

Name of Interviewer: Sabrina Jiwani

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Date: September 22, 2008

Themes: Boat People; Current Political Affiliations; Religion; Family

Name of Person Interviewed (or pseudonym): Thuy Phan

Contact Information of Person Interviewed: 2723 Lyons Rd. Austin, TX; tvphan75@yahoo.com; 512-947-3325

Name	Transcript
00:01	
Sabrina	What was it like where you grew up?
Thuy	I don't remember much. There was a bunch of narrow corridors to get to my grandmother's house and as kids we just ran around all over and just made toys, played with each other. That's all I can really remember.
Sabrina	Do you remember anything else about what your life was like as a child?
Thuy	That was pretty much it. I was less than five when I was there so not much.
Sabrina	What was a typical daily routine in Vietnam?
Thuy	Can't remember that either.
Sabrina	Did you practice any traditional arts when you were younger?
Thuy	No. It's going to be an easy interview.
Sabrina	It'll probably be more about what your life was like after Vietnam, in the United States. [Pause] Where did you move to?
Thuy	[Pause] We came to Rochester, New York.
Sabrina	[Pause to take notes] Why Rochester?
Thuy	[Long Pause] It was originally, people wanted my dad to move to California, but because there was a lot of Vietnamese people there and there was a lot of entertainment and he thought as something that was good to raise children, so he chose a more quiet area, looked for school system and somewhere to raise us separate from the rest of the gang and all of the activities in California. So for us, he chose Rochester, New York because it was a smaller Vietnamese population and wanted us to have a normal life in the US.

Sabrina Was your family involved in the war?

Thuy No.

Sabrina Where did you go after Rochester?

Thuy Austin, TX

Sabrina How old were you when you came?

Thuy I think around 18, somewhere around there.

Sabrina Why the move to Austin?

Thuy UT

Sabrina What did you study at UT?

Thuy Computer Engineering.

Sabrina What occupations did you have after that?

Thuy Computer Engineer

Sabrina Where did you work?

Thuy I worked at IBM [pause] and then Equator [pause] and then Infotronic America [long pause] and now I have my own Real Estate Assessment Company. I'm not an engineer anymore.

Sabrina What prompted the move from engineering?

Thuy Just a higher potential, easier for retirement, easier to plan for me. It fits well because when I started college I didn't originally do engineering. I was supposed to be, I wanted to go to art school, so, I didn't meet the 12 piece portfolio that they required so then I went to math and science and I realized I couldn't graduate with enough money to support my family so I went directly to engineering.

Sabrina Do you have a family now, are you married?

Thuy Yes

Sabrina How many children do you have?

Thuy I don't have any children.

Sabrina Do you live with any of your other family?

Thuy No, just my wife and my brother-in-law.

Sabrina You said you wanted to go to art school, did you do art a lot when you were younger?

Thuy Yeah, mainly just drawing and colors, that's it.

Sabrina Do you practice art now?

Thuy No, it's been a while.

05:00

Sabrina Do you remember what the hardest thing was about starting a new life?

Thuy Yeah, it's, since my parents came from business backgrounds, they were very successful in Vietnam until Communists took over. It was hard for our family to start over. I remember it was pretty tough. Everything we did we had to watch, dollars, pennies, where to spend and how to spend it. It was constantly watching where our money was going so that was the hardest part.

Sabrina Why did you decide to come to the US, or your family?

Thuy I think it was the way where people were going to the US back in the late 80s early 90s. Oh no, I'm sorry, early 80's, late 70's. It was a wave of refugees that just came over.

Sabrina Who helped you find a home in the US, or who helped your family?

Thuy All I can remember is a sponsor, his name was, we call him Mr. Dan, but I don't remember anything else about him.

Sabrina Your very first job, did you find that out of college?

Thuy No, I worked for my parent's restaurant since I was a teenager [interruption by interviewer] it was a family business.

Sabrina What did you do there?

Thuy First it was just bus boy, and then waiter, and then just took care of the management of the waiter staff and took inventory. I did a little bartending too [chuckles].

