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**Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University**

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Interviewee: Huyen Bui

Interviewer: Sarah Craig

Date/ Time of Interview: February 11, 2013, at 10:00AM

Transcribed by: Sarah Craig

Edited by: Priscilla Li (5/16/2017)

Audio Track Time: 1:09:05:94

Background:

Huyen Bui was born in Saigon in 1969. His father served in the South Vietnamese Navy. When Saigon fell and the war ended, his father was offshore, and his ship sailed to Guam, from whence he was sponsored to come to the United States. The rest of the family, including young Huyen, remained in Vietnam for the next ten years. They tried several times to escape by boat, but they were never successful, and eventually they ran out of money to keep trying. They were finally reunited with his father in America in 1985, through the Orderly Departure Program. The family settled in Portland, and Huyen attended 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade there. Despite his limited English, he became an excellent student, scoring well on several AP exams. He was admitted to MIT for his undergraduate education and earned a BS in computer science. He subsequently completed a working Master's program.

After several years as a tech consultant, Huyen moved to Silicon Valley and became involved in tech start-ups. He co-founded Esurance, a successful company that was bought by Allstate. He then left the start-up field and became a high-ranking technical specialist; at the time of this interview, he was working with Expedia. Huyen moved to Houston in the mid-2000s to marry his wife, a fellow Vietnamese immigrant whose family settled in Houston. He currently lives in West University with his wife and two young children.

Setting:

The main focus of the interview is on Huyen's life experience as a Vietnamese immigrant, although issues of labor and capital are also discussed. The interview traces Huyen's background and journey to the U.S. from Vietnam, his experiences as a refugee youth in high school, and his college education and career trajectory, as well as touching upon questions of culture and identity.

Huyen's interview took place in the library of his West University home at 10:00AM on a Sunday morning, specifically the morning of the 2013 Lunar New Year. His life story is a rich and fascinating addition to the HAAA project, and we thank him for his contribution.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

SC	Sarah Craig
HB	Huyen Bui
-	Speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...	Speech trails off; pause
Italics	Emphasis

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(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate
Brackets	Actions (laughs, sighs, etc.)

**SC:** My name is Sarah Craig, and I'm here today on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013, uh, to interview Huyen Bui, uh, at his home in West University, um, Huyen, could you please begin by telling me a little bit about yourself?

**HB:** Uh, I'm Huyen Bui, I am—let me see—44 years old, um, I've been living in Houston for the last eight years, before that I was in, uh, California. Basically spent fifteen years working in the Silicon Valley. And uh, so, I'm kind of new to the city, but, you know...

**SC:** Okay. Um, could you tell me about your childhood in Vietnam?

**HB:** Um, it's so long ago, uh—I left the country when I was fifteen, so, uh, you know, basically going through school until about tenth grade before I moved to the U.S., and Vietnam at the time was very much like North Korea right now. You know, it's completely isolated and all that kind of stuff. And um, my dad escaped the country, uh, right after the Vietnam War ended in 1975, and so, you know, growing up without a father figure and all that kind of stuff, in a chaotic country, was just a lot of trouble and a lot of fun. So [laughs] uh, you know, we were out on the street all the time, uh, fighting—you know, just playing games with the kids in the neighborhood, um—there wasn't uh that much schooling, there wasn't that much future in schooling anyway, um, so—so you just—you just hang out, cause trouble, participate in—I guess what you'd call gang activity, even though it wasn't that serious, um, you know, we didn't have guns or anything like that, it was just kids street fighting and all that kind of thing. So, uh—it was a pretty, you know, I would say a pretty, uh, ghetto kind of [laughs] childhood.

Um, so then, um, after the—the—you know, five years after the Vietnam War, that's when the UN and the U.S. have a program for people to, like, uh immigrated and—immigrated legally to the U.S., and that's when we start applying, when Dad was already here in the States, and so we went through the process, and all that kind of stuff. So—so, um, and at the same time, the Vietnam economy kind of opened up to the world, so things got a little bit better—I would say, you know—um, the last three or four years before I left the country. It definitely—that was like the turnaround point and they've been, you know, uh, growing and doing okay ever since.

**SC:** Uh, so where exactly in Vietnam did your family live?

**HB:** In, uh, the capital of the south, so it's called Saigon, so it's just like—kind of like one of the suburban district of the city.

**SC:** Okay. And you mentioned that your father left in 1975, why did he choose to leave then?

**HB:** He was in the, uh, Vietnamese military, and he was, uh, already, um—kind of he already came to the U.S. in the 1960s, to be trained, um, you know, at military schools and all that kind of stuff, so he had relationships, um, you know, with Americans, and so, um—when the war was ending my dad was in the Navy, and his ship was patrolling offshore. Basically, you know, they were, uh, safeguarding the oil exploration platform for Exxon Mobil, things of that type. So he—he was outside the country, kind of, um, when the whole—you know, the whole country kind of collapsed. And so the entire fleet just took off for the Philippines and all that kind of stuff. Yeah. So.

**SC:** And did you hear from him at that time?

**HB:** No, at the time it was like, uh, you know, there was no trade, there was no communication, there was no phone lines, you know, there was no—even like postal agreement between the U.S. and Vietnam, so, um, a

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letter from the U.S., you know, it would have to go to Canada, go to Europe, go to—you know, Singapore and then end up in Vietnam, and then it's gonna go through a ton of like censorship and all that kind of stuff, so usually it takes about six months, you know, for a single letter—you know, letter to arrive, and by the time it gets to you, it would have already been opened like five, ten times. Um, you know, for either censorship or people looking for money, you know, that might be hidden inside the letter or whatever, whatever, whatever, but you know, um, so—there was practically zero communication per se, um, you don't talk on the phone, I mean, uh, the country was poor so there were no phone lines anywhere, so you just—you just, uh—yeah, yeah, letter is it, and, you know, that's—um, towards the end, um, the two years before I was gonna leave the country—so this was like 1982 or something?—that's when we started having phone lines. So what you would do is go to the central, uh, post office in the city, then you would make an appointment with someone here in the States, and then, you know, you show up at the appointed time, step into the phone booth, and then, you know, they—they would, you know, let you talk to the person here in the U.S. and all communication would be—would be monitored. So basically, uh, you know, I did not talk to my dad for ten years. Yeah.

**SC:** And [clears throat] did—did you know that he was safe somewhere, or did you ever hear anything [inaudible]?

**HB:** Yeah, I would say—you know, so the war ended in April 1975, I would say within 6 months we knew where he was. So there was just like informal networks, you know, through people and friends, and all that kind of stuff, that—that—uh, you know, uh, I guess in war, you know, every family, there—it wasn't like an official government system or anything like that, but somehow you have your channels to figure out where people are, 'cause there were so many people scattered all over the place. You know? Yeah.

