of the proverbial “happy ending.” Rather it is one replete with the tragedy of war and the accompanying result of racism and neglect. Shunned as American in Vietnam and seen as foreign in the United States, the Amerasians have existed in a “no man’s land” of the memory of war. Neither Vietnamese nor American, they are simply Amerasian. They have lived as the dust of life, unwanted in Vietnam. In both countries they are fatherless reminders of a hated war. They are ignored in the United States as an illiterate, unskilled minority group.

Amerasians are reminders that when the bombs ceased falling and the violence was silenced, the wounds remain unhealed. They are and may always be, in this sense,

forever the “walking wounded.” Legacies endure, and the children who were born because of the Vietnam War carry the weight of it their entire lives.

The Amerasians exist eternally as the unbreakable genetic bond forged between Vietnam and the United States. They live in a “twilight zone”—trapped between two vastly divergent cultures, between two former enemies. They are the reminders that the wounds of war run deep, while justice often fails to flow. They are the witnesses of the destructiveness of hate and they are the bearers of the extremities to which humanity will strive to ensure the existence of prejudice. Boubilil and Schonberg conclude: “They’re called Bui Doi, the dust of life . . . they are the living reminders of all the good we failed to do.”<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Boubilil and Schonberg, *Miss Saigon*.

<sup>2</sup> News File. "Vietnam War." *Time Asia* (February 12, 2004). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/newsfiles/vietnam/>.

<sup>3</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 249; additionally consult Interknowledge, "Vietnam."

<sup>4</sup> Sakanond Boonthan. "Toxic Legacy of the Vietnam War." *Asia Times* (May 21, 1999). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.atimes.com/se-asia/AE21Ae03.html>, an excellent article for examining the effects of American biological warfare.

<sup>5</sup> Mang, Henry. Interview; also see Kay Johnson. "Yet Another Casualty of A Lousy War: Don Duong's role in a Mel Gibson movie has Vietnam's censors incensed." *Time Asia* (September 26, 2002). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673,501020923-351275,00.html> an excellent article for understanding Vietnam's resentment towards the United States.

<sup>6</sup> Jo Napolitano. "Vow to Rebuild Burned Holocaust Museum." *The New York Times* (November 25, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://query.nytimes.com/search/article-page.html?res=9C02E5DB1E3BF936A15752C1A9659C8B63>; concurrently consult Ron Stodghill and Amanda Bower. "Welcome to America's Most Diverse City." *Time Magazine* (August 25, 2002). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,340694-1,00.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Vaughn, "Refugee."

<sup>8</sup> Dang, Ha-Hoa. Interview; Do, Jenny. Interview; Bemak, Fredrick. Interview.

<sup>9</sup> Zoë Lofgren. "Press Release: Lofgren Introduces Citizenship Bill for Children Born in Vietnam to American Servicemen and Vietnamese Women During the Vietnam War." (October 22, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ca16\\_lofgren/pr\\_031022\\_Amerasian.html](http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ca16_lofgren/pr_031022_Amerasian.html); Haines, Clint. Interview; also see Vaughn, "Refugee."

<sup>10</sup> Bass, *Vietnamerica*, 39; also see Chris Vaughn. "Closer to Home? *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 10, 2003); Haines, Clint. Interview.

<sup>11</sup> Hegstrom, "Relocated Amerasians;" also see Vaughn, "Refugee;" additionally consult Bahadur, "Citizenship Bill Holds Promise."

---

<sup>12</sup> Bahadur, "Citizenship Bill Holds Promise;" also see Hegstrom, "Relocated Amerasians;" Do, Jenny. Interview.

<sup>13</sup> Boubilil and Schonberg, *Miss Saigon*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### ***PRIMARY SOURCE***

#### **Interviews**

Bailey, Ka'ran. Interview by Email. January 27, 2004.

Bemak, Fredrick. Interview by telephone. February 13, 2004.

Coddington, Judy. Interview by telephone. January 30, 2004.

Contreras, Arturo. Interview, Denton, Texas. January 23, 2004.

Dam, Lily. Interview by Email. January 28, 2004.

Dam Trung-Phap. Interview by Email. February 11, 2004

Dang, Ha-Hoa. Interview by Email. January 23, 2004.

Dixon, David. Interview by telephone. January 27, 2004

Dixon, Lisa. Interview by Email and telephone. January 27, 2004.

Do, Jenny. Interview by telephone. January 23, 2004.

Haines, Clint. Interview by telephone. March 2, 2004.

Mang, Henry. Interview by Email. February 5, 2004.

Nguyen, Betty. Interview, Fort Worth, Texas. January 26, 2004.

Roberson, Angela. Interview by Email, January 30, 2004.

#### **Memoirs**

Bass, Thomas A. *Vietnamerica: The Children of America's Soldiers Battle for a Decent Homecoming*. (New York: Soho, 1996).

