

Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon: Vietnamese America since 1975



Traveling Exhibit Recounts Journey of Vietnamese Americans



Smithsonian
Institution



FARMERS



VIETNAMESE AMERICAN

The Vietnamese American experience is one of the joy, sorrow, and hope. "Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon" is the first Vietnamese American historical exhibit from the Smithsonian to explore the Vietnamese American experience in America. Images covering 30 years of Vietnamese immigration are displayed in this traveling exhibition.

"Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon: Vietnamese America Since 1975" opens at the famous Eden Center in Falls Church, Virginia, on June 20, 2009. It will remain on view through August 31, 2009.

Eden Center was established more than 25 years ago and has become the hub of Vietnamese-American life in the Greater Washington DC area. With 120 stores, Eden Center attracts customers and tourists from the entire east coast and beyond.

"Exit Saigon" debuted in January 2007 at the S. Dillon Ripley Center Concourse on the National Mall. The exhibit is developed by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program (APAP), with Vietnamese American scholar Vu Pham as the curator, and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. The national tour is made possible by Farmers Insurance.

When the U.S. government opened its gates to thousands of Vietnamese in 1975, migrants faced the idea of permanent resettlement with a mixture of survivors' guilt and overwhelming relief. Vietnamese Americans were not always guaranteed equality and acceptance, but they did adapt to life in the United States while maintaining their linguistic, cultural, and religious traditions. In America, Vietnamese refugees formed communities whose shops, restaurants, and places of entertainment recreate some of the richness of Vietnamese culture. One such community is Westminster, California, also known as "Little Saigon," a major commercial center of Vietnamese customs. The area contains more than 3,500 Vietnamese American businesses.

Divided into six sections, the exhibition steps through the stages of the Vietnamese transition into America. From undergoing America's longest war in Vietnam to making their mark in American society, Vietnamese Americans have proven themselves as a vibrant and diverse ethnic group—nearly 1.5 million in number—and an integral part of the American fabric. By showcasing themes of challenges, contributions and change, the exhibit emphasizes the vibrant diversity of this ethnic community.

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 50 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. Exhibition descriptions and tour schedules are available at www.sites.si.edu.

