Thirty Years Later: Reviewing the Vietnamese-American Experience

By Hien Duc Do

April 30th, 2005 marked the 30th Anniversary of the fall of South Vietnam, the end of the Vietnam War, and the sudden arrival of a large number of Vietnamese refugees to the United States. For the last 30 years, this day has been commemorated by thousands of Vietnamese Americans living in communities throughout the United States, from San Jose, CA to Falls Church, VA. It is a day with events that include memories of their homeland, criticisms of the Vietnamese government, celebration of their achievements since their arrival, a reinforcement of their ethnic solidarity, and a day to build a stronger Vietnamese American community. How and why did they resettle here? What has been their adaptation process, and how is it different from that of other immigrant groups? The following essay will offer a brief overview of the literature and recent research regarding these questions.

The 2000 census counted more than one million Vietnamese Americans living in the United States. Most Vietnamese immigrants live in urban and metropolitan areas with well-developed and vibrant ethnic communities. One of the major differences between the Vietnamese immigrants and other more recent immigrant communities is their original status as refugees from an unpopular and divisive war involving the United States. Because of all the controversies regarding that war, their initial reception in 1975 was mixed. Some Americans opposed their resettlement because of their negative views of the war, and because of their fear of negative economic and social impacts on American society. There were others, however, who welcomed the refugees because of their support for people fleeing a communist regime and because of their humanitarian beliefs.

We will not discuss here the many books, articles and films about the Vietnam War itself. One of the triggering events that led to the collapse of South Vietnam was the “Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet-Nam,” signed in Paris, France on January 28, 1973 by representatives of the United States government, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). Under this agreement, the United States agreed to withdraw its military and economic support, which accelerated the deterioration and the downfall of South Vietnam. The flight of the Vietnamese refugees began within the country with the North Vietnamese military offensive of mid-March 1975, and ended on April 30, 1975 when Saigon, the capital of South Viet Nam, came under the control of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. This resulted in the arrival of the newest Asian refugee group to the United States at the time.

Social scientists have generally divided Vietnamese emigration history into two periods, each with several “waves” (Kelly, 1977; Nguyen, 1985). The first period began in April 1975 and continued through 1977. This period included the first three waves of Vietnamese refugees to the United States. The first wave, with some ten to fifteen thousand people, began a week to ten days before the collapse of the government. The second wave involved some eighty thousand people who were evacuated by aircraft during the last days of April. The final wave during this period involved forty to sixty thousand people who left on their own in small boats, ships, and commandeered aircraft during the first two weeks of May 1975. They were later transferred to Subic Bay and Clark Air Force base in the Philippines and to the island of Guam after having been picked up, in many cases, by the United States Navy and cargo ships standing off the coast of Vietnam.

The second period of the Vietnamese refugees migration began in 1978 and continues even today. Since the fall of South Vietnam, many Vietnamese have tried to escape the political oppression and the major social, political and economic reforms instituted by the new Vietnamese communist government. The numbers are no longer as massive as they once were. A significant characteristic of this period, especially between the years 1978 to 1980, is the large number of ethnic Chinese migrating out of Vietnam and Cambodia (St. Carmine 1983; Whitmore, 1985). There were many Vietnamese who also left during this period. These individuals have been called “Vietnamese boat people” because the majority of them escaped in homemade, poorly constructed boats and wooden vessels (Grant, 1979; Haskins, 1980; Wain, 1981). This was a very dangerous process because of the poor conditions of many of the boats, the escapees' scant knowledge of navigational skills, the limited amount of provisions they were able to bring and, finally, numerous attacks by Thai sea pirates. The death rate of the “Vietnamese boat people” was very high.

To minimize the social and economic impact of the large influx of refugees, President Gerald Ford adopted the Refugee Dispersion Policy. This policy served four purposes: to relocate the Vietnamese refugees as quickly as possible; to ease the impact of a large group of refugees on a given community; to make it logistically (continued on p. 8)
News from Libraries, Museums and Research Institutes...

The cornerstone of the German Immigration Center in Bremerhaven was laid on October 6, 2004. The scheduled opening of the center, which its founders say will be the largest emigration museum in Europe, is set for August 8, 2005. Information about the museum and the progress in its construction can be found on the web page: http://www.dah-bremerhaven.de

The Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota has added to its collections additional records of the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, 1948-1990; additional records of the International Institute of Minnesota, 1975-present; supplementary records of the International Institute of New Jersey, 1930s-1987; papers of Joseph Rukavina, Croatian community leader in the Twin Cities. Information on the web at http://www.ihrc.umn.edu/

The Polish American Historical Association invites nominations from both members and non-members for its annual awards. The Oscar Halecki Prize honors an important book on the Polish experience in the United States. The Knijczycki Prize is awarded for an important dissertation on the Polish experience in the United States, to assist in its publication as a book. Other awards include the Creative Arts Award, Civic Achievement Awards, and the Amicus Poloniae Award. Nominations must be received by June 15, 2005. To nominate someone for these prizes, or for further information, contact Prof. Neal Pease, Dept. of History, Univ. Of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. E-mail: pease@uwmx.edu.


The Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation’s traveling exhibit about Angel Island has been currently showing at the University Library, California State Univ., Hayward, through May 31. The exhibit is available for display by other museums in the future. For information, contact info@aiisaf.org

The formation of a Chinese Canadian Historical Society of British Columbia has been announced. Further information about the society is on the web at http://www.cchsbc.ca/


The National Archives and Records Administration has published a new finding guide, Guide to Records of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders at the National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region-San Francisco (NARA reference information paper 111, 2004). Information by e-mail:

sanbruno.archives@nara.gov

Two new exhibits on Chinese Americans can be found currently in Nevada. At the Nevada State Railroad Museum, 2180 South Carson, Carson City, through Dec. 30, 2005 is an exhibit on Chinese in lumbering in the Sierra Nevada. At the Fourth Ward School Museum, 5327 S. C St., Virginia City, is an exhibit on Chinese on the Comstock Lode (through Oct. 30).

NECROLOGY

Rev. William Wolkovich-Valkavicus, prominent scholar of Lithuanian-American studies, died Jan. 12, 2005 in Marlborough, Massachusetts. He was 75 years of age. Ordained in 1953, he served in various parishes in Massachusetts, most recently in Norwood, in addition to his scholarly work. His major work was Lithuanian Religious Life in America (3 vols., 1980-1988).

CARLTON QUALEY AWARD

At the annual meeting of the IEHS in San Jose on April 2, 2005, the biennial Carlton Qualey award for the best article published in the Journal of American Ethnic History was presented to Russell A. Kazal of the University of Toronto. His article was "The Intervar Origins of the White Ethnic: Race, Residence, and German Philadelphia, 1917-1939" (Journal of American Ethnic History 23, no. 4 [summer 2004]:78-131).

PERSONALS

Mary Patrice Erdma (Central Connecticut State University) has been elected president of the Polish American Historical Association.

Donna Gabaccia, currently Mellon Professor of History at the University of Pittsburgh, has been appointed director of the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota. She will also hold the new Rudolph J. Vecoli Professorship in the Department of History at Minnesota. She will succeed Rudolph Vecoli, who will retire this summer.

At the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians on April 2, Mae M. Ngai (University of Chicago) received the Frederick Jackson Turner Award for an author’s first book. Her book was Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America (Princeton Univ. Press). On the same day, Prof. Ngai received the Theodore Saloutos Award from the IEHS for the same book (see p. 6).

Also at the OAH, Michel Cordillot (Université Paris 8) received the Willi Paul Adams Award for the best book on American history published in a foreign language. His book was The Democratic and Social Republic in America: French Speaking Radicals in the USA: A Biographical Dictionary, 1848-1922 (Editions de l’Atelier).

FROM THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Current chair of the IEHS Program Committee is Ronald Bayer (Georgia Institute of Technology), vice-president and president-elect of the Society. The committee coordinates proposals for sessions that the IEHS will sponsor at major academic conferences. Members who have ideas for panels or papers for forthcoming conferences through 2007 can contact the program committee chair: Ronald Bayer, Georgia Institute of Technology, Dept. of History, Technology and Society, Atlanta GA 30332. E-mail: Ronald.Bayer@hts.gatech.edu
MINUTES OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD AND BUSINESS MEETING  
THE IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HISTORY SOCIETY  
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, APRIL 2, 2005  

John Bukowczyk, editor of the Journal of American Ethnic History—since fall 2004 and beginning with the JAEH Fall 2005 (24:1) issue—opened the meeting of the Editorial Board at 4:45 p.m. He reported that the journal has continued to be released on schedule and that the statistics of manuscripts accepted, reviewed, and rejected compare with the preceding years. He noted that he is considering publishing an anniversary issue, marking the Journal’s twenty-fifth year. Reporting on subscriptions and the trend from previous years, Bukowczyk noted a slight decline for the year 2004-2005, with total active subscribers at 767; these include institutions, 407; individuals, 281; students, 14; foreign subscribers, 85; and complimentary/exchange copies, 65. He felt the decline was minimal, but the low number of student subscribers was troublesome for the future of the organization. The reduction in institutional subscriptions reflected, he believed, the “crisis of academic publishing.” Bukowczyk noted also that many who submit manuscripts to the Journal are not members, and some editorial board members have allowed their subscriptions to lapse. He is seeking to address these issues.

Regarding finances, he reported that Wayne State University appears to provide less support for him than Ron Bayor received at Georgia Tech, since he has neither a student assistant nor secretarial help. If IEHS were to offer assistance, he noted, this may present financial burdens on the Society in the future. Victor Greene asked what amount the IEHS provided to the Journal; Barkan reported about $500 was given in the past. Regarding personnel, Bukowczyk reported that all JAEH Board members were retained in the transition to the new editorship. The Book Review Editor, however, has resigned, effective June 30, 2005. Elliott Barkan is seeking a replacement. Some discussion emerged regarding the submission of articles and book reviews. Moses Rischin proposed the shock value of reviewing books and subjects on the edge. Barkan reported that the Book Review Policy was expanded under his editorship to include works in other disciplines, such as sociology, and that the strength of the journal is its breadth.

The IEHS President, Elliott Barkan, then opened the Annual Meeting. Tim Bergquist moved and Cheryl Greenberg seconded the motion to approve the minutes from the 2004 meeting. The motion carried. Barkan recognized those members of the Executive Board that will be stepping down after three years and thanked them for their service: Eric Arnesen, Nora Faires, and Dorothee Schneider. Barkan also thanked Eric Arnesen for preparing the e-mail list of the IEHS members. He wishes to expand the list and stated that Transaction has requested that members submit e-mail addresses. He also reported that the IEHS needs to expand its list of “Specialists” and invited members to consider this. Noting evidence of interest in the Society, he reported that there have been over 15,000 “hits” on the IEHS Website.

