

# The History of Vietnamese Immigration

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The history of Vietnamese immigration to the United States is relatively recent. Prior to 1975, most Vietnamese residing in the United States were spouses and children of American servicemen in Vietnam. On April 30, 1975, "the fall of Saigon" ended the Vietnam War and prompted the first of two waves of emigration from Vietnam to the United States. Vietnamese who had worked closely with Americans during the Vietnam War feared reprisals by the Communist party. 125,000 Vietnamese citizens departed their native country during the Spring of 1975.

They were airlifted or fled Vietnam on U.S. military cargo ships and transferred to United States government bases in Guam, Thailand, Wake Island, Hawaii and the Philippines, as part of "Operation New Life." Subsequently, they were transferred to four refugee centers throughout the United States: Camp Pendleton in California, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, and Fort Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania. Initially, Vietnamese immigrants were unwelcomed by the general American populous. A poll in 1975 showed a mere 36% of Americans were in favor of Vietnamese immigration. Fortunately, the Ford Administration supported the arrival of Vietnamese immigrants and passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act of 1975. This Act established a program of domestic resettlement assistance for refugees who fled from Cambodia and Vietnam.

In 1977, a second wave of Vietnamese refugees began fleeing Vietnam. This wave of emigration lasted until the mid 1980s. The second wave began as a result of the new Communist government's implementation of economic, political and agricultural policies based on Communist ideology. These policies included "reeducation" and torture of former South Vietnamese military personnel and those presumed friendly to the South Vietnamese cause, the closing of businesses owned by ethnic Chinese

Vietnamese, the seizing of farmland and redistributing it, and the mass forced relocation of citizens from urban to rural areas that were previously uncultivated or ruined during the war. During this time approximately two million Vietnamese fled Vietnam in small, overcrowded boats. This group of refugees would come to be known as the "boat people." Most of the "boat people" fled to asylum camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines or Hong Kong and awaited acceptance by foreign countries.

To assist Vietnamese refugees, Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which reduced restrictions on entry to the United States. The Refugee Act of 1980 provided a definition of a refugee, created the Office of Refugee Resettlement, set the number of refugee admissions at 50,000 per year (unless in cases of an emergency), and allowed a refugee to adjust his or her status after one year to become a permanent resident and after four more years, to become a United States citizen. In addition laws were also passed to allow children of American servicemen and former political prisoners to enter the United States. In total, the United States accepted 531,310 refugees and asylum seekers from Vietnam between 1981 and 2000.

Taken from: [http://www.aifl.org/awards/benefit2005/vietnamese\\_essay.shtml](http://www.aifl.org/awards/benefit2005/vietnamese_essay.shtml)

List three FACT that you found interesting in the article.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write 2 QUESTIONS you would like answered.

- 1.
- 2.