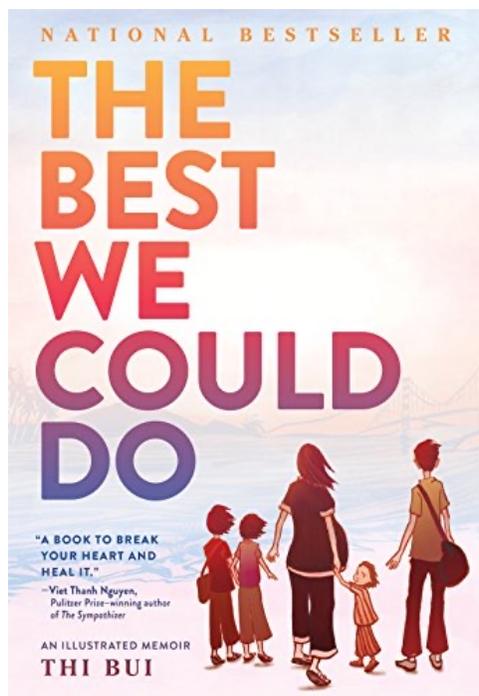


Vietnam

Thi Bui

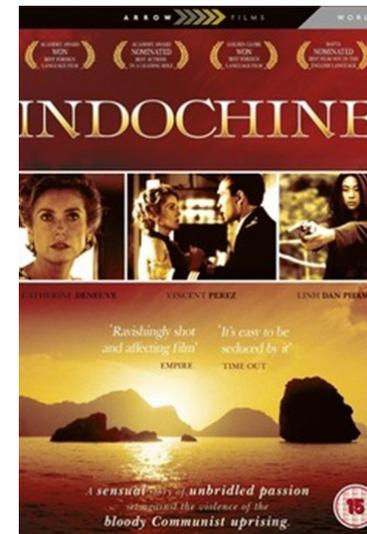


Vietnam – very brief history

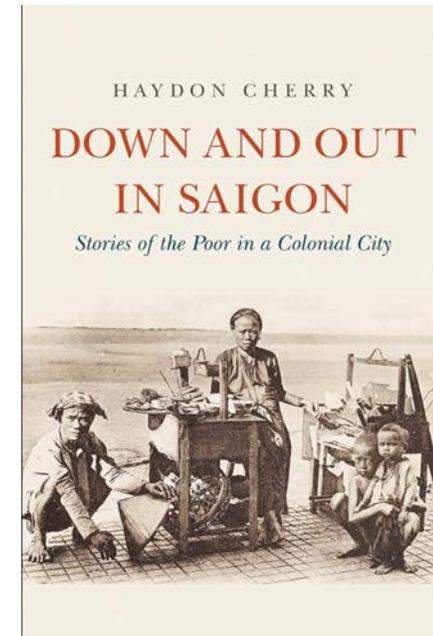
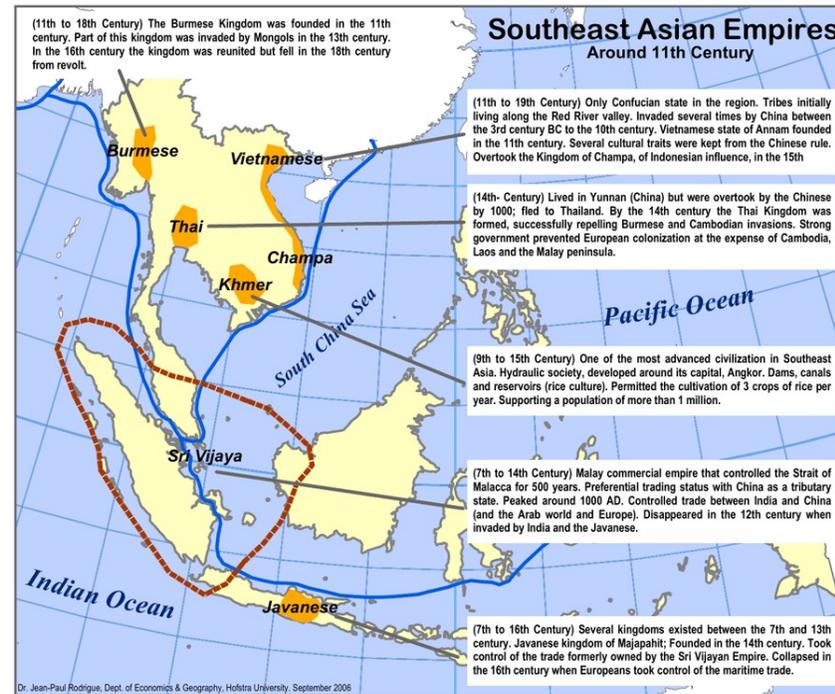
Vietnam was for more than a millennium under **Chinese political rule** and therefore very much influenced by Chinese customs and culture (for instance Confucianism). To maintain their administrative and military control, the Chinese constructed roads, waterways, and harbors to improve access to the region; they also improved agriculture (better methods of irrigation, use of metal plows and draft animals).