IEHS Secretary Betty Bergland reported the results of the election for the new Executive Board members. The new members elected (continued on p. 5)

Message from the IEHS President

Dear Colleagues, 

I am sure most of you learned one way or another that the OAH, rather than cross picket lines of striking hotel workers in San Francisco, chose to relocate the entire convention to San Jose. It appears about 400 persons chose not to switch, and thus the convention was far quieter than usual. These events affected us as well. Not only did we relocate our annual dinner to a Cuban restaurant in San Jose but, for the first time that I can remember, we were unable to muster a quorum in order to conduct business officially at our business meeting. I hope that we do not go through that again and that our members will take the time in the future to attend our business meeting and annual dinner. The next time will be April 21, 2006, in Washington, DC.

Although we could not vote on the proposed amendment to include the new Higham Travel Grant Award committee as a standing one or on some financial items, other topics were informally covered, including the results of the election to our Executive Board, the financial status of the Society (good), our participation in the National Coalition for History, our application to participate on one of the Census Bureau advisory committees for the 2010 census, my representing the IEHS at the conference May 12-14 to honor Rudy Vecoli (who is retiring as director of the Immigration History Research Center), and a lengthy discussion concerning the possibility of a third major conference to be sponsored by the Society. That was not resolved because it is a costly and complex undertaking. However, Alan Kaut, Hasia Diner and I did sign a contract with NYU Press to publish a collection of 12 revised essays from the 2003 conference in New York City in a collection tentatively entitled Borders, Boundaries, and Bonds: America and Its Immigrants in Eras of Globalization. The plan is for this book to be published in 2006. Half the royalties will go to the IEHS.

Finally, I wish to reach out to all of you concerning several matters: First, we need your email address because matters do arise that warrant our trying to reach you more promptly. And, I hasten to add, this list will not be sold or shared with any other organization. So, please, just email me at ebnarkan@csusb.edu and say hello so I can incorporate your address on the list I currently have. Second, we are eager to expand our list of “specialists” on the IEHS web site and I would welcome hearing from you. It is a good reflection on our Society if we can present an extensive list of members who possess special skills and/or bodies of knowledge.

Third, and very critically, this Society was founded during the era when the Ellis Island mentality was still predominant and most newcomers had come from Europe, or rather most scholars studying immigration were looking eastward to Europe rather than northward to Canada, southward to Mexico and the Caribbean, and westward to Asia and the Pacific. You are certainly aware that we cannot sustain this organization by remaining principally fixed on European migrations, although newcomers do continue to come from there. Not only is migration now thoroughly global in origin but considerations of race in relation to migrants and refugees (as well as gender, class, and religion) are also inescapable. We need to (continued on p. 5)
Conferences and Meetings...


Syracuse University and its College of Visual and Performing Arts plan a conference Oct. 6-8 in Syracuse: "Contesting Public Memory." "Our sense of the contention of public memories includes: efforts to resist, resurrect memories, or redefine memories, etc." Full information on the web at http://www.vpa.syr.edu/crs/memories.htm

The Chinese Historical Society of America and San Francisco State University are organizing a conference Oct. 7-9, 2005 in San Francisco. Theme: "Branching Out the Banyan Tree: A Changing Chinese America." Further information on the web at http://www.chsa.org/

The 10th International Metropolis Conference on international migration will take place in Toronto, Oct. 17-21, 2005. Theme: "Our Diverse Cities: Migration, Diversity and Change." For information and registration, see the web-page at http://www.toronto.ca/metropolis/

The Oral History Association has scheduled its annual meeting Nov. 2-6, 2005 in Providence, Rhode Island. Theme: "Voices of Dissent, Voices of Hope." Further information on the web at http://dickinson.edu/oha/


The American Italian Historical Association will hold its 38th annual conference in Los Angeles, November 3-6, 2005. Theme: "Speaking Memory: Oral History, Oral Culture and Italians in America." Paper and panel proposals accepted until June 1, 2005. Contact the conference chairperson: Luisa del Giudice, Italian Oral History Institute, PO Box 241553, Los Angeles CA 90024-1553, tel. 310-474-1698. E-mail: husadg@humnet.ucla.edu Information also on the web at http://www.aiha.fsu.edu/

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania will hold a symposium Nov. 5, 2005: "Pennsylvanians Behaving Badly: Violence, Disorder, and Transgression." Say the organizers: "The symposium aims to explore the ways in which violence and transgression mark social, economic and political fault lines and define or redefine individuals and groups' relationships to one another and the state." Paper submissions accepted until July 1, 2005; include a 500-700 word summary and a brief curriculum vitae. Contact: Kathryn Wilson, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust St., Philadelphia PA 19107. E-mail: kwilson@hsp.org

The McNeil Center for Early American Studies in Philadelphia sponsors the fifth annual New Sweden History Conference, Nov. 19, 2005. Theme: "New Sweden and its European Neighbors." The conference "will examine relations between the seventeenth-century Swedish colonists and their Swedish- and Finnish-American descendants of the eighteenth century, on the one hand, and other European-American residents of the Delaware Valley over the period from the 1630s until the end of the Revolutionary War." One-page abstracts, accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae will be received until July 1, 2005. Contact the McNeil Center, 3619 Locust Walk, 3rd floor, Philadelphia PA 19104-6213. E-mail: mcas@cat.sas.upenn.edu


