

Houston Asian American Archive
Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University

Interviewee: Mr. Nam Van Nguyen
Translator: Thieu Dang
Interviewers: Steven Loyd, Mei Leebron
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Background: Mr. Nam Van Nguyen was born in Saigon, Vietnam in 1934. His education was cut short by being drafted to the military in 1954. He was Colonel in the South Vietnamese Armed Forces. He arrived in the United States in San Antonio in 1957. He then worked at a car wash and eventually bought his own Exxon station. He would then make waves in Houston by going up against a leader of the KKK who was trying to take jobs away from Vietnamese fishermen in the Galveston Bay area.

Setting: Mr. Nam Van Nguyen was interviewed on June 11, 2019 at his residence with a translator present. The interview focuses on his life, including his childhood, time in the military, and stories about his conflict with the KKK. Mr. Nguyen shares several unique anecdotes about his personal life.

Key:

NN: Nam Nguyen
TD: Thieu Dang
SL: Steven Loyd
ML: Mei Leebron
—: speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...: speech trails off, pause
Italics: emphasis
[Brackets]: Actions [laughs, sighs, etc.]
(?): unclear or inaudible word/phrase

Interview Transcript:

SL: Today is June 11, 2019. We're here in the home of Nam Van Nguyen interviewing him for the Houston Asian American Archive. My name is Steven Loyd.

ML: Uh, my name is Mei Leebron.

SL: And uh Mr. Nguyen, let's start off with where and when were you were born?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: He was born in uh 1934.

SL: And where was that?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: In Vietnam.

TD: In Vietnam.

SL: Right. So um, where—

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

SL: Where in Vietnam?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: Saigon. Saigon region, Saigon City.

TD: In Saigon.

SL: What was it—what was Saigon like back then?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese: No, in 1934 ...]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: Saigon at that time very quiet and not too many people.

SL: Mm. Did you have a—well, how was your childhood in Saigon?

TD: Say that again.

SL: How was your childhood in Saigon?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: He attend school in Saigon and nothing else. Nothing special.

SL: Where did you go to school?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: First of all, he attend school at uh his village. And then uh, the uh—go to high school no—uh go to uh uh uh uh grade five, four, they attend school at the uh at the town—what town was that? [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: At the [inaudible] uh towns. And then he attended the Petrus Ky High School [NN: (speaks in Vietnamese) school] that was a very famous high school in Saigon.

SL: Hmm.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

SL: What did your parents do for a living?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: Farmer. His uh, his uh parent is farmers.

SL: Mhm. What sort of principles did they raise you up on?

TD: What do you mean by principles and raise on?

SL: Um...

TD: Make it clear for him.

ML: I guess values?

SL: Yeah.

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: His family, his parent very discipline.

SL: Mm. [NN clears throat] What—what sort of foods did they cook at home?

TD: What—what sort of what?

SL: Food.

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah. He said that uh during uh he was living in his village, his family got the vegetable from the garden that they grow and the fish in the pond. Something like that. [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

SL: What was your experience in high school?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah. He say that during uh the years he attend high school in Saigon, that is during the World War II was almost at the end. And uh the fi—and the south Vietnam still under the colonization of French. And uh, uh he explains when uh a French troop go to his class and kill ah uh says one student, one friend. And then uh, his friend was killed by a French, uh French uh. And then, at that time, he was fourteen or fifteen years old and uh he understand that uh uh the law of the country. What does that mean? Uh, he begin to have the idea how to fight with the colonization.

SL: So, what did you do after school?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: After... his friend was killed by French, the school was closed. And the whole student have to move the other school. And he attend one— two year there. And uh after she uh passed the exam, so called baccalaureate one, he was draft to the military in 1954.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He say that because the uh his family have been uh very crowd—lot of children. He have uh nine uh brothers and sisters so he can uh omit cannot go he—he—he could—he made uh permission out of the army at that time.

[**SL:** Hm] Not to be drafted. But only two month. That is uh general—[speaks in Vietnamese].

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: General mobilization. And he come back to the army again.