The **Trung Sisters** led the first major but unsuccessful rebellion in 40 CE. Over the centuries, China's attempts at *Sinicization* () only strengthened the Vietnam's national sentiment and desire for independence.

European missionaries came to Vietnam in the 16th century. French invasion started in 1857; by 1887 Vietnam was part of **French Indochina** (with contemporary Laos and Cambodia).



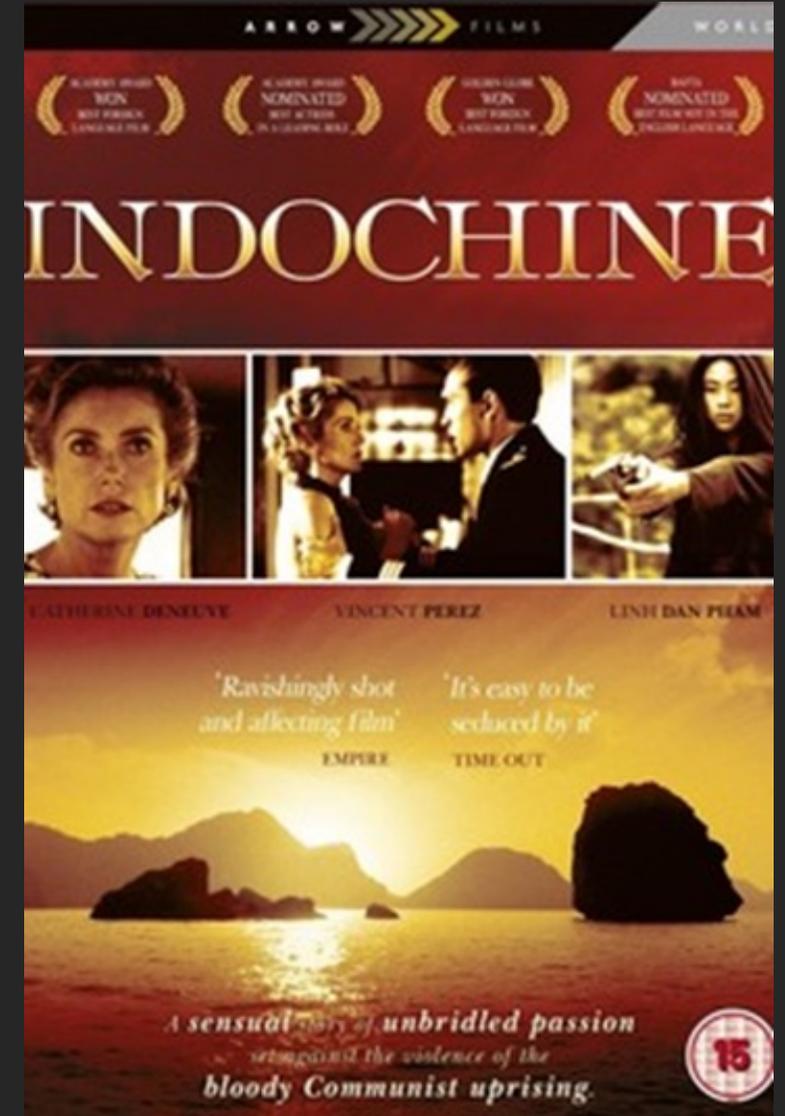
The South-East Peninsula, Indochina



Regis Wargnier's *Indochine*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxMoREEix6Q>