The Centre d’Histoire Sociale du XVe Siècle (Université Paris 1, Panthéon Sorbonne) is organizing a conference to be held March 27-29, 2006 at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. Theme: "History, Gender and Migration (Atlantic World, XIXth and XXth centuries)." Submissions are solicited by Oct. 1, 2005, and should include a 1000-word proposal, one-page curriculum vitae, contact information and a previous paper or references to published work. Language of presentation may be either French or English. Some travel aid may be available. For further information or to submit proposals, contact Philippe Rygiel, Centre d’histoire sociale du XVe siècle, 9 rue Mahler, 75004 Paris, France. E-mail: prygiel@ens.fr

The next annual meeting of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society will take place at the meeting of the Organization of American Historians in Washington, DC, April 19-22, 2006.

The Norwegian-American Historical Association, Norway Chapter, will hold its ninth seminar June 21-23, 2006 at Telemark University College, Be i Telemark, Norway. Theme: "Migration and Memory: Norwegian-American Dimensions." NAHA-Norway encourages papers from many academic disciplines. Presentations should be limited to twenty minutes and may be in either English or Norwegian. Prospective speakers are invited to submit a half-page proposal and a one-page curriculum vitae. Deadline: Nov. 1, 2005. For further information, or submission of papers: Dina Tølfsby, Norwegian-American Collection, National Library of Norway, Oslo Division, PO Box 2674 Soll, N-0203 Oslo, Norway. E-mail: dina.tolfsby@nb.no
Minutes of the Annual Meeting...
(continued from p. 3)

for a three year term are Thomas Dublin, State University of New York at Binghamton, Madeline Hsu, San Francisco State University, and Susanne Simke, Florida State University. The new members to the Executive Board were congratulated. She reported that eighty ballots were received from IEHS members, a number consistent with past elections.

IEHS Treasurer Diane Vecchio gave the Treasurer’s Report. The current balance of $5,441.89 is approximately $2,000 less than the balance one year earlier of $7,338.66. She explained that part of the problem had to do with the lack of a firm schedule of payments from Transaction. Barkan added that he discussed this issue with Transaction Publishers and it was agreed that a set schedule of payments would be made to the IEHS on March 15 and September 15, which would then be reflected consistently in the Treasurer’s Report. Vecchio called our attention to the fact that IEHS/OAH contributions to the John Hopkin Fund totaled $11,449.83.

Jim Bergquist, the IEHS Newsletter Editor, presented his report. He noted that S80 copies were sent this year. Also he reported that he was able to reduce the cost of the mailing to $28.00 (from $37.00) because of changes in mailing procedures. He also reported that he is always looking for information and for pedagogical and historiographical articles for the Newsletter.

President Barkan then reported that two IEHS-sponsored sessions will be presented at the 2005 OAH Annual Meeting: “Foreign States, Diplomats, and Consuls among Immigrants in Twentieth-Century America,” and “Portraying Immigration and Ethnic History through Exhibits.”

President Barkan noted that the IEHS is a member of the Board of the National Coalition for History, an organization that lobbies for history matters at the federal level and monitors legislation. He recently attended its meeting and reported that the coalition is in financial crisis. Currently, the IEHS contributes $500, and Barkan proposed increasing that amount. Victor Greene recommended increasing the amount by $100.00. Since a quorum was not reached at the meeting, no vote could be taken. Barkan said he would consider having the Board vote on this via email.

The Committee Chairs then made their reports. Ron Bayor, Program Committee Chair announced that six proposals had been submitted for conferences in 2006, to AHA, OAH and SSHA. Results from these submissions, however, had not yet been received.

Victor Greene, representing the Higham Award Committee, reported that this year there were eight submissions for the Higham Award. He recommended that in the future applicants send a brief statement of their research and whether they will present a paper at OAH. Barkan stated that to ensure continuity and consistency, he wanted one Executive Board member on each of the Awards Committees.

Barkan then addressed Old Business. Transaction Publishers will hereafter submit funds from dues to the IEHS Treasurer semi-annually, on September 15 and March 15. Barkan said that the tabled amendments from the last meeting would remain tabled. The By-Law proposal for this year will be held in abeyance because of the absence of a quorum. And there are currently no proposals for a revised logo.

Barkan then turned to New Business. The first item discussed was the possibility of a third conference. Bukowczak asked, why sponsor a conference? Barkan stated it gives visibility and publicity to the Society. Greene asked if there were any concrete advantage. Barkan noted that the NYU Press had signed a contract to publish the proceedings of the last conference. There was no prior authorization from the Society, however, so it will not be an IEHS publication. It is due to be completed by September 2005; it will be edited by Elliott Barkan, Hasita Diner and Alan Kraut. Bayor asked if we received any more members, students or money from the ventures; he thought, it seemed not. The discussion then moved toward possible future conferences. Green suggested that conferences should also include new approaches and historiography—not just contemporary concerns. Barkan noted that diverse groups sponsored sessions at NYU. Bergquist stated that it would be important to have university affiliation. Vecchio proposed that a broad topic would attract more interest and contributions, and she proposed a focus on new migration in the South. Green suggested that we might open it up to the Bahamas and/or Central America. Bergquist stated that the advantage of a conference is the promotion of scholarship. Barkan said that they will continue to explore conference possibilities.

