TOWARD A FRAMEWORK FOR VIETNAMESE AMERICAN STUDIES

History, Community, and Memory

Edited by
Linda Ho Peché,
Alex-Thai Dinh Vo,
and Tuong Vu

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THE PRESERVATION AND PRODUCTION OF DIASPORIC KNOWLEDGE

Oral History and Archival Contributions

Thuy Vo Dang

Against Historical Erasure

In 2016, a small pocket diary, its cover still a vibrant shade of red despite having traversed rough waters, came to the University of California, Irvine (UCI) Libraries Southeast Asian Archive as part of James Schill's collection of photographs of Southeast Asian refugees.[1] The author of the diary remains unknown. Their journey is detailed meticulously in English, French, and Vietnamese. The first diary entry, made on June 17, 1979, provides the boat number and departure point—Cà Mau, Vietnam. This pocket diary fits neatly in the palm of my hand, yet its miniature size belies the weighty documentation of suffering and resilience of an individual during a monthlong journey in the South China Sea.

After some thirty days of boat travel that involved capture by Vietnamese authorities, two robberies by Thai pirates, water and food shortages, and stormy seas, the 403 passengers and two new babies born aboard arrived in Malaysia. The diary writer's multilingual ability might have positioned them to serve as boat spokesperson or translator, as a researcher might surmise after studying the diary entries closely. The diary writer was taken ashore along with a few other passengers and asked by the authorities to present their papers. Since they did not have any documentation, the writer reflected, "So we are illegal immigrants and must be punished . . . jailed."[2]

Because of the precarious nature of their journeys, refugees who have been displaced and exiled from their homelands often carry very few official documents and little material culture that might serve as evidence of their identities or experiences. As an archival object, this diary provides a first-

hand account of a "boat person" experience. Its historical importance is clear. What may be less clear is the process of acquiring, preserving, and providing access to a record like this. Archival scholars and practitioners use the term *record* to mean a "written or printed work of a legal or official nature that may be used as evidence or proof; a document" (Pearce-Moses 2005: 326).[3] Thus, the privileging of the written record by governments and archives presents challenges and possibilities for populations forcibly displaced. Without the ability to validate their identities, some face tremendous barriers to proving their refugee status. Still, others might find a newfound liberation from the trappings of their former lives with the absence of such records. After this phase of reliance on the record for substantiating claims to personhood, the same population might find that such records become important in their struggle to preserve their history and challenge the historical erasure that often results from the loss of a homeland. This diary presents an interesting site of inquiry into the process of meaning making for Vietnamese refugee history. The diary's author is unknown, but the documentation of despair, struggle, loss, fear, and hope provides a rare and raw snapshot of a moment that has captured the world's fascination. Despite the anonymity of the diary's owner, this record provides a sought-after bottom-up perspective of an individual whose life was upended by geopolitical forces beyond their control but who also made choices and took action during their journey from Vietnam. From my time working with Vietnamese refugee narratives, I instantly recognized the research value this record would provide for the evolving scholarship on Vietnamese Americans.

Anne Frank and Dorothy Fujita-Rony argue that, "given the general marginalization of Vietnamese American issues in national media venues, the [Southeast Asian] Archive offers a critical intervention for all those who have a stake in Vietnamese American history" (Fujita-Rony and Frank 2003: 153–164). The "origin story" of the Southeast Asian Archive (SEAA) as a grassroots effort at the onset is parallel to many other projects to preserve and make available Vietnamese American history to a wider public. While this chapter does not cover all the institutional or grassroots repositories that preserve and provide access to Vietnamese diasporic history, it critically examines the role of archives and oral history projects in this important work of curating the past for future generations.