Carroll, Robert. *An American Requiem: God, My Father, and the War That Came Between Us*. (New York: Mariner Books, 1997).

Dính-Hoá, Nguyễn. *From the City Inside the Red River: A Cultural Memoir of Mid-Century Vietnam*. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1999).

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1994).

Ellsberg, Daniel. *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers*. (New York: Viking Press, 2003).

Hayslip Le Ly with Wurts Jay. *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman's Journey from War to Peace*. (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

Horwitz, Tony. *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*. (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, INC., 1998).

Kelly, Katie. *A Year in Saigon: How I Gave Up My Glitzy Job in Television to Have the Time of My Life Teaching Amerasian Kids in Vietnam*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

Mai, Nguyen Thi Tuyet. *The Rubber Tree: Memoir of a Vietnamese Woman Who Was an Anti-French Guerrilla, a Publisher and a Peace Activist*. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1994).

Nguyen, Kien. *The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood*. (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 2001).

Wu, Frank H. *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

### **Primary Source Compilations**

DeBonis, Steven. *Children of the Enemy: Oral Histories of Vietnamese Amerasians and Their Mothers*. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1995).

Foner, Philip S. and Rosenberg, Daniel. *Racism, dissent, and Asian Americans from 1850 to the present: a documentary history*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993).

Gravel, Mike. *The Pentagon Papers Volumes I, II, III and IV: The Senator Gravel Edition*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

Gettleman, Marvin E. *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*. (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc, 1959).

Litwack, Leon F. *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

Mckelvey, Robert S. *The Dust of Life: America's Children Abandoned in Vietnam*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

Terry, Wallace. *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*. (New York: Random House, 1984).

### **Government Documents**

The Avalon Project at Yale Law School. *President Johnson's Message to Congress*. (August 5, 1965). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/tonkin-g.htm>.

Coddington, Lisa. *Certificate of Naturalization*. Denver: U.S. District Court. (June 21, 1968).

Viet-Ventures. *Vietnam History: Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1992*. (April 1992). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [http://www.vietventures.com/viet\\_constitution.htm](http://www.vietventures.com/viet_constitution.htm)

Jefferson, Thomas. *Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies*. (1776). Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: <http://www.basicclassics.com/index.php?tid=8>.

Johnson Library NS File Vietnam. File Volume XXX. *CIA Secret Memo For the Deputy Director of Intelligence Cline to Director of CIA, Subject: Recommended Action for South Vietnam*. Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [www.state.gov/www/about-state/history/vol\\_i/70-107.htm](http://www.state.gov/www/about-state/history/vol_i/70-107.htm).

Library of Congress Country Studies. *Vietnam Minorities*. (1987). Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+vn0048\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+vn0048)).

Lofgren, Zoë. Press Release: Lofgren Introduces Citizenship Bill for Children Born in Vietnam to American Servicemen and Vietnamese Women During the Vietnam War. (October 22, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ca16\\_lofgren/pr\\_031022\\_Amerasian.html](http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ca16_lofgren/pr_031022_Amerasian.html).

Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Al Haig, Subject: Defense Positions on Toxins. (February 12, 1970). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB58/RNCBW19.pdf>.

Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Al Haig, Subject: Memo from Secretary Laid Enclosing Preliminary Draft of Potential Military Actions in Vietnam. (March 2,

1969). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory:  
<http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEB8//nnp02.pdf>.

Memorandum for the President from Brent Scowcroft, Subject: Escape from South Vietnam. (July 10, 1976). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory:  
<http://www.ford.utexas.edu/library/exhibits/vietnam/760710a.htm>.

Memorandum for the President From Henry Kissinger, Subject: My Conversation with President Ceausescu. (Tuesday October 27, 1970). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-o4.pdf>.

Memorandum From Henry Kissinger to the Vietnamese Ambassador in the Saigon Embassy. (April 1975). Retrieved from the Internet. Website directory:  
<http://www.ford.utexas.edu/library/exhibits/vietnam/7504291a.htm>.

National Security Action Memo No. 263. *To Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Subject: South Vietnam.* Retrieved from the Internet. Website directory: <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/viet14.htm>.

NS Action Memo #873. (November 2, 1963). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/viet15.htm>.

NSD Papers 233-69. (March 8, 1964). *Memo From Stomberg to Lodge, Taylor, McNamara, Harkins.* Saigon. Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/voli/70-107.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/voli/70-107.html).

Shea, Nina. *The United States' Commission on International Religious Freedom: Testimony Before the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam-A People Silenced: The Vietnamese Government's Assault on the Media and Access to Information.* Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory:  
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/religion/pdfdocs/vietnam%20Testimony%20vietnam%20caucus.pdf>.

State of Colorado County of Arapahoe District Court. *Affidavit: In the Matter of the Petition of Dean C. Coddington and Judy L. Coddington for the Adoption of a Child, Nguyen-Thi-Luom.* (May 17, 1965).

