UC Berkeley
Asian American Research Journal

Title
Bridging Vietnamese Subjectivities in the United States: On Complex Communication through Time and Space

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0zb7j66c

Journal
Asian American Research Journal , 3(0)

Author
Kiều, Minh Anh

Publication Date
2023

DOI
10.5070/RJ43060754

Copyright Information
Copyright 2023 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at https://escholarship.org/terms

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Bridging Vietnamese Subjectivities in the United States: On Complex Communication through Time and Space

Kiều Minh Anh

Abstract

The end of "The Second Indochina War," "The Vietnam War," or "The Anti-American Resistance War" forty years ago has led to millions of Vietnamese fleeing Vietnam to the United States and millions of others living in post-war poverty. The historical, political, and spatial separation between North and South Vietnam has also resulted in a fragmented Vietnamese identity and subjectivity. As a Vietnamese international student growing up in north Vietnam, moving to the United States, and coming in contact with the Vietnamese diaspora here without identifying with it, I am driven by the questions: "What does it mean to be Vietnamese in the United States? How do I reconcile the internalized tension of North/South Vietnamese historical conflict and come to terms with my Vietnamese experience in the U.S. I share with many other diasporic subjects here?" Using María Lugones's frameworks of diasporic and nondiasporic subjects, liminality, and complex communication, I analyzed Thi Bui's memoir *The Best We Could Do* and traced back my own family's history from a Vietnamese nondiasporic position in an attempt to bridge across fragmentation and build a coalitional Vietnamese resistance through time and space.

Introduction

"Be aware of the Vietnamese there!" was the advice given to me before I left for college in the United States. It has been more than forty years since the end of what is called "The Second Indochina War," "The Vietnam War," or "The Anti-American Resistance War" (as we call it in Vietnam). This war resulted in the Indochina refugee crisis where millions of Vietnamese fled to the United States, among other countries, after the fall of South Vietnam. The historical, political, and spatial separation between North Vietnam and South Vietnam as a result of the First and Second Indochina Wars has led to my internalized tension that I, a Vietnamese raised in northern Vietnam[1], have to navigate within the Vietnamese population in the United States.

Despite such historical and political tension, it is within these Vietnamese circles that I feel most at home with the food, language, and culture through which they rebuilt their home overseas. Coming to terms with my racial identity in the United States has also pushed me to look for a sense of belonging in resistance coalitions with other Asian Americans and Vietnamese Americans. However, I am met with my own internalized tension in my relation to the Vietnamese diaspora in the U.S. Am I more Vietnamese for having a home country or less Vietnamese for not belonging to the diasporic community? What does it mean to be Vietnamese in the United States? In an attempt to confront my internalized tension and repair the fragmentation of the Vietnamese subjectivity, I find solace in philosophical frameworks. María Lugones's theory of complex communication as well as her strategies for recognizing and

[1] In this paper, I refer to myself as a northern Vietnamese—someone who is from the northern region (not capitalized) of the current Vietnam country, also known as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. This is not to be mistaken with North Vietnam (capitalized), or the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the former socialist country that existed from 1945-1976 north of the 17th parallel. Similarly, when I use South Vietnam (capitalized) in this paper, I am referring to the former country of the Republic of Vietnam, which existed south of the 17th parallel from 1955-175. This is also the South Vietnam that is the origin country of many Vietnamese diasporas around the world, including Vietnamese Americans.

reading resistance within liminal spaces provides a promising approach to building deep coalition across different Vietnamese diasporic and nondiasporic experiences. In this paper, I will first define Lugones's ideas of "complex communication," "deep coalition," and "liminality." From there, I apply Lugones's practices to the accounts of the Vietnamese diasporic experience from Thi Bui's memoir *The Best We Could Do*. Through such analysis, I hope to bridge across fragmentation to see the Vietnamese people as whole and build a coalitional Vietnamese resistance through time and space.

