

# Conversation Starter Kit

presented by

**VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE**



# WELCOME

My grandmother once said, “I have been fleeing the fields of war since I can remember. It has always been a part of my life.”

I had the opportunity to meet my maternal grandmother when I was 19 years old. She was the only grandparent I had ever met. When my mother was finally able to bring her to America, she was already 87 years old. And shortly after, she passed away at the age of 94. Even at that age, her mind was still sharp and very coherent. My biggest regret today is not having more conversations with her.

Our elders hold an abundance of untold stories. Stories that shed light on our history and heritage. For me, the story that was told the most growing up, was the hardship that our family had to endure after the Vietnam War. But it was always told in dire moments. Growing up, hearing these stories felt more like a burden than a gift.

Today, I am a mother. My mother is a grandmother. I still have the opportunity to involve my kids in understanding my family’s stories so that one day they can share these stories with their kids.

I started the Vietnamese Boat People (VBP) podcast with the mission to preserve the stories, experiences and traditions of our families, and as a reminder that these stories of hope and resilience are an inspiration and a gift for future generations.

This conversation kit is designed to help you learn a little more about a family member or loved one. It was designed to make the process less intimidating, help start the dialogue and infuse a little fun along the way.

with gratitude,



**Tracey Nguyễn Mang**

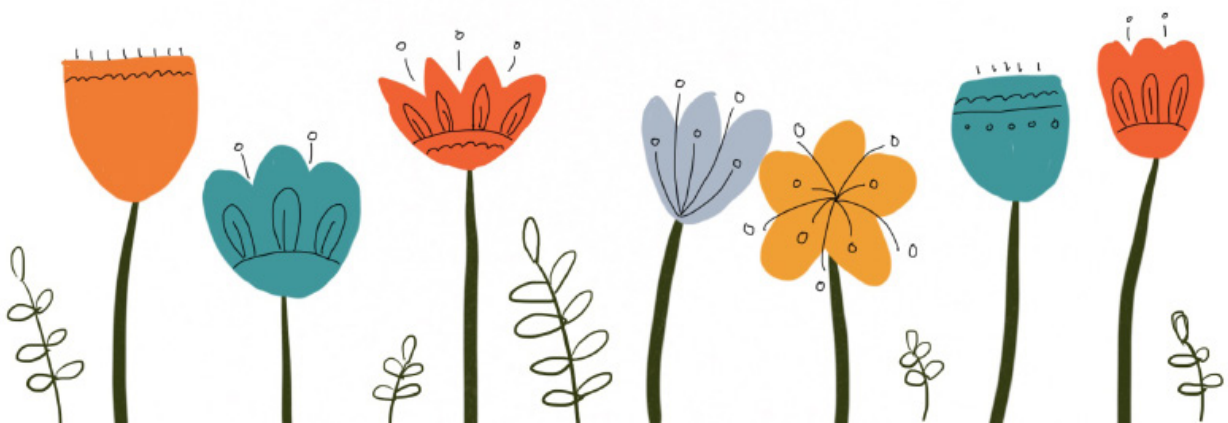
Founder, Chief Storyteller  
Vietnamese Boat People

# OVERVIEW

VietnameseBoatPeople.org (VBP) seeks to preserve the stories, experiences and traditions of the people of the Vietnamese Diaspora. We share these stories globally through the Vietnamese Boat People Podcast and raise awareness of our history through events, community partnerships and collaborative programs.

Over the course of conducting interviews and engaging with the community to produce our podcast and programs, we discovered that many of us want to engage in meaningful conversations with loved ones about their past, but we don't always know where to begin. Our team has encountered children wanting to connect with parents, youngsters with elders, friends with friends – but the problem was that they did not know where to start or what questions to ask. We hope to empower those interested in capturing and preserving the stories of the Vietnamese community to start a conversation.

The kit is designed to be a fun game for two people, a small group or an entire family. It includes a set of questions in four categories to help spark the conversation and includes historical data to provide context and the basics on how to record the conversations.



# KEY HISTORICAL DATES

**July 1954 Establishment of North and South Vietnam**

**March 1959 War Begins**

North Vietnam declares war against South Vietnam.