Summary Record of the 59<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Security Council. (October 2, 1963). White House: Washington. Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/viet8.htm>

## **WORKS CITED**

### **Books**

- Ashmore, Harry S. *Hearts and Minds: A Personal Chronicle of Race in America*. (Washington D.C.: Steven Locks Press, 1988).
- Brown, Francis J. and Rousek, Joseph Slabey. *Our Racial Minorities: Their History, Contributions, and Present Problems*. (New York: Prentice-Hall, INC, 1937).
- Cady, John F. *The History of Post-War Southeast Asia*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974).
- Cowan, C.D. and Wolters, O. W. *Southeast Asian History and Historiography*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).
- Dallek Robert. *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1017-1963*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2003).
- Dallek, Robert. *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson And His Times, 1961-1973*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- Fall, Bernard B. *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-66*. (New York: Fredericks A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966).
- Fenn, J.W. *Levitating the Pentagon: Evolutions in the American Theatre of the Vietnam War Era*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992).
- Fishel, Wesley R. *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict*. (Itasca: F.E. Peacock Publishers, INC, 1968).
- Fitzgerald, Frances. *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972).
- Gossett, Thomas F. *Race: The History of and Idea in America*. (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963).
- Handlin, Oscar. *Race and Nationality in American Life*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1957).
- Hewitt, Nancy A. *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism In Tampa, Florida, 1880S-1920S*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

- Hammer, Ellen J. *The Struggle for Indochina 1940-1955*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954).
- Herring, George C. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979).
- Hoyt, Edwin P. *Asians in the West*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson INC., Publishers, 1974).
- Isaacs, Arnold R. *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).
- Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History*. (New York: The Viking Press, 1983).
- Kennedy, Stetson. *Jim Crow Guide: The Way It Was*. (Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University Press, 1959).
- MacPherson, Maya. *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation*. (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984).
- Mooney, James W. and West, Thomas. *Vietnam: A History and Anthology*. (St. James: Brandwine Press, 1994).
- Nash, Gray B. *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early America*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Inc, 1974).
- Pettit, Clyde Edwin. *100 Years of Blunder in Indochina: The Experts, The Book That Proves There Are None*. (Secaucus: Lyle Stuart, INC, 1975).
- Radosh, Ronald and Milton, Joyce. *The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Wintson, 1983).
- Ringer, Benjamin B. *"We The People and Others": Duality and America's Treatment of Its Racial Minorities*. (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1983).
- Root, Maria P.P. *Racially Mixed People in America*. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992).
- Schandler, Herbert Y. *The Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).
- Sully, Francois. *We The Vietnamese: Voices From Vietnam*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967).

Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers From a Distant Shore: A History of Asian Life in America*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989).

Thomas, Virginia. *French Indo-China*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968.

Vandebosch, Army and Butwell, Richard A. *Southeast Asia Among the World Powers*. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1958).

Warburg, James P. *Western Intruders: America's Role in the Far East*. (New York: Atheneum, 1967).

Watsuki, Nobuhiro. *Rurouni Kenshin*, Vol. 5. (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1995).

Willie, Charles V. *Black/Brown/White Relations: Race Relations in The 1970s*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1977).

Young, Marilyn B. *The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990*. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991).

Yu-Wen, Jean, Wu, Shen and Song, Min. *Asian American Studies: A Reader*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

### **Articles, Periodicals and Journals**

Associated Press. "Amerasian Kids Seen as Passport to the U.S." *The Dallas Morning News* (October 19, 2003).

Associated Press. "Editorials: Deadbeat U.S. Dads an International Issue." *The San Antonio Express News* (July 4, 1993).

Bahadur, Gaiutra. "Citizenship Bill Holds Promise for Disenfranchised Amerasians." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (October 27, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.ledger-inquirer.com/mld/ledgerenquirer/news/7114364.htm>.

Bahadur, Gaiutra. "The Legacy of Vietnam, Lost in Translation." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (October 22, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/7070603.htm>.

Barbieri, Magali, Allman, James, Sam, Pham Bich and Thang, Nguyen Minh. "Demographic Trends in Vietnam." *Population: An English Selection*, Vol. 8 (1996), 209-234.

Bishop, David W. "Plessy V. Fergusson: A Reinterpretation." *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 1977): 125-133.

