

Name of Interviewer: Melissa Nguyen
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Name of Person Interviewed (or pseudonym): Van Nguyen
Contact Information of Person Interviewed: (832)2487647

Name	Transcript
	<i>00:01</i>
Melissa:	Can you say your name, your birth date, and where you were born?
Van:	I am Van Nguyen, and I was born in January 15, 1949 in Saigon, Vietnam.
Melissa:	OK, What was it like when and where you grew up? Please describe your childhood.
Van:	I grew up in a poor and under civilized country, Vietnam, as you know, and I was raised from a below middle income family. Yep, That's about it.
Melissa:	What was your life like as a child?
Van:	Pretty normal like every young children in Vietnam. I was active and running around the neighbor and going to school. However, I was love and care very much for my parents.
Melissa:	How were you disciplined as a youth?
Van:	Well, in Vietnam, mom and dad can hit us, can hit us, but not because they did not love us, they love us and care for us, but pretty normal to be disciplined even by mom and dad who used to hit me quite frequent because I was not a very good child.
Melissa:	Why were you not a good child, in what ways?
Van:	Well, because I like to go around neighbor run around with other childrens and going home late, late for lunch or late for dinner and I went to school and come home later and then my mom discipline me. And I think it's pretty normal for mom and dad to do that.
Melissa:	Is it normal for children to behave against their parent's wishes in Vietnam?
Van:	Not typically not normal as a young Vietnamese we pretty listen to mom and dad and we don't say no to them or don't say anything against them. Not at all.
Melissa:	So you were the outlier, the trouble maker?
Van:	No not as a trouble maker, No, I just like, I was so active, I like outdoor activity. And My mom my dad were concerning about safety and, because the country was at war. I was not a trouble maker, but I was disciplined anyway.
Melissa:	How was, you mentioned safety, how was safety in Vietnam back then as compared to, say, America now with your children
Van:	Safety at the time means that at night they have a curfew at day anything can happen on the street like car running over you or some crimes or even

some bullets because any soldier can carry guns over there. VC or Viet Cong at the time can fight on the street like I remember offense of tet in 1968, you all probably know that

Melissa: You said curfew is that in response to the war or was there always a curfew in Vietnam?

Van: In response to the war and response to other problems of the country like sometimes they have something going on the coop, you probably know the coop, try to alter the regime, by a group of army try to remove the president, something like that. Always some way to establish a curfew in Vietnam, a curfew in Vietnam pretty, I don't say normal, pretty standard procedure in Vietnam at the time during war.

Melissa: What time was the curfew and what would happen if you were caught outside after the curfew?

Van: Well The 24 hour curfew if the war comes to the city but usually curfew is at night, like after 10 or 11 pm no one can drive on the street no one can go out of the house except something really true emergency you have to prove this is emergency you have to go out, yea.

Melissa: And, Would you be ticketed or, how were the policemen in Vietnam, were they corrupt?

Van: Oh, not ticketed, no, they will put you in jail if you violate curfew, no not ticket no.

Melissa: And, You always hear about violent acts done by policemen on civilians is that a common thing, did you, is that a common thing, did you witness that or is that a regular thing done at the time.

Van: Well in a small country, in an under civilized country, police brutality is very common and they have the power, especially during the war, they have the power, and they use their power and they take advantage from the power to dominate regular citizens. Yes, police brutality is very common.

Melissa: What was a typical daily routine in Vietnam?

Van: Is that for me of everybody in Vietnam?

Melissa: For you.

Van: Well there are many like transitional time between when I was born like until 9 10 years old. The first 10 years when I was in Vietnam, I was under very, not only care, but close supervision from mom and dad. So most of the time anything I did or any where I went to, I usually went with my mom and dad. Routine thing was the first 10 years of my life I get up early 6 or 6:30 am in the morning and then I have to help my mom and dad for the breakfast. Well, I bought the breakfast from a local market, would say very close to my house for my mom my dad and then I went to school and after school I came home and I helped them to clean the house helped them to cook the dinner, the first ten years. And from 10 until 16 years I was a little bit trouble maker, yes, so I was running around with the young neighborhood and enjoy the outdoor activity until later at night and my mom usually didn't like that she disciplined me a lot about that. Pretty routine for my life

Melissa: And, You said you ran around with the neighbors in your neighborhood do you see a difference between neighborhoods in America and neighborhoods in Vietnam. Are they more close knit?