**SC:** And—you mentioned that you completed up through the tenth grade in Vietnam, I—I had heard and read that they placed restrictions on the amount of education that—that—that the children of—of military or government people could get.

**HB:** Yeah, it's a totally different system, uh, so the way they work, and—you know, this is—in a way, there are kind of two components of it. One is that, you know, they'd really tightly control movement, like, you can't just move from a state to another or a city to another, right, e-every locality, you know, they—they tightly track who you are, and you are supposed to just stay within, like, that district. Which is basically like a five mile—five mile radius. And it very much relies on, you know, they didn't have like a credit card tracking system or like a Social Security computer tracking system or anything like that, so everything is basically, you know, person to person, like somebody has to know you and kind of vouch for you that you belong there, right, so that system, it restricts your schooling, 'cause, 'cause unless you are able to kind of be registered, unless I be an official resident of Houston, you're not supposed to reside here, and therefore you cannot register for any of the schools here. So—so—so there's that, and it's not easy to just say, 'I want to be registered in Houston,' 'cause—'cause let's say, it's a big metropolitan area, a lot of people want to move there, and so it's—it's very very, you know, they tightly control that. It's a place for corruption, I mean, of course, if you pay money then—then you can, you know, you can be registered and all that kind of stuff, and that same system still exists in China, you know, today. Um, so—so that's one thing.

The other thing is, you know, they're kind of like, uh, you know, uh—as part of, like, your grade, or your scoring, it wasn't just about academic performance, it was—you know, there was like a big component of that, that they call like, uh, 'moral studies'? Or, um, 'ethics studies'? And it's primarily, you know, in order to score higher on that stuff, it's all about family history, so let's say, if your family came, you know, like uh, from a Communist party member, your family had someone who, you know, uh, was part of the Vietnamese—North Vietnamese army, you know, let's say they might have died in the war, or something like that—then those are all like pluses and checks that would allow you, you know, um, access and opportunity to colleges and schools and things of that type. Right, if you don't have that, then basically, you are kind of a mark person, um, and in, um, you know—it doesn't really matter that—that how well you do in the school, or whatever, um, you know,

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it's just—it's just—it's just gonna be tough, so—so, um—for example, the—they have systems that are similar to Boy Scouts, but it's a government-sanctioned, kind of like a Communist Youth League kind of system, and you have to belong to all that stuff as you progress through school. There are different kinds of youth leagues, you know, for the young and the—you know, uh, high school, and then the—as you get older and you prepare to enter the Communist Party and all that kind of stuff, so there's kind of a whole pipeline, and—not career path, but something close to that, you know, and—and you have, you know—in order, you know, to—to succeed at anything, really, you have to, you know, go into that pipeline, move up within there, and you know, if your family, um, don't have—you don't have a family record and history that is kosher with the government, then, forget it. There's—there's just no—yeah, there's nothing to do.

**SC:** Wow.

**HB:** And not only that, I mean [**SC:** [coughs]] I think the other thing is like, even if they give you opportunity, there was no, um—you know, Vietnam is not like a place where you can—you have like thousands of colleges, each having, like, five to twenty thousand students every year. Like, we have, like, a couple of universities. Each admit like a hundred person every year for a country of, like, seventy-eighty million people. So it's just the—the availability is just not there. I mean, even if they let you. Yeah.

**SC:** Um, and so, when you and your mother and sister finally left Vietnam, uh, through what channels were you able to—to get out?

**HB:** So usually, you know, a lot of people, uh, leave the country, and like you hear about boat—boat people and all that kind of stuff, so most people leave, um, kind of like illegally, you know, like uh, a lot of Cubans do on rafts and stuff trying to get to Florida. So, uh, you know, like, most of the people at the time, there was no way to li—you know, like, live, there was no food or anything, like real, like food shortages, um, serious stuff, so—so everybody wanted to leave, and, you know, people were taking huge risk in order to do that. S- and it—it was just part of what you do, that—that, you know, like, uh—and that's part of the reason why you don't want to get any kind of education, cause the whole time, you're prep—preparing to kind of leave the country, so what's the point of building up any—anything there, right? So—so, uh, everybody's looking for a way to leave, either on foot or most people leave on boat, and it's a very, very—it's just a very dangerous, um, kind of things. So we try that a few times, and it's just like what you hear about, uh, you know, the Mexican immigrants here now, uh, crossing the border, there were handlers, there were robbers, there were gangs along the way that would, you know, just stand to—to rip you off, take your money and, you know, all that kind of stuff. So we tried to leave many times, um, kind of illegally, leave Vietnam, but then, you know, we were not successful, 'cause somebody who was supposed to take us out of the country would take all of our money and run, or they would send us to this place that we're supposed to meet and then all of a sudden the cops show up, and, you know, all kinds of crazy stuff like that. So we try that for about, uh, five-six years, uh, we were not successful, we ran out of money, and so after a while we stop. And k—but at that time, that's when the UN kind of like program, um, was available, it's—it's, I think it's like, uh, basically for families who are broken apart to reunify. And so, uh, husbands, you know, living in the U.S. can, you know, sponsor their wives and kids to come over and all that kind of thing, so we went through, uh, we went through that program. I think it's called the, uh, Orderly Departure Program, or something in that type, yeah.

**SC:** Mokay. Um, let's see—and so, when you came to the United States, um, you initially came to—

**HB:** Portland?

**SC:** Portland. And how long were you in Portland?

**HB:** Uh, so I was in tenth grade when I came, and, you know, so basically, I attended high school in Portland. And then, you know, after high school, you know, I was applying for colleges everywhere, and then, so, I ended

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up going out of state, of Oregon, for college. So I only stay in Oregon for three years.

**SC:** But does your family still live in Portland?

**HB:** Uh huh, my parents still live there, you know, that's kind of like, uh, my hometown, per se, that's where we come back to, you know, like, uh—so yeah.