Sabrina Are you a citizen?

Thuy Yes

Sabrina Do you think of yourself as American, or Vietnamese, or Vietnamese American?

Thuy Vietnamese American.

Sabrina Do you find any similarities in culture from here and there?

Thuy No [laughs].

Sabrina Do you maintain Vietnamese culture here?

Thuy Both. I just take what I think is the best of both.

Sabrina What do you think of US policies during and after the war?

Thuy The Vietnam War? I didn't follow that much so I don't have an opinion on that.

Sabrina Are you currently involved in politics?

Thuy No.

Sabrina Why not.

Thuy A lot of backdoor stuff in politics, turned me off to that. And also, I'm not financially ready to be in politics yet, cause you have to be financially stable in terms of time, cause when you're in politics they don't make that much money based on salary alone, so a lot of politicians I know they have their own businesses, they're well off where they have managers to manager their business, and I'm not at that point yet. Even if I was I don't know, being involved in community is just so much work and you gotta be dedicated, you gotta have a passion for it and I don't know if it exists for me yet.

08:58

Sabrina Are you following the election currently?

Thuy A little bit, not that much. A little bit of news at night and a little bit of newspaper, but very generic, so not much I could say.

Sabrina Do you currently have any hobbies?

Thuy Playing games.

Sabrina Can you elaborate on that a little?

Thuy Computer games, online games.

Sabrina Can you create them or you just play them?

Thuy Just play them.

Sabrina Which ones?

Thuy A game called Rappel [spells name of the game]. I think they got that word from rapelle, which means to call or recall, it's French. I think that's where the name comes from I'm not sure.

09:58

Sabrina Are you active in the Vietnamese American community here in Austin?

Thuy I should be or else people would shoot me. I'm president of the Vietnamese American Community of Austin Texas.

Sabrina What do you do there?

Thuy Ever since we were elected by the people, I brought, I'm trying to bring new infrastructure into the community, doing ways of more mainstream versus the way they've been doing it before. We brought in a new vision and mission statement and mainly we focus on serving the community here more and what we've been doing is creating education classes, self-sufficiency, trying to get the Vietnamese community self-sufficient to contribute to mainstream society. We have ESL classes, citizenship classes, material classes. We do health and human services, getting the lower income people to tap into cheap or federally or city-funded medical assistance programs. We tap into nonprofits that do legal. We tap into nonprofits that do state taxes for people under \$50,000, so we try to network with the mainstream community and then bring it back to the lower income Vietnamese Community. So those are new things that we brought on board, and then we also, well, my little tidbit of getting involved in politics is getting people to register, and getting people to understand what the federal census is all about and trying to do an outreach for that. So that's the extent of my political involvement, is at least trying to get people to register to vote, explain to them the importance of it, and then getting them to at least fill out the census.

12:03

Sabrina Besides the voting is there any other projects that you have, one project that you're specifically focusing on?

Thuy No, I have including myself 18 officers, we have 4 elected officers, and I appointed 14 more officers. I already talked about the education part. We have that project that we created. We have the social service part, that's another officer, that's a whole project itself. We have a person that I've appointed to help do grant-research, that's another project. You already know about the voter registration, that's a whole different project. We have a human rights officer. Originally the Vietnamese community was founded on refugees fleeing and fighting communism and fighting for human rights, that's at least in every Vietnamese community, so that part can never go away. We have an officer that

does that. Our mission in that part right now is trying to do outreach and teach the younger generation what the war was truly about and get them more interested about teaching them the history, the different sides of it. If you grew up in Vietnam you got the Communist side, if you grew up in the US you got the US textbook side, except no one taught the Vietnamese Nationalist side. We're trying to get that out and teach them what the war was all about, teach them what the immigration process was, teach them about the boat people and all the different groups that traveled or immigrated to the US, and then we're trying to teach them a little bit about the history of Vietnam and how that all started. So that's a very big project, each one of the officers has a big project to do on their own.