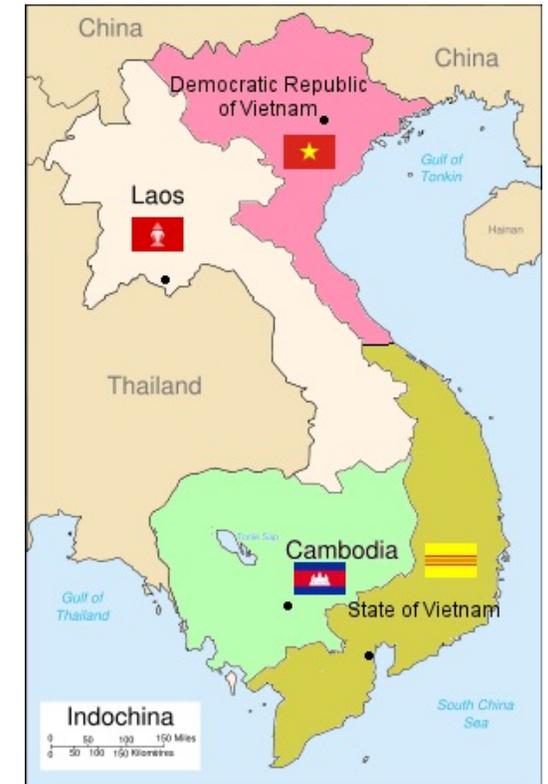
Won the 1993 Oscar for Best Foreign Film



Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh

The economic progress Vietnam made under the French -- the land area devoted to cultivate rice quadrupled between 1880 and 1930 -- benefited only the French and the small class of wealthy Vietnamese created by the colonial regime. The Vietnamese peasants were heavily and increasingly exploited. Anticolonial, national movements grew, among which **Ho Chi Minh's** Indochinese Communist Party, which became the **Viet Minh**.

After the WWII Japanese occupation of Vietnam ended, Ho Chi Minh declared independence, but the French tried to reassert their rule and an 8-year war (the “first Indochinese war”) ensued, 1946-1954. Despite American aid, the French lost and **two Vietnams** emerged from the 1954 Geneva accords: the Viet Minh north (capital: Hanoi) and the Western-backed south (capital: Saigon).





Ngo Dinh Diem, the Vietnam War

Whereas northern Vietnam was helped by the Soviet Union and China, southern Vietnam was led by **Ngo Dinh Diem**, with the United States' support. After corrupt Diem's ousting, the Saigon regime proved unable to control the Viet Cong, an insurgent movement backed by the Viet Minh that grew from 30,000 to 150,000 men in two years, despite increasing American assistance (in armament and advisers).



In early 1965, **President Lyndon B. Johnson** ordered the bombing of North Vietnam and started sending troops. The number of U.S. troops increased from 75,000 in July 1965 to more than 500,000 in early 1968 when the Viet Cong and the North led the Tet offensive, a turning point in the **Vietnam War**, with the beginning of negotiations.

The Vietnam War - protests

In the U.S., the Vietnam war gained in unpopularity. By 1967, it was costing the U.S. some \$25 billion per year, and disillusionment was beginning to reach greater sections of the taxpaying public. More casualties were reported. Under the draft system, as many as 40,000 young men were called into service each month, adding fuel to the fire of the **anti-war movement** that had started as early as 1963. Singers like Joan Baez, Nina Simone, Marvin Gaye, and even John Lennon, wrote anti-war songs. In 1971, the publication of the first **Pentagon Papers**, which revealed previously confidential details about the war's conduct, caused more and more Americans to question the accountability of the U.S. government. Nixon announced the end to U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and in January 1973 the Paris peace agreement was signed. Fighting went on, however, until Saigon fell on April 30, **1975**, and the last American chopper lifted off from Saigon (see p. 211 in Bui's book).