Barkan then reported on what he was doing about committee structures, arguing that IEHS committee procedures had been haphazard and stating, “We need to stop this.” Therefore, he will lay out specific guidelines for the processing of the Award Committees and the Nominating Committee to eliminate the confusion and repetitive steps by committees and the president.

The last item discussed was outreach to others. Greene pointed out that regular communications were important and that an exchange of newsletters could be valuable. Chan asked what benefits can the Society provide to others, that this is an important consideration in outreach efforts. Rischin proposed that a personal link with others is critical. Greene suggested that something might be done for the 25th Anniversary of the JAEH. Bukowczak proposed a reception. Chen suggested a committee discuss this.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m. and moved to the Habana Cuba Restaurant for the annual banquet. [Members present never exceeded 13, and according to the IEHS By-Laws 15 constitutes a quorum.]

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Berglund
IEHS Secretary

Message from the President...
(Continued from p. 3)

rethink our organizational mission and explore ways to expand our presence so that we explicitly represent—and boldly convey that we do—all types and origins of migration. If we do, hopefully we can thereby more effectively attract members who are involved with Latino, Canadian, Caribbean, Pacific Island, African, and Southeast, South, and Western Asian peoples and migrations. And maybe that also means it may be time to rethink the name of our organization in order to be more inclusive.

If you have any suggestions, ideas, comments, etc., please let me hear from you. It is essential that we address these matters in a forthright way. Thanks, and be well.

Elliott Barkan
President, IEHS

Visit the IEHS web page at http://www.iehs.org
THEODORE SALOUTOS BOOK AWARD, 2004

The annual Theodore Saloutos Book Award for the outstanding book of the year in American immigration and ethnic history was made to Mae Ngai, University of Chicago, for her book Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America (Princeton Univ.). The committee consisted of Madeleine Hsu (San Francisco State U.), chair; April Schultz (Illinois Wesleyan Univ.); and Dorothee Schneider (Univ. of Illinois). The award was made at the annual dinner of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society in San Jose, April 2, 2005. The citation follows:

The committee very quickly fixed upon Mae Ngai’s Impossible Subjects as this year’s honoree. This rapid decision did not stem from a lack of competition, for the committee read many wonderful monographs displaying painstaking research and carefully crafted arguments and narratives that greatly enriched and defined the field. However, most immigration and ethnic history monographs tend to focus on single ethnic groups in particular locations—a scholarly necessity because of the highly localized and historically specific processes attending the experiences of different racial and ethnic groups.

Professor Ngai’s Impossible Subjects, however, takes as its focus the historical evolution of the concept and practice of “illegal aliens” during a broad historical period extending from the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act through the more general 1965 Immigration Act and up to the present. She emphasizes the contradictions between the individuals that cross borders and the legal and racialized construction of some of those persons as perpetually alien to the American nation. Professor Ngai writes, “Immigration protection produced the illegal alien as a new legal and political subject, whose inclusion within the nation was simultaneously a social reality and a legal impossibility—a subject barred from citizenship and without rights... The illegal alien is thus an ‘impossible subject,’ a person who cannot be and a problem that cannot be solved.” (4-5) For certain groups, the lack of access to legal entry forever restricted their ability to attain legal residency, much less the protections of citizenship. They become a permanent subcaste of illegal aliens with increasingly limited rights in the United States.

By focusing on a conceptual category critical to understanding immigration policy and national identity, Professor Ngai is able to conduct comparative analyses that is far broader in scope than most studies of immigration and ethnicity. Impossible Subjects brings together the histories of Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos, Canadians, Europeans and other groups. Her inquiry also breaches disciplinary walls by integrating the related sets of questions raised by the historical subfields of legal, institutional, judicial, foreign relations and social history.

Building upon a truly impressive breadth of archival research, Professor Ngai recounts with scholarly mastery the many stories and detailed shifts in law and practice attending the racialization of illegal aliens. Despite the complexity of this terrain, she shapes a rigorous argument and narrative that always retains in view the oftentimes tragic consequences imposed by differential laws and practice upon “impossible subjects” whose only crime is to try to escape poverty by seeking better lives in the United States. Impossible Subjects is an inspiring example of the highest of intellectual standards that is also, a deeply humane book.

Other New Publications Noted...


Anagnostou, Yiorgos. "Forget the Past, Remember the Ancestors! Modernity, Whiteness," American Hellenism, and the Politics of Memory in Early Greek America.”


Conzen, Kathleen N. "Immigrant Religion and the Republic: German Catholics in Nineteenth-Century America." Bulletin of the German Historical Institute 36 (Fall 2004), 43-56.


Grans, Grant W. "Sankt Raphaels Vernein and German-Catholic Emigration to Canada From 1919 to 1939." Catholic Historical Review 91 (2005): 83-104.


McDonald, Victoria-Maria, ed. Latino Education in the United States: A Narrated (continued on p. 9)
Thirty Years Later...
(continued from p. 1)

easier to find sponsors; and to prevent the
development of ethnic ghettos (Liu, 1979).
This policy was driven by political and
financial factors, not social considerations
(Kelly, 1977).

As a result, nine voluntary agencies were
contracted by the government's Interagency
Task Force to handle the resettlement of the
refugees in the United States. These voluntary
agencies were to find sponsors that
were able to fulfill both financial and moral
responsibilities and match them with refugees' families. The responsibilities included
providing temporary food, clothing and
shelter, assistance in finding employment
or job training for the head of the household,
ensuring the children in school and
finally, providing ordinary medical care (Liu, 1979)). In short, the sponsors would serve as a resource to introduce the
refugees into the society while they become
economically independent.