Sabrina Are you involved in the education aspect?

Thuy I'm the president, so I'm involved in everything. I created all those positions to take on all those projects.

14:15

Sabrina How did you get involved with the Vietnamese American community?

Thuy It's just recently. I grew up here as you know so I started doing volunteering a little bit for Red Cross and Caritas and Meals on Wheels. I didn't get involved in the Vietnamese community until Katrina hit and then I met the ex-president of VACAT, and he brought me on board and then said well they need people to help run the organization and bring a fresh perspective to the Vietnamese community and how the American people run their organizations and just bring a new type of infrastructure. At that point I'd already been teaching ESL, citizenship classes for three or four years so I figured now is the time to bring that straight to the Vietnamese community.

Sabrina Do you still have any family or relatives in Vietnam?

Thuy Yeah my grandmother from my mom's side and aunts and uncles from my mom's side.

Sabrina Do you still keep in touch with them?

Thuy Once in a while, not very often. I sponsored one of my cousins over here to go to school but it didn't work out.

Sabrina Have you sponsored anyone else from your family?

Thuy No that's it.

Sabrina Have you gone back to visit Vietnam.

Thuy Yes in 2000.

Sabrina Can you talk a little bit about your experiences there?

Thuy It was fun because I was one of the tallest people there so it was easy to find family members. It was different walking across the street, they have lights and they have traffic but no one follows the rules there. So it's like when you cross the street just close your eyes and walk slowly. It was a little bit scary when I first started. I learned how to ride moped over there [pause] that was fun. My experience was I hated the airport because it was so corrupt. They kept trying to mess with us and trying to delay us for bribery. I didn't do it and I got upset and yelled it out and caused a big commotion at the airport so now my grandmother doesn't want me to go back there anymore, she doesn't want me to get arrested. It was pretty bad at the airport. Besides the airport it was fun I had the chance to meet a lot of family members I haven't met in a long time.

17:16

Sabrina Here in the US, do you or your family celebrate any important holidays?

Thuy Tet, which is the New Year [spells Tet].

Sabrina And what do you usually do?

Thuy It's mainly going from house to house and family and relatives and friends and wishing them a happy new year and good luck. The tradition is a little red envelope, we call it li si [spells it]. You put good luck money into there, so the adults or older people after the younger people would wish them good luck and happy new year would hand them the lucky money so that's something we do every year.

Sabrina Do you cook traditional Vietnamese food at home?

Thuy Yes.

Sabrina All the time?

Thuy Not all the time, I'm kind of lazy.

Sabrina Do you find it hard to keep Vietnamese culture here in the US?

Thuy Maybe, I'm not sure. Like I said, I'm not very involved in the Vietnamese community. I grew up here and I worked here, I went to school here so I only got involved in the last few years. In Rochester, New York it was hard to keep any tradition because we didn't have any churches or temples because the population was so small, the families mostly kept to themselves, or we'd meet each other in the grocery stores, that's it. There's no big organization like here that hosts Tet, which is the New Years, or hosts Black April, or hosts any of the festivals that we have, like the Moon Festival, we have the church and the temple that do that. Over there the population was too small.

Sabrina Did your parents try to keep any Vietnamese culture with you while you were there even though the community was so small?

Thuy Family traditions were very big and then Buddhism is very big in my family.

Sabrina What types of family traditions?

Thuy The beliefs are very different like, how, growing up here I know there is respect for parents and family here in the US as well, but it's just much more intense and much more connected in the Asian community versus in the American community. Respect for your elders, even though I find a lot of time they're wrong, sometimes you can't really do anything or say anything. And then always the older has to take care of the younger. There's a phrase, the big bird has to take care of the, not the big bird, but the head bird has to take care of the flock. Basically I'm the oldest son, so those kinds of traditions, you have to take care of the family if something were to happen to your parents. [Long pause to gather thoughts] It's very subtle, it's nothing like out there outrageous. It's very subtle and you have to be involved to understand the family values, like I understand very clearly the family values in American families versus Asian families because I'm involved in both, so I know. It's hard to explain, it's much more intense.