(source: <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-protests>)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-kA3UtBj4M>



Iconic pictures of the Vietnam War



Malcolme Browne's picture of Thich Quang Duc's self-immolation (1963)



Nic Ut's picture of Pham Thi Kim Phuc running from napalm (1972)

(and Marcelino Truong's *Such a Lovely Little War*)



Eddie Adams' picture of general Loan shooting a Viet Cong (1968, p. 209 in Bui's book (and Marcelino Truong's *Saigon Calling*))

RACING RESULTS-ENTRIES **Los Angeles Times** **FINAL**
LARGEST CIRCULATION IN THE WEST, BELLER BAILY, 1,212,782 SUNDAY

VOL. LXXXVI FIVE PARTS-PART ONE FRIDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 2, 1968 82 PAGES DAILY 10¢

10,500 Reds Killed

S. VIET CARNAGE



Savage Fight Under Way for Possession of City of Hue

SAIGON (U.S. Press) — U.S. marines and Vietnam government forces fought the Communists savagely for possession of the old imperial city of Hue today in the fourth day of coordinated Red assaults.

By attack court, the Communists had said with 15,000 dead for their attacks throughout the country this week.

South Vietnamese jets have bombed the district in the heart of Hue where an estimated 2,000 entrenched North Vietnamese troops and Viet Cong had set up a revolutionary command.

American marines and South Vietnamese infantrymen, moving behind tank columns, battled the Communists in several parts of the historic walled city 400 miles north-east of Saigon.

While the government troops moved to retake the eastern part of the city, 200 U.S. marine battalions moved to a 9.5 square mile area of Hue's Perfume River, trying to root out enemy pockets in the modern part of the city. The fighting was centered near Hue University and the U.S. Army military compound.

Fighting in Saigon

U.S. military spokesmen reported 250 Communist troops had been killed in the street fighting. They also said a total of 2,462 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops had been killed in the northernmost I-4 Corps area, in which Hue and Da Nang are located. Hue is 30 miles south of the demilitarized zone.

Southern fighting continued in Saigon during the night, but the focus of the four-day-old Red assault

JOHNSON SAYS RED RAIDS COULD PERIL BOMB LULL PLANS

WASHINGTON — President Johnson warned North Vietnamese Thursday that Communist offensives in the north could endanger any prospect of a bombing halt as a prelude to negotiations.

The President said the bombing of the north will continue until the enemy gives some better signs than what there has been lately have provided.

"Unless we have some sign that he will not continue his aggression, if we halt the bombing, then we shall continue to give the Americans no love there."

Denouncing the use of air power as he awarded the Medal of Honor to John Force III, Marine 1st, Battalion at Derby, Kan., the President said:

"Let those who would stop the bombing answer this question: 'What would the North Vietnamese do?'"

Please Turn to Page 28, Col. 1



Eddie Adams, photographe de l'agence AP, avait saisi l'instant où le général Loan, chef de la police sud-vietnamienne, exécutait un prisonnier VC en pleine rue de Saigon. Cette mise à mort provoqua l'indignation et le*

Voilà qui faire beaucoup de tort au

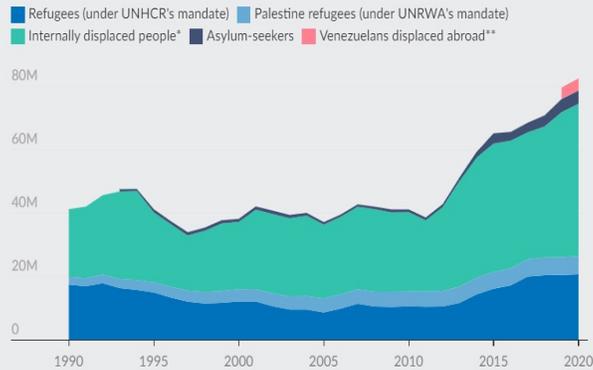
Boat People

Upon the takeover of south Vietnam in 1975, the north put in place an oppressive regime with summary executions, forced confessions, reeducation camps, forced labor etc. A massive exodus of Southerners who feared for their lives ensued. Because they fled (illegally) and crammed on any kind of small boat they could find a place on, they are known as **Boat People**. Experts estimate up to 1.5 million refugees escaped; a high estimate of 10 percent died from drowning, piracy, dehydration, or otherwise never made landfall. An estimated 62,000 Vietnamese Boat People sought refuge throughout Southeast Asia by 1978. This number rose to 350,000 by mid-1979, with another 200,000 having moved to permanent residence in other countries, including the U.S., Canada, and France (such as writers Thi Bui, Kim Thuy, and Linda Le, respectively). (source: <https://borgenproject.org/vietnamese-boat-people/>) (see p. 267 of Bui's book)



