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**A COUNTRY
STAYS ALIVE
WHEN ITS
CULTURE IS
ALIVE.**

**HOPE NEVER
DIES IN THE
INDOMITABLE
VIETNAMESE
MIND.**

- **SACEI Newsletter** updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.

- It serves as a link between **SACEI** members and those who are interested in the **Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American** culture.

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SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese Culture

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HAPPY NEW YEAR !

2013: The Year of the Snake

The Vietnamese (Chinese) New Year starts on February 10, 2013.

The snake is the sixth animal sign in the oriental zodiac. It comes after the dragon and has been considered to be a small dragon.

People born under the Snake sign are considered to be wise, cultivated, cerebral, intuitive, attractive, lucky, elegant, well bred, compassionate, philosophical, decisive, lucky.

They, however, could be ostentatious, sore losers, extravagant, presumptuous, possessive, vengeful, lazy, fickle, self critical.

Grace Kelly Rainier (b. 1929) and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (b. 1929) are typical examples of Snake women who often--not always but frequently--succeed through their beauty. In the case of the snake, beauty is not only skin deep. Coupled with the serpent's good looks is an enormous amount of innate wisdom.

Other famous snakes: Kim Basinger, Greta Garbo, Robert Mitchum, Audrey Hepburn, Dionne Warwick, Oprah Winfrey, Brad Pitt...



Editorial Note: The Viet Kieu's Genetic Code

War lessons

1. When the communists took over Lộc Ninh, a village 70 miles northwest of Saigon in April 1972, they clamped down immediately. On 8 April, all government officials, teachers were rounded up. The head of the local self defense militia along with a sergeant, and another militia man were publicly executed, shot outright without even the benefit of a "people's court." The rest arrested as "enemies of the people" were trucked to a secure base in Snoul, Cambodia. The communists then ransacked homes and plundered offices of both government officials and plantation employees. Among the most prized booty were half a dozen of black and white television sets confiscated by the victorious NVA. They were sent to COSVN (Central office for South Vietnam) in Cambodia where high ranking officials and cadres closed out each work day by watching program broadcast by Saigon. (Andrade, Dale. *Trial by Fire*, 418-419)

2. In the II Corps on 30 April 1972, after the village of Dak To fell to the communists, Colonel Stephen Bachinski, the Kontum province adviser wrote:

"Stories of VC atrocities continue to pour in from those Highland tribesmen who survived the long trek through the jungle from Dak To and points south: clergy murdered; village officials with throats slit; families of U.S. employees killed and slogans posted over their homes; young boys and girls separated from their families and taken into the jungle; and refugees being held forcefully by the NVA in obvious ambush positions in order to avoid B-52 strikes..." (Colonel Stephen W. Bachinski, *Province Report, Kontum Province, Period Ending 30 April 1972* (1 May 1972), 2-3, RG 472, National Archives.)

The above two scenarios are examples of atrocities committed by the NVA forces during the war. They were excessive and known all over the world. By using these violent and inhumane tactics, they were able to conquer South Vietnam.

Never trust the communists.

3. "After the communists took over South Vietnam [1975], I had to spend almost two years in their concentration camps and after that I had to go to a New Economic Zone for one year. I probably would have spent my whole life in that remote primitive area working manually in the rice field if it were not for the exodus of people trying by all means to escape from the communists."

Thus began Dr. Hien Ho's journey to attempt to escape from the communist Hell. "Even if we had to risk our own lives, we had to leave the country," he said. His wife put up money to buy the family's way out of the country. Risks were immense because had he failed, he "would have to stay in prison forever." On December 16, 1980 after many failed attempts, he, his wife and his three sons joined a wedding party that took them to Cay Lay in the Mekong delta where they boarded the main boat. One hundred and thirty people crammed into a 40 square-foot area under the deck of the small fishing boat.

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Danh Vo: 2012 Hugo Boss Prize Winner



HUGO BOSS announces that artist Danh Vo (born in Baria, Vietnam in 1975) has been awarded the HUGO BOSS Prize for 2012. Established in 1996, the HUGO BOSS Prize recognizes achievement in contemporary art. Danh Vo is the ninth recipient of the Hugo Boss award.

Innovation and creativity are the sole criteria when determining the recipient. The prize carries an award of \$100,000 and is administered by the Guggenheim Foundation.

"We have chosen to award the HUGO BOSS Prize 2012 to Danh Vo in recognition of the vivid and influential impact he has made on the currents of contemporary art making," the jury said in describing its selection. "Vo's assured and subtle work expresses a number of urgent concerns related to cultural identity, politics, and history, evoking these themes through shifting, poetic forms that traverse time and geography."