There were four ways for the refugees to
leave the temporary refugee camps: resettlement to a third country, obtaining repatriation to Vietnam; demonstrating proof of
being financially self-supportive, or finding a sponsor through the voluntary agencies
(Kelly, 1977). The method most frequently
used by Vietnamese refugees was the family
sponsorship method. The other three ways
were impractical and difficult. Only a
small number of refugees chose to return to
Viet Nam. Darelle Montero and Martha
Weber (1979) reported that "by October
1975, repatriation had been granted to
1,546 refugees." The majority were
docile men who were forced to leave their
families behind at the time of their evacuation. Similarly, given the nature of their
plight, very few refugees had the required
resources and few other countries offered
their assistance.

As a result, sponsors found by voluntary
agencies consisted of religious congregations, parishes or affiliates, individual
groups, corporations, and companies with
former Vietnamese employees. If the refuge
ges had relatives who could fulfill the
same requirements, they could qualify as
sponsors as well. However, Skinner (1980)
reported only 15,000 Vietnamese living in
the United States prior to 1975. Most of
these individuals were students staying
temporarily on visas, former diplomats, or
wives of American soldiers. In essence,
there was no Vietnamese-American community and thus this method hardly applied to
the first waves of refugees.

Nevertheless, the Vietnamese from the first
waves used the family sponsorship method
more frequently at a later time in order to
sponsor family and relatives who were stranded in Vietnam after 1975. The primary
ways in which this method was used was
through the implementation of two Federal
Government sponsored programs that resulted from the Conference on Indochinese
Refugees held in Geneva, Switzerland on
June 14, 1980. These programs were the
Orderly Departure Program and the Humanitarian Operation Program. The goal of
these programs, as stated in congressional
hearings, was to "provide Vietnamese a
visible alternative to dangerous clandestine
departure by boat or over land." Many Vietname families who arrived during the first
and second period, and who now have citizen-
ship or permanent residence status, used the
first category to bring family members to
the United States.

There were also others who arrived under
the Humanitarian Operation Program. The
majority of these individuals were older
refugees who spent their adulthood as soldiers or civil servants in the South Vietnamese
government. They would qualify under the
HO Program if they were imprisoned in
"re-education" or labor camps for a number
of years and could demonstrate this fact. As
a result of spending many years doing physi-
cal labor with limited nourishment in unbear-
able conditions, many of the people who
came under this program were physically,
psychologically and emotionally spent when
they arrived. This group within the Viet-
namese American community has faced
many problems in adjusting to life in the US
(Tran, 2000).

Vietnamese American communities have
continued to form, develop and expand over
the last 30 years. Although the initial group
of Vietnamese refugees was dispersed
throughout the United States, they have
since congregated in several states after their
initial arrival. There are many reasons why
these communities formed in specific states.
First, most communities were a result of the
patterns of sponsorship during the initial
arrival. In other words, communities tended
to form in cities and states that initially
received more refugees than others. This
created both a critical mass and the opportu-
nity for people to seek out each other for
friendship in a new environment. From
there, certain needs that were unfulfilled,
including food, social services, and religious
support, were developed and provided by the
people themselves. Family reunification was
an important variable that compelled people
to migrate. Those with extended families
who were originally separated sought ways
to live closer to their families in order to
receive support from this kinship network.

Second, most refugees chose to migrate to
states with job opportunities, especially those
that required little English proficiency and
specific skills. These tended to be jobs in
the high-tech industry, as assembly line
workers, as low-level technicians, as quality
control workers, in low-end manufacturing
positions, in the service sector, and in gar-
ment, agricultural, and similar industries.
Third, they concentrated in areas where the
cost of housing and overall cost of living
was reasonable (at the time) so that they
could fulfill the dream of home ownership.
Fourth, most of the communities were
formed in areas where the weather was
milder than their original destinations and
more like the weather in Vietnam. These
and other variables played a significant role
in the secondary migration process that led
to the continuing development of Vietnamese American communities throughout the
United States but concentrated in a few
states. Data from the 2000 Census indicate
that California is still the state most pre-
ferred by Vietnamese immigrants, followed
by Texas, Washington, Virginia, Louisiana,
Florida, and Pennsylvania. These seven
countries together include almost 73% of the
total number of Vietnamese immigrants in
the United States.

One of the benefits that Vietnamese Ameri-
cans have enjoyed since their arrival in 1975 is a more tolerant climate in the United
States compared to other times in American
history. America has gone through tremen-
duous social, political, educational, and reli-
gious changes as a result of the civil rights
movement, the anti-war movement, and the
emergence of minorities of color as a social
and political force. In addition, the 1965
Immigration Act had a tremendous impact
on race relations in America (Chan, 1991,
Warner, 1999, Eck, 2001). This legislation opened the door for immigration by allowing many different immigrants to enter the United States. It also allowed them to bring their own culture, ethnic background, and, more importantly, their religions. In short, for Vietnamese refugees, although there was tremendous pressure to quickly assimilate economically, there was much less pressure to assimilate socially and religiously. As such, they were allowed to practice their religions without much interference and scrutiny and with much more freedom than at any other time in history.