82.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced

at the end of 2020 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.



18 June 2021
* Source: IDMC
** This number excludes Venezuelan asylum-seekers and refugees.
Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2020

Refugees (under UNHCR's mandate)

20.7M

Palestine refugees (under UNRWA's mandate)

5.7M

Internally displaced people*

48M

Asylum-seekers

4.1M

Venezuelans displaced abroad

3.9M

18 June 2021
* Source: IDMC
Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2020

Other refugee crises

Refugee crises most commonly result for political events (war, coups etc.) and natural disasters. Current (i.e. late summer 2021) refugee crises:

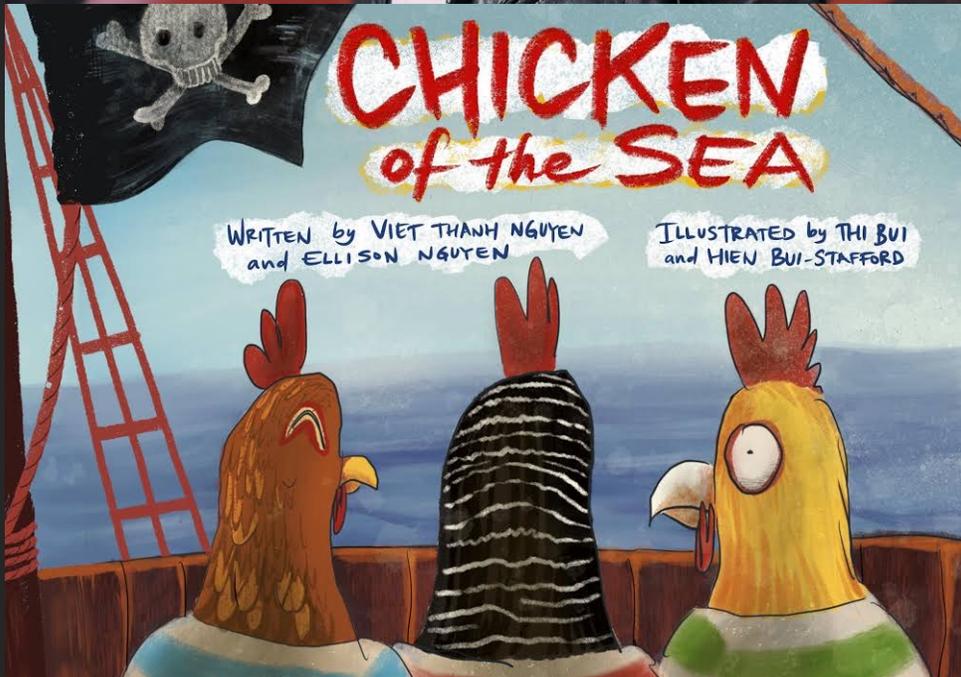
- **Afghanistan** (after the Taliban takeover of the country)
- **Haiti** (due to political instability, another earthquake, and destruction after tropical storm Grace).



Thi Bui

Thi Bui was born in Vietnam in 1975 and came to the United States in 1978 as part of the "boat people" wave of refugees fleeing Southeast Asia at the end of the Vietnam War. Her debut graphic memoir, *The Best We Could Do* (Abrams ComicArts, 2017) won the American Book Award. With her son, Hien, she co-illustrated the children's book, *Chicken of the Sea* (McSweeney's, 2019), written by Pulitzer winner Viet Thanh Nguyen and his son, Ellison. Her short comics can be found online at The Nib, PEN America, and BOOM California.