**March 1965 USA Joins the War**

America officially enters the civil war in Vietnam, arriving in Da Nang to back-up South Vietnam against North Vietnam. This was known as Operation Rolling Thunder. There had been US involvement as early as 1961 but nothing as cohesive and authoritative until 1965.

**January 1968 Tet Offensive**

A series of coordinated attacks by North Vietnam on more than 100 locations in South Vietnam.

**January 1973 Paris Peace Accords Signed**

Temporary cease-fire of the war and withdrawal of United States Troops.

**March 1975 Evacuation of Da Nang**

The U.S. Embassy in Saigon formulated a plan to evacuate U.S. citizens and South Vietnamese government officials out from Da Nang. Chaos broke out with hundreds of thousands of civilians trying to flee as North Vietnamese troops began to enter the city.

**April 1975 Operation Babylift**

Nearly 3,000 Vietnamese orphans were flown to the United States preceding the fall of Saigon. Many of which were Amerasian (mixed Vietnamese and American).

**April 30, 1975 Fall of Saigon**

Fall of Saigon and flight of US Troops and Vietnamese refugees. In the final days before the fall of Saigon, some 140,000 Vietnamese who were closely associated with the former South Vietnamese government were evacuated from the country and resettled in the United States. The U.S.-organized evacuation was followed by a smaller exodus of Vietnamese who found their own way by boat to neighboring Southeast Asian countries.

A vertical timeline with a central line and colored circular markers. The markers are blue, orange, teal, orange, blue, orange, and teal from top to bottom. Each marker is associated with a date and event.

### **June 1976 Reeducation Camps**

After the war ends, Vietnamese citizens were resettled or redistributed to new economic zones across the country. The new regime in Vietnam enacts Reeducation Camps.

### **1978 Second Wave of Exodus**

A second wave of Vietnamese refugees. These were the “boat people” who fled increasing political repression and poor living conditions in Vietnam.

### **July 1979 Geneva Conference for Temporary Asylum**

Geneva Conference for temporary asylum to resettlement in a third country. This was done to control the amount of boat people by having direct, legal departures from Vietnam.

### **March 1988 Amerasian Homecoming Act**

The American Homecoming Act or Amerasian Homecoming Act was an Act of Congress giving preferential immigration status to children fathered by a U.S. citizen in Vietnam.

### **December 1988 Memorandum of Understanding**

UNHCR and Vietnam signed a Memorandum of Understanding, whereby Vietnam would allow for the voluntary return of its citizens without penalizing them for having fled.

### **June 1989 Comprehensive Plan of Action**

The Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) was designed to address the continuation of large numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers from Vietnam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. By changing UNHCR policy toward the Boat people, those who arrived at the camps after the so-called cut-off dates would no longer automatically be considered as prima facie refugees, but only asylum seekers and would have to be screened to qualify for refugee status.

### **July 1989 US and Vietnam Reach Emigration Agreement**

The U.S. and Vietnamese governments issued a joint statement that they had reached agreement on the emigration of former political prisoners and their families.

# DOCUMENTING THE CONVERSATION

We've created some guidance to help you collect additional information during the conversation.

Depending on how well you know the interviewee, you may not need this.

Use it as you see fit.



# TIMELINE

Sometimes it helps to write down or draw out the timeline of events. This is a template you can use to document major family events during your conversation.

A vertical timeline diagram. A central vertical line has five colored dots: blue, orange, teal, orange, and blue from top to bottom. To the left of the line are three blue-outlined rectangular boxes, and to the right are three orange-outlined rectangular boxes. All boxes are empty.

# RECORDING THE CONVERSATION

**With your interviewees' permission, we encourage you to record the conversation as a memento.**

The easiest and most accessible way to record the interview is using your cell phone, as most cell phones have built in voice recording apps that will provide sufficient recording quality. If you require or prefer to have higher quality recordings, handheld recorders and recording equipment is always a great choice.





# **Below are some quick tips on how to set up your phone as your recorder.**

## **1. Turn your phone to Airplane Mode**

So your audio won't be interrupted by calls or texts: Go to Settings>Airplane Mode.

## **2. Locate your phone's microphone**

For example, on the iPhone, the grill on the left is the microphone. The one on the right is a speaker used to play music.