While their initial focus was economic survival and adaptation to life in America, Vietnamese have recently turned their attention to claiming a voice in America by participating in all the available social, political, economic and educational institutions. Although they originally focused on homeland politics and the overthrow of the Vietnamese Communist government, with the coming of age of a new generation they have expanded their activity into issues in the United States as well. While they continue to bring attention to the issues of human rights violations and religious persecution in Viet Nam to Congress and the public with demonstrations, petitions, and full-page advertising in newspapers, they have also focused on issues relating to their status in the United States. To this end, there is an increase in the numbers of Vietnamese Americans engaged in the political process in recent years with a number of Vietnamese Americans running for political office. There are also recent indications of Vietnamese Americans building coalitions and alliances with other groups, especially in demanding more accountability from the local police and legal institutions.

References

Hien Duc Do is Professor of Social Science at San Jose State University. He is the author of The Vietnamese Americans (Greenwood Press, 1999). His current research centers on the role of religion in immigrant communities.

New Publications....
(continued from p. 7)
Portuguese Studies Review, vol. 11, no. 2 (July 2004) is a special issue on “Luso-Canadians: The Portuguese in Canada.”
Quirroz, Anthony. Claiming Citizenship: Mexican Americans in Victoria, Texas, College Station: Texas A & M University, 2005.
Romero, Roht C. “Transnational Chinese Immigrant Smuggling to the United States (continued on p. 10)
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New Publications...
(continued from p. 9)
via Mexico and Cuba, 1882-1916." American


Scour, Jennifer. "Exploring Personal History: A Case Study of an Italian Immig-


Toussaint-Conne, Manude and Sherrie L. Whine. "Tenure Choice with Location Selection: The Case of Hispanic Neighbor-


Weinreich, Leo Shab. Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History. New Har-

Rae U., 2005.


Yung, Judy, "A Bowlful of Tears" Revis-


Ziogas, Victor and Ruben Hernandez-Leon, eds. New Destinations: Mexican Immig-

Wanted: Book Review Editor
Journal of American Ethnic History

The Immigration and Ethnic History Society is now seeking a Book Review Editor for its Journal of American Ethnic History. The Book Review Editor is responsible for selecting, requesting, receiving, and distributing books for review, identifying and recruiting reviewers, editing, summarizing, and arranging book reviews and review essays for each journal issue. The Journal publishes about 80-100 book reviews and 5-10 review essays per year and operates under quarterly deadlines (March 1, June 1, September 1, December 1).

The Book Review Editor should have good editorial, administrative, and organizational skills; broad knowledge of the immigration and ethnic history fields; and institutional support sufficient to perform the functions of the position and cover the costs of materials, postage, shipping, telephone, and especially editing assistance.

The Book Review Editor works in cooperation with the journal editor, who oversees final submissions, scheduling, and production of the journal. Preferably, the term of appointment is five years. The Book Review Editor must also be, or be willing to become, a member of the IEHES. The start date for the job is July 1, 2005, or as soon thereafter as possible. The position is uncompensated except for what the Book Review Editor may arrange with his or her department.

For further information about the IEHES and its publications, go to www.iehes.org. For more information about this position, or to apply for it, please contact: Elliot B. Barkan, president, Immigration and Ethnic History Society, Dept. of History, Calif. State University, San Bernardino CA 92407-2397.
The Book Review Editor should also coordinate the book review section.

E-mail: ebarkan@csusb.edu

HIGHAM TRAVEL AWARDS, 2005

Three John Higham travel grants to attend the 2005 Organization of American Historians annual meetings and to the 2005 annual meeting of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society (IEHES) and the OAH were awarded to graduate students Victoria Cala (Columbia University), Christopher Nicholas, (Univ. of Virginia) and Yaroslava浏览 (University of California at Los Angeles).

Activities Report for the Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter

Mail your information for the next newsletter to:
James M. Bergquist, Department of History, Villanova University, Villanova PA 19085-1699 or FAX a copy to (610) 519-4450 or send information via E-Mail to: James.Bergquist@villanova.edu

Your name and affiliation:

IHS News Notes...

THOEBE SALOUTOS BOOK AWARD

Closing date for submissions for the annual Theodore Saloutos Book Award is December 31, 2005. To be eligible, a book must be copyrighted 2005. A book may be nominated by the author, the publisher, a member of the prize committee, or a member of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society. Nominations and inquiries should be submitted to the chair of the Saloutos Prize Committee, Dorothea Schneider, 512 West Washington, Urbana IL 61801. E-mail: dorethschneider@gmail.com

Copies of the book must be received by all three members of the committee by Dec. 31, 2005. Send books to Dr. Schneider at the address above, and also to Prof. April Schelske, Dept. of History, Illinois Wesleyan Univ., Bloomington IL 61702-2000, and to Prof. Madeline Hsu, Dept. of Asian American Studies, San Francisco State University, 1600 Holloway Ave., San Francisco CA 94132.

JOHN HIGHAM TRAVEL GRANT

The Organization of American Historians and the Immigration and Ethnic History Society (IEHES) have created a fund in memory of John Higham (1920-2003), past president of both groups. With fully financed, Higham Grants of $500 each will be given to up to three graduate students each year to facilitate their OAH/IEHES annual meeting attendance. Preferred candidates will be those with interests related to those of Higham: American immigration/ethnic history or American intellectual history. Candidates should submit applications by December 1, 2005 for the 2005 OAH meeting. Required information: current and permanent addresses, educational background, degrees received and expected, current institution and status, lists of publications and papers, and travel funds available from other sources. Applicants should include a short statement (not over 300 words) about how they envision the annual meeting will help prepare them for a career in history. Applications should be sent electronically (Word format only) to Higham@OAH.org Grants will be announced in early February 2006.