(<https://www.thibui.com/pagecv>)



Topics for discussion

- **Family:** whereas the U.S. promotes individuality, the family is seen as a unit in Vietnamese culture and **filial piety** is a key tenet. Children must respect and obey their parents, specifically the father (it is a patriarchal culture) and are expected to take care of them in their old age.
- **History** (more particularly the Indochinese war and Vietnam war) and how it affected this family
- **Exile** (and how it affects the family dynamic and challenges filial piety)
- **Traumas** (and secrets)
- **Graphic novel genre:** use of color vs B&W, organization of the squares, use of the gutters, drawings based on photographs...



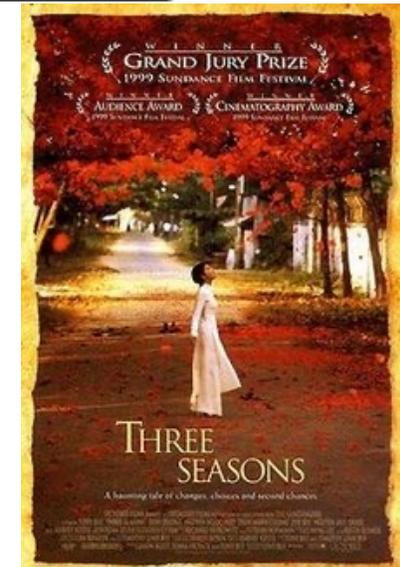
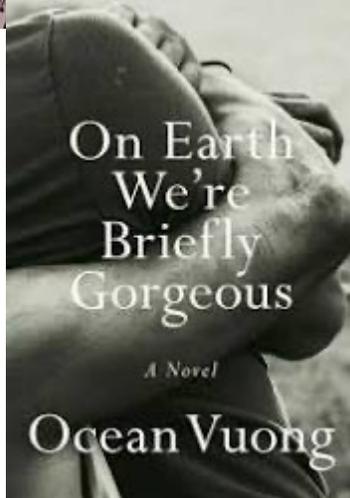
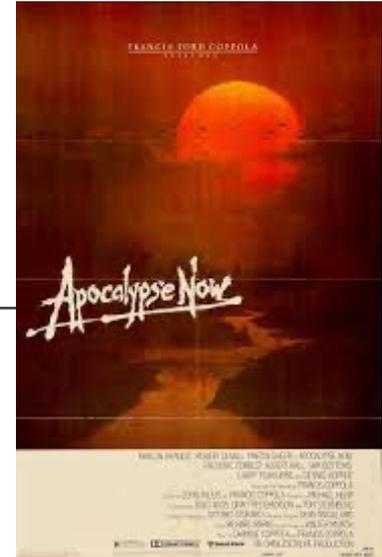
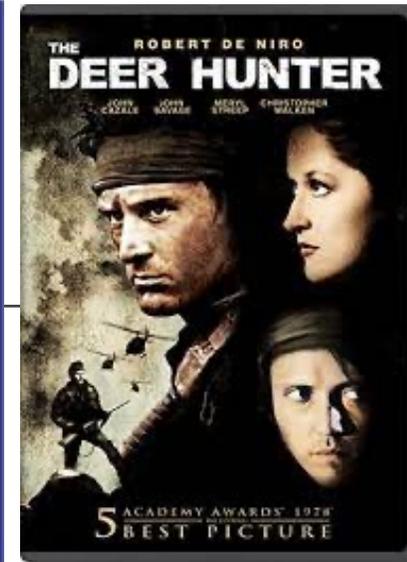
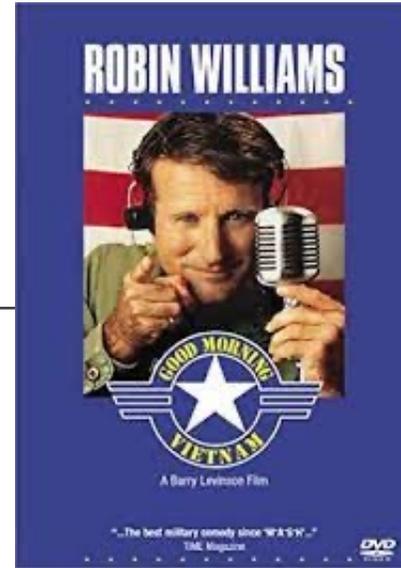
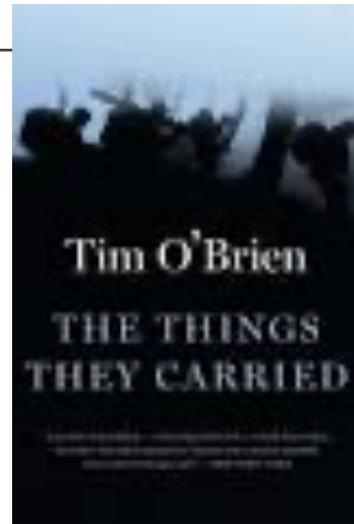
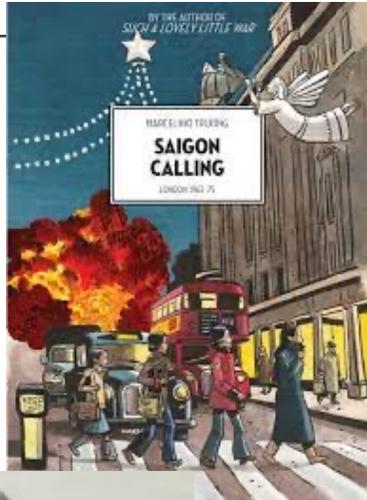
Invited Speakers Thi Bui and Marcelino Truong

