



# Exploring the Asian Diaspora: Nailed It

February 1, 2020

# It

## Vietnam terms for educators

- French Indochina
- Ho Chi Minh
- Vietminh
- Hanoi
- Vietcong
- Saigon
- Domino effect
- Battle of Dien bien Phu
- Geneva Conference
- John F. Kennedy
- Lyndon B. Johnson
- Napalm
- Agent Orange
- Tet Offensive
- Richard Nixon
- Vietnamization
- Ho Chi Minh Trail
- Fall of Saigon
- Vietnamese Boat People
- Operation New Life

## Vietnam War: context & synopsis

- In the late 19th century, the present-day countries of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia made up the French colony of **Indochina**.
- These lands were desirable to the French because of their fertile rice lands (Mekong and Red River deltas and coastal lowlands) and natural resources of rubber, silk, and spices.
- Under French colonial rule, Indochina suffered greatly: high illiteracy rates, religious persecution, poor healthcare and infrastructure, corrupt governance.

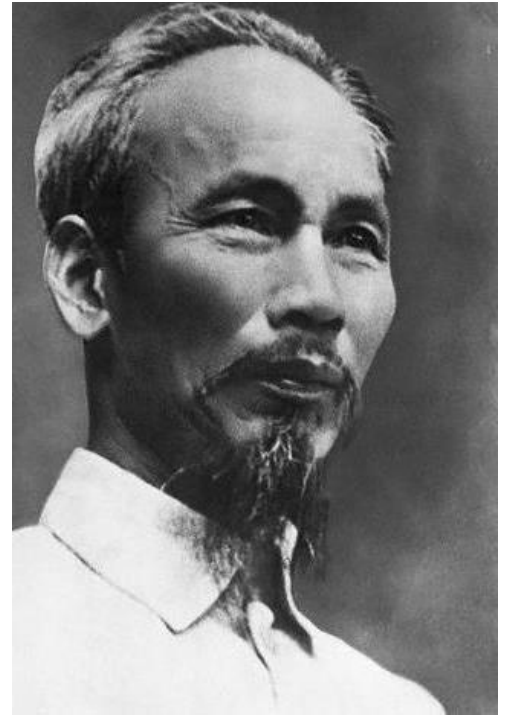




# French imperialism in Indochina

# Ho Chi Minh

- Ho was a nationalist and a communist, whose name means “**He Who Enlightens.**”
- His appeals for Indochina’s sovereignty were rejected by President Wilson at post-World War I **Paris Peace Conference.**
- He lived in China and the Soviet Union where he was influenced by communist doctrine.
- He formed the League for the Independence of Vietnam, or the **Vietminh**, which became the military power of communist north Vietnam, whose capital was **Hanoi.**
- Both US presidents Truman and Eisenhower saw Ho as a threat to U.S. Cold War goals and sought to topple him, however unsuccessfully.



# Indochina War

- The **domino effect**, or Cold War fear that if one region (Indochina) became communist, others surrounding it would as well, justified Presidents Truman and Eisenhower's decision to support and aid the French quest to maintain Indochina as its colony after World War II ended.
- In the Indochina War, the French forces were defeated at the (in)famous Battle of **Dien bien Phu**, and Indochina was seemingly freed of its French colonial masters.
- However, the **Geneva Conference**, organized by the western nations as overseers of Indochina's transition from colony to sovereign nation, convened in 1955, and divided Vietnam in half at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel for what they claimed would be two years, after which time democratic elections would be held to re-unify Vietnam.



# The Unwinnable War in Vietnam

- Vietnam remained divided, and in 1962, the new U.S. president **John F. Kennedy**, sought to bolster his Cold War foreign policy credentials and legitimacy by increasing U.S. military advisors in Vietnam more than ten-fold, and authorizing U.S. forces to engage in direct combat there.
- After President Kennedy's assassination, his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, escalated U.S. involvement in the war with massive bombing campaigns in Vietnam and the use of chemical weapons in the form of **Napalm**, a chemical gel that burned its victims, and **Agent Orange**, which was sprayed over jungle foliage to de-nude the dense ground cover in which the Vietminh and their south Vietnamese compatriots, the **Vietcong**, were hiding and waging guerilla warfare against U.S. soldiers.
- By the end of Johnson's presidency in 1967, however, victory in Vietnam seemed no closer than it did in 1963 when Kennedy was assassinated.
- U.S. popular opinion turned against the war in 1968 during the **Tet Offensive**, when the Vietminh and Vietcong coordinated massive strikes during the Vietnamese Tet New Year against countless South Vietnamese villages, more than 100 cities, 12 U.S. military bases, and the U.S. embassy in South Vietnam's capital, **Saigon**.