Van: Very completely different. Here even the neighbor, but we don't have much like daily seeing them because probably the way living in America very privacy for every family and because probably Americans working hard they just want to enjoy their family at home they don't want to have association daily with their neighbor, but in Vietnam we see them everyday we talk to them everyday and as a child I used to run around with young children in the neighbor everyday and my mom my dad also talk to the neighbor every day and see them everyday, yeah.

Melissa: Has it been difficult for you to adapt to the American culture? You said there's more privacy, do you find yourself becoming more American with the private aspect or do you miss the public realm of information and everything as in Vietnam where everyone knew everything about one another they knew their family.

Van: It was very difficult the first few years when I just start coming to America trying to live a new life here. Yes its completely different the culture the language and the privacy like you just mentioned, privacy in America I'm learning everyday I like it now I like to live a private life and but the first few years was difficult was very difficult and I try to be adapted to the new life first 5 years, but now I think my family my wife and me are very comfortable with the way we live here and association with American people, American culture

Melissa: Do you contribute that to because you feel you've become more American or are you, like you said adapting, assimilating, and learning?

Van: I don't think I will become more American I just feel like I live in a country where people doing the normal thing, and I will do the same way they do I don't think I will lose my root my culture as a Vietnamese however I adapted well and I can say I am a little more Americanized compared to people who still live in Vietnam

Melissa: You describe your life as a child in Vietnam, do you see difference in children in Vietnam and children going up in America. What are these differences that you see

Van: Yeah it's. different the children in Vietnam well I'm talking for my time children now I don't know how they live how they feel but when I was a child in Vietnam the children there completely different from the children living in this country because we live in a poor under civilized country so what we got very little, little toys we got little freedom we got low educations we got a lot of disadvantage to be growing up as a child in Vietnam, but children here children here I think has more and more things for them for their need and they have more education and food everyday and they have clothes even some extra thing more than they need everyday because this is America this is a powerful country

Melissa: What occupations did you have in Vietnam?

Van: Many, after I finished my high school I went to a college and I got my bachelor degree in biology when I was only 20 yrs old and they employed me as they hire me as a lab instructor in the lab of the university of Saigon and beside doing that I was a teacher at 9 10 and 11 grade of few high school in Vietnam and then, later I was draft into army and become second lieutenant in Vietnam and then went to America

Melissa: When you say education was sparse in Vietnam t the time for children and for getting so far in your own education you have to admit you were successful in school for getting so far

Van: I don't know if I am one of the intelligent childs in my life but because my ambition I wanted to do I wanted to have more school in French [speaks French] meaning if you want it you get it I want more educations I want more school even my mom my dad couldn't afford to put me through school anymore and I was myself to go through college I got a scholarship I didn't have to pay for anything at college so I was in advance program and I did well and I was able to finish my college in Vietnam

Melissa: Where did you live during the Vietnam war and what were your experiences? What were you doing? What were you involved in? And how did you feel about the war?

Van: Say again you ask me where

Melissa: Where did you live during the war what were you involvements and how did you feel about the war

Van: I was living in Saigon all my life I was born and lived in Saigon until 26 years old it was not fun to live in a country who which were under the war it was not fun at all because it slow everything down it slow for example my education it slowed it down I had a lot of days many days without food with out drink without electricity but everybody was under the same roof so we not surprised we have no electricity for a few days or even no food for few day and my country was under war that was ridiculous war civil war between north and south but it effect everybody affect children a lot because many children was not able to go to school and if they not doing well in school they become draft become army and I can say 30 and 35% of them die when they come to the army

Melissa: Was there a minimum age to be drafted?

Van: If you did not pass high school if you did not pass high school or if you did not pass 10 or 11 grade no matter how old 18 17 you were draft you were draft in the army if you did not pass the college yes you were draft and some of them volunteer to go into the army because this is the only way for them to have a career and make some income if you pass 11 or 12 grade you can go to army as an officer but if you didn't pass 11 grade you were draft into the army to be a soldier but not an officer.

Melissa: Were there any incidents of people hiding from the draft like trying not to be drafted and what did they do to hide

Van: Yes there are many family who only has one child, one child or one son and they used that as an excuse t be draft and there are many family who live their children too much who don't want their children to be draft and

to be killed during the war when they children go into army so they try to hide them they try to bring them to far into the country side and either change the name or doing something for them not to be drafted however if the government if the government found out about that well they would put not only that child into the jail but they will prosecute the parents also

Melissa: Were any of your other family members involved in the war, if so how?