21:11

Sabrina How many people are in your biological family?

Thuy So my parents, me, I have two younger brothers and then the youngest sibling is a sister.

Sabrina Did you have to care for them a lot when you came over here?

Thuy Yeah I guess you could say that because my parents were at work a lot. They worked morning shifts and night shifts. My dad was a sweeper and then a vegetable chopper in a restaurant, he worked in a kitchen. My mom was doing cleaning and selling newspapers, very odd jobs all over the place. I was the oldest one so mainly I had to stay home and take care of little brothers and sisters. I think I was seven, eight, I had to, probably around seven I had to take care of my sister, had to learn how to change diapers. Just be there for her.

Sabrina Do you still stay in touch with your brothers and sisters now?

Thuy Not as often, but yeah [pause for guilt]. Each one of them is in a different state [chuckles].

Sabrina Where are they?

Thuy One is in [pause for confusion] Boston is in Massachusetts right? One's in Maryland, my parents are in New York, and then my sister moved down here in Texas, so they're all over the place.

Sabrina What do they do?

Thuy My second brother works for Harvard.

Sabrina Administration?

Thuy Yeah in administration [long pause to think]. My other brother works for I forgot which bank, FECU, but he works for a bank [pauses to apologize for allergies]. My sister works, I don't know the name of her company but they do real estate acquisition, deals, and real estate renovation, they deal with banks and portfolios.

Sabrina And your parents still own that restaurant?

Thuy Oh no, they're retired. They have a very nice schedule, they work now but this is how nice their schedule is: first they bought a one-way ticket to California, to see friends and relatives. They call me and were like we're going to come visit you, this was two summers ago, sometime this summer, when? We don't know yet, we got a one-way to California. Then next month I get a call and they say we're in Florida, so when you coming over to Austin, we don't know yet, when we get bored with Florida. Then two weeks before they come over: okay yeah we got a ticket to Austin, so they bought a one-way ticket to Austin and then they bought a one-way ticket back to New York. That's how flexible their schedule is. They just work because my dad's been a business man all his life since he was 13, he had to take care of 13 siblings, he was also the oldest, so he can never sit still. So he's just working odd-jobs just to pass time by. But he's kind of semi-retired.

25:17

Sabrina Do you remember who all left Vietnam with you?

Thuy Not a clue. I remember it was a very small boat and it was a lot of people. All I know is my family, I'm sure there was other relatives but I can't remember exactly.

Sabrina Obviously you didn't remember anything about the immigration process back then when you were younger?

Thuy Actually I do but it wasn't a nice scene. I remember it was a very small boat, you can actually touch the ocean. It was pretty crowded and I remember brushing our teeth was pretty funny, we used ocean water. We passed a boat that was also very small and pretty crowded. I think a few days later we passed them again, but it was, I think it was four dead bodies covered in a white sheet. The boat was just cast away I don't know where all the people went. After that, somehow, we went across an oil rig, just a very small one. The people from that boat got on there and

they got rid of their boat. I remember all those feet dangling on the side of that oil rig, they were just sitting there waiting for someone to rescue them. And then sometime after that, I don't remember time frames, but sometime after that all I remember was there was this pretty big black ship, you looked straight up and you could see people looking down. I think we got on that ship and we were rescued and we went to Indonesia and we stayed there for two years. That was all I could remember from the boat scene. On the island, we had a lot of canned meals. We dug wells and we lived in barracks with [pause because he forgot] and then we had to grow bean sprouts to sell at the market. I remember I was always complaining about carrying bean sprouts and walking so far to market. I remember my dad teaching me how to make bean sprouts with rice bags and just a box, and water. It was [pause] very blur I didn't remember much. All I remember was just digging the wells to get water. My sister was born on that island.

28:15

Sabrina Do you know about any of your parents memories, did they tell you about them?

Thuy They didn't talk about it much. They didn't talk about when we immigrated, they talked about family.

Sabrina What do you know about your family in Vietnam?