Since the moment the diary came into our custody at the UCI Libraries, it has been rehoused, described, and digitized. The surrogate is available online through Calisphere, a union database where archives and libraries throughout California can publish their digital or digitized assets.[4] Like many other primary source materials that provide insight into the Vietnamese refugee experience, the diary is part of a collection given to the SEAA by a non-Vietnamese collector. James Schill was a foreign service officer during the Viet-

nam-American War for the United States Department of State and USAID. He worked on Southeast Asian refugee resettlement beginning in 1975. At the time we acquired the collection of Schill's photographs, he signaled that there would also be a very special item—this anonymous pocket diary. He could not remember how he came to acquire this object. It is essentially an orphaned work, as the creator remains unknown. We decided to digitize this resource and make it available with the understanding that its owner might one day surface and request the scans be taken down from the website where it is available to the public, or even ask for the diary to be returned.[5]

In an often-referenced scene in *Star Wars: Episode II, Attack of the Clones*, Jedi archivist Jocasta Nu tells a puzzled Obi-Wan Kenobi that, "if an item does not appear in the record, it does not exist."[6] Her firm and resolute claim goes against the vernacular knowledge that Obi-Wan carries into the Jedi Temple Archives as he searches for a planet that has been deleted from the database. All over the internet, one can find this popular culture example used to critique history books and all they leave out. I often think of this moment in the film when I work with oral history and archival records of Vietnamese Americans. The Indochinese conflicts that produced the largest refugee exodus from Asia have been explored often by scholars and cultural producers, yet what Vietnamese American community members often express is their feeling of being left out of or misrepresented by this history. Perhaps, like the missing planet, the South Vietnam known to the Vietnamese American diaspora has been willfully deleted and to find evidence of its existence requires a deeper attention to the vernacular spaces where it may remain. Historians know well that archives are incomplete and are often created by those in power to further solidify their positions within the halls of history. Where do we look to find the narratives left out, erased, or maligned? When faced with historical erasure, cast as "losers," "puppets," or "victims" of the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese refugee community responded with local, grassroots efforts to preserve their stories for themselves and future generations. Their efforts to create new archives as interventions in the production of knowledge may be instructive for other groups faced with the tremendous challenge of documenting trauma, collecting materials that have been dispersed, and piecing together fragments of lives torn apart by war and displacement.

In the early years of diaspora, archives and other repositories of cultural memory for Vietnamese refugees were often initiated with materials collected by non-Vietnamese people who had some ties to the community or experience with the war. The SEAA reflects this history in the collections developed over the years. Founded in 1987 by Anne Frank, subject librarian for Orange County, California, in the UCI Libraries, it has since become an established repository of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Lao, and Hmong diasporic history. The alignment of these population histories through U.S.

militarism against communist revolutionary movements and the colonial occupation by France tie these diaspora communities together in significant ways. Records created in the 1970s and 1980s often refer to peoples escaping from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam as "Indochinese" refugees. Community organizers and scholars of Southeast Asian Diaspora studies have pushed back against this problematic formulation that centers the French colonial legacy and advocated for ethnic specificity whenever possible or Southeast Asian as the preferred collective descriptor.[7]

In 1985, Vietnamese American community members approached the libraries to start collecting materials that could help document the growing population in the Orange County, California, region. Frank took on this daunting task in a slow and steady way, bringing in community members for their valuable input and resources, particularly the donation of monographs and archival materials. From a single desk drawer in her office, the SEAA grew to claim a 645-square-foot reading room of its own and then became professionalized as a distinctive collection in Special Collections and Archives around the mid-2000s. Frank retired in 2007 after twenty years of steadfast stewardship of an archive that has often been taught as a model of a "community-based archives" (Wright et al. 2008: article 5). While housed and supported by a large institution, the SEAA can more accurately be described as a "community-centered archives," advancing a model of archival work based on collaboration with community stakeholders, critical interrogation of our own collections and knowledge gaps, shared authority with communities, and flexibility in how we work with diverse groups. Since its founding, the SEAA has worked collaboratively with local communities and a network of Southeast Asian Diaspora studies scholars to document their histories. Meaningful relationships established as a result of these community-university collaborations are driven by the need for Southeast Asian diaspora communities to take a prominent role in determining how to share their histories with future generations. The establishment of the Orange County and Southeast Asian Archive (OC and SEAA) Center in 2015 solidified UCI Libraries' commitment to fostering community-centered archives.