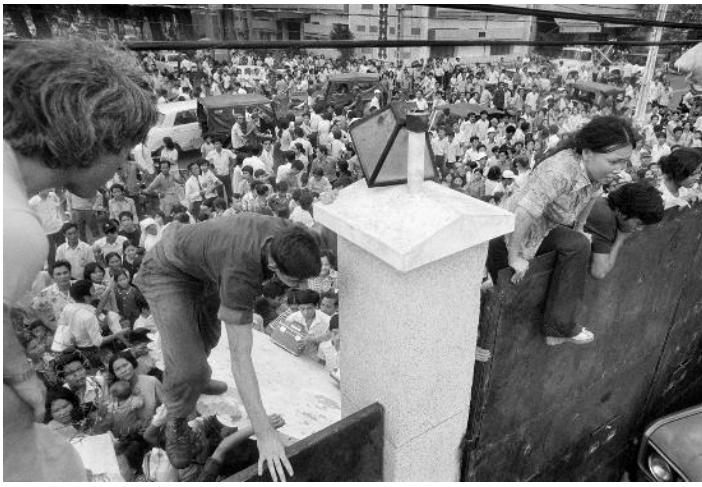


# The Unwinnable War in Vietnam



- When **Richard M. Nixon** was elected in 1968, he promised to secure U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam in what he called "peace with honor" through **Vietnamization**, or incrementally turning Vietnam back to the responsibility of the Vietnamese.
- However, first Nixon secretly bombed neighboring **Cambodia** due to evidence that they were supplying the Vietminh and Vietcong with weapons via the **Ho Chi Minh Trail**, or underground communist networks and supply lines.
- Most U.S. forces, now demoralized and even vilified back in the U.S., withdrew from Vietnam by 1973.
- Two years later, in April, 1975, Vietminh and Vietcong troops overran South Vietnam, which surrendered unconditionally in the **Fall of Saigon**.
- The more than two million Vietnamese refugees who fled their country between 1975-1995 were known as the **Vietnamese boat people** or *Thuyền nhân Việt Nam*.
- Under the U.S. government program, **Operation New Life**, more than 100,000 Vietnamese refugees were transported to the island of Guam, where they were housed in tent cities for several weeks and then processed for re-settlement, mostly to the United States.

## America loses Vietnam



# THE FALL OF SAIGON

# Waves of Vietnamese Refugees



In the aftermath of the war, Vietnamese refugees arrived to the United States in three distinct waves:



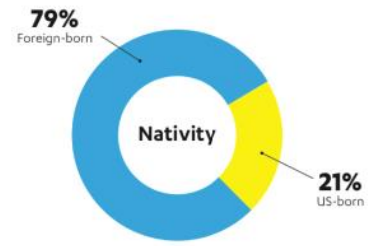
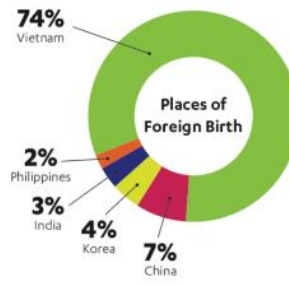
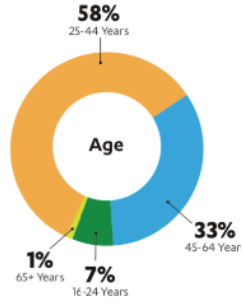
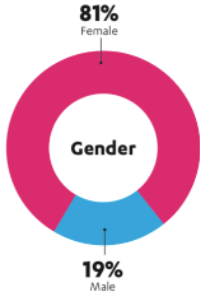
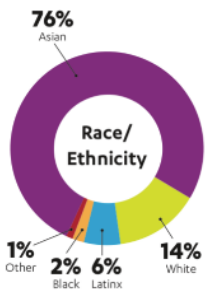
The first wave was comprised of military and government employees who were middle class, urban residents of Vietnam, and were more educated and proficient in English than those who left Vietnam later.



The second wave of Vietnamese refugees came from rural areas, were comparably less educated, did not speak English or were less proficient in English than the first wave. This is the group that mostly settled in California and made a large impact of the nail salon industry.



The third wave was comprised of political prisoners, ethnic Chinese, Vietnamese, and others.

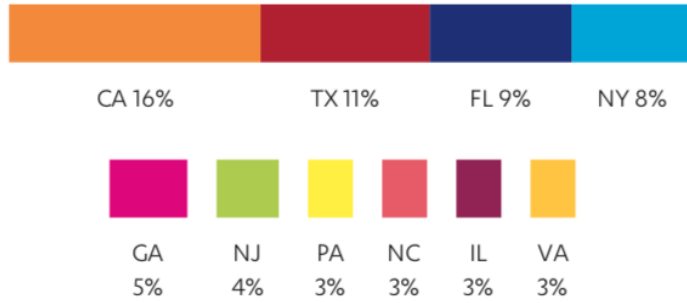


Source: American Community 5-Year Sample 2012-2016

# U.S. Nail Salon Worker Characteristics



## Where do nail salon workers live?



**44%** of US-based nail salon workers live in CA, TX, FL, and NY

Source: American Community Survey 5-year sample 2012–2016

# The Vietnamese Diaspora to Pittsburgh

- Roughly 3,000 Vietnamese immigrants settled in the Pittsburgh region in the 1970s.
- The draw to Pittsburgh was largely due to jobs in the steel industry and proximity to the Fort Indianatown Gap refugee camp near Harrisburg, which resettled more than 32,000 Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees in 1975 after the Fall of Saigon.
- After Pittsburgh's loss of local industry in the 1980s, the Vietnamese population dropped to just about 1,500.
- But by 2014, the number increased again to about 3,000 due to the U.S. government's offer of refuge for Vietnamese people with connections to the former government of South Vietnam and to children fathered by American soldiers, along with a boom in the cosmetic nail industry.
- Source: Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 8/3/2014

# Curriculum ideas for enriching understanding & extending meaning of the Vietnamese diaspora

1. Conduct oral histories with Vietnamese immigrants to Pittsburgh region.  
[https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators\\_lesson\\_plan\\_09.html#Interview](https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators_lesson_plan_09.html#Interview)
2. Mapping Vietnamese settlement in Pittsburgh region with text narrative, images, video, audio:
  1. Tour Builder: <https://tourbuilder.withgoogle.com/builder#present/ahJzfmd3ZWltdG91cmJ1aWxkZXJyEQsSBFRvdXIYgIDgwKrQ9goM>
  2. ArcGIS: <https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis>
  3. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/bd2b9a89fb9e48c5a22472c015208f25/edit>
3. Sharing mapping data with national digital mapping project: HistoryPin.org: <https://www.fivecolleges.edu/fcceas/ties-that-bind>