SL: Okay. How did you feel about getting drafted?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: He say because he say that he's sad, he was sad because he didn't—he has not completed the—his high school. So he left at grade twelve.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: And he said that uh his parent want the children uh have to complete high school. And you know that his brother is a doctor here.

SL: Hm. So, what were some of your experiences in the military?

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Uh, [grandfather clock noises in background] because during the training in the base, he is he was very skill in the tactic. How to fight. So the, the woman wanted him to be uh the instructor in the base—the military base.

SL: How, how long after being drafted was that? [**TD:** speaks in Vietnamese] That you became an instructor?

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Um, he worked in uh training camp for six months. And three months for training for to be an instructor. And then uh he taught there for three classes, classes in the official training. And then he allowed to go to the U.S. for study.

SL: Oh, okay.

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD & NN: Fort Benning.

TD: He went to uh the U.S. in 197—uh—

NN: No. 57.

TD: 57. At Fort Benning.

NN: Fort Benning.

TD: Fort Benning, Georgia.

SL: What was that like? How did you like Georgia?

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He was there for almost a year.

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: You can speak English.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese] Fort Benning, Fort Benning for infantry and the uh uh supply training, supply **courses**. Both of them about almost ten month, maybe a year in Fort Benning, Georgia. And after that, I come back to revisit to Vietnam. Then I go to the battlefields.

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: And after he left the U.S., uh they send him to the battlefield immediately. At the...

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese] They sent me to the 16th Infantry Division at the uh at the uh DMZ.

[**TD:** DMG] To the DMZ Zone. The north and south DMZ.

[**SL:** Right]

NN: I go there and uh fighting every day. [laughs and speaks Vietnamese]. I was sent to 16th Infantry Division at the DMZ (**Note:** DMZ= *Demilitarized Zone*) and fought every day (laughing). I went to many places, some well known killing fields such as Khe Sanh, Lao Bao, A Sao, A Luoi...I was wounded twice.

TD: He fought in a lot of ba—ba—battlefields there.

SL: Mhm.

TD:

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese] Lieutenant.

TD: Yeah. Lieutenant at that time.

SL: So, you got back to Vietnam in 59?

NN: 58, about 58.

SL: Okay.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese] I fought in uh [**TD:** Fort Benning] uh along the borders. Cambodia and in—in Laos. In uh 6—1975 until 19—no—1957 till 1959.

SL: Okay. What did you—

[**NN:** In the border] Right. Into Laos, you said?

TD: Yeah. At the **borders** but Vietnam in the **borders of** Vietnam [**NN:** (speaks in Vietnamese)] and Laos **and** Cambodia.

[**SL:** Right.] They fighting there in the battlefields.

SL: And you were in the military until you left in the '70s?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese] Until 1975.

TD: 1975. At the end of the war.

SL: Mhm. What were some of your experiences as the war escalated?

TD: Experience during the war?

SL: Yeah.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He attend about 20... 22 years in the military. [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: A lot of experiences for—

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He said that he went to *every* corner of the country. Everywhere in—in the south Vietnam to fight.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Uh, he—he say that he fought and then trained uh officers. Like training for uh commandoes, officers, trained them how to fight, something like that.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He say that he trained a lot of officers in the—

[**Lady in background:** Here the coffee]

SL: What was the mindset of most of the soldiers you trained?

TD: What?

SL: Do you—would you say that they were... were they—were the soldiers enthusiastic about, about the—their efforts? Uh, let's see.

ML: I guess so like what was their attitude?

TD: Attitude [**SL:** Yeah] of the officers? [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: He say that the every officer believe in him because he is a good instructor. And uh what he say they apply in the battlefield. And they feel so good. They—they—they do appreciate him a lot.

SL: Great.

TD & NN: [speak in Vietnamese]

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]...A lot...[speaks in Vietnamese]...sweat...