The Personal Is Archival: Reflections on Curating Vietnamese Diasporic History

My first time entering the University of California, Irvine's Southeast Asian Archive was during the summer of 2001, a few months before I began my graduate program in Ethnic studies at the University of California, San Diego. I was finally a bona fide researcher, being paid to conduct archival research for my adviser. The reading room was located in a corner of the third floor

of Langson Library, the main library in one of the original buildings on campus, and it was often staffed by Anne Frank herself, along with a student assistant. Each time I visited the SEAA, I would write in my name and research purpose on a clipboard greeting patrons by the entrance. I pulled file folders from metal filing cabinets that lined one wall of the room and was allowed to take materials a few doors down to make photocopies. I read the *Người Việt Daily* newspapers stacked within large gray acid-free boxes and pulled periodicals such as *Thời Mới* and *Phụ Nữ Gia Đình* for closer examination.

After that initial summer, I gained confidence with navigating the physical holdings of the SEAA, and I would return a few years later to conduct research for my own work on Vietnamese American anticommunism (Vo Dang 2005: 64–86). The SEAA became essential for my journey as a scholar and community activist, providing access to Vietnamese language materials that I would be hard-pressed to find as easily elsewhere. As I conducted ethnographic and oral history research on the Vietnamese community in San Diego, I depended on this archive for historical context on the Vietnamese diaspora.

A decade after my relationship with the SEAA began, I was appointed the project director for Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History Project (VAOHP), based in the Department of Asian American Studies at UCI under the direction of Professor Linda Trinh Vo. Viet Stories assembles the life stories of Vietnamese Americans in Southern California and involves university-community partnerships as well as a program for training undergraduate students, many coming from Vietnamese American families, to conduct and process oral histories. Since 2011, this project has collected over 450 oral histories through professional, student, and community volunteer interviewers.

By this time, the SEAA had undergone major transitions with Anne Frank's retirement in 2007; the reassignment of stewardship to Christina J. Woo, a research librarian with a portfolio that included many diverse fields; and the administrative transfer of the SEAA to its current position within the Department of Special Collections and Archives. As project director for the VAOHP, I worked closely with the head of Special Collections and Archives at the time. She provided technical expertise and the preservation and access vision for the partnership. We were building a "community-centered" collection of digital oral histories, with me working on the front line for engagement with the Vietnamese community to collect these stories and the SEAA (under the Special Collections umbrella) serving as the repository for preserving and providing access to them. This partnership produced fast results. We were able to launch a public access website with eighty processed oral histories within the first year of the project. Each oral history contained an audio recording, transcripts in Vietnamese or English, and narrator photographs. Each oral history had the appropriate consent and release forms

to allow for perpetual stewardship by the UCI Libraries and wide access for the public.

Two years after I began my work on Viet Stories, I was appointed to steward the SEAA. I did not have formal training in library or archival studies, but my work with building a born digital oral history collection along with my subject expertise on Southeast Asian Diaspora studies enabled the transition into this role. I have grown in my role as curator for the Southeast Asian Archive, expanding my portfolio to include the role of research librarian for Asian American studies. The Asian American Studies Department at UCI was established just a few years after the SEAA, and the focus on knowledge production about historically marginalized communities aligns well with the work of community archives.

As a Vietnamese American child refugee, an oral historian, and a steward of archival collections, I have had many moments of profound privilege and joy and moments of grief and trauma that inflect my work on Viet Stories and in the SEAA. During an oral history interview, I was listening to a narrator share her story of life in 1940s Vietnam in a family headed by a wealthy patriarch, but as the child of a second wife relegated to the role of a household servant. During and after the interview, I felt deep appreciation for my role of stewarding a story and perspective I had not been exposed to before. And I wondered how many others would be able to learn from the resilience of this woman who sat before me describing the wet clothes she hung to dry each day after school because she only had two outfits to wear despite being the daughter of one of the richest men in Vietnam at the time. Knowing that her experience would be part of an archive, adding depth and nuance to the stories that would circulate about our community, I felt pride and joyful purpose. On other occasions, when I provide orientations or instruction to students and community members using materials from SEAA collections, I am often filled with a sense of purpose in this role. I remind students to be critical, peeling back the layers of archival work to reveal how decisions are made so that my listeners might have a better understanding of the famous concept that "who controls the past controls the future" (Orwell, Pimlott, and Davison 1989).

