

## The Voices of a Dream

I am Vietnamese-American. That is my most important identity. I did not realize that many people do not know that about me; they do not even know what or where Vietnam is!

Asian-Americans are underrepresented in the media. Their voices are not heard as much as others. As an Asian-American (specifically Vietnamese-American), I want to change that. I want to open a window to other cultures, so they can see what Asian-Americans have to offer too!

The adults in my family are all immigrants from Vietnam. They left because of the Vietnam War and its aftermath. Both of my grandfathers, who were officers in the South Vietnamese army, were put in so-called “reeducation camps” by the communist North Vietnamese after the war ended. The reeducation camps were basically labor prisons. My grandfathers were very lucky to immigrate to the United States under a humanitarian program.

My father left the country soon after his father was sent to prison; he became a part of a group called the “Boat People”, who left Vietnam in droves after the war, fearful of the new regime. He was very young; he hadn’t even finished high school! But he understood that if he stayed in Vietnam, education would be useless and life means nothing. After he left, every day he hoped that one day, he would be able to see his family again. My relatives and immediate family had to endure many, many hardships to reunite, and even then they faced other challenges. They had to learn English and American culture; they had to adapt to the American lifestyle.

Back in September, Ken Burns and Lynn Novick made a documentary called “The Vietnam War”. Hearing about my family’s hardships my whole life, I wanted it known to others. I was very, very disappointed when I realized that the film barely showcased the South Vietnamese perspective; it was not what I expected at all!

Later, I read a newspaper article that criticized the film. American and Vietnamese veterans of the Vietnam War declared that the film did not tell the story accurately. People agreed, but they did nothing. I realized that if my community cannot advocate for themselves, I will have to be the one to do that for them. My dad suggested that I make my own documentary.

It was a great idea: the Vietnam War should be reported by a Vietnamese person. They have to understand the struggle of their own people, and to be able to portray and explain it accurately.

Currently, I am an eighth grader chasing the future. With good education and knowledge, I can achieve whatever I dream of. One of my dreams is telling about my people’s story. It is not just a story of a war but instead a story of a culture. It is a story of a destroyed culture that I will work hard to restore and bring back. I will surely and definitely succeed where others did not.