

Conversation with 50 year old male, Virginia (Transcription)

START M35 B(8)

One thing I wanted to know is about the different time periods the refugees came over. A lot came in 75 but then were there times when a large number came over?

S: 75 is one part of it and then there is a number of migration inbetween..? a second migration in <gap> ? until bout 79-80..the boat people came about 79-80 and from that time on they come regularly with a direct replacement from the Volag's, a <gap>? education or second migration? I think this area is a receiving area for second migration more people come....

F: This area here in Arlington?

S: Arlington, and Fairfax and also Maryland seem to be a receiving area. They're not losing refugees to other areas.

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F: Most of them are staying?

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S: They're not moving away..some, maybe, have been moved...have moved to California but there are others coming so it's a plus not a minus in the end.

F: The people that are in Arling...now, what....can you give us some idea in general so far as their background as far as occupation or their education...?

S: The majority are working in many area. Of course,

F: Here, in ARLington?

S: In Arlington. I would say most of them are in service organizations as a general business...a number of professionals were able to get into county government, into I would say more sophisticated industries like Xerox and IBM, banks, teaching, for local government, social services, some were even able to get into the federal service. I think the majority would be in just like any other group?...they have been starting out and in nearly everything. The more visible ones would be some of these small businesses, especially grocery stores and restaurants, but I would say many are being very competitively hired to work in most of the services, services provided as businesses(?). I know that there are people who works in National Airport, also in Dullas airport in services department cafeterias. There are people who works now for the VEPCO, gas companies, I would say, they tend to be more, compared to other areas, they tend to be more technical and professional....

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F: Compared to other areas in the United States?

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S: Yeah.

F: How does that compare to what they did in Vietnam. Do you know?

S: I would say not much difference, because you must remember that Vietnam has been impacted by American, both military and civilian advisors and even businesses. <gap>? was working for Esso for more than 10 years in Vietnam. And so, most of them tend to do more or less the same kind of professional level...tend towards that, of course most are still underemployed or what you say over qualified for their job. But still, we must understand that during the American presence in Vietnam many had been trained by American. They have been sent here by thousands, especially military people who have been trained - some of them in Fort Benning, some of them in the higher level of command staff of Levenworth (?). We have very highly skilled professionals in most of the military logistics and communications. So the only difficulty would be cultural and social adaptation for themselves and also language barrier. Once they go through that they can live...they can do right well.

F: I guess that took a while for them to get up to the same level... How bout at first like in 75 when they.....?

S: Well at first it was very difficult but you know there was an American recession...many of their advisors, American advisors, from Vietnam, were also out of job when they come here..and many of the Indochinese were surprised to see that their American friends and advisors could not help them. Now they understand

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why. But the most interesting thing in 75 was that there were a number of very good and I should say professional sponsors who brought them in and really helped them with housing, with jobs and with examples of the American aggressiveness and I felt that most of the sponsors who were middle class Americans who brought them in part of them the kind of American attitude toward work ethics, towards community living, towards mobility and advancement. And I think that was a real good help because those 1975 first residents who were helped that way were now in more or less most of the communities and are leading the communities <gap>(?) You can see that by the results coming out of their children in school. The children in school are very much helped by their parents. And attitude about their own motivation for studies. The parents knew themselves that in America education was also a very part and they now had access to it. They may not know enough to access to job but they now know to access to education or institutions, especially for the children.

F: How about...How does where they're living now, say in Arlington, the general class structure of where they're living compare to where they were living in Vietnam?

S: In Arlington, there's number of areas, like, I think it was up there, was at Westminster, in West Tower in ARlington, near Columbia Pike. They have many Indochinese. They are Laos,

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Cambodian, Vietnamese who live there. They tend to go where the landlords seem to be more lenient, to allow them to put in more people. They tend to go where there are good transportation, public transportation, also I would say, where they are accepted by the communities. I think, to my knowledge, we don't have any backlash with communities

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in ARLington. They seem to get along very well together. Hispanics, the blacks, other emmigrants, Mexicans, whatever they are, not have any trouble with having any Indochinese living next to them. And, I would say, of course, many of them still have to make move, but one of the few things that really not realize is that they put in, they pool resources. They learn now that both man and women must work sometime, their cousins and uncles they live together, and they work and they pooling their paychecks. So, in fact, if people think that they're given money by the government to buy houses, and buy cars, and they see that in very short time, two, three years, whatever, they were able to buy cars and houses, simply because they had enough credit ratings pooling together. My..I have a cousin, he and his wife and his two children working <gap>? them enough credit to buy a house. They now own three cars, course they always screaming that still have to pay so much debts..but on the other hand they enjoy as much advantages as many middle class Americans.