**SC:** Um... what was it like going to high school and coming from—from Vietnam, did you speak any English?

**HB:** Well, you know, like, you don't want to be a teenager and go through a cultural transition [laughs] at the same time, so, um, you know, we didn't study and learn a single dang thing in Vietnam, right, it was no education system, nothing to do, uh, really, no motivation to study. So the first fifteen years of my life, I didn't learn a single dang thing. Um, so—so—but the year before we were supposed to leave for the U.S., you know, um, my family sat down, said, 'Well, we can't send them abroad like this,' you know, so stupid, [laughs] you know, it would be an embarrassment to the whole family. So, you know, they sent us through kind of intensive, um, English language training, uh, so I did a few years of, like, just English language, you know, studies, in Vietnam. I couldn't speak, like, I couldn't hear, I couldn't listen to what people say, but I can read and write pretty well by the time I got here. So—so, uh—you know, I—I came to the U.S. in, let's say, March 1984, so there was only a couple months left in high school. So the school didn't really know what to do with you if you enter kind of, like, late like that, and I didn't quite speak English, so they put me in—in all the kinds of, uh, you know, like classes that just fill up time. So they put me into, like, home studies [**SC:** [laughs]] and personal finance and—you know, like—like just—just really stuff—and—and so, um, one of the shockers, like, they put me into sex education [**SC:** [chuckles]], so like, you know, imagine a kid from Asia, right, knowing nothing, we didn't have TV, we knew nothing, and then you come here and, you know, like, you have to watch a movie about sex and write an essay about it and all that kind of stuff, and that was like quite a—that was, like, you know, that was a shocker. Um, but like—I didn't quite speak English, and then, you know, no—I couldn't talk to anyone, and I—what I say nobody understood, so—so—so I just go home with basically, it's the complete opposite in Vietnam, in Vietnam it was like, in a gang hanging out, you know, getting into fights, chasing girls—I come here and I was complete opposite, I don't do anything. Right, there's nothing to do. Uh, I didn't know how to drive or anything like that, you know, so you don't have much of a party life or anything like that. Uh, but in a way, it turned out to be a blessing because then, you know, I just stay home, study, watch TV and eat ice cream. [laughs] You know, so I did that for about, uh—yeah, until—through junior year. I say at, you know, senior year, that's when I become a little bit more, you know, uh—um, adapted, you know, I had—that's when I started having more friends and going out with people and stuff like that, and luckily that's when all the exams and stuff for college applications already did and done, so, you know, uh, you know, so yeah. So it was kind of a mixed blessing, in a way.

**SC:** Um, were you enrolled in ESL the next year in high school, or did you ever take ESL?

**HB:** So these—um, yeah, I took ESL for three months, um, and you know, these—these, like, low-level filler classes. So the high school, they had, like, let's say that for the same grade there were multiple tracks of student going through them, right, there's like the honors students, and then the average students, and then, like, kinda like the bottom performers, and 'cause I didn't speak English, they put me into all the bottom performer classes. And oh my god, I mean, like, I was getting beaten up like every other day, and it was just a rough, rough class, and so I'm like—uh, well I gotta get outta here. So I went to all the teachers and said, well, you know, 'What do I need to do to move into a different class?' So they said, 'Well, you in—in a lower level go, you know, kind of course, and if you want to take an advanced class then you have to, like, take an exam, see if you can do it, and then—so I went home, studied, took the exam, just so that I can get into the other classes. Um, you know, so—so that was, that was, you know, that was how a lot of this was done.

**SC:** Um, and you mentioned that you went out of state for college, where did you go?

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**HB:** Uh, I went to MIT for undergrad—

**SC:** Wow!

**HB:** Yeah, so that was, uh [**SC:** Nice!]  
—‘cause—‘cause as an immigrant, right, first of all, um, whatever, uh, you know, like—you look at the textbook, if it’s too thick, and it’s got a lot of words in it, you don’t study that. You don’t take that subject. Right, so—that, like, is out of the way, we all went for number stuff, you know, if you see a book that has more numbers than letters, then that’s what you do. So, um, I—I was like, you know, I was great in math and physics, and all that kind of stuff, and so, um, you know, my teachers then one year just said, you know, ‘Hey, so what do you want to do in life?’ And I said, you know—so this was the eighties, right? There was Reagan against the Russians and the evil empire, and there were nuclear wars talk and all that kind of stuff, and so I told them I wanted to be a nuclear physicist. And all the teachers were like, ‘Wow,’ you know, like, ‘we don’t hear that often, right, none of our students want to be a nuclear anything.’ So all of them, like, really helped me. Uh, so I—I had a lot of help, uh, in my high school, right, like the—the physics teachers, the math teachers, the chemistry teachers, the history teachers, the English teachers and all that kind of stuff, and so they kind of—I didn’t know anything. So they shepherd me through the whole program and curriculum and everything like that, so by the end of senior year, I was taking, like, all the advanced placement classes in the school, uh, including English and history, and, you know, like, I score higher on all the English tests [laughs] than most of my classmates do, so, uh, yeah, that’s how I kind of got into MIT, and then, you know, yeah. So that was—that was—so then, you know, we—we applied, and my family were—we were immigrants, so—we didn’t have a lot of money, and to go to college when your family is poor is actually very easy, ‘cause you have no ability to pay, and, uh, and MIT in particular, you know, they have these programs that are like totally needs-based, so they don’t have, actually—they don’t have any merit scholarship, like, um, the—the whole kind of, uh, you know, the—the—the school is just set up so that if you are admitted, then they will work out a package for you to go, for uh, you know, financially. So then I basically, because of that financial aid, you know, I—I was able to—to go to school much cheaper than if I had gone anywhere else, yeah.

**SC:** And so what did you study at MIT?

**HB:** I bummed all around like everybody, you know, like, one thing didn’t work out, and, you know, things were too difficult, and I realized I couldn’t make a living off of it, so finally, um, I settle on, uh, computer science. So I—yeah. [laughs]

**SC:** I have a lot of friends who have recently gone that same trajectory. [laughs]

**HB:** Yeah, well, you know, like, uh, it’s kind of like MIT is, uh—you know, it attracts people from all over the world, right, so then, you know, I wanted to do nuclear physics, but then my first physics class were all these, like, you know—gosh, guys who were doing like PhD level research, you know, in your freshman class, and it’s just bound to be bad. And then I’m like, okay, that’s not gonna work, um, and nuclear—you know, we don’t make, uh, nuclear plants anymore, and the war is like—whatever, Cold War is, you know, slowing down, so there’s probably not much to do, so then I said maybe I’ll become—I’ll do, uh, mathematics, and become a teacher. And then the math part didn’t work well because, like, my god, like, you know, the class has like U.S.—U.S. math Olympians, and you know, the champions of math from Norway and Germany and all that kind of stuff, so I was, like, consistently, like, in the bottom half, and I was like, that’s not gonna, you know, that’s not gonna work out. So that’s when I try to pick something that, you know, I can probably succeed and make a living off of. [laughs] That’s always the—yeah.