Van: Yeah all of my cousin I'm talking about boys, were draft into the army my brother and my my two brothers in order not to go into the army my mom recommend them to go to the police department and to be a police men and both of them become policemen so they didn't go to the army they was not drafted into the army

Melissa: So what was the difference in police involvement and say the soldier in the army involvement with eh war. Did the police just kind of mandate the civilians more?

Van: Yes the police usually work in the big city like Saigon or like can through like hue and they are running the city they are going to the street and running traffic [doorbell] and try to control crime on the street yeah they not involved in the war unless the war start in the big city and they have to fight VC during the war

Melissa: And you mentioned your boy cousins were drafted do you know of any female involvement in the war

Van: Yes females volunteer to go into the army like my sister she was volunteer to go into the army and she become a female officer for a few years but they don't draft the female the female got to volunteer in order to go into the arm

Melissa: And when they volunteer do they use the females as soldiers do they fight or more office work

Van: No they use female soldier not going into the battlefield, no. Usually in the office or in a very safe environment yeah.

Melissa: Did you come into contact with American solders what did you think of them if you did?

Van: Well I saw them talk about contact I don't think so I saw them because sometimes they operate a unit I was a second lieutenant in Mekong delta river and sometimes I saw them patrolling, patrolling, but my English at the time was very poor so I was afraid to come to talk to them, because I was afraid they would not understand me at all.

Melissa: Did they have an intimidating presence were they unsightly were they kind of frightening or how was the general feeling toward the American solders at the time?

Van: I don't think so I think the American soldier, most of them or many of them are young 19 20 or a little more than 20 yrs old and they liked the children because when I was a kid 10 or 11 years old sometimes they give me a smile sometimes they give me a candy or some, but I think, like everybody else, it depends on the personality some soldiers acting bad because of personality more than because he's a solider or something

Melissa: How did the war affect you and your family?

Van: Very much the war like I just said few minutes ago the war slow down us slow down a lot of people in Vietnam in terms of educations in terms of financial in terms of job and in terms of nutrition and medicine it really affect everybody unless you are a very very wealthy family, but only 3 or 4% of the population are very wealthy the rest are either below middle income or poor.

Melissa: What do you remember most about the war or that time period?

Van: Well, I remember the most the war and its still vivid in my, in my memory Tet offensive, you all heard about 1968 I remember I was out of my house because I went to a, a small city, which is about 30km about 20 miles, 30 km north of Saigon to visit my aunt, my mom's sister. I love her dearly, and on that day is the first day of the Vietnamese new years. It just pop up shooting noise everywhere in Saigon and I learned from where I was that Saigon was occupied or was under heavy fighting between VC and the government soldier. However I was worried about my mom and my brother and sister, I was 16 years old, I decide to walk home from, like I mean walk 20 miles, walk home from that small town and I walk and I saw dead bodies on the street. I saw blood and I saw, I still heard a lot of pop pop pop, but I was, I was not wise. I walk, and I was a teenager, and I walk during the fighting of offensive Tet. I could have been received any bullet anytime, be shot at anytime, but I was lucky someone up there protect me or so and I walk home safely and I saw my mom my brother my sister everybody safe. So yep.

Melissa: So during the Tet offense did everyone just stay in the house?

Van: Yeah

Melissa: And they were aware of what was going on

Van: Oh yeah yeah, oh yeah. Yeah.

Melissa: Were you or anyone you knew in a reeducation came and did they describe what it was like?

Van: Well I have two brothers who I said were policemen so they was reported to the north Vietnamese government after Saigon fell under the communist regime and they were both have to be going to reeducate camp the oldest one were in the camp for about 6 7 years and they, well, jail him in north Vietnam camp in Hanoi. And he was in a very poor condition because he didn't have no nutrition, not enough nutrition, no medicine, so he become edema and become very ill and lost all of the teeth and the younger brother was lucky only in the camp for one in a half years and he was fine.

Melissa: Did you see a change between people who were, say family and others after the war happened say your two brothers who served did you see a change especially after being in a reeducation camp?

Van: What do you mean change?

Melissa: Like their perspective on life their way of thinking was there any change?

Van: No in fact after the reeducated camp all they want because they know all who was hell they know how bad they were treat in the camp and how poor they live in the camp so they all want to be getting out of the camp

and they wish to come to America and I was able to bring my oldest brother to America, yeah.