Lugones's Philosophical Frameworks: Complex Communication, Deep Coalition, and Liminality

When historical and political conflicts divided a nation into two, resulting in the geographical separation and estrangement of a people from one another, complex communication is necessary to undo the internalized tension and see each other's struggles as real. Complex communication is the practice of building a genuine coalition with others by acknowledging each other's meanings and struggles as complex and real outside of the oppressive dominant structure.[2] This resulting sense of coalition, "deep coalition," expands beyond the traditional notion of coalition in that it requires collaboration without reduction to one meaning, resistance, or oppression.[3] In other words, I stand with Vietnamese Americans not because I assume I know their struggles or that their struggles are similar to mine, but rather because I am open to their experiences and view their struggles as valid, albeit different but not discontinuous from mine. This is especially important when the two sides were once in conflict

[2] María Lugones, "On Complex Communication," *Hypatia* 21, no. 3 (2006): 76.
[3] Ibid.

and have the tendency to dehumanize one another. Complex communication is the opportunity to give the other the agency to define their own meanings and struggles.

According to Lugones, complex communication is achieved by traveling to the liminal space and seeing each other in liminal spaces. Liminal spaces refer to spaces existing outside of dominant structures.[4] Dominant structures are necessary for oppressors to maintain their superiority over minority groups by imposing reductive meanings over those groups. In the racist dominant structure, people of color are placed inferior to white people; in the sexist dominant structure, women are placed inferior to men. Since liminal spaces are created at the edge of dominant structures, liminality allows for a multitude of perspectives that are not narrowly defined by one mode of oppression or one mode of resistance. Instead, liminality provides a richer alternative to the closed minority identity that is heavily limited by a narrow understanding of its oppression which, in turn, leads to limitations in its liberation. As a result, traveling to liminal spaces requires one to have a certain awareness of the multiplicity of one's and others' experiences and identities. However, it is also worth noting that liminal spaces only being defined as a lack of an oppressive structure risks any meaning constructed from it being incommunicable to others.[5] In the rest of this paper, I will explore how my family's history, along with Vietnamese Americans/Vietnamese refugees' history, can situate us in liminal spaces to reconstruct a continuous Vietnamese subjectivity and coalition.

Thi Bui's *The Best We Could Do*

In the search for a reference point to situate my external position from the Vietnamese community in the United States, I recognize that the diasporic experience is a collectively shared

[4] Lugones, "On Complex Communication," 75.
[5] Lugones, "On Complex Communication," 76.

yet seemingly ambiguous experience. As I trace back my personal history and beliefs, I am pulled towards first-person anecdotes and stories of unfamiliar Vietnamese experiences such as that in Thi Bui's graphic memoir *The Best We Could Do*, a self-illustrated account of her family's history and Vietnamese historical events from the period of French colonization to the end of the Second Indochina War/Vietnam War/Anti-American Resistance War.[6] Bui's story highlights the impact of war and loss on families throughout generations. In an attempt to understand the wounds of her family, Bui reconstructs her parents' past through glimpses of their perspectives, from their childhood to marriage to their final escape from Vietnam. At the end of the memoir, she reflects upon the meanings and responsibilities of parenthood as well as her perception of family and what it means to be free.

Figure 1. (left) Bui's storytelling with minimal colors and interconnecting imagery of her family's history and Vietnamese historical milestones. Figure 2. (right) Bui's reflection of the effects her father's childhood trauma had on her upbringing. Thi Bui, 2017, in Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do* (New York: Abrams ComicArts, 2017), 210-211, 128-129.

[6] These three terms refer to the same historical event yet are used depending on the perspective: in historical/academic contexts, in the United States, and in Vietnam respectively. They are used interchangeably in this paper.

