

*"Educational exchange
can turn nations into
people, contributing
as no other form of
communication can to the
humanizing of
international relations."
-- J. William Fulbright*

Inside this issue

Message from the Program Director	1
Highlights	2-3
Pre-departure Orientation for Vietnamese grantees	4
Current VN Students and FLTAs	5
Current VN Scholars	6
Departing U.S. Students	7
Feature story by Nguyen Thu Ha	8
Feature story by Kevin Thor	9
Alumni Corner	10
Feature Story by Thuong Ho	11

From Program Director

Dear Fulbrighters and Fulbright friends,

It's summertime, which means we have to bid farewell to our American Fulbrighters who have completed their program in Vietnam, and to honor 25 new Vietnamese Fulbrighters who will represent Vietnam at U.S. schools across America as scholars, graduate students and teaching assistants in the 2017 academic year.

We were impressed with the achievements and successful stories that U.S. scholars, U.S. students and English Teaching Assistants shared with us at the Enrichment Seminars. We are also proud of Vietnamese Fulbrighters who have been successfully admitted to schools in the U.S. including top notch schools, and firmly believe that the new cohort will contribute to the success of these programs.

Besides our regular work and events, we had the honor to meet Ambassador Bruce Wharton, Acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy in Hanoi and celebrate with him the 25th Anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Vietnam. We also organized a "Career Orientation Workshop" led by 15 new Fulbrighters of the Vietnamese Student Program.

We were thrilled to see the Spring version of our newsletter so well received by the Fulbright community. We truly appreciate the comments and feedback we received, as well as the stories, articles and photos you shared. Please keep them coming so we can include them in future issues and keep making the newsletter better.

Happy reading and have a great summer!



Warm regards,
Vu Quynh Nga

Ambassador Wharton dines with Fulbrighters

Ambassador Bruce Wharton, Acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy was in town and had lunch with some of our Fulbrighters to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Vietnam. Fulbrighters shared with Ambassador Wharton their Fulbright experiences, and informed him about Vietnamese issues of interest to him.

After the visit, Ambassador Wharton shared how impressed he was with our Fulbrighters and his appreciation for the contributions they have made in their communities.



Highlights

Career Orientation Seminar with Fulbrighters AY2017

15 Fulbright Vietnamese students hosted a career orientation seminar for young people in Hanoi on June 8, 2017. The seminar was a big hit with over 170 participants including high school students, undergraduates, graduates and early career professionals.

Before the seminar, participants received an e-collection of stories written by these Fulbrighters about themselves, their academic experiences, career path and their Fulbright journeys. If you're interested, you can read their stories at this link:

<https://goo.gl/MBZo9L>



Counselor for Public Affairs, Molly Stephenson gives welcome remarks

Through their personal stories and direct counselling, the new Fulbrighters helped the participants see different perspectives on choosing a career, how to get and stay motivated, and how to take full advantage of any work opportunity to fully foster one's professional and personal development.



Having coordinated this event before actually meeting in person, the 2017 Fulbright students demonstrated excellent teamwork and leadership. In the "pay-it-forward" spirit, they were eager to mentor others even before they got on a plane to the U.S. for their graduate study programs this fall.

As we continue with the yearlong celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Vietnam, we can proudly say that this seminar is truly one of the highlights!



Guest speakers for EducationUSA Pre-departure Orientation

On June 9, Fulbright alumni and current grantees spoke at the annual Education USA-sponsored Pre-Departure Orientation for Vietnamese students departing for the U.S. in Fall 2017. Jeffrey Lam shared with high school and undergraduate students the differ-



ence between the two educational systems, academic environments, and student life in the U.S. He also provided tips on how to succeed academically and socially, how to connect with professors, and how to work in a team with fellow classmates. Khuat Tuan Anh and Dave Paulson co-presented on similar topics for graduate students. Tuan Anh shared insights of being an international stu-



dent in the U.S., how to engage in social activities or student organizations, which key skills need to be developed, and how to find internship opportunities. Dave Paulson gave helpful information on what are common practices in U.S. study environment, what to expect when enrolling in graduate programs in the U.S., and how to maximize one's study time. Both sessions were very successful as EducationUSA received a lot of positive feedback from students after the sessions.