Melissa: A lot of wars are between two different countries, two different nations, and so two different people with the Vietnam war since it was between the north and south and essentially everyone was Vietnamese was there more resentment that say in an reeducation camp the people who were treating you wrongly were Vietnamese and they spoke the same language and understood each other yet they still treated each other with such hostility.

Van: Well the same but the war was between north and south Vietnam between Vietnamese and it's a ridiculous war we fought each other because ideology one is thinking communist is everything and one is thinking freedom is everything and we are from the south and we like to be freedom and people from the north like to be communist so we fought each other same way when the south Vietnamese soldier went to reeducation camp and were treated badly and poorly by the north Vietnamese but it is a war so you can not asking for your right or autonomy anymore and you have to accept it

Melissa: What was life like after the war?

Van: Peaceful no more gun nose no more different regime between south and north the whole country is under only one government even the government is communist government however the war was ended so people can have time to better their life to better their education and to work and to take care of family I don't think what I say here is best to live under the communist regime but its best to live under no war. A not war. Yeah.

Melissa: Where were you in April 1975 the fall of Saigon and how did you hear about the fall what were your thoughts?

Van: After I become a second lieutenant because of I had more education than many soldiers, many Vietnamese soldiers Vietnamese office I was able to be granted to go to America to continue my education as a doctor of philosophy, so I took the offer and I went to Louisville Kentucky in September 1974 only 9 months later Saigon fell to communist in April 30 1975 so only 9 months after living in Louisville I learned that my south Vietnamese country has been lost. And I had no country to go back and I was offered by the American government and the school I went to go to continue to stay and continue my education.

Melissa: Did you apply for citizen ship down the road?

Van: Not yet at the time I applied to be a refugee you have to live in this country at least 5 years to be able to petition to of to file applications of naturalization. So at the time I was a refugee, I was a student and then become a refugee then 5 years after i live in America yes I was applied to be a us citizen and I got it.

Melissa: And how was that process? Did you find any biases any unfair treatment, any difficulties did you have any hardships with that?

Van: I'm sure any process to have a something unfair to have something bias but not in my case my case so straight forward after 5 years I know I want

to go to medical school the best way to be increase the chance to be accepted to medical school I have to be a US citizen so I petition to be a US citizen before I try to go to medical school I don't think I received any unfair treatment any bias at all during the process of becoming naturalization of US citizen

Melissa: When and how did you learn English and how difficult was it

Van: I learned very informal English in my country everybody who went to high school got a choice besides your own Vietnamese language either you choose French or you choose English as another language like take a few credit hours during high school and I choose French. I didn't learn English during high school however before I went to Louisville, Kentucky, I got to learn more English to be allowed to go to united states so I took 6 months a very fast course in 6th months it was help but not enough for me to go to a formal class and understand what was going on. It was so difficult the first few months when I went to the graduate school and taking classes because I was not understanding at all

Melissa: And what do you think helped your process in English was it just being here in America hearing English everyday or formal class training?

Van: For my part, for my case because of the determination to do well in school in order to do well in school you have to learn English you have to better your English to do well in school so I determined to do that so I read the newspaper everyday watch TV go out and talk to people everyday so after 6 months of living in Louisville, Kentucky my English was better I was more comfortable in class I did well

Melissa: What was the hardest thing about starting a new life in America?

Van: The hardest thing is how to have a better life how to have a better job how to have a career hardest things because this country is new to be this country is not only different language but different culture e have to fight many things to be above not only just language or just education but we need to work very hard in other things also like how to have a career how to protect your career and yourself protect your family. It was a struggle at the beginning

Melissa: Who helped you find a home in the US?

Van: What you mean find a home?

Melissa: Just any type of aid. Did you receive any aid from any Americans or any organizations? Was there anyone to help you finance your school finance your housing?

Van: Yeah, after I became a refugee at the time I was in Louisville, Kentucky, I was 27 years old there was an American family, their name is Shapel, Mr. and Mrs. Andy and Lisa Shapel, who one day happen I went to the church and they saw me and they asking me are you Vietnamese? And I said yes and you need any help because I heard the country was fell and I said yes I need help. So they become like unofficial sponsor for me anything they can they take me to any organization for me to have to supply some old clothes and they even give me a little cash to pay for my apartment and

they try to help me to find a job something like that at the beginning and its really helpful for me the first few months after Saigon fell.