Monday, November 8, 12:30-2pm:
Marcelino Truong (keynote and
workshop, virtual)

Wednesday, November 10, 3-4pm:
Thi Bui (keynote, virtual)



Further reading/viewing



“Another point that was made was the whole part of being a refugee and how they had to sneak away without anyone knowing. They had to work so hard to make a new life for themselves. This was extremely important because if they didn't escape and go make a life for themselves these children could not have made it. I think reading this book opened my eyes to the struggles that other cultures have gone through that I can't quite understand, but this book shows me and makes me feel part of it.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“The way I feel this connects to a calling in life would probably be how even though the idea of going against what your parents had planned for you or wanted for you. Although when you are going against it to do something you feel you need could really be seen as a calling to you. In the book as she went and looked back to see how far her parents came really had her feel for them and not want to disappoint them although she was doing what she felt she needed to for herself.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

Having family in Chile, I have many different and more opportunities here in the U.S. than any of my family members; but hearing about war stories and just how big the lack of freedom is really opened my eyes... think it is important to learn about your parents and it can give you some insight into understanding your family and who you are today.

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“I think this is so important to keep in mind because she doesn’t want to continue to pass down that familial trauma. Creating a future for herself is something all refugees have to go through and I thought this was a very important thing to recognize. It’s very challenging having to restart your life in a new place, and although I will never experience being a refugee, I believe that if they can get through all those obstacles they faced, then in comparison, my little challenges can be done... it feels as if she’s caught in between two different cultures and it’s hard to navigate through them both ... The hope that your children can be freer than you were and to have hopes for their future is important.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“She mentions that her mother was more affectionate than her father, but that she slowly started to become less affectionate due to the way her husband treated her; she lost herself in her marriage to someone that she didn’t truly love or want to be with. This gave Bui skewed views of how marriages and romantic relationships could be, she was not given the happy, “white-picket fence” family that a lot of American children are living in. Toward the end of the book, she begins to realize that her past and the past of her parents does not define who she is today.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“I have a liking for her use of sociological skills and understanding different customs and way of living is impacted where you live, not just necessarily who you live with.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“[What] I gained from this reading was how Thi analyzed her fathers (BỐ) childhood trauma to understand why she grew up so afraid of him. And to be able to do that, she just had to “learn to ask the correct questions” but it took until she reached adulthood. This connects to my evolving ideas of my calling because I have crossed paths with people close to me who has unresolved childhood trauma that has impacted my urge to want to become an educator, and every story that they have told me was a teachable moment and lesson for me to carry, and convey”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“She explains that she becomes a little less in touch with her culture everyday while she’s here. America is just kind of washing off some of her culture and she even says after a while that she’s becoming more American every day.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“As we dive into the recount of Bô’s childhood we see that he has some very serious unresolved trauma, the term “refugee reflex” was instilled onto him as a young boy and he carried that reflex well into adulthood and even passed this trauma and fear to his children.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“it is important to teach your students it is ok to break out of the stigma of following your parents footsteps. May that be they attended college and they don't , or their parents did not attend and they do. The same idea follows with going into a family business. Every student should feel they are creating their own path with inspirations along the way.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“It is important to empower young females. Once again to break the stigma that they should just stay home and be mothers. Females in modern day time and the future should feel as though they can talk about any profession and be successful with it. There is no need to feel less of yourself just because you are of the opposite gender.