Outreach for Vietnamese Scholar Program

During April – June 2017, Fulbright Assistant Ms. Do Thu Huong led a series of information sessions promoting the 2018 Vietnamese Visiting Scholar Program in Hanoi and other cities/provinces throughout Vietnam. Some highlights of those outreach activities included sessions in the North at Lang Son College of Education and Ha Long University; in Central Highlands at Tay Nguyen University and Dak Lak Teachers' Training College; and in the south at An Giang University, Can Tho University and Can Tho College.



During the sessions, Thu Huong provided detailed instructions on the different parts of the application package. Specifically, she shared what candidates should include in a proposal, how the project proposals are assessed, how to create a strong Curriculum Vitae (CV), and how to target the candidates' best references.



Fulbright Alumni were invited to the sessions to share their experience with the application process, the interview and the grant tenure time in the U.S. By sharing more personal advice, the alumni help to encourage future candidates to apply, by showing others how they too could succeed and be selected for this prestigious program. These alumni demonstrated a deep commitment to the Fulbright Program by offering to help potential candidates, providing specific advice, proofreading applications, and writing reference letters, if asked.

ETA Final Meeting

On May 30-31, 2017, the Fulbright Program in Vietnam organized the final year meeting for 17 English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) in Hanoi. The meeting was an opportunity for ETAs to share their thoughts and experience about their life and work during their program at the host institutions and all the ups and downs. They also discussed the results of their work including what they had accomplished and what the host institutions had gained from their assistance. The ETAs were also very forthcoming with helpful suggestions and advice for the next group of ETAs.



2nd Enrichment Seminar for U.S. Scholars & Students

On June 1st, the final Enrichment seminar for U.S. Scholars and Students of AY 2016-2017 was organized in Hanoi. The grantees had the chance to share and discuss their projects at the end of their program in Vietnam. They discussed the challenges of adapting to different academic and cultural environments while working on their projects. Specially, grantees were excited to share their professional and personal experiences while mingling with Vietnamese colleagues & students,

as well as striving to be good cultural ambassadors in Vietnam. All the scholars and students also described their efforts towards relationship building with their host institution as their small part in strengthening people to people ties between Vietnam and the United States.



Pre-departure Orientation for Outgoing Vietnamese Grantees

Twenty-five Fulbright Vietnamese Scholars, Students and Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs) gathered in Hanoi from June 8 to 11 for a pre-departure orientation before they embark on their Fulbright journey in the United States this fall.

The PDO aimed to provide outgoing grantees with the necessary information for a smooth departure and arrival in the U.S. While briefing sessions by U.S. officers on political, economic, security and health issues gave them an overview of the U.S. today, those on academic and cultural matters really sparked the grant-

ees' interests the most. Fulbright U.S. and Vietnamese alumni were invited to share their experiences tips for academic success, and how to make the most of their time in the U.S.

The 2017 cohort is an outstanding group of dynamic individuals who have participated in a very rigorous competition to win this Fulbright scholarship. Within this group are doctors, lawyers, social workers, teachers, MC – Vlogger, journalists, ministry officials and businessmen who hail from different cities and provinces throughout the country.

The scholars will conduct research; the students will pursue Master's programs in areas that are important to Vietnam's development, such as Public Policy, Public Health, Communications, Teaching English as a Second Language, and Business; and the FLTAs will help introduce Vietnamese language and culture to American students.