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The simple fact that they were pooling four paychecks. Supposing each of them, I don't know how much they earn, but if they earn no more than 5 to 800 a month, if you multiply those by four you see that they are near the upper income. And that is a few thing that some of the survivors would not be able to now. Of course the time will come when they would like to split off. The children want to get married. and live apart. Even cousins, they don't like to stay together any more. But by the time they are, they know how to live.

F: Was that a pattern in Vietnam too, that they would pool resources like that?

S: Well, I think, see the struggle here pattern, but the pattern is that they would be able to live together and accept to go along with each other, not only to pooling their resources, unless it is only required to do so. If they have enough, they would like to go out by

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themselves, but they know that by staying together and pool their resources they have more in their interest (?) That is a simple cooperative idea that all of us know. Simple economics yes. Also I think, that another point, that they more or less take pride in their own...I was thinking after five or six years year, I'm looking into this language, like with the Vietnamese and the Indochinese who come here are very much like the Jews who come...they tend

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to preserve their culture, and language, and that creates some kind of community pride. That goes beyond the family. Well, thanks to that, kind of community communication, and community cohesiveness, they were able to get jobs from China. The word pass very quickly, well there is an opening... <gap>? <gap>? a company like Xerox, for example, he would go around and tell somebody else, there's an opening. My wife got a job at Riggs National Bank because of the fact that my cousin was there. There was an opening only internal promotion but we just called and so now my wife got a job. I don't think anybody else if that guy, that cousin of mine is not there to tell us. And myself, I got a call from Montgomery County, a friend works there and say that there is a parttime opening. As a teacher specialist for counseling parents. I applied two months ago and now they offer me a parttime job. I don't have the time to run around and look for announcements unless somebody tell me. And I think that they know who can do what in the community and they'll call us up. That's one of the very good things. Second thing, second thing to me which is much more important is that people who come out of this trauma of being a refugee need each other to help. At first we thought the only thing we need is just to get a job, and think of ourselves, and now we found out there's more to

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that. The community can help you feel much more at home, on the feast day, international day, you can go somewhere and have a market fair, they call it a Tet fair, they have social events, they have <gap>?, movies, makes them really feel at home. And that, I would say, at least the kind of c community activities, at least, give people a wholesome mental health so that they can give more of themselves to work and to cope with other things without losing heart. Bout two, three years ago, we know that there have been many cases of family breaking up, of people who have good jobs suddenly quit their job and go somewhere else because of personal tragedy, within their family here or in Vietnam or people who lost their friends. We have here, a person that works for us here who lost her husband at sea. She come here with two children and when you looked into her work, she is very very effective as a worker, I found out that she live with her brother and her sister-in-law has been a very good advisor to her because her sister is working in social services in Montgomery County and she have extended family there cooking for them in the evening. <gap>? shelter for free, help for care for the two children, and they been living together for the last two years. And now we realize that the family, the extended family is so important to the parents success of so many people.

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Now, of course, that would go against talking English. Because they are able to speak their own language, they will only speak English when they are at work, not at home. I would think that that would not be, that would not be a should not be considered as a <gap>? especially for the children. The children can switch to Vietnamese at home and English in school all very quickly. Sometimes parents are worried that they won't speak English at home mine, for example, I would speak <gap>? and <gap> English, and at first I was worried but now I think that so long as they understand what I say to them, it's ok. Maybe one day they should go Vietnam and stay for 6 months or for vacation.....home country as many Italian and Irish are doing. I know a Japanese who was born.. <gap>?

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third generation, he went all the way to Japan and married a Japanese wife. Once she came here we found out she's even more sophisticated. than an American born Japanese. (cassette ends here). And so there's all this... <gap>? older people, if you are able to speak their language at home, they feel much more themselves and I think that that would be a handicap for them when they work. But with the help of their children, I think we have <gap>? many people employment field, employers, colleagues, they seem to be very helpful.

END M35ends