**SC:** And then did you get your Master’s from MIT as well?

**HB:** No. So as an immigrant, you gotta go and work, so uh, you know like—like medical school and law school and stuff like that would be tough, just because of the length of the education. Um, so—so, uh, you know, we

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were all just really trying to get *something* so that we can go out and work as fast as we could. So I went to work immediately after, kind of like a four-year degree, um, but at the time, I went to work for a research lab, so they had this program where, basically, you can be their employee and do research jointly with a university and get a Master's as you work, and so that's what I did. Yeah, so I did that—the [inaudible] at, uh, Boston University, with the company I was working for.

**SC:** And, uh, what company was that?

**HB:** This is, uh, Bull, it's B-U-L-L, so it's like the IBM of France, kind of thing, yeah.

**SC:** And could you tell me a little bit about your career trajectory since then?

**HB:** So, you know, the first, uh—I would say, 3-4 years out of college, I wanted to travel the world, so—so I picked these jobs that are like consulting or professional services, um, jobs, that basically, um—I would work for a company, but they would always put you, uh, at a client site somewhere else. So, you know, uh—and I was practically living out of a suitcase in company apartments and hotels like that, just so that I can travel, 'cause I've never had the opportunity to travel or anything like that. So I did that, kind of like, so—kind of like a... system engineer, uh, you know, uh... working, you know, at various client sites, and, you know, that was great, that was just like three or four years of living on the company expense account and partying with all your friends cause, uh, usually we go in a group to a location, and it's all four or five single guys from the same company, you know, and—and, you know, having the company credit card and all the kind of stuff, so, uh, so that was just a lot of fun, and then, um—um, I started getting involved with kind of start-up companies in Silicon Valley, and you know, it's a big thing in California, so I did that, uh, for quite a while, um, and then when the Internet boom hit, uh, this was like mid-nineties, uh, to late nineties, uh, just like everyone else in California at the time, we got together with a group and, you know, went out and raised venture capital funding and all that kind of stuff, and started a company. So, uh, we started a company called Esurance. Yeah, so they did that, you know, so it was like, uh—it was a lot of fun, it was just like hack—you know, you were—I was in my twenties at the time, and people would give—were giving you millions to go and build things, so you know [laughs] like—like, that's nothing to complain about, so that was—that was a lot of fun, and then, you know, um—you know, uh, the company was acquired and I was, you know, like I had this dream of becoming a serial entrepreneur and all that kind of stuff, so then, you know, you start one company, and then, you know, you move on to the next one, you start another company and you keep on going and all that kind of stuff. So, uh, I was in the middle of that, that's when September 11 hit. So I 'Oh, forget it, this is not gonna work out,' right, I mean the whole, um—you know?

Like let's say the week after September 11 was when I schedule all the meetings with venture capitalists, um, to get them to invest in the next company, and you know, like, um, they're—you know, venture capitalists, you know, I hope they don't listen to this, but let's say—are a pretty arrogant bunch. So they—they—they—they give you like five minutes, you talk, maybe they don't understand, or, you know, they don't—they're not excited about what you do, they show you the door, and they just, you know, like—the meeting's gonna be very short. And then you don't really just sit there and chitchat and talk about nothing with them. But the week after September 11, I mean—the amazing thing is that all of the VCs, I mean, investors, they—they took the meeting, nobody canceled. These things are canceled all the time, they're like oh, you know chasing after some deal or whatever. They don't make time [for you]?. That week, nobody canceled. We came in, everybody gave us the full hour, and we just sat there, and nobody had anything to say. And everybody was just, like, dazed. It's was obvious that these guys, who are, like, you know—uh, movers and shaker, did not know what hit them. And everybody just sat there, and they were like former CEOs and running, like, you know, billion-dollar funds, and they just, like, sit there and we talk about, just, the weather, and how's the family doing, all that stuff. We just waste the whole hour. You know, and all of the—all the meetings were like that. So I came back, and I'm like, 'Okay, I'm not going to start anything [laughs] in this environment.' So I went back to work for—for, like, in the corporate world, and then, uh, so I've moved around, basically, uh, you know—I am kind of like, uh, the

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head of IT at these kind of companies, so that's what I've been doing ever since, uh, the Internet bubble burst. So, uh, you know, I—I lead the teams at, let's say, uh, the luxury travel at Expedia, so Expedia has kind of like this thing, uh, and now I'm with a healthcare company, and I do your same, I lead all the technology, software, you know, networking kind of stuff.

**SC:** Okay. Cool. Uh, so how did you come to live in Houston?

**HB:** Uh, my wife and her whole family is here. Uh, we met at a friend's wedding back in—at MIT in Boston, so we started long-distance dating, and, you know, one thing to another, and it's time for somebody to move, and, uh, and you know, so... yeah.

**SC:** Mhm. Um, could you tell me more about your wife?

**HB:** She is, uh, an immigrant, you know, she's Vietnamese like me, too. Uh, she escaped the country by boat, and she actually was pick-up by a Dutch, uh, oil tanker, uh, so their family moved to the Netherlands, um, you know, for a long time. Uh, so my wife went to school in—high school in the Netherlands, um, and then for college, that's when her family started moving over here, uh, to the—to Houston. Uh, so, uh—let me see, um, she comes from a pretty big family, uh, lots of siblings, um—most of them are in Texas, uh, some are still back in—in the Netherlands, so, uh, she's a dentist, you know, so she, you know, so we, uh... yeah, so we both work a lot, and—you know, yeah.

**SC:** And why did her family start moving to Houston from the Netherlands, do you know?

**HB:** Well, all of these things are kind of, uh, you know, accidental, because, like, uh, it's really about where the jobs are, so, um, you know, her oldest brother—cause the parents are old, and they can't, you know, they can't go through this, you know, education system and, like, get a job and all that kind of stuff, so the oldest—the oldest siblings typically, are responsible for taking care of the younger ones, and so her oldest brother, you know, like went to four-year engineering degree type, he graduated and got a job at NASA, for NASA's contractor, and that's how he ended up in Houston. Then, you know, you just—everything just kind of follows from there.

**SC:** Um, so—were your parents happy that you were marrying another Vietnamese? Do you think they had strong feelings either way about that?

**HB:** They are happy. I wouldn't say they have strong feelings. Um, you know, if anything, you know, like they have—let's say, uh, in Vietnam, the whole marriage stuff, the strongest feelings are probably about religion, so whether you were marrying, like, a Catholic girl or not is a big deal, cause we're not Catholic, but other than that, I—I would say, you know, yeah. It's pretty neutral.