Thuy They're pretty poor. My mom sends money back there a lot [pauses to blow nose].

Sabrina Were you ever in a refugee camp?

Thuy I guess in Indonesia that was a refugee camp. Because when all the boats picked up stranded boat people they had to drop them off to refugee camps.

Sabrina Do you remember if you took any specific with you or what you brought with you?

Thuy We couldn't bring anything. It was very crowded, just the basic essentials like food.

Sabrina How were you allowed to come to the United States?

Thuy I'm not sure exactly how it worked here but I think you had to be sponsored by somebody and the person who sponsored us, all I can remember was his name was Mr. Dan. He had two daughters and they were about our age [blows nose].

Sabrina Did you have any experiences with culture shock when you came here?

Thuy [Long pause]. Not really. Basically I considered myself growing up here not Vietnam, so we adapted to culture as a kid. I think the only one that maybe

experiencing culture shock is my sister and that's only recently because I'm not talking about everybody. In general, the more traditional Asian people, dating was not for fun it was for creating a family so we don't date much. My sister growing up here and having the mindset of what my mom taught her and what our family values had taught her, when she dates she looks for commitment. But now she's dating an American guy and they're more about going out having fun, that doesn't mean they're committed, that doesn't mean oh just because I'm dating you doesn't mean I'm gonna marry you. It was a little bit of a shock to me, just joking about marriage it was like no you don't do that. So I guess yeah that was a little bit of culture shock. I'm in my thirties now so that's my first experience of culture shock I think. Besides that the culture and tradition is more family as I've explained to you, we didn't deal with family much. My wife is Vietnamese, my brothers, their wives are Asian as well. My sister's the only one where we've experienced this first time where dating is not really to develop family, it's more having fun and that's the lifestyle. I guess that could be explained as culture shock.

32:46

Sabrina Did you speak Vietnamese when you came here?

Thuy Yes.

Sabrina When did you learn English when you started going to school?

Thuy Yes when I started going to school.

Sabrina Did you immediately go to school when you came here or after a while?

Thuy Oh I don't remember. Probably whatever the next school year was.

Sabrina How do you feel about the term 1.5 generation?

Thuy The first time I've heard of it was here. Like I said, the more I'm involved now with the Vietnamese community I'm picking up new terms. That term is new to me within the last few months.

Sabrina What are some other new things you learned from being involved with the Vietnamese American community?

Thuy You have to have a lot of patience when you're working with older people, they're pretty stubborn. I knew that already but I never had to really work with them. If you want something done you just have to do it and you just have to ignore certain things. The Vietnamese community it's just weird, the older folks they're living in the past. They blame the younger folks for not understanding the past or history but there's no communication [recording device interruption] they blame us for not understanding about Vietnam history and what Communism meant and what they did to family and what they did to Vietnam. I mean no one's

there to teach us, and our parents are working two three jobs, they're barely even home, how do they expect people from my generation to all the sudden be involved and take time, big issues like human rights in Vietnam without telling us, basics of teaching us what it is. They come in there, they're all protesting every time something looks Communist and they don't explain to us why so the gap becomes bigger and bigger and bigger. We're here, our volunteer ethics are based on growing up in America, and we want to serve the community and it seems like that's not their focus. Their focus is Communism and human rights in Vietnam. Now being president of VACAT that's a big conflict I have to constantly deal with.

35:43

Sabrina Are you learning more about that subject?

Thuy Yeah I'm learning more and more about human rights. Every month, every week, every day, there's something that happens. I have to as president, I have to know what it is. We have to make decisions as to what are we going to do about that.

Sabrina In your opinion, what will become of Vietnamese culture in the United States?

Thuy The easiest one is Tet, which follows with the Chinese New Year. That's the easy one.

Sabrina What do you mean by easy?

Thuy Because it's New Year for a lot of Asian countries, so basically, it's already been accepted. Tet is pretty well known in the US because of the Vietnam War. It wasn't pretty back then when the American soldiers thought, you know Tet you're supposed to take a break from war but the Communists they totally ignored tradition and they attacked on New Years, so everybody knows about the Tet offensive.

