



Vietnamese **IN PHILADELPHIA**



ietnamese migration to the United States, including Philadelphia, followed the fall of Saigon in South Vietnam in April of 1975 to North Vietnamese troops—the end of the Vietnam War. Many South Vietnamese people had to flee the country as soon as possible after that event, as they were persecuted or feared persecution due to their ethnic, religious, or political affiliations.



Many early Vietnamese immigrants were part of a U.S.-sponsored evacuation and consisted mainly of military personnel and urban, educated professionals associated with the U.S. military or the South Vietnamese government. Other south Vietnamese escaped their country by boat, so they were called “boat people.”

Some of the south Vietnamese refugees came from rural areas. Lacking education and speaking little English, many of these immigrants opened small businesses in their new homes in places like Philadelphia in order to survive and take care of their families. Their entrepreneurship took the form of small family businesses, as factory jobs were on the decline at that time and they were otherwise unable to find work that fit their skills.

With an estimated 20,000 Vietnamese in Philadelphia and the surrounding areas, the Vietnamese community upholds its traditional values of family, freedom, and democracy. Vietnamese social and cultural organizations are working to blend the Vietnamese community with American society while preserving its cultural character.



LEFT: Pho and Summer Roll are two significant dishes in every Vietnamese restaurant. Pho originated in North Vietnam and Summer Rolls are from South Vietnam. This photo shows Pho Ga from the Thanh Thanh Restaurant in Kensington.

ABOVE: Vietnamese youth performing a Fan Dance for homeless mothers and their children during a Thanksgiving event at Visitation BVM church at Lehigh and Kensington Avenues.



ABOVE, LEFT: From the very beginning in the late 1970s, Vietnamese immigrants settled in the Kensington section of the City.

ABOVE, RIGHT: Pho 75 and Pho Ga Thanh Thanh are two famous pho restaurants in Philadelphia. Pho 75, on Washington Avenue in South Philly, is part of a large chain of pho restaurants in the Philly and Washington, D.C. areas.

LEFT: The owner of the Pho Ga Thanh Thanh restaurant on Kensington Avenue greets customers at the door.

RIGHT: Alex Luong is a Vietnamese pharmacist who has opened a successful drugstore on Washington Avenue in South Philly. He represents the new generation of Vietnamese-American immigrants, well-educated and working hard to start new businesses.





ABOVE: While many Vietnamese start their own small businesses, others pursue advanced college degrees and professional practices. Binh Nguyen received his education locally and started his own physical therapy center in South Philly. Most of his patients are elderly Vietnamese who enjoy the ability to converse easily in their native tongue.

RIGHT: Vietnamese supermarkets carry traditional foods to support the community's demand for authentic ingredients and spices.





LEFT, ABOVE: Vietnamese contribute significantly to the nail salon industry not only in Philadelphia, but nationally. This is due to extensive support and training provided by the Hollywood actress Tippi Hedron, who was moved to support the community after a chance visit to a Vietnamese refugee camp near Sacramento, CA in 1975.



LEFT, BELOW: Two young second-generation Vietnamese carry on the nail salon business started by their parents.

RIGHT: Young Vietnamese engage in Philadelphia's culture and nightlife—part of what keeps the City vibrant and its economic engine running.

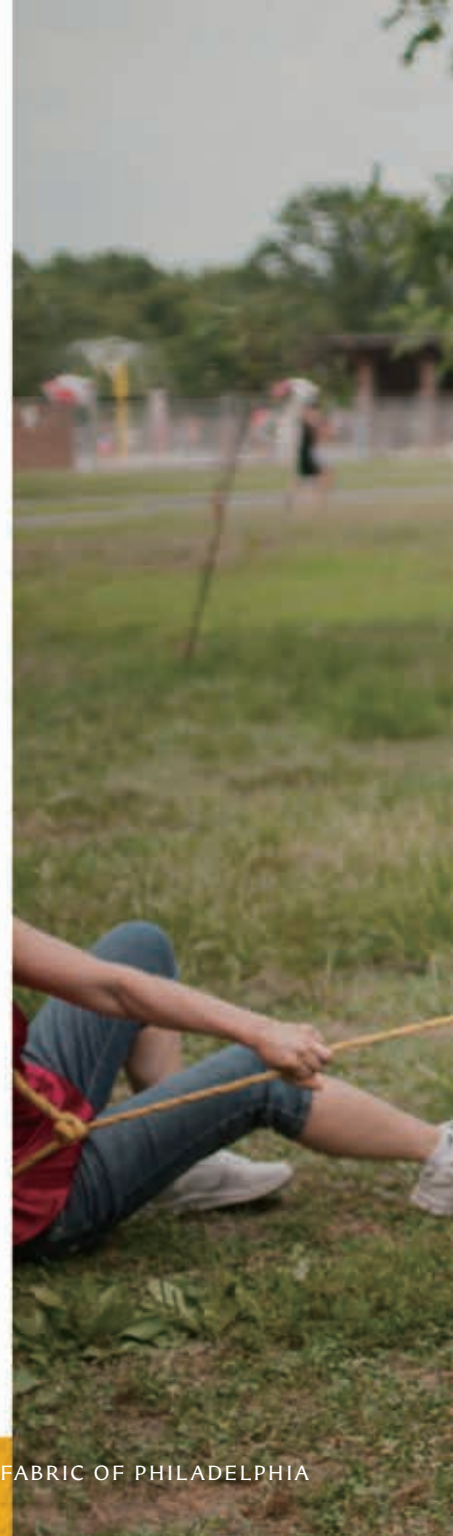




LEFT, ABOVE: Older Vietnamese-Americans enjoy the social aspect of ballroom dance, and they often include it at parties.