Reading the Vietnamese Diaspora through Thi Bui's Memoir

In the next two sections, I will situate Thi Bui's and my positions as diasporic and nondiasporic Vietnamese, respectively, following Lugones's descriptions in her paper "Musing: Reading the Nondiasporic from within Diaspora." While traditional analysis of the Vietnamese diaspora in the U.S. often refers to all Vietnamese immigrants living in the nation, the Vietnamese diaspora in this paper specifically refers to the population of Vietnam War refugees and their families.[7]

The first feature of the diaspora, according to Lugones, is the shared diasporic way of thinking, referred to as the "movements of thought."[8] Since diasporic subjects are not tied to a solid nation, they reconstruct a nation of their own from collective memories, thoughts, and actions.[9] This is illustrated in Bui's work when she writes,

> Soon after that trip back to Việt Nam (our first since we escaped in 1978), I began to record our family history thinking that if I bridged the gap between the past and the present, I could fill the void between my parents and me. And that if I could see Việt Nam as a real place, and not a symbol of something lost, I would see my parents as real people and learn to love them better. I ask them endless questions about their lives, the war, and the country that once was home.[10]

[7] According to the Migration Policy Institute, there are currently 1.1 million immigrants from Vietnam living in the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Within this population, more than 200,000 people migrated immediately after the Vietnam War and the subsequent refugee program admitted almost 600,000 people from 1978- 2013, comprising 3% of all U.S. immigrants in 2012. It is also worth noting that following 1996 there were no further significant waves of Vietnamese refugees, as many entered through family-based immigration or nonimmigrant visas instead.
[8] María Lugones. "Musing: Reading the Nondiasporic from within Diaspora," Hypatia 29, no. 1 (2014): 19.
[9] Lugones, "Musing," 18-19.
[10] Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, 36-37.

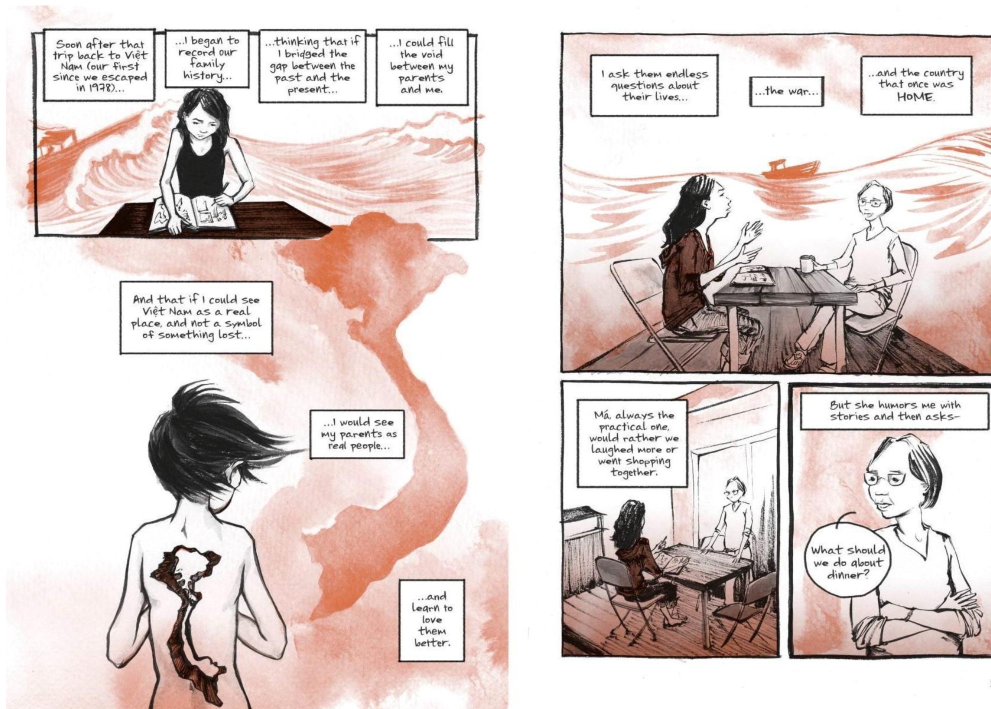

Figure 3. Bui's image of longing for connection with her parents through reconstruction of Vietnam. Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, 36-37.