Sabrina Do you know a lot about the Vietnam War now? Have you been studying a lot of background?

Thuy No, my extent of knowledge on the Vietnam War is from my mom and dad. They didn't talk about that much either.

Sabrina What exactly did they tell you of what they told you?

Thuy I haven't really ever tried to confirm it but the US because of the fear of Communism they wanted to get into Vietnam and the president of Vietnam wanted to be in control. He only needed weapons and soldiers he didn't want the US to totally take control over there. They assassinated him but you can't find it in any US history books. Then there were [pause] different things in US policy, Vietnamese policy that didn't mix. Just more, I think, stuff that passed down that I don't see any history books so I don't know if it's true or not.

38:16

Sabrina Do you think it's important to keep a cultural identity?

Thuy I thought about it for a while but I still don't have an answer yet. Because that's a more philosophical question for me. If I have to explain that that'd be days. Basically in general it's, through Buddhism, everything is nothing and nothing is everything. Keeping your self-identity and self-worth and selflessness, to a certain level, and what it, if everybody is equal, everybody is the same, then there's no point to it. So it's philosophical because it has to deal with religion it has to deal with culture, it has to deal with a lot of things, and that's something I don't have any strong opinion for or against.

Sabrina How important is religion in your life?

Thuy It's very important because it shapes who I am, how I think, what I do. It's very core to the existence, to my existence.

Sabrina Do you have any other memories that you would like to share, anything that you could possibly remember from Vietnam, anything from your childhood?

Thuy No, it's very vague in my mind in Vietnam.

Sabrina Is there anything that stands out from your experiences when you came to the United States?

Thuy Help me a little bit on this question.

Sabrina Any experience that was shocking, or memorable or funny, or just something that really stands out in your mind from the time that you came here until now, any core experiences that shaped who you are.

Thuy No, it's, anything that shapes me is just family teaching, being poor really helps. I think that helps define me versus my siblings, especially my sister being such a big gap. Being poor you have to think of your family more, you think about money in a different way, not in a materialistic way, but in a survival way. Just family and religion and coming over with nothing that really shapes who you are.

41:28

Sabrina Thanks, that's all the questions I have. Thank you very much.

Thuy Okay, thanks.

41:33

Excerpts

Subject: Community Interaction
Name Transcript

10:05

Thuy

Ever since we were elected by the people, I brought, I'm trying to bring new infrastructure into the community, doing ways of more mainstream versus the way they've been doing it before. We brought in a new vision and mission statement and mainly we focus on serving the community here more and what we've been doing is creating education classes, self-sufficiency, trying to get the Vietnamese community self-sufficient to contribute to mainstream society. We have ESL classes, citizenship classes, material classes. We do health and human services, getting the lower income people to tap into cheap or federally or city-funded medical assistance programs. We tap into nonprofits that do legal. We tap into nonprofits that do state taxes for people under \$50,000, so we try to network with the mainstream community and then bring it back to the lower income Vietnamese Community. So those are new things that we brought on board, and then we also, well, my little tidbit of getting involved in politics is getting people to register, and getting people to understand what the federal census is all about and trying to do an outreach for that. So that's the extent of my political involvement, is at least trying to get people to register to vote, explain to them the importance of it, and then getting them to at least fill out the census.

Subject: Family beliefs
Name Transcript

19:44

Thuy

The beliefs are very different like, how, growing up here I know there is respect for parents and family here in the US as well, but it's just much more intense and much more connected in the Asian community versus in the American community. Respect for your elders, even though I find a lot of time they're wrong, sometimes you can't really do anything or say anything. And then always the older has to take care of the younger. There's a phrase, the big bird has to take care of the, not the big bird, but the head bird has to take care of the flock. Basically I'm the oldest son, so those kinds of traditions, you have to take care of the family if something were to happen to your parents. [Long pause to gather thoughts] It's very subtle, it's nothing like out there outrageous. It's very subtle and you have to be involved to understand the family values, like I understand very clearly the family values in American families versus Asian families because I'm involved in both, so I know. It's hard to explain, it's much more intense.