TD: A lot of sweat during the training.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: More sweat in the training camp and less in blood the battlefield. More sweat in the training camp and less blood in the battlefield. That the way he taught the—

[**SL:** Yeah]

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]...There are many procedure, many subjects in training. The uh all the training, very difficult. Many different. [**TD:** Many ways] many different uh uh [**TD:** ways] category. Basically you have to open roads. You close the borders okay and you attack, fighting in the city, and uh [inaudible] or jump from the airplane. Many things, many ways to with good

training, with good training for the student so they could save their lives in the battlefield. [SL: Yeah.] That's why. They, they knew me, so many units which I trained them, they believed that because I was wounded twice in the battlefield okay get some experience and to transfer this everywhere. Yeah. [clears throat]

SL: How did Saigon and I guess Vietnam as a whole change from your childhood and to when you were in the military?

TD: How Saigon change [SL: Yeah] during the war?

SL: Yeah.

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Uh [clears throat] he says that the during the Ngo Dinh Diem president uh time, Saigon was very peaceful. Everything is so good. Just like the education, economics. Everything was so good. And then when the Viet Cong, that mean Vietnamese communism uh increased the degree of the war, it make chaos and make a lot of change in Saigon.

SL: Mhm. Do you have any questions?

ML: Uh, no. I think we can continue.

SL: Okay, how did you come to leave Vietnam?

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: That was in 1975.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Uh, he say that the first of all, he—he did not want to leave the country. He want to fight until uh he's dead. But uh he know that uh uh the Vietnamese uh South Vietnamese soldiers very courage. They can fight hard in every battlefield and win every battlefield. But because the politic they are not allow them to fight. And uh after the surrender of the South Vietnam in uh on uh uh April 30th, 1975 there no way they can fight and so they have to leave Vietnam.

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah, he—he still emphasizes that he didn't want—did not *want* to—to—to leave the country because he worked with the uh CIA and uh they support him a lot. They can fight to the north uh and he handle a lot of some uh uh radio stations and some—something like that. But because the situation at that time when the last day of Saigon, he still didn't want to go. But his friend wanted him to bring the family to a ship there. And his wife go with them, go to the—the

ship and then he left on that boat, that ship, in the last day of Saigon in 19—uh on April 30th, 1975.

SL: How did the war change when America got involved?

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Uh, he said that the South Vietnam government was self defense and the North invaded. So uh uh... the South Vietnam lose the war because the U.S. uh did not uh give supplies. In the meanwhile, in the North of Vietnam the communist regime look like the Russian, Chinese government, they fully supported the—the—the—the North Vietnamese government. And they give a lot of ammunition and everything. And in the meanwhile, in the South Vietnam, we don't have anything from U.S. at that time, so we had to lose.

SL: So, how did you decide to come to the U.S. as opposed to anywhere else?

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He say that he didn't want to go. He did not want to go.

[**SL:** Mhm]

TD: But, when uh he drove the family to the boat, and then the boat there everybody forced him to come to the ship. He still didn't want to go. He did not want to go. He wanted to stay there to fight.

[**SL:** Right] Yeah.

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: At that time he had a gun and a uniform he wanted to stay there and fight until the end.

SL: So, was everyone else just going to America and he sort of got dragged along?

(Noise in background)

TD: Let me tell them to be quiet.

[TD leaves the room to ask people in the other room to quiet down]

TD: Say that again.

SL: So, everyone else was—just decided to go to America and he just sort of got dragged along?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [answers in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah. He said that because he had been in U.S. in 1957 [phone ringing] and she—he understood how the Americans felt. Although that he didn't want to—he didn't want to come to the U.S. No. He didn't want to go. [**SL:** Mm] But uh he was forced to go and he say that the U.S. uh abandoned look like abandoned Vietnam and we lose the war. But the—he still uh did not hate America. He understood. [phone ringing]

SL: Where did you—

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He say that the he was trained in U.S. in uh for intelligence in Okinawa for six, for six months so he understand it. Understand it. And uh when he went back to Vietnam he didn't want to stay in the office, and he want to go to the battlefields to fight. And uh, so he say that he understood all—what Americans thinking about the war and why they left Vietnam and did not help South Vietnamese government to fight since 1973 something like that. And we lose the war. He under—understood that.

SL: What were Americans thinking?