In this illustration, Vietnam is not a real country to Bui but a collection of memories and stories. The healing process through recording her family's history can then be considered a part of this diasporic disposition. The diasporic pattern of survival instincts is also illustrated in another part of the memoir where she recounts a fire that happened during her childhood in the U.S. Despite being removed from the context of war, these shared patterns have become permanently etched into the subjectivity of those who fled the country.

> "Get the people upstairs!" The normal response might have been to see what was happening. Ours was to immediately lock the door and rush to the bedroom to hide. [...] This is the night I learned what my parents had been preparing me for my whole life.

> This—not any particular piece of Vietnamese culture—is my inheritance: the inexplicable need and extraordinary ability to RUN when the shit hits the fan. My Refugee Reflex.[11]

Another feature of the diaspora is the hostility from its host country. The development of diasporas from imaginary spaces thus emerges as resistance against alienation from the host country.[12] Without the dominant structure that places the immigrants as outsiders and secondary citizens, one would not need to form a diaspora to feel whole. Due to this discrimination and alienation, diasporic subjectivity is a constant struggle to define one's diasporic meanings.[13] The racial reprisal against Bui's family and their otherness in the U.S. is evident in Bui's recounting of an instance in San Diego when her father was called a derogatory term for someone of Southeast Asian descent.[14] America's involvement in Vietnam meant that both the host community and the dispersed community felt deep residual wounds from the hardships of their past; American hostility against Vietnamese refugees extends beyond racialization to Vietnamese to be specific, which necessitates the development of the Vietnamese diaspora in the U.S. as a means of resistance and survival. Through Thi Bui's memoir and Lugones's description of the diaspora, in this section, I have defined the Vietnamese diasporic position as having a shared movement of thoughts in an imaginary nation reconstructed from collective memories, and being in constant struggle against the hostility of its host country.

Traveling to Lugones's Liminal Spaces as a Nondiasporic Vietnamese in the United States

The absence of the aforementioned diasporic features can conversely characterize the position of the nondiasporic subject.[15] In the context of being Vietnamese in the U.S., I position

[11] Bui, The Best We Could Do, 302-205.
[12] Lugones, "Musing," 19.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Bui, The Best We Could Do, 66-68.
[15] Lugones, "Musing," 20.

myself as nondiasporic in reference to the Vietnamese diaspora because my experience is not the same as that of war or political refugees. Unlike Bui's family, I do not carry the survival instinct nor the struggle to start anew in the U.S. Vietnam is my home. I am an international student coming from a country where I am a member of the dominant ethnic group. I have never previously faced racism and xenophobia in my home country. Therefore, the position from which I speak and act is not within the Vietnamese diaspora in the U.S. In this section, I explore how my journey as a Vietnamese native across space and time constitutes a liminal space. Since liminality depends on the framework of power, I attempt to define my background, position, and identity in two different but interrelated contexts: the two Indochina Wars and the current racial discrimination against Asians and Vietnamese in the U.S.

While the historical account of the Indochina Wars and post-war Vietnam deserve greater analysis than the scope of this paper permits, I will discuss moments in Vietnamese history and my own family's history that developed my identity as a northern Vietnamese.

The late nineteenth century witnessed the colonization of Vietnam into French Indochina. Through literature and stories, I learned of the violence inflicted upon my people by French colonizers. The significance of the French's hundred-year rule is evident through Vietnamese folk culture, which uses word of mouth to speak of the pain and suffering felt across generations.

Cao su xanh tốt lạ đời,

Mỗi cây bón một xác người công nhân.