**SC:** So your family isn't Catholic, and your wife's family is also not Catholic?

**HB:** Mhm.

**SC:** Mhm.

**HB:** Yeah.

**SC:** Uh, what is your—your religious affiliation, then?

**HB:** [exhales] We are probably Buddhist. **[SC:** [laughs]] But, you know, I mean, it's not the same, because—I guess, in a way, Buddhism is so flexible, and then, um... you know, uh, I guess Vietnamese culture is not as formally religious as, let's say, you look at Thai or Laos or Cambodian, you know, it's just—or Indians are

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much more—you know, have—yeah. And religion is, uh, just a much, much bigger part of their—their life. Um, so—being a Vietnamese Buddhist actually—yeah, is—is, uh—yeah, it's not a card-carrying member anything, it doesn't signify, um, that much, you know, uh, a lot of people may not even, let's say, read the—the scriptures or the Bible, you know, they may not even go to church or whatever, you know, so—so it's not—it's not that serious. Yeah.

**SC:** Mokay, and... um, just wondering, do you and your wife speak Vietnamese in the home?

**HB:** Yeah, but we speak more English.

**SC:** Um, is it like 70-80% English, 20% Vietnamese?

**HB:** Yeah, yeah.

**SC:** And you said in the questionnaire that you have one child?

**HB:** Mhm, yep.

**SC:** Um... do they speak Vietnamese?

**HB:** No. She speaks English. Uh, she understands a little bit of Vietnamese, but, you know, she speaks English, yeah.

**SC:** Um, how old is she?

**HB:** She is five, almost six, yeah. And we're expecting another one in May, so—

**SC:** Oh, congratulations!

**HB:** Yeah, thanks.

**SC:** Um, I guess, she's still pretty young, uh, what have you told her about Vietnam?

**HB:** Mm, not much. Uh, you know, she is just getting, um, you know, she is just grasping the concept of different countries, so let's say Mexico she refers to as Dora Land, uh, she knows about China because of *Mulan*, the movie, you know, so—so there are particular places, um, and—and she has the concept of 'land,' which are like countries, like in this land, they speak a different language, and you know, like, America we speak a different language, so she knows that, but—but Vietnam is just—just too—too far away. So we tell her a little bit, but no, I would say, not much.

**SC:** Does she have a sense of being Vietnamese?

**HB:** Um... no, not really. I mean, we talk about it, she has asked about it, and we have told her about it, but, you know, to her, she's very much a, you know, a product of American TV, [laughs] I mean there's—you cannot fight, you know, the big screen, so, like, um... yeah, she—she's very—she's just like, uh, you know. She's very, very much about, you know, um, that am I s—that I speak English, I live in America, and, you know, everything else is kind of like a foreign and different strange thing. Yeah. And let's say we get her to try even, like, food, for example, but—but she knows McDonald's and Chick-fil-a and all that kind of stuff, but—but a lot of deviation from that are just—are just, don't like them. It's not—yeah, this is, this is—yeah.

**SC:** So, does—does she like eating—eating Vietnamese food, or is it too different from the McDonald's and Chick-fil-a stuff?

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**HB:** She eats Vietnamese food, but, you know, uh... yes, but we don't—we don't tell her that she eats Vietnamese food. Um, but—but like, um—it's almost, like, about having to, um, explore and expand what you eat, as opposed to this is like *food*, you know, cause—cause she's—she—she uses—she eats lunch at school, with the school lunch, they've got the menu which is like fish sticks and pizzas [**SC:** Mhm.] and all that kind of stuff, and so to her, that's, like, what food is, you know... processed stuff. [laughs]

**SC:** And would you ever want to take her back to Vietnam to see it?

**HB:** Yeah, my wife and I, we go kind of often, so I would say every other year, we go. We've never taken her, just for safety and health, and then also, she doesn't, you know, doesn't appreciate it yet, um, but—but I think, you know, yeah, eventually.

**SC:** Um, do you have family in Houston besides your wife's extended family?

**HB:** Uh, not really. I have, you know, I, uh, you know, like a long-distance cousins and stuff.

**SC:** Um, do you have a network of Vietnamese friends in Houston? [clears throat]

**HB:** Mm, yeah?

**SC:** Mhm. Um, and—do you mostly know them through, you know, friends of the family, or business connections, or...

**HB:** Uh, my wife is, like, you know, controls the social calendar, so [chuckles] you know, I mean, it's gonna be pretty tough to hang out with, uh, people that your wife don't like, that kind of thing [**SC:** [laughs]], so, uh, it's just the reality, and then, you know, we are both so busy that we don't have a lot of chances to just go party and hang out, so, um, there really—a lot of my friends right now are like my wife's friends, you know. But we—we—we are, you know, we are very compatible, uh, in a way it's a pretty small world, uh, you—you know, you—you move in kind of like the same circle, you bump into the same people, that kind of thing. Um, you know, so—so—so yeah. Uh, I have—I have business associates, but I—I typically don't hang out with them on, let's say, weekends, or take trips together, that kind of thing. It's more like my—

[At this juncture, Mr. Bui was interrupted by his daughter calling him from upstairs. This portion of the recording is not part of the interview and, as such, has been omitted from this transcription.]

**HB:** Okay.

**SC:** Um [clears throat], let's see... um, would you consider yourself as belonging to a—a Houston Vietnamese community? Do you see that as kind of a thing that exists that you are a part of?

**HB:** Uh, no. Cause, um, Houston has a very, kind of like large, and kind of a, you know—it's—it's a large community with a long history, you know, relatively speaking. I mean, there's been a lot of Vietnamese people here for a very long time. So there's just been, you know, a lot of people who have participated, who knows the history, who knows the different people, you know, um, they knew people from—'cause, 'cause in a way, um, rolling back the clock like twenty years, everybody was from the same place. We—we live together, we basically eat the same thing, everybody else was at exactly the same stage. Right? [exhales] And then over the twenty years, like, people—I guess, grow apart, into different groups, but because of that history, you know, I know, you know, from a lot of the people, um, that we—we—we spend time with, I mean they have just been involved with the community and they know the community and they're part of it for—for a very long time. And I'm a pretty new transplant, um, and then my wife—my wife and I are also kind of younger, you know, for the community. Um, a lot of people are the people who've been kind of living and working and being with the Vietnamese community for a long time are, like, in their early fifties or older now. You know, so—so—so—so,

you know, so we're—we're a little bit of a, uh—and then I—I think the other thing is that in the early days of the Vietnamese community, um, a lot of them, they—they built kind of like—they were their own world, they were their own ecosystem. You know, they built businesses that serve each other. They trade among each other, right, you open a Vietnamese restaurant, primarily cater to Vietnamese clients, or you sell Vietnamese books or music, or—or that—that kind of thing, so it was very self-contained, whereas—and then the other part of it is that they may not, uh, you know, have the same a—you know, uh, access to education, cause they all came a little bit when they're older, and so they gotta just go out and make money and support the family, as opposed to having this luxury of going through six, ten years of school, for example. So my wife and I are not like that, you know, we were—we were kind of—you know, we were not like the pioneer generation that has just to hit the streets and go out and make a living, you know, our parents did that. They—they went out and they did whatever, so—so that we have, like, the—the extra years of education, and s—and becoming professionals and all that kind of stuff, so—so, um, so it's very different from the quote-unquote 'Vietnamese community.' Let's say my work today, or my wife's work, we barely, you know, see or serve any Vietnamese clients. Right, but if you look at, let's say, um, a fifty-something year old Vietnamese dentist, they will be primarily serving Vietnamese clients. That kind of thing. So—so—so, yeah.