- Chieu, Vu Ngo. "The Other Side of the 1945 Vietnamese Revolution: The Empire of Viet-Nam March-August 1945." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume 45, Issue 2 (February, 1986): 293-328.
- Contreras, Reynaldo A. and Valverde, Leonard A. "The Impact of Brown on the Education of Latinos." *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Summer 1994): 470-481.
- Dang, Anh, Godstien, Sidney and McNally, James. "Internal Migration and Development in Vietnam." *International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer, 1997): 312-337.
- Desbaratas, Jacqueline. "Population Redistribution in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (March 1987): 43-76.
- Drimmer, Melvin. "Neither Black nor White: Carl Degler's Study of Slavery in Two Societies." *Phylon*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1979): 94-105.
- Esper George. "Children of War Caught Between Cultures: Born to U.S. Servicemen and Vietnamese Women in Wartime, Amerasian Children are the Products of Two Worlds-and Scorned by Both." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (June 26, 1994).
- Ficker, Douglas J. "From Roberts to Plessy: Educational Segregation and the 'Separate but Equal' Doctrine." *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (Autumn 1999): 301-314.
- Fifield, Russell H. "The Thirty Years War in Indochina: A Conceptual Framework." *Asian Survey*, Volume 17, Issue 9 (September 1977): 857-879.
- Finn, Peter. "Horror Walks in the Door: Area Families Live in Constant Fear of an Increasingly Common but Unreported Crime, Home Invasion Robberies by Vietnamese Gangs." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (July 19, 1993).
- Fox, Jonathon. "Lost Son: The Vietnamese Son of a Black American Soldier Faces a Long Trip Home." *The Dallas Observer* (June 21, 2001). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.dallasobserver.com/issues/2001-06-21/news.html>.
- Fredrickson, George M. "Presidential Address: America's Diversity in Comparative Perspective." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (December 1998): 859-875.

- Gonzalez, David. "For Afro-Amerasians, Tangled Emotions." *The New York Times* (November 16, 1992).
- Goodkind, Daniel M. "Vietnam's One-or-Two-Child Policy in Action." *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (March 1995): 85-111.
- Hegstrom, Edward. "Relocated Amerasians Find Opportunity in Port Arthur." *The Houston Chronicle* (October 13, 2003).
- Hirschman, Charles and Preston, Samuel and Loi Van Manh. "Vietnamese Casualties During the American War: A New Estimate." *Population and Development Review*, Volume 21, Issue 4 (December 1995): 783-812.
- Hoffmann, Stanley and Hunitngton, Samuel P, May, Earnest R, Neustadt, Richard N. and Schelling, Thomas C. "Vietnam Reappraised." *International Security*, Volume 6, Issue 1 (Summer 1981): 3-26.
- Howie, Donald L.W. "The Image of Black People in Brown V. Board of Education." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (March, 1973): 371-384.
- Jian, Chen. China's Involvement in the Vietnam War. *China Quarterly* Volume 0, Issue 142 (June 1995): 356-387.
- Johnson, James H., Farrel, Walter C. and Guinn, Chandra. "Immigration Reform and the Browning of America: Tensions, Conflicts and Community Instability in Metropolitan Los Angeles." *International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Winter 1997): 1055-1095.
- Johnson, Kay. "Yet Another Casualty of A Lousy War: Don Duong's role in a Mel Gibson movie has Vietnam's censors incensed." *Time Asia* (September 26, 2002). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673,501020923-351275,00.html>.
- Johnson, Kay. "Children of the Dust." *Time Magazine/Asia*, Vol. 159, No. 19 (May 20, 2002). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673,501020520-237115,00.html>.
- Jones, Gavin W. "Population Trends and Policies in Vietnam." *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (December 1982.): 783-810.
- Lackshmanan, Indira AR. "The Children They Left Behind." *The Boston Globe* (October 26, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory:

[http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2003/10/26/the\\_children\\_they\\_left\\_behind/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2003/10/26/the_children_they_left_behind/).

Lau, Richard R, Brown, Thad A. and Sears David O. "Self-Interest and Civilians' Attitudes Toward the Vietnam War." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 42, Issue 4 (Winter 1978): 464-483.

Lowy, Richard. "Yuppie Racism: Race Relations in the 1980s." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (June 1991): 445-464.

Moore, Sarah. "Looking for Their Own Home: Amerasians Struggle to Gain Acceptance, U.S. Citizenship." *The Beaumont Enterprise* (September 15, 2003).

Mydans, Seth. "Amerasians: Finding it Difficult to Adjust to New Life in America." *The New York Times* (July 9, 1995).

Napolitano, Jo. "Vow to Rebuild Burned Holocaust Museum." *The New York Times* (November 25, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://query.nytimes.com/search/article-page.html?res=9C02E5DB1E3BF936A15752C1A9659C8B63>.

Neilands, J.B. "Vietnam: Progress of the Chemical War." *Asian Survey*, Volume 10, Issue 3 (March 1970): 209-229.

News File. "Vietnam War." *Time Asia* (February 12, 2004). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/newsfiles/vietnam/>.

Pacifici, Robin Wagner and Schwartz, Barry. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." *The American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 97, Issue 2 (September 1991): 376-420.

Pasdilla, Maria T. "Old Racial Categories Losing Meaning: Tiger Woods' Situation Shows the Nation's Ethnic Palette Includes Many Shades of Brown." *The Orlando Sentinel* (May 16, 1997).