Melissa: You came to America before the first wave of refugees so--

Van: No I came to America as a student

Melissa: Right, you came before the first wave of major Vietnamese refugees, so were there any Vietnamese within your city or community at all?

Van: Yes right after Saigon fell there were a lot of Vietnamese who went to, who sent to a camp, a camp the American organized some camp for refugee camp so in fort Jeffery some in Pennington, Pennsylvania and I was able to contact some of my friends who went to the refugee camp and was so happy to talk to them and try to help them to be relocated. And I even as a student, I organized some transportation for anyone who went to Louisville, Kentucky we come to the airport to pick them up we tried to visit them many days we can a month and we try because I was a student at least I came 9 months before so I was a little bit understanding the culture and the language in US better than the new refugees so anything I could help them I did

Melissa: Did u find it difficult when associating with the new Vietnamese refugees did you find it difficult to assimilate to American culture because now you have a community of Vietnamese people to associate with or did you find comfort in the fact that there were more Vietnamese people around you in America

Van: Either way. I feel more comfortable with a lot of Vietnamese around me now but in Louisville, Kentucky at the time there was only 5 Vietnamese student and I was fine because my main purpose when I was in Louisville, Kentucky is to go to school was to do well at school so I don't have to be around a lot of Vietnamese however after Saigon fell and refugee camp I was able to see more and more Vietnamese that's good. And we came to see them and we had lunch together and we had dinner together

Melissa: Did you have the mentality that the Vietnamese should stick together here in America or were you ok being independent and trying to move on and start a new life

Van: I think I cant speak for many Vietnamese in my community but speaking for myself I don't think its necessary to be with just Vietnamese community to be happy no I think I can be with anyone with any community if they are good people if they are good America I think that's fine with me so, when I say so I mean that probably like to be independent and like to have my own private life

Melissa: Did you, and the Vietnamese community now establishing, face any racisms by the Americans?

Van: I didn't see I'm sure always has some racist going on in any society in any country no just in America here however when you look different when you talk different when you come from a different culture different background, country always someone there look at you with a strange eye and some of them more than other pay attention to that part of you and some of them even hate you it could happen like I said in any society but I

was lucky maybe at the beginning and they saw me heard me talk English with some accent and behave different than the American here they may give me a strange look, but after they come to talk to me or after I come to talk to them, I probably change the mind of many Americans because I am who I am and I don't see part of my life where I receive any racist bad treatment from American at all. I don't see it.

Melissa: Did your classmates and your colleagues treat you differently because you came from Vietnam you feel?

Van: No, no, probably the student in medical school, they are knowledge people they from pretty good family and they know the international and they know that there are a lot of people from different background, different culture different country, come to the United States and they probably get used to and they don't treat me different, they just very friendly with me.

Melissa: Do you have any funny stories of culture shock?

Van: Not really culture shock, but something funny because of language more than anything else, I remember when I came to Louisville, Kentucky, my first few days some I think some student approach me, American student say howdy-dooddy! and I said my names Van don't call me howdy-dooddy. I still remember, and my professor asking me I will pick u up Van at the stop and go. So I was just waiting for him at the stop and go and I miss him because I thought the stop and go was green light and red light I didn't know stop n go was a grocery store, yeah. I think language problem, but another funny memory is my chairman, anatomy chairman, he has a bald head and his wife always caress his head and one time I was sitting behind them when they drive me somewhere and he was driving with his bald head and his wife keep, keep keep touching his bald head and I was upset so I removed his hand from my professor bald head and I said don't do that because its not respectful to your husband and they both just laugh at me wildly, they just laught at me. I think in Vietnam I never see a wife always touch a husband head caress a husband hand in Vietnam my dad really respect my dad and don't ever touch his head [laugh].

Melissa: Do you think of yourself as an American would you call yourself an American?

Van: Yes I am a Vietnamese American now and this is my country and people around me many many good American and they are, many of them are my friends and even my neighbors now are my good friends and my colleagues at the hospital they are American they are good friends and my, friends of my children, they are American they are good people too. So I think after many years of living here I am very comfortable and this is my country I am very proud to be a Vietnamese American.

Melissa: 2008 being an election year, how do you think politics is going right now? How is it in your opinion?