Rubber trees are surprisingly lively,

Each tree is fertilized by a worker's corpse

(Vietnamese folk poems about rubber plantation workers)

Vietnamese independence from the French imperialist forces and later Japanese occupation was declared by the communist Việt Minh forces in 1945. However, France's later attempt to reclaim the nation after the Second World War led to the 1954 agreement to divide Vietnam along the seventeenth parallel into two nations: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North and the State of Vietnam in the South. While the South was considered by communist propaganda to be under the residual influence of the French and later, a puppet regime under American control, North Vietnam was regarded by outer forces as blind followers of communism with programs and campaigns heavily implemented to ensure the people's loyalty to the communist ideology.[16]

Despite coming from the north, my maternal ancestors and relatives, who pride themselves on their ancestral history of scholars and mandarins through generations of Vietnamese dynasties, became targets of Việt Minh land reforms in the 1950s. To redistribute land from wealthy landowners to peasants, landowners like my family were vilified, tortured, and executed extrajudicially. The negative impact of this act proved extensive as recalled by Bui's father's memories: "They [land reform laws] were a process of reorganizing the society. They began to weed out all the landowners and killed them, or beat and tortured them. [...] In a short time, the land reforms killed 220,000 people!"[17] The land reform that was initially carried out to grant property to the poor became a painful part of my family's history.

Coming from the North, my family did not receive the same treatment of constant monitoring and distrust from the government as Bui's family after the victory of North Vietnam in the Second Indochina War. Nonetheless, my parents, like many others, grew up in poverty

[16] This perception of Vietnam comes from my own experience with the Vietnamese education system and the exposure to critical work outside of our country. While many of my peers and I share this perception of how our country came to be, I do not claim that this perception is the only one there is in Vietnam.
[17] Bui, The Best We Could Do, 169.

while their struggles were ignored by the communist administration. My father, who is only four years older than Bui, grew up knowing far too well how to survive through poverty in the post-war nation from which Bui escaped. Being the oldest of three, he felt constant pressure to provide for his family, such as working manual labor jobs after school and later taking work that relocated him to the USSR, where he met my mother. To provide for us, my father did not fully move back with my family to Vietnam until I was seven years old. Despite our financial comfort, to this day, I still feel in my father the presence of this constant pressure to make ends meet. More significantly, I feel the same push in me—a familiar muscle hardened from uncertain threats of the past—more pronounced now studying away from home and taking multiple jobs to hopefully lessen the burden on my family. While it is not the "Refugee Reflex" that Bui speaks of, I understand the residual effects of the war that so deeply affected my parents: "Maybe being their child simply means that I will always feel the weight of the past."[18]

Growing up in Vietnam, I understood the fact that my country was won by communist forces meant that the public education I received and the language I am allowed to speak openly reflect communist ideals. On one hand, I was taught behind closed doors to be frustrated but reserved against our leaders. On the other, I was taught at school to admire communist leadership and criticize "fake and treacherous Vietnamese"—a description often given to Vietnamese refugees who escaped the country "to follow Western forces."

Now studying in the United States, the disconnect between the dichotomous perceptions of northern/North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese refugees/Vietnamese Americans also evokes great disorientation within my Vietnamese identity. It is within Vietnamese grocery stores, restaurants, and neighborhoods that I get to hear the familiarity of my mother tongue and

[18] Bui, The Best We Could Do, 325.

enjoy the taste of home's cuisine. At the same time, it is within this Vietnamese American community closest to home that I hide from others my Vietnamese origin. I realize my northern Vietnamese identity is embodied not only in my regional accent but also in the tension I inherited from the communist post-war education system. When navigating diasporic environments, I speak mostly English as I fear my northern Vietnamese accent could invite hostility from South Vietnamese Americans. Refusing to speak Vietnamese to diasporic Vietnamese people means I have the comfort of presenting myself as ethnically ambiguous without a history of judgment and violence. In the attempt to resist the oversimplification of the northern/North Vietnamese as communists, I have unintentionally internalized the belief of other Vietnamese as antagonistic while denying myself of connection within the Vietnamese community. Within the framework of the Resistance Wars and history, I claim my liminal space as a northern Vietnamese not fully defined by the historical association with communist ideology nor free of predisposed biases.