Pham, Hieu Tran. "'Unwanted' Child Makes His Place in the World." *Orange County Register* (May 14, 2001).

Rand, Nelson. "The trials of Vietnam's ethnic minorities." *Asia Times* (August 2003), retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: [http://coranet.radicalparty.org/pressreview/print\\_right.php?func=detail&par=6597](http://coranet.radicalparty.org/pressreview/print_right.php?func=detail&par=6597)

Reno, Jami, Isikoff, Michael, Thomas, Evan and Gegax Trent T. "Kerry and Agent Orange." *Newsweek* (March 8, 2004).

- Rollins, Peter C. "The Vietnam War: Perceptions Through Literature, Film, and Television." *American Quarterly*, Volume 36, Issue 3 (1984): 419-432.
- Sakanond Boonthan. "Toxic Legacy of the Vietnam War". *Asia Times* (May 21, 1999). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.atimes.com/se-asia/AE21Ae03.html>.
- Schatler, Barry. "In Limbo: Unwanted at Home or in U.S. Immigrants Held." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (July 4, 1993).
- Simmons, Dale M. "Amerasians from Vietnam Seeking New Life in Austin." *The Austin American Statesman* (July 3, 1989).
- Stodghill, Ron and Bower, Amanda. "Welcome to America's Most Diverse City." *Time Magazine* (August 25, 2002). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,340694-1,00.html>.
- Time Archive. "1965: William C. Westmoreland." *Time Magazine* (January 1966). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.time.com/time/poy2001/archive/1965.html>.
- Timms, Ed. "Amerasians Seek Connection with Their Heritage: For Many Born to Vietnamese Mothers and U.S. Servicemen, Life Means Existing Outside Their Culture." *The Dallas Morning News* (April 24, 1995).
- Tricia, Rose, Andrew, Ross, Robin, D. G. Kelley, Wood, Joe, Winant, Howard, Jones, Jacquie, Eric Dyson, Michael, Harper, Phillip Brian, Gregory, Steven, Farred, Grant, Dent, Gina, Roediger, David, Baraka, Amiri, Aronowitz, Stanley, Gordon, Lewis R, and Gaines, Kevin. "Race and Racism: A Symposium." *Social Text*, No. 42 (Spring 1995): 1-52.
- Trong, Le Hoang. "Survival and Self Reliance: A Vietnamese Viewpoint." *Asian Survey*, Volume 15, Issue 4 (April 1975): 281-300.
- Ungar, E. S. "The Struggle Over the Chinese Community in Vietnam, 1946-1986." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Winter): 596-614.
- Urciuoli, Bonnie. "Language and Borders." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 24 (1995): 525-546.
- Vaughn, Chris. "Children of U.S. Soldiers in Vietnam come to U.S. to Find Dream." *The Sun Herald* (November 21, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/news/nation/7317855.htm>.

Vaughn, Chris. "In Their Father's Land: Left in Vietnam Years Ago, Many Children of U.S. Soldiers are Struggling to Make New Lives in America." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 9, 2003).

Vaughn, Chris. "Life in the Homeland of an Unknown Father." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 9, 2003).

Vaughn, Chris. "Refugee Dedicated to Easing Citizenship for GI Kids from Vietnam." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 21, 2003).

Vaughn, Chris. "Vietnamese Children of U.S. Soldiers Struggle to Make New Lives in America." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 10, 2003).

Vecoli, Rudolph J. "The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of an American Identity." *The History Teacher*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (November 1996): 9-27.

Von Ende, Zoë. "Adopted Viet Girl Happy in Colorado." *The Denver Post* (August 19, 1968).

Von Ende, Zoë. "Denverites Adopt Viet Girl: Nguyen-thi-Luom, three and a half, Is Just Lisa Now." *The Denver Post*, Vol. 73 No. 202 (February 19, 1965).

Wu, Esther. "'Miss Saigon' Comes to an End, Moral Lives On." *The Dallas Morning News* (January 4, 2001).

### **Films, Documentaries, Theatrical Productions, Speeches, Poems and Lyrics**

Boublil, Alain and Schonberg, Claude-Michel. *Miss Saigon*. (New York: 1989).

Davis, Peter III. *Hearts and Minds*. (Los Angeles: Home Vision Entertainment, 1974).

Dolgin, Gaff, and Franco, Vincent. *Daughter of Danang*. (Los Angeles: Interfaze Productions, 2002).

King, Martin Luther. *I Have Dream*. (1963). Transcript of speech obtained from the University of Minnesota website. Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/units/diversity/mlk/mlk.html>.

King, Woody Jr. *The Last Days of Malcolm X: Death of a Prophet*. (Los Angeles: Leisure Entertainment, 2002.)