**SC:** Um, what is your attitude toward Vietnam now?

**HB:** Um, I think—I think it's just like any, you know, emerging market, developing economy, you know, um, everybody's focused on making money, fairly or unfairly, whatever, but you know, uh, they are all, uh, kind of quote unquote 'capitalists' and going after money, so—so—so, uh—so, you know, the country is just, um—I mean, it's just going through enormous growth. It's just, um, kind of *shocking*. I mean, you go—um, it's like the entire Houston downtown is being built every day. And, you know, you have, like, construction cranes everywhere. You know, it's not growing to the—the level where China has been growing, but gosh, is this—it's just ex—you know, it's just exploding. Uh, you know, with construction, investment—you know, all kinds of business activities, um, there's so many jobs there now, I mean, people hop jobs, do job-hopping like crazy, um—yeah. Uh, it's kind of the land of opportunity because it starts from such a low base. It starts from where, you know, the whole family of twenty people, four generation, living in, like, 900 square feet. And so now, you know, I mean—living in 900 square feet with—will have no income. Now, they still kind of all live together, but then they have income, so all of a sudden life is very good. You know, even though, let's say by American or European standard, it's still a pretty tough life. Um, you still—and you know, but—but so—so just—just—they just have a lot of energy and enthusiasm and excitement, because they're on, kind of on a growth curve, and they see, like, tomorrow is better than today. Yeah.

**SC:** Um, do you feel a sense of South Vietnamese nationalism?

**HB:** Not really? There were, you know—I don't—well first of all, I'm young. I was never really exposed—uh, it's almost like, uh—exposed to kind of like the civil war, you know, broader—I guess, broader rivalry. Um—you know, and then I'm kind of like a product of, uh, American education, so—so I have just a different perspective, you know. It's almost like the perspective outside—an outsider perspective, I suppose, to someone who lives inside. Um, yeah.

**SC:** And you say that you and your wife go back to Vietnam about every other year, um, what makes you want to go back, and go back that often?

**HB:** We go primarily, uh—my wife does charity work, and then I have some, uh, business work over there, so, um, you know—and then we still have family, so, uh, we typically, you know, make a—my—my wife and I, we travel a lot. So, uh, you know, for my work, I travel almost every week, and then, uh, my wife, like a year, she would do, like, four international trips. So... you know, to us, Vietnam is just part of the mix, you know, it wasn't like any special attachment to it, per se, like—we don't have, let's say, if, uh, my parents, or her parents, were still living in Vietnam, that'd be a whole different story. Right, but we don't—we uh—uh—if we have,

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like, a factory, or like a business establishment over there, that'd be a different, uh, story. We don't have—we don't do any of that sort—we—we primarily, uh—you know, I think—I think, uh, let's say, Vietnam to us, it's just like going to Mexico, you know, or something like that. It's—it's more on that level. You have some attachment and some history, but then the other part of it is that it's so far away. So—so, you know.

**SC:** And do you feel any, kind of, sense of nostalgic attachment to it as a homeland?

**HB:** No? Because, you know, I mean, um it's a different world, and—and, you know, we live in such a different world now, um, their—their—their—you know, our fates are not tied together in any way, um, so—so you just kind of grow—you—you have nothing in common, per se. You know, there's—there's no—there couldn't be any bond, kind of in that sense. It's almost like—uh, let's say we live and die by, uh, you know, the U.S. economy and Consumer Confidence Index, right? They operate just like China or India, or like an emerging market economy. Um, their fates are, you know, tied to different variables than our fates are here, so it just—just—there's really not—nothing in kind of common, per se, I don't think.

**SC:** And what is it like to go back?

**HB:** Oh, it's just, uh—it's just, um—I would say, whenever, you know, I go to Vietnam or anywhere around the world, um, you know, I—I just appreciate the American system and life just much, much more. Right? Um, so I would say that's one, and then the other thing is that it's just an amazing opportunity to witness, um, growth and development. You know, it was probably what we as a country went through in the twenties, or fifties, when we were building all the highways and all that kind of stuff, like, you know, um, a lot of the emerging markets, you know, in Europe and Asia and all, it's just—just—just amazing to see that growth, it's just like jaw-dropping, it's just shocking. You know, and I think the part that is shocking is because they have so many people. It's such a humongous population. I mean, Vietnam is a small country, but it's like one-third of America in terms of population. You know, so—so everywhere you go, just, you see this, like, mass of people concentrated, you know, and—and developing, I think on just an amazing scale. You know, they're—they're—it's just so—yeah. Uh, we're—we're not used to, you know—we're here, let's say we—when the economy is good, we have probably about four or fi—uh, four or five construction cranes building high-rises in downtown Houston, which is a pretty big city, and it's got a lot of money, and—you go to Vietnam, for example, and that would be like one block. I mean, it's just—the level of economic activity is just insane. You know. This is just a different—different world, and—and you know, you don't see—um, it's very different.