Van: One thing I hate to discuss I hate to give my opinion is politics probably because I was suppressed, well suppressed, when I was young in my country we did not have a voice. No one could have an opinion or voice in a war country because government don't like it they may cut you up you

know they may kill you. So I was suppressed the whole of my family was suppressed their voice so coming here I don't want to be in politics and I don't want to discuss even though I know I have the right to talk about politics the right to choose the president or some, but to me any president who become president of United States, they, he or she, should protect us, should care for Americans and should care for the country. That's what I want to see what the president the next president do.

Melissa: Do you feel as a Vietnamese American, that the candidates address your issues and do you feel included in their plans for the future?

Van: Very little, I think, very little I think both sides republican or democrat that's the least of their concerns. They concern over the whole of American. They don't really really pay a special concern for any group or any ethnic, but for the whole country yes they do and I don't expect them to just pay attention to any community or Vietnamese community. I want them to pay attention to the whole community that is US, The whole America.

Melissa: When you go back to Vietnam, how do you feel what do see has changed?

Van: First time when my wife and I come back to Vietnam 1997 after 20 23 years, left the country it was shock. It was shock when the first time I stepped out of the airplane and see my country again and there was a big change more and more people on the street more motorcycle bikers on the street and honking everywhere more people who selling food on the street and the only thing, the only thing that is best for the country at the time 1997 when I came back to Vietnam for the first time was I did not see war. I did not hear the gun noise and that's the best, that's the best.

Melissa: Do you think Vietnam is progressing for the better, is changing for the better?

Van: I think so, I think, and we came again 4 5 years ago and I see at least in the city-side people who live better, have better food, and better income better house. I don't talk about a small town or way in a remote area in Vietnam, maybe they still live very poorly but at least the country going to the right direction, to improve the conditions of the people in Vietnam.

Melissa: In your opinion what will become of Vietnamese culture in the US?

Van: What do you mean?

Melissa: The new generation, the second generation of immigrants--- the children of immigrants, how do you think they'll embrace, will they keep the culture?

Van: We become less and less we coming here even we coming here after 30 years after 33 years we become less and less keeping our culture, for example the Tet is a very important day--- the first day of the Vietnamese new year we used to be we used to enjoy tremendously just like people enjoy Christmas and new years here but coming to this country for many years, I don't think I celebrate Tet like I did in Vietnam probably because the culture is less and less and the time, the work, and the day is different. Whenever we celebrate Tet while American people are still working, so I have to work too. So even we come to this country after 30 years we

Van: Oh, not ticketed, no, they will put you in jail if you violate curfew, no not ticket no.

Melissa: And, You always hear about violent acts done by policemen on civilians is that a common thing, did you, is that a common thing, did you witness that or is that a regular thing done at the time.

Van: Well in a small country, in an under civilized country, police brutality is very common and they have the power, especially during the war, they have the power, and they use their power and they take advantage from the power to dominate regular citizens. Yes, police brutality is very common.

Subject: Adapting to American culture

Name	Transcript
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8:56

Melissa: Has it been difficult for you to adapt to the American culture? You said there's more privacy, do you find yourself becoming more American with the private aspect or do you miss the public realm of information and everything as in Vietnam where everyone knew everything about one another they knew their family.

Van: It was very difficult the first few years when I just start coming to America trying to live a new life here. Yes its completely different the culture the language and the privacy like you just mentioned, privacy in America I'm learning everyday I like it now I like to live a private life and but the first few years was difficult was very difficult and I try to be adapted to the new life first 5 years, but now I think my family my wife and me are very comfortable with the way we live here and association with American people, American culture

Melissa: Do you contribute that to because you feel you've become more American or are you, like you said adapting, assimilating, and learning?

Van: I don't think I will become more American I just feel like I live in a country where people doing the normal thing, and I will do the same way they do I don't think I will lose my root my culture as a Vietnamese however I adapted well and I can say I am a little more Americanized compared to people who still live in Vietnam

Subject: The future of Vietnamese culture in the U.S.