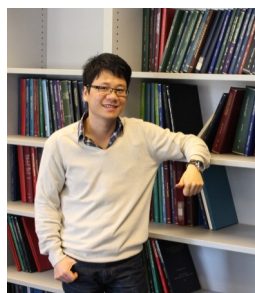
List of Fulbright Vietnamese Students AY2017

No.	Family name	Middle name	First name	Proposed field of study	U.S. University	Current work title	Current workplace	City
1	Do	Van	Anh	Energy Policy	University of California, San Diego	Consultant	Independent Contractor	Hanoi
2	Doan	Trong	Tuan	Accounting/Finance (major in Internal Audit)	Michigan State University	Internal Auditor	Viettel Group	Hanoi
3	Huynh	Nhu	Ai	MBA Entrepreneurship	University of San Francisco	Managing Director	HappyTap Co. Ltd	HCMC
4	Le	Vu Phuong	Thuy	Mass Communication Studies	University of Arkansas, Fayetteville	Managing Editor	Elle Magazine	HCMC
5	Nguyen	Thanh	Trung	International Law	Georgetown University	Legal Expert	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Hanoi
6	Nguyen	Ngoc Minh	Tam	Public Health- Health Administration	Kent State University	Researcher	Pasteur Institute	HCMC
7	Nguyen	Thi My	Linh	MBA - Supply Chain Management	University at Buffalo, The State University of New York	Overseas Procurement Officer	Asia Saigon Food Ingredient JSC	HCMC
8	Nguyen	Thuy	Linh	Master of Public Administration in Nonprofit Management	Harvard University - John F. Kennedy School of Government	Migrant Services Assistant	International Organization for Migration	HCMC
9	Nguyen	Viet Hieu	Linh	Arts - Comics	Savannah College of Art & Design	Creative Director	MATO JSC.	Hanoi
10	Pham	Thi	Ha	Public Policy	University of California, San Diego	Researcher	ISPONRE, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	Hanoi
11	Tran	Thi Hai	Yen	Psycholinguistics (Linguistics)	University of Kansas	Lecturer	Thai Nguyen University, School of Foreign Languages	Thai Nguyen
12	Tran	Thi	Ly	Public Health - Molecular Epidemiology	University of South Carolina	Medical Laboratory Scientist	Oncology Hospital	HCMC
13	Tran	Thi	Tra My	Clinical Social Work	Washington University in St. Louis	Case Manager	Hagar International Vietnam Office	Hanoi
14	Tran	Thanh	Van	Communications	The New School	MC/Vlogger	Freelance	HCMC
15	Vu	Duc	Minh	MBA	Columbia University	Chairman/Co-founder	HealthConnect Technology JSC	HCMC

List of Fulbright FLTAs AY2017

No.	Family name	Middle name	First name	Proposed field of study	U.S. University	Current work title	Current workplace	City
1	Ly	Truong Thanh	Tam	Language Teaching	University of Michigan	English teacher	Le Hong Phong Gifted High School	HCMC
2	Dang	Thi Cam	Tu	Language Teaching	University of Wisconsin-Madison	English lecturer	Hue University of Foreign Languages	Hue
3	Phung	Hai	Chi	Language Teaching	University of Hawaii at Manoa	English lecturer	Hanoi University	Hanoi
4	Trinh	Thi	Diep	Language Teaching	Michigan State University	English teacher	Newton Grammar School	Hanoi
5	Nguyen	Thi Thu	Thao	Language Teaching	University of Notre Dame	English lecturer	Hanoi National University of Education	Hanoi

Fulbright Vietnamese Scholars AY2017



Dr. Nguyễn Đức Chính is a lecturer in language teacher education in the College of Foreign Language Studies at the University of Danang, Vietnam. His main scholarly interests include language studies, identity in language teaching, sociocultural issues in language teaching, and social justice in education. As a 2017 -2018 Fulbright scholar at College of Education, University of Washington in Seattle, WA,

Chinh is conducting research in *Educating Teachers for Social Justice in U.S Higher Education: Lessons for Vietnam*. This Fulbright project aims to explore the policy and practice of social justice teacher education in U.S. higher education and put forward recommendations for implementing social justice teacher education in Vietnam.