On Veterans Day in 2020, I received an email to my work address from a Vietnamese American, sharing a set of images from the Mỹ Lai Massacre in 1968 with a narrative that urged me not to forget the criminals among the celebrated veterans of the Vietnam War. Without a trigger warning, I saw violent images of mostly women and children, bodies splayed on the ground or in shallow graves, some close-up faces in excruciating pain and anguish. I felt sickened and enraged. I immediately recalled a book of photography gifted to me in college by a well-meaning friend. They were images taken by famous photographers of the Vietnam War. As I flipped through that book of photos back then, I cried until my body shook. I will never forget the emo-

tional and physical toll of seeing such violence on bodies that look like my own, exhibited without a warning of the damage they might do. These types of materials serve an important role as records and archival documentation, but there should be an ethics and care that we take into consideration when we choose to provide access to them. Additionally, stewards of these visual materials should consider a critical engagement with how images have been deployed for memory projects.[8] Archival practitioners have written about "vicarious trauma" in this line of work, using a concept adapted from the mental health field that refers to ways in which those who work with people or materials affected by trauma are also affected themselves.[9] Whether it is vicarious trauma as an archives steward or inherited trauma based on my identity as a Vietnamese American that informs my response to these images, the more important point is how we might consider allowing for our hybrid identities to inform this work. Care for these historical records should also involve respecting and caring for the potential user communities, particularly the communities represented in the collection.

A few years into my work at the SEAA, we received materials from another former foreign service officer, Lionel Rosenblatt. His records were quite extensive, documenting the refugee camps throughout Southeast Asia. They also included state-sponsored materials created as training guides for working with refugees. As I selected materials from this collection for a class exhibit, I encountered a folder with images of deceased Cambodians at a refugee camp in Thailand. They were victims of brutality, likely at the hands of camp guards, as the redacted document included with the photographs suggested. Recalling my own encounters with such images, I flagged these few photos and worked with my colleagues to rehouse them into envelopes labeled with a trigger warning. This example might seem trite when we consider the widely circulated images of refugee suffering in the 1980s that contributed to the Western world's "compassion fatigue" toward Southeast Asians or even promoted "trauma porn," a perverse fascination with the suffering of others combined with inaction.[10] However, I believe that archival stewardship requires an ethics of care and empathy that challenges objectivity and neutrality as governing principles in archival work. Archivist Jessica Tai argues for a practice of cultural humility, which differs from the often-used concept of cultural competency because it "entails actively denouncing archival neutrality, requiring the continual and visible disclosure of one's own positionality" (Tai 2021: 3). Part of an emergent generation of archivists who insist that radical care be an embedded archival practice, Tai and others challenge me to consider how my situated knowledge informs my work as a steward of my own community's history. I take an approach that is consultative rather than authoritative, even when administrators or students might look to me to act as an authority on Vietnamese diasporic history. As with collecting oral histories from people or

communities that have survived individual and collective trauma, we must "first, do no harm" and then consider and grapple with the context in which these materials were created and who their intended audience is/will be.

Multiplicity and Memory Work: Collecting Oral Histories of Vietnamese Americans for Public Access

"If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive." While Audre Lorde spoke specifically of Black determinism, the quote suggests that what is at stake in the process of knowledge production is the misrepresentation or erasure of people's experiences and cultural memories, which likely leads to the circulation of more distorted histories.[11] Certainly for Vietnamese Americans, history has, more often than not, been written for us. While documentation such as news articles, government reports, organization records, and photographs could be collected in abundance as a result of the highly controversial and well-documented Vietnam-American War and refugee exodus, the narratives coming from Vietnamese refugees and immigrants themselves were not as readily available. For Vietnamese refugees (and other groups that have endured significant historical traumas), oral history has been an important method for the preservation of bottom-up perspectives, often left out of mainstream narratives in both the United States and a reunified Vietnam. Oral historians collect personal narratives for their potential to simultaneously broaden the lens on history by including a multiplicity of voices *and* zoom in on particular perspectives and experiences. Personal narratives, when combined with other primary and secondary sources, allow for researchers to understand the macro, meso, and micro scale of the Vietnam-American War, refugee exodus, and rebuilding of Vietnamese lives in diaspora. Undertaking an oral history project with Vietnamese Americans often requires a synchronicity of factors: timing, resources, and an understanding of the complexity of this identity—the ways in which it has often been tethered to anticommunism, indebtedness to the American nation-state, and the Asian American "model minority" myth in a racialized and stratified society.