New Board Members and Editors

Members elected to three-year terms on the executive board of the IEHES are: Thomas Dutil, SUNY Binghamton, Madison Hu, San Francisco State University; and Sonzana Sukoo, Florida State University.

GEORGE POZZETTA DISSERTATION AWARD

At the annual dinner of the IEHES on April 2, the Immigration and Ethnic History Society named two co-recipients who will share the George E. Pazzetta Award. The two are: David J. Lavige, University of Minnesota, for his project "Black Menli: Race, Ethnicity and Nation on the Mesabi Iron Range"; and John W. Weber III, College of William and Mary, for his project "The Shadow of the Revolution: South Texas, the Mexican American Working Class."

The Immigration and Ethnic History Society announces competition for the 2006 George E. Pozzetta Award. It invites applications from any Ph.D. candidate who will have completed qualifying examinations by Dec. 1, 2005 and whose thesis focuses on American immigration, emigration, or ethnic history. The award provides a sum for expenses to be incurred in researching the dissertation. Applicants must submit a 3-5 page descriptive proposal in English, discussing the significance of the work, the methodology, sources and collections to be consulted. Also included must be a proposed budget, a brief curriculum vitae, and a supporting letter from the major advisor. All materials must be received by each committee member by Dec. 15, 2005, which is the deadline. Send materials in hard copy (no Faxes accepted) to Deirdre Moloney (chair of the committee), Dept. of History, St. Francis Univ., Loretto PA 15940; and to Cindy Habemann, Dept. of History, College of William and Mary, PO Box 9795, Williamsburg VA 23187-2975, and to Karen Chen, Dept. of History, 239 Murray Krieger Hall, University of California-Irvine Irvine CA 92697-3273. Inquiries may be sent to Prof. Moloney at dmoloney@francis.edu.
THE IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HISTORY SOCIETY

...was founded in 1965 as the Immigration History Group. It was chartered in 1972 as the Immigration History Society. In 1998 the Society, which had traditionally dealt with ethnicity as well as immigration, changed its name to the Immigration and Ethnic History Society.

The purpose of the Society is to promote the study of the history of immigration to the United States and Canada from all parts of the world, including studies of the background of emigration in the countries of origin; to promote the study of ethnic groups in the United States, including regional groups, native Americans and forced immigrants; to promote understanding of the processes of acculturation and of conflict; to furnish through the Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter information as to research, organizations, meetings and publications in the field of immigrant history; to help organize sessions on immigration and ethnicity at meetings of learned societies; and generally to serve the field of immigration-ethnic history with special reference to professional scholarship.

MEMBERSHIP

...in the Society includes subscriptions to the quarterly Journal of American Ethnic History and the semiannual Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter. Dues for individuals: one year, $40; 2 years, $75; 3 years, $105. Dues for institutions: one year, $130; 2 years, $255; 3 years, $356. Students: 1 year, $15. For all subscriptions outside U.S.A. and Canada, add $30. Membership dues should be sent to John Bukowczyk, editor, Journal of American Ethnic History, Dept. of History, 3094 Faculty/Administration Building, Wayne State University, Detroit MI 48202.

Visit the IEHS web page at http://www.iehs.org

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President: Elliott R. Barkan, Dept. of History, California State Univ., San Bernardino, San Bernardino CA 92407-2397. Tel.: (909) 880-5525. E-mail: cbarkan@csusb.edu
Vice-President: Ronald H. Bayor, Georgia Institute of Technology, Dept. of History, Technology and Society, Atlanta GA 30332. E-mail: Ronald.Bayor@his.gatech.edu
Secretary: Betty A. Bergland, University of Wisconsin–River Falls, History and Philosophy Department, 410 South Third Street, River Falls, WI 54022-5001. Tel.: (715) 425-3164. FAX: (715) 425-6037. E-mail: betty.a.bergland@uwrf.edu
Treasurer: Diane C. Vecchio, Dept. of History, Furman Univ., Greenville, SC 29613-0444. Tel.: (864) 294-2065. E-mail: diane.vecchio@furman.edu
Editor, Journal of American Ethnic History: John Bukowczyk, Dept. of History, 3094 Faculty/Administration Building, Wayne State University, Detroit MI 48202. Tel. (313) 577-2799. FAX (313) 577-6987. E-mail: az2092@wayne.edu
Editor, Immigration History Newsletter: James M. Bergquist, Department of History, Villanova University, Villanova PA 19085-1699. Tel.: (610) 687-0838. FAX: (610) 519-4450. E-mail: James.Bergquist@villanova.edu

Inquiries about the Society should be directed to the appropriate officer. Newsletter submissions and questions about editorial matters should be sent to the editor at the address above. Requests for back issues of the newsletter should be sent to the editor; send $2.00 per copy (by check made out to Villanova University).

Subscriptions to the Immigration and Ethnic History Newsletter are part of membership in the Society. Members' changes of address should be sent to Journal of American Ethnic History, Transaction Periodicals Consortium, Rutgers University, 35 Bertrum Circle, Piscataway NJ 08854-8042.