Name	Transcript
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10:43

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enjoy Christmas and new years here but coming to this country for many years, I don't think I celebrate Tet like I did in Vietnam probably because the culture is less and less and the time, the work, and the day is different. Whenever we celebrate Tet while American people are still working, so I have to work too. So even we come to this country after 30 years we practice less and less the Vietnamese culture, so I don't blame if my children or my grandchildren completely to be like Americanized or American. And I understand that. However I wish my children at least understand where I am from, where me and my wife from, and to understand that the root, our root, and our old culture and oh, I just wish them to understand why we do this why we do that because deep down inside we still remember our culture and our roots

Subject: Life in Vietnam during the Vietnam War

Name Transcript

14:32, 22:05

Van: I was living in Saigon all my life I was born and lived in Saigon until 26 years old it was not fun to live in a country who which were under the war it was not fun at all because it slow everything down it slow for example my education it slowed it down I had a lot of days many days without food with out drink without electricity but everybody was under the same roof so we not surprised we have no electricity for a few days or even no food for few day and my country was under war that was ridiculous war civil war between north and south but it effect everybody affect children a lot because many children was not able to go to school and if they not doing well in school they become draft become army and I can say 30 and 35% of them die when they come to the army

Van: Well, I remember the most the war and its still vivid in my, in my memory Tet offensive, you all heard about 1968 I remember I was out of my house because I went to a, a small city, which is about 30km about 20 miles, 30 km north of Saigon to visit my aunt, my mom's sister. I love her dearly, and on that day is the first day of the Vietnamese new years. It just pop up shooting noise everywhere in Saigon and I learned from where I was that Saigon was occupied or was under heavy fighting between VC and the government soldier. However I was worried about my mom and my brother and sister, I was 16 years old, I decide to walk home from, like I mean walk 20 miles, walk home from that small town and I walk and I saw dead bodies on the street. I saw blood and I saw, I still heard a lot of pop pop pop, but I was, I was not wise. I walk, and I was a teenager, and I walk during the fighting of offensive Tet. I could have been received any bullet anytime, be shot at anytime, but I was lucky someone up there protect me or so and I walk home safely and I saw my mom my brother my sister everybody safe.

Subject: Present day Vietnam

48:05, 53:51

- Van: First time when my wife and I come back to Vietnam 1997 after 20 23 years, left the country it was shock. It was shock when the first time I stepped out of the airplane and see my country again and there was a big change more and more people on the street more motorcycle bikers on the street and honking everywhere more people who selling food on the street and the only thing, the only thing that is best for the country at the time 1997 when I came back to Vietnam for the first time was I did not see war. I did not hear the gun noise and that's the best, that's the best.
- Melissa: When you travel back to Vietnam do you consider it coming home? Do you consider Vietnam your home?
- Van: Well I don't think truly, truly coming home because first of all I have no home there. My home is here. Coming back to the country, yes, but coming home, I don't have a feeling that I'm coming home. Not because I lost completely the culture as a Vietnamese, but, hey, I've been living here for 33, 34 years I have a home here my families here my childrens here my friends here my neighborhoods here so coming back to Vietnam is coming back to visit but not coming back home, no.

Summary

Yes, I am a Vietnamese American now. This is my country. I am very proud to be a Vietnamese American. First time when my wife and I [came] back to Vietnam [in] 1997, after 20, 23 years [of having] left the country, it was [a] shock. It was [a] shock the first time I stepped out of the airplane and [saw] my country again and there was a big change: more and more people on the street, more motorcycle[s], bikers on the street, and honking everywhere, more people selling food on the street and the only thing, the only thing that is best for the country at the time, 1997, when I came back to Vietnam for the first time, was I did not see war. I did not hear the gun noise[s] and that's the best, that's the best. [Being in] this country for many years, I don't think I celebrate Tet like I did in Vietnam, probably because the culture is less and less and the time, the work, and the day is different. I don't blame if my children or my grandchildren completely be like Americanized or American. And I understand that. However, I wish my children at least understand where I am from, where me and my wife [are] from, and to understand the root, our root, and our old culture.

The excerpts were chosen because they encompass many aspects of the interview such as self identification, culture, the future, and something that is important to the interviewee. The interview was conducted in English and no translation was necessary. I corrected the grammar only because the interviewee preferred I did. Personally, I was against any change made to the word choices and way of speech of the interviewee, because I think it is a part of who he is and to change his words, is, essentially, to change his answer. In my opinion, to suggest that presenting incorrect grammar or someone's diction without editing to be a sign of neglect or unsatisfactory standards---is to suggest that someone who does not speak correct or perfect English is somehow unsatisfactory.

The interview was conducted in English because the interviewee understands and speaks English. Implying grammatically incorrect English is subpar or unacceptable to exhibit, almost sounds to me like suggesting someone who does not speak perfect English is not as presentable as someone who does. The question that lingers in my mind is: Do the people who think informal English is a sign of neglect, see the people who speak in such a manner as somehow less American, or neglecting to assimilate “completely”?