In reference to racism in the United States, my identity as an Asian international student also subjects me to discrimination while situating me outside of many Asian circles resisting racism here. I grew up in a community where one need not process her racial identity. When I moved to the U.S. in 2018, I was confronted with being perceived as Asian and carried myself accordingly in a country rooted in unhealed racial trauma from colonization and immigration. Having to navigate a new environment with an imposed racial identity, I feel the pull towards other Asian bodies to process my experience with racial discrimination—I am singled out by the sound of my name and the accent of my English. During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was aware of how my Asian physical features put me in potential danger of violent attacks as I watched stories upon stories of assaults targeting Asian bodies.

Considering that spaces that exist for anti-racism resistance often center their racial identity around experiences of immigrants, an Asian nonimmigrant like me does not have the space to discuss my racialization. Nonimmigrants, such as international students, are defined as foreign nationals whose temporal stay has a specific, predefined purpose. Unlike many Asian Americans fighting for their space in the United States as their home, my struggle with racism is distinct from having a homeplace. Moreover, I also understand the mechanism through which nonimmigrants are placed second compared to those with citizenship—certain jobs or educational opportunities are only available for U.S. citizens and permanent residents, further widening the gap between my experience and that of Asian Americans.

In addition to the racial identity imposed on me, I learned later on that along with my Asian identity, my Vietnamese origin holds further significance in the United States. A theme of personal identity being overshadowed by the narrative of war is consistent throughout some of my interactions here, whether it is be a new acquaintance glorifying the U.S. army's role in the Vietnam War upon introducing myself as Vietnamese, or hearing my country's name referenced in pop culture as a symbol of loss and trauma. Moreover, the more proficient my English tongue becomes and the more American I am judged to be, the more invisible my Vietnamese origin becomes. My identity as a racial minority means my experience in the United States has put me in a different position from that of most people living in Vietnam. This gives rise to communicative impasses between me and other people of the Vietnamese dominant population of which I was once a part.

In the framework of racism and anti-Vietnamese sentiment in the United States, I situate myself in the liminal space of being a subject of racialization without an adopted community of resistance in the United States, as well as being a nondiasporic Vietnamese sharing the

experiences of many diasporic Vietnamese subjects. In this reference frame, both my Vietnamese origin and my experience with racism and anti-Vietnamese sentiment in the U.S. continuously interact with each other to form my perception and my position within the process of complex communication.

Complex Communication: Reading Vietnamese Resistances across Time and Space

Per complex communication, by situating myself in my liminality, I can now read Bui's family history as being outside of the closed circle of the Vietnamese diaspora and constructing liminal spaces of their own. My liminality in the framework of the Indochina Wars/Resistance Wars helps me recognize that her family, too, does not simply fit into the oversimplification of South Vietnamese as told by the pro-communist North Vietnamese narrative. For instance, Bui's parents have been critical of communist ideas, not out of pro-Western sentiment, but out of concern for their family.

> We had lived under French domination for a hundred years. There were many people like [my grandparents] who had gotten used to living with the French. A new regime that was both nationalist and communist, they had to kill all those people who were friends of the French. The communists, they called those things sacrifices. And [I] called them Grandmother and Grandfather.[19]

Both of her parents' upbringings show that in multiple instances, they too felt a strong sense of nationalism for Vietnam and discontent towards French colonial forces. This is demonstrated in an account where Bui's mother speaks of her French school days: "As for me, it was by reading history books in Vietnamese that I learned how the French had come and

[19] Bui, The Best We Could Do, 156.

colonized our country. I started to feel a sense of nationalism and pride in my own people... ‘We’re Vietnamese. Let’s not speak French outside of school anymore.’”[20]Acknowledging such forms of nationalism and resistance as legitimate despite Bui’s mother’s upper social status and their association with the French at the time means rejecting the reductive narrative of nationalism as exclusively associated with communist ideas. Broadening the construct of nationalism to take on different forms implies the possibility that my maternal distant relatives could have had a chance to contribute to the liberation of our people. This particular application of liminality for Bui’s family invites an interpretation of their actions and stories leading up to their eventual escape from Vietnam as resistance to oppressive forces. Bui’s father, originally from the North and dissatisfied with the current society, dyed his clothes black. Yet later, he rejected the idea of living in the communist North after the divide in 1954:

