Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: AMY HUYEN LE

Interviewer: Vee Kim Banh

Date: March 15, 2012; March 18, 2012

Location: Irvine, California

Sub-Collection: Vietnamese American Experience Winter 2012

Length of Interview: 00:39:18, 00:28:35, 00:16:08

Time Log

VAOHP0027.1_T01 (00:39:18)

00:00:45  Amy Huyen Le introduces herself and tells a bit of her background and family history.

00:01:15  Amy discusses her mother’s occupations in the past and present.

00:02:42  She talks about her childhood growing up on both coasts of America.

00:03:24  Her mother single-handedly raised her and her younger brother.

00:04:37  Her grandparents came to America and her brother was born.

00:06:35  She has heard her estranged father is Thai.

00:07:23  She speaks a bit of Vietnamese and is using Rosetta Stone to become more fluent.

00:08:35  She tells of her mother’s near-death experience in escaping the Vietnam War on a boat.

00:10:45  She recalls the amount of time her mother spent in Indonesia before coming to America.

00:11:35  She retells an urban legend in her family.
00:13:15  Her family’s current and past educational endeavors.
00:14:45  How her aunts and uncles came to marry.
00:17:36  She reminisces the traditional family gatherings during holidays.
00:19:55  She embraces her Catholic faith.
00:21:09  Her cousins and her like to mix Vietnamese words with English words.
00:22:09  Each aunt and uncle in her family cooks different traditional Vietnamese dishes.
00:25:22  There are no family heirlooms due to the vast amount of children in the family.
00:25:43  Her mother is not good with keeping photos.
00:27:18  Her grandmother struggled with raising 11 children on her own, while her grandfather fought in the war.
00:29:04  Amy refers to her family’s occupations as hustlers.
00:29:40  Her grandfather did not spend any time in prison.
00:29:55  Her grandparents did not come to America with their oldest nine children.
00:31:33  She was a latchkey kid because her mother was always working.
00:32:38  Her aunt and uncle sponsored her mom over to America.
00:33:17  She recalls her past occupations.
00:35:00  She considers herself Asian-American in the United States, but American abroad.
00:36:16  She did an internship in Malawi, Africa.
00:38:27  She has considered interning and working in Vietnam.

VAOHP0027.2_T01 (00:28:35)
00:11:00  She recounts her grandparents’ occupations in Vietnam.
She does not keep in touch with her relatives in Vietnam; only the first generation does.

It is not expected for her family to send money back to Vietnam as much anymore.

Her uncle is more often than not in Vietnam than in America.

Vietnamese holidays, Vietnamese church, and Paris by Night remind her of Vietnam.

People coming from Vietnam carry a distinct smell, according to Amy.

She speaks of Paris by Night’s inaccurate interpretation of Vietnam and the production’s involvement over time.

She thinks there is a revival of the past for every generation to want to learn more about their identity.

She considers herself an outsider from the Vietnamese community.

She has voted twice in the U.S.

She recalls personal racist experiences and why it still occurs.

She illustrates the pain of growing up wanting to be white.

She stresses the importance of respect due to family values.

She wants her children to sustain Vietnamese culture.

She used to visit Phuoc Loc Tho often as a child with her family.

Amy discusses the important of learning history.

She learned about Vietnamese history through reading.
Amy reflects on a Japanese history teacher who despised Vietnamese and American people.

Amy shares another racist incident with a friend’s father.

She thinks prejudices against the Vietnamese was created by the war.

Her friend’s father, a Vietnam War veteran, committed suicide.

She recollects her friend’s boyfriend’s father discriminatory practices on anyone of any Vietnamese descent.

She stresses the importance of saying Saigon versus Ho Chi Minh City.

She embraces the model minority myth.

People usually assume that she is more American than Vietnamese.

She believes that the current and future generations have been going in the right direction.

Her mother indirectly pushed her away from her career of choice.