

**Nancy's speech at the Grand Opening of VAHF's collection of  
FVPPA at Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University in  
Lubbock. May 28, 2008.**

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to represent the Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation in expressing our sincere gratitude to our distinguished guests and all the participants of the Grand Opening of VAHF's Collection of Vietnam Political Prisoners at The Vietnam Center today.

When the Vietnam War ended, many people tried to forget about this unpopular war. But many of life's lessons are not easily learnt and our collective experiences are always valuable. Whether good or bad, we must strive to preserve our history, and towards this goal we owe many thanks to, the Regents of Texas Tech University, Dr. James Reckner , Dr. Steve Maxner, and all the people at The Vietnam Center who have spent thousands of hours finding the many stories of this war.

Over 2 millions pages of documents have been collected, preserved and published on the web. The stories that fill their pages give people from all over the world a unique opportunity to study about The Vietnam War. For most Americans, the Vietnam War was something that happened in the distant past. It was a war that resulted in the fall of Saigon, and from it came many valuable lessons.

However, for almost 2 million Vietnamese Americans, the war is still fresh on our minds. A war that, despite its tragic losses, was also a war that brought us here. It brought us to a beautiful and gracious country replete with countless opportunities. And just like the war, the stories of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese

immigrants fleeing communist oppression ended in both stunning success and heart breaking failure. Our stories of survival need to be preserved in order for future generations to understand why and how we came to America. If we give a voice to Vietnamese Americans, we can document how we feel about the home land we left behind, what we have done to cope with our new lives, and how we have become one of the most productive groups of immigrants.

For several reasons, South Vietnam and her people did not receive enough media coverage during the war. Unfortunately, the situation was not much improved after the war ended. Even today, and despite a presence of 2 million Vietnamese Americans in the US, our story continues to be marginally covered in printed and visual media, especially textbooks. Furthermore, most of the information that is available to the public is misconstrued.

After taking over South Vietnam, the Vietnam Communist government burned books, re-wrote history, and imprisoned many writers, educators and Intel lecturers. We not only lost our homeland; we lost our history, our heritage, and our identity.

The Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation was formed in 2004 with the goal of restoring our lost identity. Its aim is to improve awareness about Vietnamese Americans, by collecting, preserving, promoting, and celebrating the Vietnamese American history and heritage.

Our grand opening celebration today features documents pertaining to Vietnam Political Prisoners and the Humanitarian Operation program. Although this is only part of the full collection, it includes 6,000 pounds of correspondence between Vietnamese political prisoners and the White House spanning 5 presidencies since 1975. These materials include legal papers, pictures and personal letters written by prisoners and their families, documents

from many US Senators, Congressmen, High Commissioners from the United Nations, Amnesty International, the International Red Cross and countless other governmental and non-governmental agencies who have worked tirelessly for the sake of Vietnamese refugees since 1975. Many efforts are still ongoing to help thousands of Vietnamese find justice and freedom even though the war ended over 33 years ago.

This collection sheds light on the truth regarding Vietnamese political prisoners. Most of all, these documents show the moral and humanitarian dedication on behalf of America to its South Vietnam ally.

This archive is also proof that while Vietnam did not undergo a massive holocaust nor killing field after the war, it did employ the use of concentration camps that slowly killed tens of thousands of people through forced labor, malnutrition, lack of healthcare, torture, and instilling a lack of hope among its prisoners. These people did nothing wrong; they were imprisoned without trial. Some of them were released only just recently, after 30 years. They were detained in so called re-education camps simply because they had some form of involvement with the previous government, with Americans or because they disagreed with the Vietnam Communist government.

Furthermore, this collection of documents show how the US lent its hand to free its past ally, and to grant asylum to political prisoners 15 years after the war ended. Hundreds of these political prisoners came straight from their prison cells to the US. Despite those efforts however, tens of thousands of Vietnamese political prisoners died before finding freedom. According to a Source from High Commissioner of Refugees of United Nation, there is an estimate of over 65,000 Vietnam political prisoners were executed or died due to prison conditions over the last 30 years. While American, North Vietnamese, and soldiers of other nationalities

were able to return to their homeland and families to rebuild their lives after the war, South Vietnamese soldiers were forced into prisons and were punished until they finally died.

Today, Ladies and Gentlemen, please stand up and join me for a moment of silence to pay tribute to these heroes and heroines, who have died for their country, who were forced to die even after the peace has come.

Thank you, and please be seated.

How can the Vietnamese American community find peace and happiness when we know that many of these heroes and heroines remains are still missing? The Vietnamese POW Association in Houston, lead by Mr. Nguyen Dat Thanh has been helping families to locate the remains of these forgotten heroes. Mr. Nguyen himself and the members of the Vietnamese POW Association are former political prisoners. Donating their own time and money, they have been able to find hundreds of the remains of these heroes. Thousands of them are still out there waiting to come home. To them, and to their families, the Vietnam war is certainly not over. For any concern or donation, please can contact Vietnamese POW Association by call them at: 832-725-3231. or Email to: thanhnguyen41@yahoo.com.

And then, there are also tens of thousands of the disabled South Vietnamese soldiers who are being persecuted by the Vietnam communist government. Today, disabled beggars line the streets of Saigon and other cities. If you were to approach them, you would find that many of them fought side by side with Americans during the Vietnam War. For them and their families, the Vietnam War is not over either. Any assistance, or advice on this matter, please contact Ms. Hanh Nhan at The H.O. Invalids and Widows Relief Association. P.O. Box 25554 , Santa Ana , CA 92799

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There are many efforts on behalf of the Vietnamese American community to raise funds for these victims of the Vietnam War and post war. But the needs are so immense, we cannot do it all. We hope that US government and other NGO agencies, especially the ones are here today join Vietnamese American community in this mission. We have heard that the US government has sent over 60 million dollars to the Vietnam communist government to help disable soldiers of both sides. We would like to find out how these funds were used and managed. Who received this aid? We have learn that, the South Vietnamese soldiers received nothing from this financial aid?

We are here today to celebrate the Grand Opening of the VAHF's collection of documents pertaining to Vietnamese Political Prisoners. Most of us think the Vietnam War is over; it is part of past history. However, Vietnamese Americans cannot find peace nor heal, until our opened wounds have been closed. For us, the war will never be over until the remains the South Vietnamese soldiers missing in action, the South Vietnamese disable soldiers and their respective families find peace. Please help us to close the opened wounds. The contribution of almost 2 million Vietnamese Americans to this country well justifies your participation. It also will reinforce the dedication and faithfulness the US has shown to South Vietnam in the past and carry it into the future.

At the end, we would like invite all of you to visit this collection. It is a piece of American history that we all can learn so much from. Once again, our special thanks to the Regents of exas Tech University, Dr, James Reckner, Dr. Steve Maxner, and people at Vietnam Center for their generosity and willingness to house and maintain this valuable collection. Most of all, VAHF would like to

dedicate this collection to the living legend of all Vietnam Political Prisoners We also thanks to all efforts put forth by Americans and the rest of the world in this endeavor. Last but not least, we also would like to dedicate this collection to Ms Khúc Minh Tho, VAHF chairwoman of the board: the wonderful lady who devoted all her life to fight for freedom and justice of Vietnam political prisoners. She is not only a heroine to Vietnam Political prisoner, but also a heroine to all Vietnamese Americans.

Thank you, God Bless You All!