## **3. Check your levels**

Press record. Make sure it is recording and you can see the meter registering sounds. Move your device closer to the interviewee until you are at the correct volume levels.

## **4. Place phone about four-seven inches from interviewee's mouth**

If it's further away, you will get diminished sound quality. Make microphone distance adjustments and check your audio levels throughout the recording.

## **5. When you are finished, make sure you have a saved audio file**

After you hit stop, don't shut off your phone and walk away. Look at the file. Make sure it is recorded and saved. Play some of it back so you can hear it. Then name it so you can find it later.

## **6. Transfer audio files from your phone to your computer**

Some audio apps allow you to edit on your phone. This is great if you want to upload something on the go, but it can be difficult to make clean edits with your thumbs. For best results, transfer your files to your computer and edit it there.

**Quick Tip:** If you plan to record, before starting, think about anything that may prevent you or your interviewee from focusing on each other or may cause a distraction. If possible, move to a quiet room away from distractions.



# ALTERNATE RECORDING TECHNIQUES

If you are unable to record in person with your interviewee (perhaps they live across the country or are not accessible), it is possible to record your interview.

**Recording virtually on smartphone or desktop:** If you and the interviewee are using the kit remotely, Skype is one option that allows you to make free audio and video calls either by phone or using the built-in recording on your computer. Other free tools to check out are Zoom and Google Voice. Note that the free versions will have limited capabilities.



# REMEMBER TO HAVE EMPATHY AND JUST LISTEN

Discussing someone's refugee experience can bring up emotional and traumatic memories. While it goes without saying, respect and be aware of the implications and boundaries of your line of questioning. Give some space and quiet moments if needed. Don't rush the story and let the conversation flow naturally to the pace that is most comfortable for the person.

## **BOUNDARIES**

Respecting boundaries means understanding that the person may choose to withhold information. You will need to be prepared to honor any requests and be cognizant of sensitive subjects.

Meeting locations should be comfortable for both parties. Try to select an environment free from distractions. For example, public spaces may not be the right atmosphere to have an open dialogue.