Lazarus, Emma. *The New Colossus*. (1883). Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: <http://www.umkc.edu/imc/statlib.htm>.

Rzenik, John. *I'm Still Here (Jim's Theme)*. Treasure Planet. (Los Angeles: Walt Disney Records).

Teng, Vienna. *Gravity*. (Tokyo: Vince Mercer, 2003).

Watsuki, Nobuhiro. *Rurouni Kenshin Trust and Betrayal*. (Tokyo: Shueisha, SME Visual works, 2003).

Yukisa, Isao. *Go*. (Tokyo: Toei Company, LTD, 2002).

## Websites

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices-2000*. (2001). Retrieved from the Internet Website directory: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eap/819.htm>.

Human Rights Watch. Vietnam: New Documents Reveal Escalating Repression. *Human Rights News* (April, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/04/vietnam042103.htm>.

Interknowledge Corp. Vietnam. *Asia Geographia*. (February 2004). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.interknowledge.com/vietnam/>.

International Adoption Agency. Information on Amerasian Homecoming Act. *Amerasian Legislation*. (December 15, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [http://www.i-a-a.org/amerasian\\_legislation.htm](http://www.i-a-a.org/amerasian_legislation.htm).

Miller, Kevin, Jr. Amerasian World.com. (1997-2004). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.amerasianworld.com>.

O'Neill, Patricia. *Vietnam Declaration of Independence*. (February 21, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://web.cocc.edu/ea292po/disc5/00000001.htm>.

Peoples of the World Foundation. Travel and Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam. (2003). Retrieved from the Internet Website Directory: <http://www.peoplesoftheworld.org/vietnam.jsp>.

Tran, Than. Vietnamese-Amerasian: Where Do They Belong? *Vietnamese Amerasians*. (December 15, 2003). Retrieved From the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~thantran/Amerasian.html>.

## **WORKS CONSULTED BUT NOT CITED**

### **Books**

- Archdeacon, Thomas J. *Becoming American: An Ethnic History*. (New York: The Free Press, 1983).
- Berry, Brewton. *Almost White*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963).
- Buttinger, Joseph. *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger 1967).
- Cheng, Anne Anlin. *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation and Hidden Grief*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- Chung, Henry. *The Oriental Policy and the United States*. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1919).
- Christner, David. *Bui Doi: The Dust of Life*. (1998).
- Christy, Arthur E. *The Asian Legacy and American Life*. (New York: The John Day Company, 1945).
- Coburn, David R. and Pozzetta, George C. *America and the New Ethnicity*. (Port Washington: National University Press, 1979).
- David, Elliot, W. P. *The Vietnam War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1975*. Two Volumes. (New York: M. E. Sharp, 2003.)
- Fairbank, John K., and Reischauer, Edwin O. and Craig, Albert M. *East Asia Tradition and Transformation*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973).
- Fall, Bernard B. *The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis*. (New York: Fredericks A. Praeger, Publishers, 1963).
- Freeman, James M. *Hearts of Sorrow*. (California: Stanford University Press, 1989).
- Gelb, Leslie H. and Betts, Richard K. *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*. (Washington, D.C.: The Brooklings Institution, 1979).
- Griling, J. L. S. *People's War: Conditions and Consequences in China and South East Asia*. (New York: Fredericks A. Praeger, Publishers, 1969).

Hickman Martin B. *Problems of American Foreign Policy*. (Beverly Hills: The Glencoe Press, 1968).

Honey, P. J. *Genesis of a Tragedy: The Historical Background to the Vietnam War*. (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1968).

Iriye, Akira. *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East. 1921-1931*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

Iriye, Akira. *From Nationalism to Internationalism: US Foreign Policy to 1914*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

Javits, Jacob K. *Discrimination—U.S.A.* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960).

Kibria, Nazli. *Family Tightrope*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Kinchelow, Joe L., Steinberg, Shirley R, Rodriguez, Nelson M, Chnnault, Ronald. *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America*. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1991).

Lacouture, Jean. *Vietnam: Between Two Truces*. (New York: Random House, 1966).

Lipman, Jana K. *Mixed Voices, Mixed Policy*. (Rhode Island: Wayland Press, 1997).

Menzel, Paul T. *Moral Argument and the War in Vietnam*. (Nashville: Aurora Publishers Incorporated, 1971).

Olson, James S. and Roberts, Randy. *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1942 to 1990*. (New York: DIANE Publishing, 1991).

Rutledge, Paul J. *The Vietnamese Experiences in America*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

Sheehan, Neil. *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 1988.

Thrift, Nigel and Forbes Dean. *The Price of War: Urbanization in Vietnam 1954-85*. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986).

### **Articles, Periodicals and Journals**

Alaniz, Veronica. "Honoring Years of Family Service: Woman's Efforts Led to Nation's First Multicultural Adoption Agency." *The Dallas Morning News* (October 23, 1994).