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: And he say that [clears throat] he understood Americans at that time uh because war too long [**SL:** Mm] and uh uh at that time, the Americans had to—to leave Vietnam so could not help Vietnamese government anymore. [**SL:** Mm] He understood that.

SL: Where did you arrive when you came to the U.S.?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: Huh?

TD: In 1975.

SL: Right, yeah. Where, where in the U.S. did you go?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: In San Antonio.

TD: He says that—the in San Antonio in 75.

SL: How was—?

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He say that uh he attended general uh... talk in Paris in 1968 until 72, 73. Something likes that. He understood that the uh that American want to withdraw everything and left Vietnam. And he say that and he said that the uh... he was an officer. He had to die.

TD & NN: [speak in Vietnamese]

NN: I do not uh, I didn't, blame the American withdrew or the uh [inaudible] ...I know it was a poor situation [inaudible]...we lose [inaudible] political reasons but not by [inaudible] this why I said fight until my, until my [inaudible]...

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He say that the uh he doesn't blame anybody because of the, after loss of Vietnam. But he think that we will regain, take the Vietnam again. We will win again.

SL: How long did you live in San Antonio?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Three years.

SL: What was that like when you arrived?

TD: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He say at that time San Antonio was very quiet, very good for education [**SL:** Hm] because uh his brother living there and graduated uh from medical school there.

SL: Hm. What did you do while you were in San Antonio?

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: Car wash.

TD: He—yeah he did everything like car wash. And the...

NN: Car wash. [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah. \$2.10 an hour.

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Uh, he was a car washer and then uh become assistant manager, \$2.70 an hour. And then the owner said that the, “Why you don’t buy one, you want to be an owner?” And then uh some brothers help him. Uh, each one gives a few thousand dollars and he bought one uh Exxon uh station.

NN: I borrow uh \$15,000 from two my brothers. Two brothers. To invest there to be a leader. And they come to uh to uh rural (?) for the uni—university certificate before we bought a gas station. Live in Houston. Therefore, I convince them to attend the trading in. I work over there for three years. I make some money and after that I—I think it’s better to work more, make more money to do something. Thou—thousand dollar nothing better I come to do fishing. [**SL:** Mm] Do fishing.

TD & NN: [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah. Next one.

SL: So, what was the Vietnamese community in Houston like when you arrived?

TD: What, what?

SL: What was the Vietnamese community like in Houston when you got here?

TD: Population?

ML: Uh like the environment, I guess.

TD: The-the Vietnamese at that time... at the—

SL: In Houston like were there—were there a lot of Vietnamese people here?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah he said that uh in 1978 [**NN** clears throat] when he uh came to Houston, the Vietnamese population is around thirty thousand dollars, uh thirty thousand people, lived in Houston. And it’s a possibility uh Galveston, Seabrook, something like that. About thirty thousand people.

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: At that time uh the liv—the life in Houston—Vietnamese in Houston is very good. But the problem is uh the uh because of KKK group. They didn’t want uh people go to fishing.

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: He said that uh he when he arrived in Houston he knew the problem of KKK. That group didn't want Vietnamese fishermen to work at the Galveston bay, Galveston, Seabrook, something like that. He understood that. He wanted the way, a peaceful way uh... two groups live together in peace. That's what he wanted.

SL: How did you start making that happen?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: It started in uh uh 1979 and... uh until 1981 and become strong. The KKK group wanted all of uh Vietnamese fishermen uh get out of this area and uh they could not do the work like fishing in the Galveston bay.

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: And the KKK group uh [coughs] tried the Vietnamese fishermen have to get out of the Galveston bay, prohibited them do the job uh fishing.

SL: Was there any sort of organization or leadership among the Vietnamese fishermen?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: At that time, they didn't have uh any group any organization at all. When the KKK involved too strong and he got involved in that.

SL: So you became sort of a leader for that movement?

TD & NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: At that time, because he could speak English and he understood KKK group and he went to the Galveston bay. [NN clears throat] At Galveston, and uh from one group, one organization to fight with them, not fight with, not fight, but uh negotiate with them, the KKK group. [Clock rings] Uh during the night, they shot to his house and fight up his house and then uh tried to uh get the Vietnamese fishermen out of the—the—the—the—the—the—

NN: We get out from—from the (?) [laughs]

SL: Wow. [NN clears throat]

SL: What sort of support did you receive from the people of Houston while that was going on?