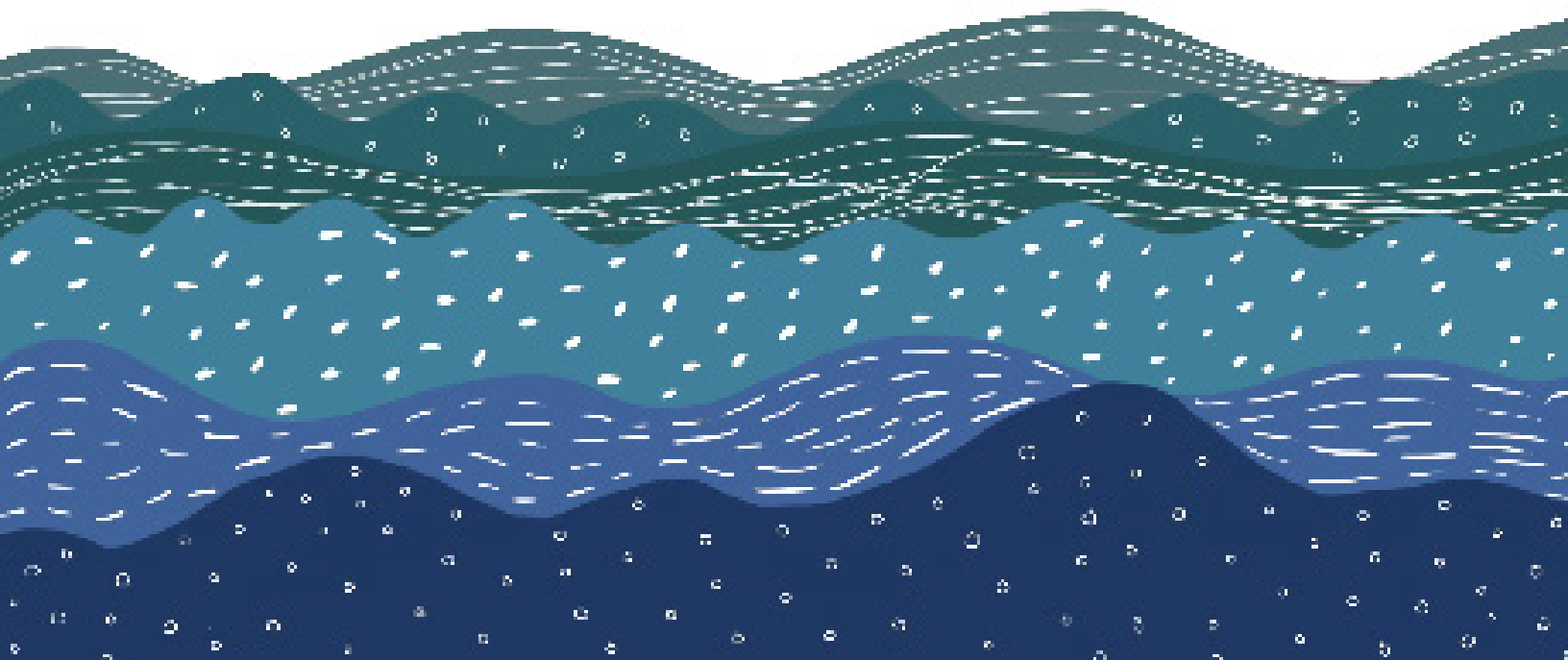
## **EMOTIONS**

It is not unusual for you or the other person to be emotionally moved by the stories and memories. If appropriate, temporarily stop and allow your time to regain composure. Perhaps even a change of subject. It's okay to ask if he or she is comfortable continuing from where you left off.

# SHARE IT WITH US!

With your interviewee's permission, you can contribute your conversation recording to the Vietnamese Boat People collection. All files should be in MP3 or WAV4 format and can be submitted to **[www.vietnameseboatpeople.org/share](http://www.vietnameseboatpeople.org/share)** along with a signed release form giving us permission to archive your recording as part of the collection. You can find the release form on our website.

Feel free to contact us anytime with questions on how to share your story on our platform, at  
**[stories@vietnameseboatpeople.org](mailto:stories@vietnameseboatpeople.org)**

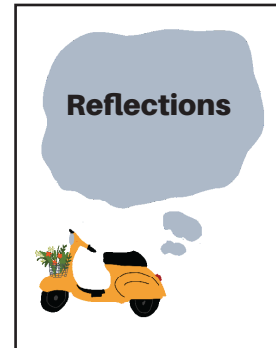
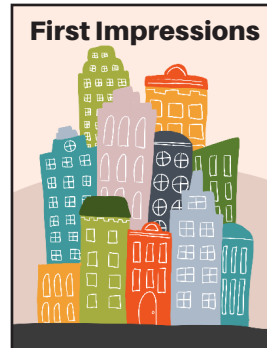
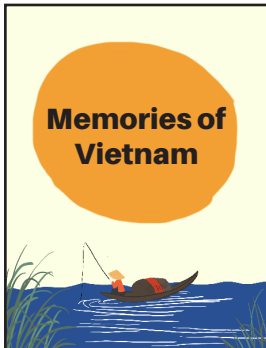


# Conversation Cards

**VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE**

# HOW TO USE

There are a series of questions under four categories.



Print the sheets onto 8x11 size paper. Now cut along the dotted line and tape, so there is an image on one side and question on the other. Stack the cards with image faced up. Shuffle if you'd like. Have the person draw a card for a question. Ask your interviewee the question.

The questions in this kit are designed to help you get started. This is a guide and should be customized as you see fit. For example, consider rewording the questions that are specific to your relationship. And make it conversational by inserting follow-up questions as you are listening to the story. Remember this is an opportunity for you to get to know the person better and uncover more details behind the story!



## Memories of Vietnam

**What do you remember most about growing up in Vietnam?**

Bạn nhớ nhất điều gì khi lớn lên ở Việt Nam?



## Memories of Vietnam

**What were your parents and grandparents like?**

Cha mẹ và ông bà của bạn như thế nào?



## Memories of Vietnam

**Describe the house you grew up in.**

Mô tả ngôi nhà bạn đã lớn lên.



## Memories of Vietnam

**What was your favorite aspect of living in Vietnam?**

Bạn yêu thích khía cạnh nào của cuộc sống ở Việt Nam?





## Memories of Vietnam

**Did you go to school in Vietnam? What was school like?**

Bạn đã đi học ở Việt Nam?  
Trường học như thế nào?