But, you know, then at the same time, right, um, you know, the—the partner makes you, like, appreciate life in the U.S. and in the American system, it's just—you know, let's say this whole debate about taxes and all that kind of thing. Gosh, they have no taxes in Vietnam or China. Barely. Right, they don't do sales tax, they don't do property tax, they don't do—and it's just, uh, total chaos. You know, you don't pay taxes formally every year, you don't have to fill out any form, it doesn't have to flow through the fe-federal government in any way. But guess what? You are being taxed every day, at every street corner, by every cop and every, you know, government bureaucrat, and hey, I mean, it's just like every step of the way, everything, and it's just like an informal black market, you know, corruptive kind of a system, where nothing is clear. Right? So yeah, you pay, I mean, when you leaving the airport, when you get off a plane, when you—I mean, you are just being taxed every step of the way, uh, when you—you know, when you open a school, and you have, uh, to pass a foreign inspection. You know, nothing people would do for you. Like when a policeman stop you on the street, you know, that policeman is not being compensated really by the taxes, um, that flows through him. So guess what happen? I mean, you are paying—he—you are paying his salary, you—you pay him right there, and you don't—he doesn't give you any piece of paper that then you mail in to the courthouse, blah blah blah. So you pay him right there, person to person, so it's just—it's just—it's just... you know, um, yeah, it's just—it's just a very, you know, I would—I would say the lack of, uh, of systems and controls and things like that are just insane. Uh, food safety, there's—is nonexistent, um, you know, you would have a farm growing fresh

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[inaudible] vegetables right next to, like, a chemical factory that there's—that—you know, that are processing, right next to another factory that there's, like, you know, semiconductor whatever whatever manufacturing, and I mean, it's just bound to be bad. Um, you know, there were no FDAs, there were no EPA, I mean, the pollution is just insane, um, there were no s—let's say, um, you know, building codes and building inspections or anything, that was worse—so houses, at the touch of anything, collapses. You know, schools collapsing, you know. So—so I think—I think it's just, you know, it's just part of a maturing society. Someday, it'll get there, but, you know, right now, it's just gonna take a long time. Um, they have no—let's say, um, Social Security or Medicare system, so, I mean, uh, what are old people supposed to do? So everybody, you know, is—is, uh, you know, has to operate differently, right? Um, you can't afford to think long-term, if you have a chance to grab a lot of money, legally or illegally, I mean, uh, for short-term profit, or, you know, to the detriment of the whole society, then you have to take it, because, like, there's no rainy-day fund. So, yeah. So yeah, so there are a lot of things like that.

**SC:** Um, moving on to some more kind of cultural questions, um, you—you speak Vietnamese?

**HB:** Mhm.

**SC:** Uh, about how fluently do you speak it?

**HB:** I can do, you know, I can definitely—you know, I can function in Vietnam normally, uh, just like anyone. I can't really, let's say, do this interview in Vietnamese. Yeah. Um, just because, you know, you don't use the language every day, there are a lot of terms and concepts—for example, let's say, about the economy or the topic of the day or policies and stuff that—that—the—I just don't have, like, kind of the like the, uh, essentially the vocabulary. So—so—yeah.

**SC:** Um, with whom do you speak Vietnamese?

**HB:** My parents, uh... really, with the older generation, and then sometimes with my wife. And we have a nanny who watches my daughter, uh, cause both me and my wife, we work, so I speak Vietnamese with her, 'cause she doesn't speak English.

**SC:** Um, how did you come to—to find her and hire her as—as a nanny? [mumbling] Like, what connections and—

**HB:** Uh, referral—referral, just is [two words unintelligible], but—but you know, we have a lot of local Vietnamese-language papers that you can put ads on, and, you know, so that's—that's, that's usually the more—the common way.

**SC:** Um, and—how often do you speak Vietnamese? Like with [several words unintelligible]—

**HB:** Every day. You know, and uh—just—just, yeah. Every day.

**SC:** And when you're speaking with your parents, do you speak to them in just Vietnamese, if you can, or a mixture?

**HB:** Uh huh, just Vietnamese. Yeah.

**SC:** Mhm. Um, how important to you is it that you maintain fluency in Vietnamese?

**HB:** Um... I don't think about it, I don't put an emphasis on it, um, it's just part of life, kind of, 'cause—'cause after a certain point, like, let's say if you want to ge—get rid of it you can't. So—so I—I kind of don't think about it. We—we—we still watch, like, you know, Vietnamese movies, um, and that kind of thing. We still read

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some literature, that kind of thing, but it's not like I have to make an effort to do that, yeah. Maybe because, like I said, my wife and I, we—let's say we travel back every other year or so, we're, we're constantly—we have kind of like an underlying constant exposure that we don't feel like we have to make an effort, you know, to maintain.

**SC:** Um, how often do you watch, like, Vietnamese movies and TV, or read books?

**HB:** Every other week, maybe?

**SC:** Oh wow!

**HB:** Yeah, with the Internet now, you know, like, things are much easier, cheaper, more available, all that stuff. ...In the eighties, you would have to make a real effort, um, you would have to—there are only particular Vietnamese-language bookstores that you have to go to, they're always, like, very expensive, 'cause they do limited prints and all that kind of stuff. Now, you know, essentially all content is free, I mean, you can watch as many Vietnamese movies, listen to as much music, you know, download as many e-books as you want.

**SC:** Um, in—in the eighties when it was more difficult, did you watch and listen less than...?

**HB:** [inhales] No, more, because, you know, I was kind of in college at the time, so that was kind of like, I guess, a period when you're exploring, and you're just absorbing a lot of things, so—so I was—and then you had time, 'cause you didn't have kids or family responsibilities, that kind of thing, so I—back—back then, you know, I—I definitely did more. But mainly I did more because I also did more of everything, right, I read more of everything, listened to all kinds of new music and all that kind of stuff. Um, now I don't buy, you know—I barely get new music and, you know, so it's just a—yeah.

**SC:** Um, how often do you eat Vietnamese food?

**HB:** Every other day.

**SC:** And do you participate in Vietnamese cultural events in Houston?

**HB:** Uh, casually, I would say, once every three months.

**SC:** Um, like, what cultural events do you usually participate in?

**HB:** Like religious, uh, you know, uh, events, like the birthday of the Buddha, you know, like today is Chinese New Year [**SC:** Mhm.], that kind of thing, so—so—so stuff like that, you know. Um, like, I go to church on Easter and Christmas—for Easter and Christmas, you know, uh, so it's more that kind of thing [**SC:** Mhm.], I'm—I'm a fair-weather kind of a person, I am not committed to a lot of stuff, I just dabble in different things.

**SC:** Mhm. What church do you go to when you go?

**HB:** Uh, the West U Baptist, right here.

**SC:** Okay. And what are you all doing today to celebrate the New Year?

**HB:** Uh, we had a family get-together, like, uh, on New Year's Eve last night, so today usually you just go visit friends and then go to church or go to, you know, like a Buddhist temple or something. Yeah.

**SC:** Are you going to be going to a temple later?

**HB:** Yeah. So.

**SC:** Um, let's see... um, oh, going back to the, uh, the Vietnamese food, when you eat it, is—does your wife

cook it, or do you go out to restaurants...?