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“I noticed in the book when talking about her mother's story, her mom hadn't known how to speak her native language of Vietnamese, and she only knew French because that was what was taught at her school. She went out of her way to teach herself, as a child, her native language so that she had a connection to her roots. I think it is important to be familiar with, if not fluent, your native language, and schools should allow that opportunity for everyone... I will make sure that when I am dealing with any history in my classroom, that I will do my best to show both sides of the story and get perspectives from those sides so my students never have only half of the picture thinking it to be the whole picture.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“Not only seeing what the hard-working soldiers are doing all day and all night but also what slowly breaks them from the inside. Not being able to see their families with ease, having to deal with the stress of the entire nation on their shoulders, and even the stress of coming back whole. The not only meaning to come back the way you left physically but mentally as well”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“This story connects to my calling and my life because I too was an immigrant. I was born and raised in St. Lucia until I was five years old. Since I was so young I don't really remember to many details of my day-to-day life, I can only remember the good and bad memories. The bad memories I had living in St. Lucia makes me appreciate America so much more. My life past events relate to my calling because I can relate to people living in different situations and understand what they might be going through. Because of those experience I am more empathetic to people who are struggling. Being a teacher is my life calling for the sole reason of making a more positive environment for children whose families may be in a life changing situation.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“Personally I never really enjoyed reading. However, when reading this book I really just wanted to keep turning the page at night and really enjoyed the graphics which helped me get a better picture in my mind of what the people in the story we're going through. I really hope that I do get a chance in college to learn more about different cultures and I am really hoping there are other books out there like this that will help me especially with teaching when I'm older.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“It was hard to find insights that I could connect with my calling and life. I am white and never had anyone discriminate against me, and I’m from the United States and never had to live while a war was happening right outside my front door. Or that they had to come to the United States on a boat to make a better life for their kids. My parents were never separated, and I never had to deal with them hating each other. Although I want kids in the future, I can’t relate to her birth story in the first chapter, because I haven’t been through it”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“All I had been taught was about the American experience in the Vietnam War and I knew nothing of the country before, after, or during from the perspective of those who lived there... Because this story was written as a graphic novel, it felt less intimidating to start. Additionally, I had not read a graphic novel before, and I realized that they have so much to offer. One of the specific things is evoking empathy in the reader. This graphic novel does an excellent job of that. Furthermore, I learned that graphic novels are really an art form in it of themselves... as a future secondary education English teacher, my biggest takeaway from reading this piece is that there is so much to be learned from ‘untraditional’ literature and it adds so much value to the learning experience.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“This is closer with her mom, but at the same time the words ‘I love you’ aren’t something that is said. My mom and I never say we love each other, but it is something that is just known.”

—FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff

“This story kind of reminds me about my family because my parents were raised in two different cultures. My father was raised in Jamaica with a Jamaican family. My mother was raised in a southern black and Irish family. My parents do not talk about how it was growing up for them and I had to find out piece by piece for myself. For me, it was hard because I felt like I did not know who I was because my parents never talk about their past. My mother grew up with everything that she wanted, and my father grew up poor and moved to the United States when he was a young boy. When he moved, he felt like an outsider and did not want to do anything, but he had to work for everything he had. This book is really good, it is very inspirational and anyone that has trouble with finding their own identity should take some time to read the book.”

— ECSU FYI Student with Dr. Stoloff