TD & NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Uh at that time, people Vietnamese people in Houston, they supported him but they were very afraid. They scared of KKK a lot, and they advised him do not involve with that. But the fishermen [NN clears throat] uh at that time they had they trusted him, only uh he was a—he is

their uh leader. And especially his mother advised him that uh, “you have to live like a man, and uh try to help people, try to help fishermen there, and uh try to work the peaceful way to win the fight; not fight with them. No!” She said that, “if you—uh if they kill uh 50 Vietnamese fishermen and you kill 5 KKK members, that is your fault.” So he said that he had to find the way by the court, by the law or something like that.

TD & NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Uh he tried to work to—to find a way, the peaceful way and uh... [NN clears throat] he... tried to reach the leader of KKK at that time. And then the leader is sergeant, is a veteran, Vietnam veteran war. He was in Vietnam, in helicopters [NN clears throat] and... uh one day uh his helicopter was down, the general and himself pinned a medal for that man.

SL: Hm.

TD: Look like a uh... medal something like that to give him.

[Scene changed]

SL: Where, where did we leave off there? You remember?

TD: What?

SL: Where were we—what were we talking about?

TD: [Laughs] Oh well the leader, [**SL:** Yeah] the leader of KKK.

SL: Right.

TD: That’s what he said. Uh he say that uh uh... she—he had known that the, the leader of KKK, he was a sergeant in the helicopter and he was uh a Vietnam vet during the war and uh one day his uh helicopter was down—shot down. And uh they uh they uh one general and himself walked to there to save him and gave a—him the medal. And uh when the leader of KKK heard that, he wanted to meet him, but uh he refused because at that time he was very careful about that.

SL: What was his name? The leader?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

NN: Louis, Louis Beam. Louis Beam.

TD: Louis Beam.

SL: Okay. So how did that eventually get resolved?

TD: Result of that?

SL: Resolved.

TD: Result?

SL: The, how did the conflict with KKK come to an end?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese] [Book page flips]

NN: [Reads book] Here. [Shows ID] Louis Beam.

SL: Right.

NN: Rea—rea—rea Reagan. [SL: Yeah] Rea—Reagan, [Louis Beam] yeah. [SL: Mhm] Yeah. I know, I know him, he's back out. He used to be a captain, a sergeant. He's a fighter, gun—gunship of the one uh the Cobra helicopter [SL: Right] He fought everyday in Vietnam and—and uh and he got shot, he (?) get shot, and drop at the Soc Trang province. [SL: Yeah] The man who come to bring the medal for him is my friend, (?) and myself. Bring the medal to him. I say you are hero listen, he don't believe that, and then I tell him “oh, but you know them [laughs] because I know your background. You are against me because you want to protect the fishermen, American fishermen. But you, you evict them out, wrong. This is a free enterprise country. You get that thinking about. If they move out, at least they have to, they have to—to sell his boats. Because they spent their own money to buy boats. After I found he uh come on go to leave a peace rule, I do not I—I ask just a sentence of flexibility order for them to stop fighting, to make the peace restored in the (?). So that uh the—when I were newsman come to check two films. [SL: Uhm]. Film one is a fire, *Fire on the Water*, Film one is a fire, *Fire on the Water*, fire on, (Note: *Fire on the water*. Author: [Robert Hillmann](#); [Cinergy Films](#). Publisher: Emeryville, CA : Cinergy Films - TD)

fire on, and the other one *Por L'amour*. [SL: Mhm] Two films [SL: Uhm. Yeah] fighting uh our human uh almost three years, so [laughs] we have to tell or write out in the film here. If you can find it here, you can have anywhere. [SL: Yeah] And then one uh book here my—my lawyer, Mr. Molesky. [SL: Uhm] He wrote this one. [SL: Oh wow] Yeah. (Note: [The Book: *This Gulf of Fire* by Mark Molesky](#)), TD)

SL: Your—your lawyer?