> But the month I spent in the communist North had a very different effect on me. It was true that the Việt Minh had won independence by winning the war. But the new society I dreamed of didn’t exist. Here there was no freedom of thought, no allowance for individuality. [...] Who would choose a world that had become so narrow, so poor, and gray? (Bui 2017, 168)

Such an effort that would be considered anti-liberationist otherwise could now be read as refusing oppression of individuality in the name of national independence. Following the same theme of resistance, Bui family’s decision to leave the country is then not about taking Vietnamese/Western or communist/anti-communist sides, but rather survival and escaping economic turmoil along with “constant monitoring, distrust, and the ever-present feeling that our

[20] Bui, The Best We Could Do, 145.

family could, at any moment, be separated, our safety jeopardized [after the communist forces took control of the south]".[21]

Situating Bui's family within the liminality of being South Vietnamese but outside the reductive characterization of "treacherous Vietnamese" allows for creative resistant meanings alternative to the predefined binary of the North Vietnam-South Vietnam tension. By doing so, I realize that Bui's parents' struggle of escaping and my own family's struggle of staying are not competing forces, nor invalidating other Vietnamese experiences. Instead, when analyzed in synthesis, they provide critical insights into how historical forces of colonialism and communism have created the different pains and struggles suffered by Vietnamese people, bringing about certain patterns of continuity throughout Vietnamese history.

How can this process of defragmenting the Vietnamese experience in historical Vietnam foster a deep coalition across the boundaries of diasporic/nondiasporic identities in the U.S.? Bui's honest and intimate account of her family's experiences as diasporic subjects is a coalitional gesture in itself, as their story is presented in a manner that is open to interpretation for the readers. From a nondiasporic perspective, these insights foster coalitional thinking where our collective memories can form a collective Vietnamese resistance where one experience does not oversimplify another. Despite having different experiences, we are real in each other's history (Figures 4 and 5). As complex communication requires me to understand my liminal spaces, I am aware of the tendency carried over through generations of conflicts to distance myself from other Vietnamese bodies in the United States. Bui's coalitional gesture here presents the basis for not only reconstructing a continuous Vietnamese history, but also unpacking our

[21] Bui, The Best We Could Do, 221.

internalized contention with one another and building a collective Vietnamese identity and resistance.