**HB:** No, we—we have [unintelligible—possibly name] the nanny, who watches my daughter [**SC:** Oh!], who watches my daughter, she stays home with her all day, kind of [**SC:** Mhm.], um, so she makes the food. Yeah, she's sixty years old, Vietnamese person, so that's really the only food she knows how to make. Yeah.

**SC:** Um, are you involved in any Vietnamese cultural organizations?

**HB:** No... we are just busy with our work and then, you know, with young kids, so... We casually participate, let's say people have a—uh—a cause that they want to raise money for, or, like, a charity, uh, trip that they want to make, or something, then we participate, but we're not like, uh, you know, we're not a consistent, you know, participant or organizer of those things. We never organize, yeah.

**SC:** Okay. And this is kind of less a cultural question, more of a me being curious question—this is a wonderful library, and the decorations look amazing.

**HB:** Yes, the awful decoration, yep [laughs].

**SC:** Could you—could you tell me more about some of them?

**HB:** Um, let's see, so we—so, um... So my wife was born in the year of the horse, so you're gonna see a lot of horses everywhere in the house; uh, we travel, we try not to bring back big stuff, but a lot of these things are stuff—let's say we got that when we were in Indonesia, in Bali; some of these little trinkets thing we got in Singapore; uh, you know, some of them are in—are from Vietnam; this is from Bali; uh, let me see. We like to travel, so you see a lot of hotels [**SC:** Mhm.] and travel books here; um, you know, kids, so I have this whole collection for my daughter of Disney stories [**SC:** Oh!] and all that kind of stuff, yeah, so.

**SC:** I used to have some of those when I was little!

**HB:** Yeah [chuckles]. So they, uh—and then I'm interested in history and kind of like classics stuff [**SC:** Mhm.], so I have some—I have that; like I told you, I'm interested in the Civil War, 'cause in a way, you know, the Vietnam War is like a bit of, uh, some of that elements, but not exactly the same. So then, you know, I read about the Civil War and Lincoln and all that kind of stuff; uh, the classical stuff you see up here. But there's a lot of history, and classics, I suppose. And then up here's like all the Buddhist, uh you know, it's not quite Bible, per se, but Buddhist books.

**SC:** Mhm.

**HB:** Yeah. So.

**SC:** Very cool.

**HB:** Haha, it's not—yeah.

**SC:** And these paintings?

**HB:** Oh, those are just, uh, you know, I guess Japanese, uh, yeah. So.

**SC:** Cool.

**HB:** But these things are here—we don't really read these books, you know, nowadays with the Kindle and all that kind of stuff, so everything I read now is pretty much, uh, electronic, on the plane, and thing—uh, that kind of thing.

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**SC:** Um, and then, just a couple of kind of wrapping-up questions, uh—how do you self-identify, like as Vietnamese, Vietnamese-American, American, or something else?

**HB:** I'm, you know, like—uh, you know, I'm an American, um... you know, so there isn't any, uh... yeah. It's as simple as that. Because, you know, um—if you don't live somewhere and you don't contribute somewhere, you know, it's not—you're not really a part of them, let's say, even if I wish to be Vietnamese, it's just—you know, it's just makes no sense, and doesn't work. Like, they wouldn't even take you, you know, that kind of thing. 'Cause—'cause it's not, um, you—you—you don't share anything with them, you don't share the—the pain, you don't share the sacrifice, uh—we actually, you know, chose to leave the country, so we have no quote unquote, like, 'claim,' you know, or rights or responsibilities, or anything like that, that kind of thing, um, so—so Vietnam is very much, like, the land for all the Vietnamese people who are living there now, and it's just their country, and then, you know, their future, and it's their responsibility. Uh, and they—they—they—they reap the fruits and rewards, and, you know, the pain that comes with that. And we, you know, uh, you know, uh—like it or not, or color of the skin, or whatever—whatever, our fate is just intertwined with—with America, um you mean, you know, like—there's nothing about it, I say if this country is attacked, we are hurt, if the economy is bad, we're hurt [laughs], you know, so—so it's just the—the—I—I would say for a matter of the practicality of fates intertwined and all that kind of stuff; then also, as a matter of beliefs, because, you know, in a way, uh, you know, uh—yeah, the—the—the—the, you know, I believe in kind of like the American, uh, quote unquote 'system' and vision, and so—so, uh, you know. Yeah. Anywhere else would just not be, um... you know, a good place for me to—to... sign up.

**SC:** And then, how does your Vietnamese heritage fit into your kind of American-ness, you see them as—as separate or intertwined, or...

**HB:** Well, there are parts of it that are kind of, uh, inseparable, because, you know, in a way, let's say, you know, I kid around about being a fair weather, you know, religious person or whatever, you know, we're not religious, and, you know, we're not—almost borderline atheist or whatever, but, you know, kind of like your fundamental worldview is kind of set so soon, and it drives so much of what you do and think, um, you know, I—I don't think most people pay attention to that stuff, but so that—that part of me was set, you know, that—that part of me is extremely Asian, um, and—and it was set, like, through stories and s—you know, or whatever, even when I was, like, a little kid or something. You know, those are just things that you kind of take for granted as truth, and, you know, that's how you live and, um, and all that kind of thing. So you—I would say, your worldview is—is almost, uh, you know, is almost, uh—you know, it, you know, so that—that worldview is almost all—you know, it's always gonna be there, and it's always gonna have a more Asian kind of, uh, you know, perspective to it, uh—I'm always gonna be kind of an outsider in America, right? 'Cause—'cause, you know, I mean, I'm not a, uh—uh, I wasn't born here like—there are things, for example, that my daughter, growing up here, going to kindergarten, will take for granted. That I would have no clue about. I mean, the other days, I was caught—caught like, really, many times at her kindergarten, about stuff that I just like, 'oh,' you know, like, uh—'cause—'cause I didn't come to the U.S. practically until I was almost in college, and your education and your culture and the things that you do are just different. I mean, college is not, you know, all the years before it, so—so there was—there is just a part of it—of, uh, American culture and life that I don't have. That I—you know, I mean—that my daughter has, you know, cause she practically, you know, she—she grew up here, was born here and all that kind of stuff. So—so there are—there are like—like, holes in my American experience, per se, that are just not gonna be—I just can't go back to kindergarten and, you know, refill that gap. Um, so—so it'll always be, you know, a half and half kind of a thing.

**SC:** Um, I believe that wraps up the interview.

**HB:** Okay.

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**SC:** So thank you again for making the time to do this today.

**HB:** Sure. Sorry for the confusion in scheduling [laughs].

**SC:** Oh, it's quite all right.

**[The recorder is turned off, the interview ends]**