- Anderson, Theodore. "Bilingual Education: The American Experience." *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 7 (November, 1971): 427-440.
- Associated Press. "Father, Daughter Meet After 22 Years." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (May 1, 1995, 13).
- Arnett, Elsa C. "GOP Senators Clearing the Way for Full Relations with Vietnam." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (January 12, 1997).
- Bankston, Carl L, and Zhou, Min. "Effects of Minority-Language Literacy on the Academic Achievement of Vietnamese Youths in New Orleans." *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 1995): 1-17.
- Barrett, David M. "The Mythology Surrounding Lyndon Johnson, His Advisors, and the 1965 Decision to Escalate the Vietnam War." *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 103, Issue 4 (Winter 1988-1989): 637-663.
- Blake, Andrew. "Amerasians reach for opportunity; GI offspring face challenge in U.S." *The Boston Globe* (July 8, 1991).
- Bock, Paula. "Children of the Dust." *The Seattle Times* (October 27, 1991).
- Branigin, William. "Vietnamese try to buy American Dream; Families fake relationship to children of GIs, Obtain Visas." *The Washington Post* (February 19, 1993).
- Brooks, Diane. "Vietnam Veteran Finally Finds the Family He Left Behind." *The Seattle Times* (May 22, 2001).
- Citrin, Jack, Reingold, Beth, Walters, Evelyn, and Green Donald P. "The 'Official English' Movement and the Symbolic Politics of Language in the United States." *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (September 1990): 553-559.
- Constable, Pamela. "Offspring of the War Still Looking for Peace/Mixed Race Vietnamese Not at Ease in U.S." *The Houston Chronicle* (April 26, 1999).
- Corfman, Tom and Sundam, Helena. "Refugee Agencies Dodge Funding Crisis." *The Chicago Reporter* (April 1993). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.chicagoreporter.com/1993/04-93/0493RefugeeAgenciesDodgeFundingCrisis.htm>.
- Dickson, Terry. "Man Helps Pen Pal Immigrate Dream Come for Amerasian." *The Florida Times Union* (September 14, 1997).

- Dizon, Lily. U.S. Ends Era of Welcome for Vietnam's Refugees. *Christian Science Monitor*, Vol. 89, Issue 223 (October 14, 1997).
- Dizon, Lily. "I Thought it was Romantic." *Hong Kong Standard* (April 12, 2002).
- Fields, Sidney. "Rosemary's Babies." *The Denver Post* (December 13, 1970).
- Filaroski, Douglas P. "Trying to fit in: Amerasian children find a new life in the United States." *The Florida Times Union* (April 30, 2000).
- Fogelman, Aaron S. "From Slaves, Convicts, and Servants to Free Passengers: The Transformation of Immigration in the Era of the American Revolution." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (June 1998): 43-76.
- Foster, Gaines M. "Guilt Over Slavery: A Historiographical Analysis." *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (November 1990): 665-694.
- Gates, John M. "People's War in Vietnam." *The Journal of Military History*, Volume 54, Issue 3 (July 1990): 325-344.
- Gimble, Cynthia and Booth, Alan. "Who Fought in Vietnam?" *Social Forces*, Volume 74, Issue 4 (June, 1996): 1137-1157.
- Gold, Scott. "Whether in Vietnam or the U.S. War-Era Offspring Still Find It a Struggle to Belong." *Los Angeles Times* (April 28, 2000).
- Golightly, Cornelius L. "Race, Values and Guilt." *Social Forces*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (December 1947): 125-139.
- Goodkind, Daniel M. "Rising Gender Inequality in Vietnam Since Reunification." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Autumn 1995): 342-359.
- Gordon, Linda W. "The Missing Children: Mortality and Fertility in a Southwest Asian Refugee Population." *International Migration Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), 219-237.
- Henley, David E. F. "Ethnographic Integration and Exclusion in Anticolonial Nationalism: Indonesia and Indochina." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37, Issue 2 (April 1995): 286-324.
- Herring, George C. "American Strategy in Vietnam: The Postwar Debate." *Military Affairs*, Vol. 46, Issue 2 (April 1982): 57-63.