## Memories of Vietnam

**What is your most memorable food from Vietnam?**

Kỷ niệm món ăn đáng nhớ nhất của bạn ở Việt Nam là gì?



## Memories of Vietnam

**Describe the make-up and interactions of your community.**

Mô tả cấu trúc sự tương tác của cộng đồng bạn.



## Memories of Vietnam

**What were your hobbies and what did you do for fun living in Vietnam?**

Sở thích của bạn là gì và bạn đã làm gì để có được niềm vui khi sống ở Việt Nam?



## Memories of Vietnam

**What were some of your favorite Vietnamese songs / music?**

Một số bài hát / nhạc Việt yêu thích của bạn là gì?



## Memories of Vietnam

**How was your family affected by the War?**

Gia đình bạn bị ảnh hưởng như thế nào bởi Chiến tranh?



## Memories of Vietnam

**Did you or anyone close to you serve in the War?  
What was that like?**

Bạn hoặc bất cứ ai thân cận của bạn phục vụ trong Chiến tranh? Nó như thế nào?



## Memories of Vietnam

**Can you remember the first time you realized during or after the Vietnam civil war that your life was drastically changed?**

Bạn có nhớ lần đầu tiên bạn nhận ra trong hoặc sau cuộc nội chiến Việt Nam rằng cuộc sống của bạn sẽ thay đổi mạnh mẽ không?



## The Journey

**When and why did your family choose to leave Vietnam?**

Khi nào và tại sao gia đình bạn chọn rời khỏi Việt Nam?



## The Journey

**Who did you leave Vietnam with and who did you leave behind?**

Bạn đã rời Việt Nam với ai và bạn đã bỏ lại ai?



## The Journey

**Were there others in  
your family that left  
Vietnam before you?  
Who?**

Có người nào khác trong  
gia đình bạn rời Việt Nam  
trước bạn không? Người  
nào?



## The Journey

**What was the most  
difficult part about  
leaving Vietnam?**

Khó khăn nhất khi rời Việt  
Nam là gì?



## The Journey

**Describe how you left  
Vietnam?**

Mô tả cách bạn rời Việt  
Nam?



## The Journey

**How did you feel on the  
day you left Vietnam?**

Bạn cảm thấy thế nào vào  
ngày rời Việt Nam?



## The Journey

**What did you take with  
you when you left  
Vietnam? Why?**

Bạn đã mang theo những  
gì khi rời Việt Nam? Tại  
sao?



## The Journey

**How did you make  
preparations before you  
left Vietnam?**

Bạn đã chuẩn bị như thế  
nào trước khi rời Việt  
Nam?





## The Journey

**How did you make the decision to leave Vietnam?**

Bạn đã đưa ra quyết định rời Việt Nam như thế nào?



## The Journey

**What is your most vivid sense of your journey leaving Vietnam (sight/ smell/ sound)?**

Cảm nhận sống động nhất của bạn về hành trình rời Việt Nam (thị giác / khứu giác / âm thanh) là gì?



## The Journey

**What were your hopes  
when you initially left  
Vietnam?**

Bạn hy vọng gì khi ban đầu  
rời Việt Nam?



## The Journey

**Was there a moment  
on your journey that  
changed the way you see  
the world?**

Có khoảnh khắc nào trên  
hành trình của bạn thay  
đổi cách bạn nhìn thế giới  
không?

## First Impressions



**What do you remember most about the first day when you arrived here?**

Bạn nhớ nhất điều gì về ngày đầu tiên đặt chân đến đây?

## First Impressions



**What was life like for you (or your family) trying to adjust in a new country?**

Cuộc sống của bạn (hoặc gia đình bạn) khi cố gắng điều chỉnh ở một đất nước mới như thế nào?

## First Impressions



**What was your first day  
at school or at work like  
in a new country?**

Ngày đầu tiên đến trường  
hoặc đi làm của bạn như  
thế nào ở một đất nước  
mới?

## First Impressions



**What surprised you the  
most when you first  
came here?**

Điều gì khiến bạn ngạc  
nhiên nhất khi lần đầu đến  
đây?

## First Impressions



**What did you miss most about Vietnam when you first came here?**

Bạn nhớ điều gì nhất về Việt Nam khi lần đầu tiên đến đây?

