

# Vietnamese Americans

LESSONS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

## Diversity Among Vietnamese Americans

The Vietnamese American population is quite diverse, representing immigrants, refugees, and second- and third-generation individuals. To understand this diversity, it is important to examine immigration and refugee exodus patterns of the community.

The first significant wave of Vietnamese refugees to the U.S. began directly after the fall of Saigon in 1975. A large majority of this first wave was relatively more educated and more affluent than the subsequent flows of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants.

Those that left Vietnam beginning in the late 1970s, popularly known as “Boat People,” escaped under dangerous conditions.

Another peak of Vietnamese immigration to the U.S. occurred in 1992, when many individuals in Vietnam’s re-education camps were released or were sponsored by their families to come to the United States.

### **EBB AND FLOW**

The fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, triggered an exodus of nearly 2 million refugees and other immigrants to the United States over the next 25 years.

### **1975**

The first wave of refugees — including many of the country’s most affluent and well educated citizens — fled Vietnam after the fall of Saigon.

### **1980**

A second wave of refugees peaked with exodus of “boat people.”

### **1992**

The flow peaked again after an increase in refugees released from re-education camps and immigrants sponsored by their families living in the United States.

Total Vietnamese Immigrants and refugees, 1970-2000: 1,824,197

SOURCE: LOS ANGELES TIMES, APRIL 23, 2001.