LEFT, BELOW: An avid Eagles fan wears a hat given as a present from his grandson, also an Eagles fan. Respect for the elder generation is a foundation of Vietnamese culture.

RIGHT: Tug-of-war is a popular sport at family picnics. These youth are competing in a friendly game at one of the many gatherings organized for Vietnamese families every year.







LEFT: A father takes a moment from soccer practice to visit with his wife and children. In Vietnamese culture, family comes first.

RIGHT, ABOVE: Sports are an important part of Vietnamese culture, and soccer is Vietnam's national sport. Here the Vietnamese soccer team practices for the 2016 Philadelphia International Unity Cup soccer tournament.

RIGHT, BELOW: The Vietnamese soccer team during the opening ceremony for the 2016 Philadelphia Unity Cup soccer tournament final match at Citizen's Bank Park in 2016.





LEFT: Ceremonies that commemorate April 30, the day that Saigon fell in 1975, are held every year at the Vietnamese Memorial at Penn's Landing. Vicky Ung, of The Greater Philadelphia Vietnamese American Community organization, helps coordinate this event.

ABOVE: As part of these proceedings, respects are also paid at the nearby American Vietnam War memorial in honor of their American partners who gave so much for their country and culture.

RIGHT: These women display the Vietnamese Republic flag at the 2017 April 30 event at the Penn's Landing Vietnamese memorial.

BELOW: Vietnamese and American military veterans pay tribute to their fallen comrades during a flag-raising ceremony at City Hall.





Áo dài, a fitted silk tunic worn over trousers, is the traditional clothing of the Vietnamese.

LEFT: A Vietnamese elder dressed in an áo dài.

BELOW: While many men have adapted western clothing (e.g. a business suit) for their formal wear, Vietnamese women often still wear áo dài for events and celebrations. This family is attending a Vietnamese wedding.

RIGHT: A church elder wears his áo dài to show respect during a church service at Visitation BVM Church.







LEFT: A special Vietnamese Mass service at Visitation BVM church in Kensington. There are almost 7,000 Vietnamese Catholics in Philadelphia; most are part of seven Archdiocese of Philadelphia parishes, many of which are guided by Vietnamese priests.

RIGHT, ABOVE: Young Vietnamese assemble Thanksgiving food boxes for homeless mothers at the Community Center for the Visitation BVM church in Kensington. This was a 2016 multigenerational Thanksgiving Day event organized by the Vietnamese community.

RIGHT, BELOW: A Vietnamese elder helps his granddaughter write personal messages of hope on Thanksgiving food boxes.







LEFT: A dragon dance at the end of a mass celebration (St Helena Incarnation, Olney) to bring in the New Year. Tet, the New Year festival, is the biggest holiday for the Vietnamese community. The date of the holiday usually falls in January or February; it varies because it is based on the lunar calendar year.

ABOVE: Philadelphia Vietnamese carry on the traditional dragon dances and firecrackers to celebrate Tet. This is a time when family members return home to pay respect to their parents and ancestors.



Many Philadelphia Vietnamese are Buddhists.

LEFT: The Vu Lan Festival honors Vietnamese parents and grandparents.

RIGHT: This Lantern Festival celebrates a year of success with balloons and the release of birds. It is one of many family picnics throughout the summer.

BELOW: A young child with her lantern at the Lantern Festival. This festival was celebrated in September, following the lunar calendar observed by many Vietnamese. Lanterns are often built as family projects.





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FOLLOWING PAGE: A busy restaurant in Philadelphia's Chinatown.



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NINE TING

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welcoming to all people who choose to call it home.

—Mayor James F. Kenney



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A lack of understanding of immigrant communities—their traditions and their values—has led to an intense, often negative, national dialogue about immigrants in America.

It is easy to criticize the unfamiliar and unknown. Education and awareness leads the way to understanding, and understanding immigrants will help people make more informed decisions about welcoming them.

The Cultural Fabric of Philadelphia, Volume One is the first of a series that shows Philly's immigrants from the inside, using photography to immerse the reader in these smaller worlds within the City.

Most photo books are “photographer-led,” meaning the photographer determines what to shoot, where and how. This book was built using a “community-led” approach, in which committed and passionate community leaders tell the stories. They identified the important cultural features to be photographed, wrote the captions, and prepared each community's cultural summary.

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