Subject: The boat
Name Transcript

25:41

Thuy

Actually I do but it wasn't a nice scene. I remember it was a very small boat, you can actually touch the ocean. It was pretty crowded and I remember brushing our teeth was pretty funny, we used ocean water. We passed a boat that was also very small and pretty crowded. I think a few days later we passed them again, but it was, I think it was four dead bodies covered in a white sheet. The boat was just cast away I don't know where all the people went. After that, somehow, we went across an oil rig, just a very small one. The people from that boat got on there and

they got rid of their boat. I remember all those feet dangling on the side of that oil rig, they were just sitting there waiting for someone to rescue them. And then sometime after that, I don't remember time frames, but sometime after that all I remember was there was this pretty big black ship, you looked straight up and you could see people looking down. I think we got on that ship and we were rescued and we went to Indonesia and we stayed there for two years. That was all I could remember from the boat scene. On the island, we had a lot of canned meals. We dug wells and we lived in barracks with [pause because he forgot] and then we had to grow bean sprouts to sell at the market. I remember I was always complaining about carrying bean sprouts and walking so far to market. I remember my dad teaching me how to make bean sprouts with rice bags and just a box, and water. It was [pause] very blur I didn't remember much. All I remember was just digging the wells to get water. My sister was born on that island.

Subject: The Elderly Vietnamese Community
Name Transcript

33:45

Thuy

You have to have a lot of patience when you're working with older people, they're pretty stubborn. I knew that already but I never had to really work with them. If you want something done you just have to do it and you just have to ignore certain things. The Vietnamese community it's just weird, the older folks they're living in the past. They blame the younger folks for not understanding the past or history but there's no communication [recording device interruption] they blame us for not understanding about Vietnam history and what Communism meant and what they did to family and what they did to Vietnam. I mean no one's there to teach us, and our parents are working two three jobs, they're barely even home, how do they expect people from my generation to all the sudden be involved and take time, big issues like human rights in Vietnam without telling us, basics of teaching us what it is. They come in there, they're all protesting every time something looks Communist and they don't explain to us why so the gap becomes bigger and bigger and bigger. We're here, our volunteer ethics are based on growing up in America, and we want to serve the community and it seems like that's not their focus. Their focus is Communism and human rights in Vietnam. Now being president of VACAT that's a big conflict I have to constantly deal with.

Subject: Self-Identity
Name Transcript

38:24

Thuy

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with culture, it has to deal with a lot of things, and that's something I don't have any strong opinion for or against.

Summary

I remember a pretty big black ship. We got on that ship and we were rescued. We went to Indonesia and stayed there for two years. Growing up in America, I know there is respect for parents and family, but it's more intense and connected in the Asian community. Respect your elders, even though I find them wrong sometimes. You have to have a lot of patience when you're working with older people. They blame the younger folks for not understanding the past and Vietnamese history. There's no one to teach us. How do they expect people from my generation to be involved without telling us the basics? Now being president of the Vietnamese American Community of Austin, Texas (VACAT) that's a big conflict I have to constantly deal with. I'm trying to bring new infrastructure into the community. We focus on serving the community and trying to get the Vietnamese community self-sufficient. Through Buddhism, everything is nothing and nothing is everything. You keep your self-identity and self-worth and selflessness, to a certain level. Identity is philosophical because it has to deal with religion, it has to deal with culture, and it has to deal with a lot of things.

In Thuy's except, I wanted to focus on living and learning; the experiences in the present Vietnamese community are experiences that he learned from. He was able to open his mind and expand his horizons through the things he learned as President of VACAT (Vietnamese American Community of Austin, Texas). I decided to correct grammar, spelling, and word usage simply because he is a professional, and a highly-looked upon member of the Vietnamese American community, and I wanted to represent him in the best light possible: as someone with clear poise and precision in speaking.