NN: [Nods]

TD: Yeah. The lawyers at that time, the lawyers they—they bring the KKK to the court.

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: [Coughs] He brought uh the KKK to the court and he said that uh he doesn't want to be any

[NN clears throat] win, to be a winner or loser. He wanted two sides to live in peace. That's it.

SL: So what did you learn from that conflict if anything?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: He said that uh he learned that uh understanding to each other is most important. Nobody was a loser, nobody was a winner. Uh living together in peace, that is the most important.

SL: What effect do you think that whole thing had on the Vietnamese community in Houston?

TD: What?

SL: The Vietnamese people. What—what effect did the conflict have on them?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: He said that the people in Houston, living in Houston at that time, were very afraid. They were afraid that he was killed, fishermen was killed, people in—in Houston were killed, something like that. They were afraid.

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He said— [NN: speaks in Vietnamese] he—he said that but however somebody was very aggressive; he said that we have to fight until the end. And uh but he didn't—he did not agree with that. [NN clears throat]

SL: And what would you say were the long term effects on the city and the people?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah. He said, he said that uh everybody understand that.

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: And now the leader of the KKK is a friend of him. [SL: Hm] They are friends, and say hello to—to him, anytime he meet him.

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah he say that uh one of the boats was demolished... he paid for that [SL: Hm] and he asked the court did not uh have any penalty to the KKK.

SL: How has the Vietnamese community in Houston changed since you've been here?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah after... the conflict, uh people in Houston loved him, liked him a lot. Even though the local liked him, like the Mayor met him many times, advised him to be a—a—a Vietnamese community should have an organization. And at the end, he became the leader, he became the first president of the Vietnamese community here.

SL: So you said it went to court, what—what sort of result was reached exactly?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

[Phone rings in the background]

TD: He said that uh in the court. Let me ask them.

[TD leaves the room]

NN: I'm sorry my voice cannot talk. [laughs] Yeah.

SL: No that's alright

TD: You can talk English.

NN: No.

TD: Talk to him.

NN: No, no. Okay I... before the uh the judge, judge—judge judge uh judge Gabrielle McDonald, the judge, the black lady, the black. I uh made this statement in front of the uh his group, our group and uh two sides, the lawyers, the judge, I just made the statement the uh I would like you to uh judge, a—a sensitive order, sensitively. [hand gestures] [inaudible] But and I'm—I'm not a winner, they are not loser. But we—we—we know what we did wrong we have to correct. [SL: Uhm] I talk to my uh fishermen, they correct themselves. Something had been done right wrong, and he tell them. He say that evict all fishermen out from water, because it wrong, protect them. Okay. And they come to the uh the on the uh uh... house in Austin. The—the—the judge call me there to ask me.

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He said that, he want—

NN: Okay okay. I wanted peaceful restored. We—we can live together, okay? No, no fighting, so that uh I said that uh, they said uh uh, [inaudible] I said, “why you uh you uh want to uh protect some of your fishermen uh for uh to get welfare food stamp?” I say, “no you are no. I wanted them to work, hard, do business in the water to make some money and also to file tax, pay tax, probably. Not get in line for welfare, food stamp. Not what I like to live.” So they don't want, don't need to—to fish, they have to get in line for welfare food stamp. That's ridiculous. I

don't want that. I look I uh uh uh I love the country. I know what love is so that they do something wrong against the law. I don't want to do that. Told you and just judging a sensitive order. After 20 years, the judge, after uh after this event, the judge was assigned by the, the uh international law— [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: International judge...

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

NN: The judge, the judge ruled, the judge what do you rule, what do you rule make the KKK listen to you. Outside the uh law uh the judge of uh they like, they come here, they ask me why I—I make things like that. Because I love this country. I love people. [laughs] I want peaceful. I don't want to fight. See now I write book I ask you but [inaudible] so after that they come to down nobody problem. Many men they come to ask me and they come to talk to ? The Mayor over there and the uh chief police over there. They said at that time I know you are very gentleman, very... They want to ask me more about it, interview me, but I think that uh... But today I—I think we can do things peaceful, peace be restored that I- because I love this country and uh... after that I let you know they uh I want to, I always intend to take Vietnam back to—to that community. Okay I right now it's our uh. [speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He said that the uh... he had a plan to call on up uh Vietnam veterans and veterans of allies, seven countries that went to war, to help president Trump to dissolve the communist regime in Vietnam and after.