Critical refugee studies scholar Yen Le Espiritu has insisted on a close examination of the workings of history and memory for Vietnamese Americans. She writes, "like other communities in exile, Vietnamese in the United States feel keenly the urgency to forge unified histories, identities, and memories" (Espiritu Y. L. 2014: 3). Similarly, Viet Thanh Nguyen has insisted that "all wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory" (Nguyen V. T. 2016: 4). Indeed, the struggle over memory and

history may take the form of archives creation, preserving Vietnamese American and South Vietnamese history, which has been maligned in mainstream narratives or erased in institutions in both the United States and Vietnam. These efforts to claim history have often adhered to strict limits of a Vietnamese diasporic identity rooted in anticommunist and heteropatriarchal values. Vietnamese diasporic anticommunism refuses the socialist regime in Vietnam and extends to a denouncement of China but has historically aligned with the U.S. empire. The extension of South Vietnam into the diaspora means that an extension of the allyship with the United States is fundamental to the narrative of why Vietnamese became Americans. Lan Duong and Isabelle Thuy Pelaud remind us that, "while U.S. empire and Việt Nam's human rights abuses should be critiqued, scholars also need to be critical of the Vietnamese diasporic community's efforts to construct a monolithic discourse about citizenship and cultural membership, one that complies with the disciplinary logic of being 'with' or 'against' one's community" (Duong and Pelaud 2012: 241–269). Heeding this call for more nuanced and inclusive representation in the work of archives creation, we must be ever mindful of how archives might reproduce dominant systems of oppression even as they attempt to counter the erasure of Vietnamese diasporic history.

Archives creation and oral history projects are nuanced and complex spaces for community members to intervene in public history.[12] The process of remembering the past to preserve it for the present and future is a political project involving struggles for power. Moreover, archives creators and stewards play key roles in determining what records have historical value, who should have access to them, and how they might be made discoverable. Transparency in archival work is essential, as others have argued, but is often a neglected part of the work.[13] Verne Harris, the archivist for Nelson Mandela's papers, explains the difference between remembering and "remembrancing." While remembering is a process that is imperfect, it allows for a multiplicity of narratives to emerge and often raises more complexity about documented events in the past. However, remembrancing is memory work that avoids complexity and often entails the use of memory as an instrument of power.[14] Collecting oral histories of Vietnamese American experiences with the end goal of making these stories publicly accessible is an example of how we might evoke remembering in our community. Projects that are organized around the recreation of an imagined heroic Vietnamese past, such as monuments or statues erected in sites around Vietnamese American strongholds like Little Saigon in Orange County, California, are remembrancing projects that attempt to reinforce heteropatriarchal power in the cultural history of the diaspora. In the Vietnamese American community, the flag of the Republic of Vietnam, adopted in many U.S. municipalities as the "Heritage and Freedom Flag" for the Vietnamese community, has often been