<http://en.artintern.net/index.php/news/main/html/1/2169>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/02/arts/design/danh-vo-wins-hugo-boss-prize.html?pagewanted=all>

Dr. Quang Dong Nguyen, Chairman of Ophthalmology

A retina and uveitis specialist from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Quan Dong Nguyen, M.D., has been named McGaw Professor and chairman of the Department of Ophthalmology University of Nebraska Medical Center and Visual Sciences and Director of the Stanley M. Truhlsen Eye Institute.

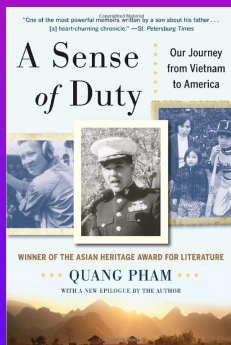
Born in Saigon, Vietnam, Dr. Nguyen is an associate professor of ophthalmology at the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins. He serves as principal investigator and chair of several multicenter clinical trials sponsored by the National Eye Institute and other organizations for:

- Diabetic macular edema;
- Neovascular age-related macular degeneration; and
- Ocular inflammatory and uveitic diseases.

Dr. Nguyen is known for his innovative evaluation of novel therapeutic agents.

Dr. Nguyen's wife, Diana Do, M.D., also is a retina specialist at the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins and will join the University of Nebraska Medical Center faculty as an associate professor and director of the Center for Innovative Clinical Trials in Ophthalmology at the Truhlsen Eye Institute.

<http://www.unmc.edu/news.cfm?match=10104>



A Sense of Duty: Our Journey From Vietnam to America: Quang Pham

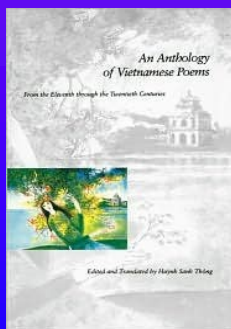
Quang Pham came to the United States as a child just before April 1975, along with his mother and three sisters. His father, Pham Van Hoa, a South Vietnamese Air Force pilot, remain a captive of the Communist government. The son grew up in California, joined the U.S. Marines and took part in the first Persian Gulf War as a helicopter pilot. Quang Pham's well-told memoir, his book debut, tells the story of father and son, with an emphasis on the family as a whole. The author's mother, Nguyen Thi Niem, struggled mightily and succeeded in learning English, finding work and educating her children. The author's father nearly died, and nearly had his spirit nearly broken, during 12 years in re-education camps in Vietnam. His life improved measurably after immigrating to the U.S., but the marriage ended in divorce. The author had a rough time assimilating to American life, and joining the Marines presented its own problems, including anti-Asian racism.

<http://www.amazon.com/Sense-Duty-Journey-Vietnam-America/dp/0891418768/>

An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems: Huynh Sanh Thong

This superb anthology brings together a thousand years of Vietnamese poems for the English-speaking world. Huynh Sanh Thong, widely regarded as the preeminent translator of the poetry of Vietnam, here presents more than three hundred poems by 150 poets, some celebrated, some obscure. Many of the poems are not otherwise available in English. The author's historical and critical introduction to Vietnamese poetry, and his abundant explanatory notes throughout the collection, assist readers in understanding and appreciating each work. Huynh observes that Vietnamese people in all walks of life compose, read, and listen to poetry; this collection of poems thus reveals much about Vietnamese language, literature, history, and culture. He has organized the poems-which range from ancient to very recent works-around nine main themes that include Vietnamese views of society, responses to foreign influences, and feelings about such universal questions as relationships between men and women, the role of art in life, and conflicts among social classes.

<http://www.amazon.com/Anthology-Vietnamese-Poems-Twentieth-Centuries/dp/0300091001/>



Editorial...continued

After three days and four nights on the high sea, they landed in Mersing, Malaysia where they lived in makeshift tents in a park. On Christmas eve 1980, they were transferred to the inhabited island of Pulau Tengah on the east coast of Malaysia where they were screened for resettlement in western countries. Two months later, the Pulau Tengah camp closed and all the refugees were transferred to the island of Pulau Bidong where more than 30,000 refugees were confined in a refugee camp while waiting for their paperwork. When they finally were accepted for travel to the U.S., the Reagan administration issued a requirement that all refugees took a six-month course in orientation and English as second language before coming to the U.S. On November 3, 1981, they were flown to Manila, the Philippines for the training session. It was only on March 27, 1982, that they left Bataan and boarded the plane in Manila for Virginia, USA. (Hien Ho. A Refugee's Life in Vo Nghia. *The Viet Kieu in America*, pp. 138-156)

Other refugees could take longer to get to their final destination. Many were returned to Vietnam if they reached the Asian shore after 1982. Many died during the trip of diseases, starvation, dehydration, or as the result of storms, or from pirate attacks. Many never reach the free world despite their attempts. The lucky ones are called Viet Kieu or overseas Vietnamese.

The Viet Kieu

Having survived the communist rule and the escape, the Viet Kieu have acquired over the years a unique genetic code.