SL: Hm.

NN: Okay I— [clears throat] I don't like communism, I don't like the regime [SL: Uhm] Okay. I formed the uh the new organization here, they all ally forces, called 'Force and Vietnam'(?). [SL: Mhm] They will join here. Seven countries. American, Vietnam are the main, and uh you have Korean Thailand and uh uh uh...

TD: Canada, Australia.

NN: Yeah. C—Canada uh... formed to support or get together with the uh...

TD: Donald Trump.

NN: Mcdo—no, uh liberal, uh with the uh with the Trump, Donald. [SL: Uhm] Okay to ask to dis—dissolve communism in Vietnam. No more communist because we should go here. [points at pictures on the phone]

SL: What has been the [NN clears throat] organization's response to that?

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He said that he had a plan to get together and take Vietnam back. Seven country, allied countries and invite President Trump to come over here, with a audience about two thousand, to support Trump, to dissolve the communist in Vietnam right now. That's his plan. [SL: Mhm]

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Yeah.

NN: [Reads card] So here we uh fighting for freedom, democracy and human rights, [TD: Democracy and human rights.] against a dictator regime in Vietnam lead by (?) against a challenge. You have that right?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: You can have it.

SL: Oh thank you. I'm gonna take—take picture for the archive. Okay!

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: This is uh President Reagan.

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Okay, okay.

SL: So what—what is this?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Economic opportunities, that's what they said.

SL: Okay!

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: This uh some [clears throat] judge uh... yeah federal judge. Okay, next question.

SL: Can you tell us about your children?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: He has 3 children.

SL: What do they do?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: What happened is uh... the first one is a doctor, specialty in uh uh psychology. The second—second one is a dentist. And the third one uh... is a teacher, at an old school.

SL: How did you raise your children? What sort of values did you bring them up along?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Sir, can you clear, more clear about the question?

SL: What sort of values did you raise your children with?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Polite with the seniors.

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Think deep about everything you want to do

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: Appreciate the people, the country where you are right now.

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: They have to study hard and to be a useful people.

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: All of his three brothers are doctors. Right now, in Houston.

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

[Phone rings in the background]

TD: He said that he, even though he has no academic degree, but he has lots of experience. [SL: Hm]

SL: Have you ever gone back to Vietnam?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

SL: Uh he said that he never came back to Vietnam. But his son come back and he was—he—he is arrested right now because uh [NN clears throat] because the government looked at uh his background and arrested his son right now. [SL: Oh]

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: Ten, ten months already. In jail right now.

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: They say that uh... [clears throat] uh he was accused to overthrow the government... that way. [laughs] [SL: Hm]

SL: What kind of traditions does your family celebrate?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

[Clock rings in the background]

TD: Nothing. [everyone laughs].

NN: [Speaks in Vietnamese]

TD: He has two celebrations. One is new year, Vietnamese New Year, and uh uh American New Years, and Fourth of July.

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: He...he said that he does appreciate Americans uh government and American people uh to uh... to let the Vietnamese refugees come over here. And he said that uh his family, his son's children have to study and pay tax. That's it!

SL: What do you like to do in your spare time?

TD & NN: [Speak in Vietnamese]

TD: In the spare time right now he's writing. He wants, he—he—he writes uh... memory for the children, and uh during his uh past and try to educate them that uh they have to work based on uh equality, uh fair, [NN clears throat] and uh love.

SL: Great. You have any questions?

ML: [clicks tongue] Uh I'm okay.

NN: [speaks Vietnamese]

TD: He said that he appreciates you come over here. Because he's old he cannot make clear. So apologize for that.

SL: Oh we appreciate you having us.

ML: Yeah thank you so much!

NN: Yeah... Thank you.