wielded for the purpose of remembrancing. During the month of April each year, the flag is raised throughout Little Saigon to commemorate the fall of Saigon. First-generation Vietnamese Americans' longtime affiliation with the U.S. Republican Party and continued adherence to anticommunist politics have often been performed in public and used as mechanisms for policing parameters of Vietnamese American community and identity. For example, during the final months of 2020, Vietnamese Americans were featured in many mainstream media articles as outliers in their support of Donald Trump (Republican) while the majority of Asian American Pacific Islander communities leaned toward Joe Biden (Democrat).[15] Frequent rallies and car parades in Orange County's Little Saigon where Trump flags were displayed next to the Heritage and Freedom Flag prompted much debate, turmoil, and conflict in the community, and especially between the first and second generations. Much like the fissures during wartime Vietnam, when families had divided loyalties between North and South, tensions boiled over in Vietnamese America during the presidential election. The social media and ethnic media narratives that circulated in the community propped up Trump as a champion for freedom and democracy and a "strongman" figure who would stand up to China. Linking this narrative to a deeply entrenched history of anticommunism, their alignment with white supremacy was packaged as loyalty to their Vietnamese heritage, particularly in the way they claimed the South Vietnam flag. When attached to such political imperatives, the flag becomes an instrument of power rather than a prompt for remembering multiple, complex, and sometimes conflicting Vietnamese pasts.

Attending to these complexities must be part of any archival or oral history effort for the Vietnamese diaspora. As we build spaces for remembering to unfold in a way that can add more layers of meaning to the stories told about the Vietnam War, Vietnam the country, and the Vietnamese diaspora, multiplicity will allow for many truths to simultaneously exist and shape public discourse in the United States and the world. An understanding of the complexities of the Vietnamese American community requires a nuanced approach, radical empathy, and respectful care. Preserving history in this community requires not turning a blind eye to all the voices in our community, no matter how problematic they might be. In 2020, we confronted a global pandemic and the heightened awareness of anti-Blackness in American society. This context has reinvigorated my commitment to archives creation and to being more intentional in surfacing a multiplicity of narratives. The dominant community discourse on anticommunism might be questioned or challenged if we provide other narratives that push against this limit of community membership and meaning making.

Community archives arise from the need to address the silences of institutional memory projects. Inspired by the work of Verne Harris, Michelle

Caswell advances theories and approaches to community archives (Caswell, Cole, and Griffith 2018). Caswell uses the concept of "symbolic annihilation," drawn from feminist and media studies scholarship, to refer to the absence of disenfranchised groups from the historical record. When we do not see ourselves or people who look like us in the historical record, we feel that our experiences are not valid or important. Caswell argues that community archives can counter this marginalization and absence by fostering "representational belonging." Community archives provide a space for historically marginalized communities to see themselves in history. This recognition may foster a sense of belonging and provide Vietnamese in the diaspora with platforms for claiming space as well as the potential for alignment and allyship with other historically marginalized communities.

Collecting, preserving, and sharing historical materials and stories is often unglamorous hard work (and heart work) that has also disproportionately fallen on the shoulders of female or female-identified individuals. Whether in formal institutional archives or historical societies or among memory keepers for families or organizations, the work is often undervalued and underpaid (if paid at all). Replicating other divisions of labor in society, memory keeping has problematically become an extension of ways that women are expected to reproduce culture through maintaining our connections to the past. How do we continue to push back? In my experience, we must find multiple avenues, such as making visible these gendered expectations, insisting this labor be seen and valued, and claiming the intellectual contributions we make in the work of archives creation. For example, a SEAA collection of scrapbooks was donated by a former Hong Kong refugee camp director, but his wife created the six scrapbooks, meticulously assembling news clippings, photographs, correspondences, and other ephemera that documented a three-year period.[16] At the time he donated these scrapbooks, his wife had already passed away. While the materials highlighted his work, we named the collection after her, the creator, rather than him, the donor. It is important to consider how these practices of titling, attribution, and acknowledgments might call attention to the tremendous labor of those working "behind the scenes" to preserve cultural memory. Theorizing the intersection between cultural memory and feminist studies, Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith remind us to incorporate "feminist modes of knowing and listening that facilitate the work of memory and transmission" (Hirsch and Smith 2002: 1–19). In *The Memorykeepers*, Dorothy Fujita-Rony examines women's memory keeping across generations and contexts of migration. Fujita-Rony highlights ways this form of labor is gendered and argues that "women's memory-keeping creates an autonomous space for the critique of patriarchal structures and expectations" (Fujita-Rony 2021:93). Women make up more than 60 percent of the mainstream archival profession in the United States. Among Viet-

namese diaspora memory keepers, there is a dearth of public data on how many open and accessible archival and oral history projects are conducted by female or female-identified individuals. Two prominent examples are efforts grounded in a community archives framework and headed or founded by women: Viet Stories: The Vietnamese American Oral History Project (VAOHP) originating in Southern California and the Vietnamese in the Diaspora Digital Archive (ViDDA) originating in Texas provide examples of the efforts by Vietnamese Americans to preserve and make available a multiplicity of sources and voices by the community, for the community. Emerging from sites with two of the largest diasporic populations, these projects collect, preserve, and disseminate life stories of Vietnamese Americans as an intervention in public history.