1. *It is about carrying a lot of luggage:* Each of them has spent many "mini-lives" that were not only sad, frightening, but also character building. To survive through the war, the privations, the misery under the communist society, the reeducation camps, the new economic zones, the boat escape, the Asian refugee camps and finally the complex western society, the retraining required a lot of courage and abnegation.
2. *It is about grieving:* "There is no greater loss than that of losing our country," declared Phan Boi Chau--one of Vietnam's greatest non-communist revolutionaries--in 1908.
3. *It is about taking risk:* Putting their lives in the hands of un-seasoned skippers on rickety, unseaworthy fishing boats required a lot of courage. But, what other choice did they have? Live under the communist regime was NOT an option.
4. *It is about embarking on the most amazing journey on earth.* Who could imagine a rice farmer's son who brought only "seven oranges onto a crowded boat thinking they should last him the whole journey through the Pacific" is now an architect who helps design high rise buildings all over the globe?
5. *It is about resiliency, hope, and healing.* To survive and thrive after these ordeals was no simple feat. When they first came to the U.S, they did odd jobs to survive. One physician worked as a nurse aid; a general became a painter; a former senator sold fried chicken for a grocery store...
6. *It is about contributing to the new society.* Membership does have its privileges and responsibilities.
7. *It is about believing in freedom.* (Vo Nghia. *The Viet Kieu in America*, pp.199-207)

From the few thousand souls scattered worldwide before 1975, the Viet Kieu have grown into a complex, heterogeneous group with firm roots in many western countries. They have become the second largest refugee group in the U.S. behind the Cubans thanks to their hard work and ingenuity.

The New Revolution

The so-called "communist revolution," turned out to be a sad and tragic "canard" that cost five million Vietnamese lives. The communists have to ask themselves whether controlling the South was worth that many lives and ended up dividing a country?

- Foreign to the Vietnamese, the pseudo-revolution adopted Russian and Chinese communist ideologies. Why did they kick the French out if they were inviting the Soviets and Chinese in? Were the Chinese and Russians better than the French?
- Subordinate to foreigners, communist Vietnam is now a satellite of the above two countries by borrowing so much from them from ideology, manpower, armaments, to military assistance... In turn, the communists had to give away part of Vietnam's cherished land to the Chinese (northern Vietnam, Paracel Islands,...). Hanoi is guilty and responsible before the nation for losing the precious land of our forefathers.
- Worse they oppressed the people to stay in power and took away their rights and freedom.
- The Vietnamese still remain poor, one of the poorest countries in the world with a yearly GDP of \$1,500. Hanoi and the communists have mortgaged Vietnam's economy, future, and standing among the nations. They are responsible of the economic and financial downturn of the country.
- Under the communist system, moral decay has worsened. Corruption is rampant from top to bottom causing the people to suffer as a result.

Vietnam needs a new revolution for our mother country is in dire need of freedom.

Vietnam needs to be FREE. Free from communism, free from oppression by the Cong An, free from corruption,

Vietnam needs to live under a rule of LAWS.

Vietnam needs to have new MORAL values. In fact, the set of values from our forefathers are still there; but the communists did not use

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Editorial...continued

it because they think they are ABOVE the laws.

If the Viet Kieu in some way could usher freedom, rule of laws and moral values, progress will follow. It will not be easy because the Cong An will not simply relinquish their hold on the government.

What Vietnam needs is a true revolution for FREEDOM, JUSTICE, and MORAL values.

If the Viet Kieu could help jump start this revolution, the in-country Vietnamese could do the rest.

Having survived all many ordeals, the Viet Kieu must now work to bring about a NEW and FREE Vietnam.

THE DAY VIETNAM IS FREE

*I dream about the day
when the Vietnamese will be free again,
free from oppression and repression,
from communism,
free to act out,
and to speak out their own thoughts.*

*It has been a long journey,
from antiquity until today.
The Vietnamese
were not free under the Chinese,
they were not free under the French,
they are not free under the communists.*

*The Chinese forced them
to bow to China,
The French forced them
to bow to France,
The communists forced them
to bow to Marx, Lenin,
They all have enslaved them
one way or another.*

*Of all evils, the communists are the worst,
They force the people to serve
one party and its leaders,
to obey the Cong An,
and to bribe their minions.*

*The Vietnamese were born free.
Then came the Chinese, the French,
and the communists
who told them what to do,
where to sit, what to believe.
They have enslaved, demeaned,
and corrupted them.*

*I hope to see the Vietnamese free again,
free to talk, to walk tall, and to act,
free from all oppression and foreign ideologies,
free to be Vietnamese.*

*I know them.
If it took them one thousand years
to free themselves from the Chinese,
if it took them one hundred years
to free themselves from the French,
they will set aside, if need be,
another thousand years
to get rid of the communists
for they were born FREE
and free they will remain.*



Viet Kieu in Westminster, CA.