

What Freedom Means to Vietnamese Americans

There are currently about 2.2 million Vietnamese Americans in the USA. Almost all of us are here for one major reason: Freedom.

The first generation of Vietnamese Americans had their freedom taken away at gun point when North Vietnamese Communist forces overran the free Republic of South Vietnam at the end of April 1975. At that time a number of fortunate South Vietnamese were evacuated by American service members and relocated around the United States. Those left behind were severely punished by the Communists in prisons, and/or re-education camps, and many died as a result of mistreatment. After their release, former South Vietnamese government workers, soldiers, and their families endured life in a totalitarian oppressive society that they could not accept. Many went to the high seas in flimsy boats to escape tyranny and to seek freedom. Some of them were robbed and killed by pirates; many more died when their boats sank in the ocean. Other refugees were lucky enough to be rescued by cargo vessels or military ships. These Vietnamese came to be known as Boat People. Many first-generation Vietnamese Americans are former Boat People, and for them “Live Free or Die” is not just a slogan but a decision that they made in order to survive.

The third wave of Vietnamese came to the USA via the HO (Humanitarian Operation) program authorized by President Reagan to offer freedom to former South Vietnamese military and civilian government officials, who had spent many years in communist prisons, and their long-suffering families.

It should be noted that some Vietnamese Americans were displaced twice in search of freedom. The first time this happened was in 1954 when Vietnam was divided at the 17th parallel into the countries of North Vietnam and South Vietnam, with the North to be controlled by the Communists per agreement of the Geneva Conference. At that time many residents of North Vietnam chose to escape to the South to live in

freedom. Some of their stories were told in a memorable book titled *Deliver Us from Evil*, by American Navy physician Tom Dooley. Since 1975, Vietnamese Americans of the first and second generations have contributed positively to the US in all aspects of life, including sciences, the arts, education, the military.... American citizenship protects their hard-earned freedom through the Bill of Rights in the Constitution, which is sacred to those of us in the Vietnamese American Conservative Alliance (VACA).

Every American should know about the Bill of Rights:

<https://billofrightsinstitute.org/primary-sources/bill-of-rights>

Those 10 amendments provide Freedom and Liberty to individual Americans, as proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence, and uphold the principle of Equality for individuals, regardless of race, creed, gender, religion, country of origin, or other aspects of personhood.

Conservative Vietnamese Americans strive to treat everyone equally and want to protect the rights of individuals as stipulated in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Unlike the progressive Left, we detest excessive social collectivism that violates the rights of individuals.

Conservative Vietnamese Americans are Free and Proud citizens of the USA. Many people have sacrificed their lives for us to have freedom. We will not squander this precious gift, and we will protect it for the next generation of Americans.

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