## First Impressions



**What would you say was the hardest thing for you to adjust to in a new country?**

Điều gì khó khăn nhất để bạn thích nghi ở một quốc gia mới?

## First Impressions



**Migration can be hard.  
Where did you find  
strength in difficult  
times?**

Di cư có thể khó khăn. Bạn  
tìm thấy sức mạnh ở đâu  
trong những lúc khó khăn?

## First Impressions



**Why did you choose to  
relocate where you did,  
as opposed to another  
location?**

Tại sao bạn lại chọn tái  
định cư nơi bạn đã làm,  
thay vì một địa điểm khác?

## First Impressions



**Who / What was most helpful in getting you settled in your new country?**

Ai / Điều gì hữu ích nhất trong việc giúp bạn định cư ở đất nước mới?

## First Impressions



**What were the first goals you or your family focused on in your new country?**

Mục tiêu đầu tiên bạn đặt ra cho mình ở đất nước mới là gì?



## First Impressions



**What was the community  
or your neighbors like in  
your new country?**

Cộng đồng hoặc hàng xóm  
của bạn như thế nào ở đất  
nước mới của bạn?

## First Impressions



**What do you think is  
the biggest cultural  
difference between  
Vietnam and this  
country?**

Bạn nghĩ đâu là điểm khác  
biệt lớn nhất về văn hóa  
giữa Việt Nam và đất nước  
này?



## Reflections



**What has been your biggest challenges as a refugee/an immigrant?**

Những thách thức lớn nhất của bạn với tư cách là một người nhập cư là gì?

## Reflections



**What has been your greatest sources of joy being in a new country?**

Nguồn vui lớn nhất của bạn khi ở một đất nước mới là gì?

## Reflections



**What is your most proud moment so far in your new life here?**

Khoảnh khắc tự hào nhất của bạn cho đến nay trong cuộc sống mới ở đây là gì?

## Reflections



**What do you think your life would be like today if you had not left Vietnam?**

Bạn nghĩ cuộc sống của bạn sẽ như thế nào ngày hôm nay nếu bạn không rời Việt Nam?

## Reflections



**How has your migration experience influenced you as a person today?**

Kinh nghiệm di cư của bạn đã ảnh hưởng đến bạn như thế nào với tư cách là một người ngày nay?

## Reflections



**What do you hope people will take away from hearing your story?**

Bạn hy vọng mọi người sẽ nhớ lại điều gì khi nghe câu chuyện của bạn?

## Reflections



**As time has passed, how does your experience compare to what you expected?**

Khi thời gian trôi qua, trải nghiệm của bạn như thế nào so với những gì bạn mong đợi?

## Reflections



**Can you think of times when you have felt welcomed as an immigrant? What about when you have felt unwelcomed?**

Bạn có thể nghĩ về những lần bạn cảm thấy được chào đón như một người nhập cư không? Còn khi bạn cảm thấy không được chào đón?

## Reflections



**What are you hoping  
to accomplish in the  
future?**

Bạn đang hy vọng đạt  
được điều gì trong tương  
lai?

## Reflections



**If someone you knew  
were planning on coming  
to this country, what  
would you tell them to  
expect?**

Nếu một người nào đó mà  
bạn biết dự định đến đất  
nước này, bạn sẽ nói với  
họ những gì họ mong đợi?

## Reflections



**What advice would you give another refugee or immigrant who is thinking of coming to this country?**

Bạn sẽ cho họ lời khuyên nào về việc họ có nên đến hay không?

## Reflections



**What advice would you like to give to the next generation of Vietnamese in this country?**

Bạn muốn đưa ra lời khuyên gì cho thế hệ người Việt tiếp theo trên đất nước này?

# SPECIAL THANKS

We'd like to thank our entire Vietnamese Boat People team of volunteers, community supporters, and podcast listeners for the motivation behind this Conversation Kit.

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# ABOUT VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

Founded in 2018, Vietnamese Boat People is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the mission to preserve and carry forward the stories of the Vietnamese diaspora for the future generations and to inspire communities to pay-it-forward in helping today's refugee population. For more details, visit **[www.vietnameseboatpeople.org](http://www.vietnameseboatpeople.org)**.