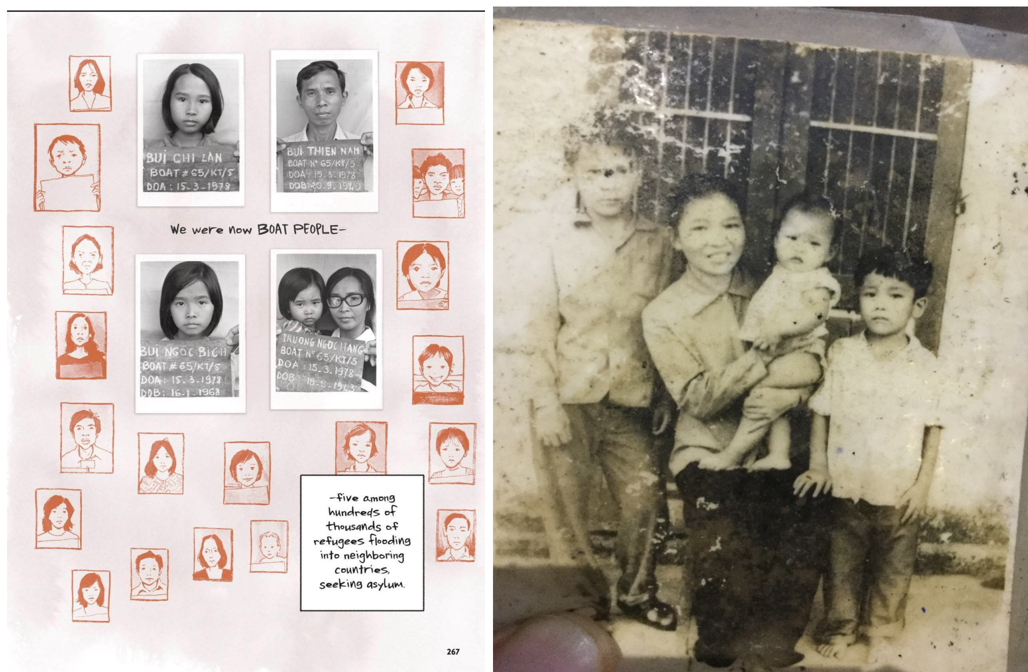

Figure 4. (left) Bui's family's identification photos at the Pulau Besar refugee camp in March 1978. Bui, *The Best We Could Do*, 267. Figure 5. (right) My father's family around the late 1970s-1980s from left to right: my father, grandmother with aunt, and uncle.

In this paper, I have invoked Lugones's theories of complex communication to read Thi Bui's memoir *The Best We Could Do* as a coalitional gesture for developing unfragmented narratives of Vietnamese resistance across time and space. First, I described Lugones's framework of complex communication from her paper "On Complex Communication." Second, I referenced Lugones's description of the diaspora to construct the Vietnamese diaspora presented in Bui's work. Third, I situated myself outside of the diaspora and constructed my own liminal spaces in the two contexts of Vietnamese historical conflicts and the current anti-Asian and anti-Vietnamese sentiments in the U.S. Last, within my liminality, the complex

communication theory serves as a guide to identify Bui's family's liminality and read their memories as part of the Vietnamese resistance.

Bridging the Vietnamese subjectivities, I want to provide a different reading of the Vietnamese folk story of Lạc Long Quân and Âu Cơ. Legend has it that the origin of Vietnamese people starts with Lạc Long Quân, a descendant of the Dragons, and Âu Cơ, a descendant of the Fairy, whose marriage united the kingdoms of the oceans and highlands. They gave birth to a hundred eggs, which later turned into one hundred children. Always longing for the oceans and the highlands, Lạc Long Quân and Âu Cơ decided to divide their children: fifty to follow their father to the coast to learn the ways of the oceans, and fifty to follow their mother to the highlands to learn the ways of the land. Despite the separation, they promised to love and look after one another, signifying the unity of family and of the later formation of Vietnam. As the legend means to tell a story of a united people across the nation, I suggest that through complex communication, the Vietnamese people can be united once again and retell our history as continuous, regardless of which side of time and space they are on.

Bibliography

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* 4th ed. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 2012.

Bui, Thi. *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir.* New York: Abrams ComicArts, 2017.

Lugones, María. "Chapter Seven - Boomerang Perception and the Colonizing Gaze: Ginger Reflections on Horizontal Hostility." In *Pilgrimages / Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions*, 120–130. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

Lugones, María. "Chapter Ten - Tactical Strategies Of The Streetwalker/Estrategias Tácticas De La Callejera." In *Pilgrimages / Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions*, 159–181. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

Lugones, María. "Musing: Reading the Nondiasporic from within Diaspora." *Hypatia* 29, no. 1 (2014): 18–22.

Lugones, María. "On Complex Communication." *Hypatia* 21, no. 3) (2006): 75–85.

Lugones, María. "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception." *Hypatia* 2, no. 2 (1987): 3–19.

Migration Policy Institute. "The Vietnamese Diaspora in the United States." June 2015. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/RAD-Vietnam.pdf.

Tai, Yu-Chen. "The Ripple Imagery as a Decolonial Self: Exploring Multiplicity in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's Dictée." In *Speaking Face to Face: The Visionary Philosophy of María Lugones*, edited by Pedro J. DiPietro, Jennifer McWeeny, and Shireen Roshanravan, 65–82. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2019.