With public access as the ultimate goal, these efforts highlight how, when faced with a scarcity of primary sources, we must proactively create them ourselves. Using oral history as the methodology for building a record of Vietnamese American lives, these projects and others expand the avenues in historical research. Oral history has existed for much longer than the professionalized form it has taken since the 1940s in the United States. Oral traditions and storytelling practices are part of the rich heritage of cultures around the world. The modern approach, however, rests on the work of recording, preserving, and making available these stories. These three aspects are crucial to the way that knowledge about underrepresented communities can be circulated. The interpretive work that might arise from these oral history projects may include exhibitions, book publications, digital collections, and documentary films, to name a few examples. If the intentions behind these projects are to promote multiplicity in perspectives of the past, they have great potential to challenge the symbolic annihilation of marginalized communities from the historical record.

Examples of Vietnamese American/Diaspora Archives and Oral History Projects

The following is a curated list of oral history or storytelling projects and archives on Vietnamese Americans or Vietnamese in the diaspora, with descriptions pulled from their websites. This list is not meant to be comprehensive but may provide an access point for further discovery, research, and analysis.

Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History Project at the University of California, Irvine assembles, preserves, and disseminates the life stories of Vietnamese Americans in Southern California. http://ucispace.lib.uci.edu/handle/10575/1614.

The Vietnamese in the Diaspora Digital Archive (ViDDA) documents a grassroots collection of interviews conducted and supported through the Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation (VAHF) to provide oral history resources about the Vietnamese community living abroad for students, researchers, and the general public. https://vietdiasporastories.omeka.net/.

The Vietnamese Diaspora Project works to preserve the memories of those affected by the Vietnam War and the aftermath, which led to one of the most tragic diasporas in recent history. https://vietnamesediaspora.com/.

The Vietnam War Oral History Project (VNWOHP) gathers, documents, preserves, and disseminates recorded interviews, written records, and historical artifacts pertaining to the history and consequences of the Vietnam War. https://vietnamwarohp.com/.

The Arlington County Public Library and master's degree students from Virginia Tech's Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (National Capital Region) collaborated on a project to collect the stories of the Vietnamese community who immigrated to, shopped at, or owned businesses in Arlington, Virginia's Clarendon neighborhood when it was known as Little Saigon during the late 1970s and early 1980s. https://littlesaigonclarendon.com/.

Viet Chronicle is an ongoing oral history project that records and archives the life stories of Vietnamese Americans who settled in the New Orleans metropolitan area. http://hnoc.minisisinc.com/thnoc/catalog/3/26727.

The "Becoming Texans, Becoming Americans" Oral History Project documents the stories of Vietnamese refugees who arrived in North Texas after the fall of Saigon in April 1975. https://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/doc.php/338760.pdf.

Project Yellow Dress is a storytelling platform that highlights the histories, voices, and experiences of the Southeast Asian diaspora. http://www.projectyellowdress.com.

Archives/Museums

The UCI Libraries Southeast Asian Archive collects, preserves, and makes accessible primary and secondary source materials documenting the history of the Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese diaspora. https://seaa.lib.uci.edu.

The Southeast Asian Digital Archive at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell seeks to collect, preserve, and share historical materials related to Southeast Asians in the Greater Lowell area,

with particular focus on refugee resettlement and community building from the 1970s to the present. https://www.uml.edu/research/sea-digital-archive/.

The Viet Museum or the Museum of the Boat People and Republic of Vietnam is a museum dedicated to the history of Vietnamese Americans and their journey from Vietnam to the United States. https://www.sanjose.org/listings/viet-museum.