- Holsti, Ole R. and Rosenau, James N. "Vietnam, Consensus, and the Belief Systems of American Leaders." *World Politics*, Volume 32, Issue 1 (October 1979): 1-56.
- Huntington, Samuel P. "American Ideals versus American Institutions." *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Spring, 1982): 1-37.
- Kleinpenning, Gerard, and Hagendoorn, Louk. "Forms of Racism and the Cumulative Dimension of Ethnic Attitudes." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (March 1993): 21-36.
- Kouser, Morgan J. "Separate but not Equal: The Supreme Court's First Decision on Racial Discrimination in Schools." *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (February 1980): 17-44.
- Kruh, Nancy. "What Does This Country Mean to You?" *The Dallas Morning News* (November 1, 1995).
- Legarda, Loren. "Plight of Amerasian Children." *Manila Bulletin* (March 12, 2000).
- Linch, William L. and Sperlich, Peter W. "American Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam." *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 32, Issue 1 (March): 21-44.
- Marcovitz, Hal. "Mission the same after 50 years; 7,000 Children have been Adopted Through Welcome House." *The Morning Call* (January 21, 1999).
- Marino, Katherine. "Senior Division Winner: Women Vietnamese Refugees in the United States: Maintaining a Balance Between Two Cultures." *The History Teacher*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (November 1998): 90-117.
- Martin, Norma. "Overcoming Long Odds: Father, Amerasian Daughter Are United." *Houston Chronicle* (April 30, 1995).
- Martin, Philip. Proposition 187 in California. *International Migration Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring 1995): 255-263.
- McClendon, McKee J. "Racism, Rational Choice, and White Opposition to Racial Change: A Case Study of Busing." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Summer): 214-233.
- McConahay, John B., Hardee, Betty B. and Batts, Valerie. "Has Racism Declined in America? It Depends on Who is Asking and What is Asked." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (December 1981): 563-579.

- Merelman, Richard M. "Racial Conflict and Cultural Politics in the United States." *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (February 1994): 1-20.
- Moore, John Newton. "The Lawfulness of Military Assistance to the Republic of Vietnam." *The American Journal of International Law*, Volume 61, Issue 1 (January 1967): 1-34.
- Moore, Sarah. "Adrift on the Way to Freedom." *The Beaumont Enterprise* (October 22, 2003).
- Mydans, Seth. "End Embargo: Shifts Vietnamese Refugee Tide, Many Plan Business Ventures in Old Country". *The New York Times News Service* (1998).
- O'Malley, Robert. "Fields Corner, Dorchester." *Fields Corner* (April 5, 1995). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.geocities.com/romalley7/fields.htm>.
- Paulston, Christina Bratt. "Language Policies and Language Rights." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 26 (1997): 73-85.
- Saenz, Rogelio, Hwang, Seab-Shong and Aguirre, Benigno E. "In Search of Asian War Brides." *Demography*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (August, 1994): 549-559.
- Sege, Irene. "US no haven to Amerasians, survey finds." *The Boston Globe* (February 14, 1990).
- Shaughnessy, C.A. "The Vietnam Conflict: "America's Best Documented War?" *The History Teacher*, Volume 24, Issue 2 (February 1991) 195-147.
- Skidmore, Thomas E. "Bi-Racial U.S.A. vs. Multi-Racial Brazil: Is the Contrast Still Valid?" *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (May 1993): 373-386.
- Time Archive. "A Moment of Subdued Thanksgiving." *Time Magazine* (February 5, 1973). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: [http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/from\\_newsfile/0,10987,1101730205-217013\\_00.html](http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/from_newsfile/0,10987,1101730205-217013_00.html).
- Vaughn, Chris. "Closer to Home?" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 10, 2003).
- Vaughn, Chris. "Immigrant has Unattainable Dream of Meeting U.S. Soldier Who Fathered Her." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (November 21, 2003).
- Virtanen, Simo V, and Huddy Leonie. "Old-Fashioned Racism and New Forms of Racial Prejudice." *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (May, 1998): 311-332.

Usdansky, Margaret, L. "Amerasians: caught between cultures." *USA Today* (May 18, 1993).

Wright, Quincy. "Legal Aspects of the Viet-Nam Situation." *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 60, Issue 4 (October 1966)" 750-769.

Wu, Esther. "Holiday Hard to Grasp, but not Freedom." *The Dallas Morning News* (November 23, 2000).

Yancey, George A, Yancey, Sherelyn W. "Black-White Differences in the Use of Personal Advertisements for Individuals Seeking Interracial Relationships." *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (May 1997): 650-667.

Yoon, Diane H. "American Response to Amerasian Identity and Rights." *McNair Journal* (December 15, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www-mcnair.berkeley.edu/99McNairJournal/yoon/yoon.pdf>.

Yu, Xie, Goyette, Kimberly. "The Racial Identification of Biracial Children with One Asian Parent: Evidence from the 1990 Census." *Social Forces*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (December 1997): 547-570.

## Websites

International Relations Committee. Striking a Balance Between Liberty and Security: The Patriot Act, The Homeland Security Act and American Civil Liberties After September 11. *The League of Women's Voters* (March 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.lwvcincinnati.org/civillibertiesmarch2003.ssi>.

Nilsson, Carl. Amerasians. (1997). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://www.svt.se/svt-sales/tvshow.asp?ID=10>.

Pfeifer, Mark E. Vietnamese Amer-Asians. *Vietnamese Studies Internet Resource Center* (December 15, 2003). Retrieved from the Internet. Website Directory: <http://site.yahoo.com/vstudies/vietam1.html>.