Dr. Đinh Đức Trường is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Environmental Economics, the National Economics University, Hanoi. He plans to go to Columbia University to study America's experience with pollution damage valuation and draw policy implications for environmental management in Vietnam. Dr. Truong has over 15 years of teaching experience and doing research in environmental economics and policy in Australia, Germany, the UK and Vietnam. Currently, Dr. Trường is a member of the National Scientific Council on Climate Change. He is also conducting assessment studies on damages caused by climate change in Central Vietnam. Traveling and connecting with community members to protect the environment is Truong's biggest hobby. During his trip to the U.S, Dr. Truong hopes to explore nature and share his stories with American friends to increase the understanding of culture and science between Vietnam and the U.S.



Dr. Phạm Thị Hương is working for University of Finance and Marketing and cooperating with the Center for Education Accreditation – Vietnam National University-HCM City on various aspects of quality accreditation and assurance for higher education. Her Fulbright project at the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges aims to critically investigate how an accrediting agency in the United States operates in terms of ensuring the credibility and consistency of accreditation decisions and follow-up.

Based on the project, lessons for accrediting agencies in Vietnam will be drawn taking the contextual and cultural values of Vietnam into consideration. Her scholarly interests include the concept of higher education quality, the impact of external quality assurance on quality enhancement, and how to improve quality of higher education.

Dr. Trần Thị Ngọc Liên teaches and conducts research at the School of Hospitality and Tourism - Hue University. Recognizing a critical need for change in the tourism curriculum development at her university and other institutions, her research in the United States aims to gain insights into the American experience in developing outcome-based curricula and to find the most effective models for universities in Vietnam to adapt to their curricula development for higher education in tourism and hospitality. Her wish is to connect the schools she visits in the United States to her university and other universities in Vietnam for the development of international tourism education programs.



Dr. Nguyễn Hữu Quyết teaches English and International Relations at Vinh University. He will go to the University of South Florida to conduct research on the South China Sea dispute, with a particular focus on examining the U.S. role in this contentious issue and exploring the ASEAN member states' strategic objectives towards Washington's regional re-engagement in the context of an increasingly assertive China. Dr. Quyet is the author of the monograph *Vietnam's ASEAN Strategic Objectives since the 1986 Doi Moi Reform*. In Vietnam, apart from teaching English and international relations for master students, Dr. Quyet serves as a coordinator and trainer of the National Foreign Language 2020 Project. He loves working as an MC for international events and engaging with the Youth Union and local community.



Dr. Vũ Minh Tân is the vice chair of the Soil Mechanic Department at the National University of Civil Engineering. His Fulbright project at the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences, Stanford University, will focus on developing and calibrating groundwater flow and seawater intrusion models for the Mekong Delta area in Vietnam - one of the largest basins world-

wide which is among the most vulnerable to the impact of global climate change due to sea level rise, severe drought and the subsequent disastrous seawater intrusion. With seven years experience in modelling groundwater processes, heat transfer and soil mechanics, he taught in Vietnam for five years and delivered courses in Geotechnical and Geo-environment disciplines. With this experience, he expects to bring two academies closer together, especially in his research area, in addressing these global issues.

Departing U.S. Students



Dave Paulson is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Temple University. Dave's research interests in Vietnam are language endangerment and childhood socialization. With the Fulbright program, he is conducting doctoral-dissertation research on how Cham ethnic-minority children and youth are preserving their traditional language and culture in the context of Vietnam's rapid modernization. This work is based in Ho Chi Minh City and Panduranga

(the traditional Cham name for Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan Provinces). Dave's host institution is the Center for Vietnamese and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City, who have provided him with invaluable support throughout his experience in Vietnam.. Dave noted that "while I have been here five times before beginning my Fulbright, this trip has been, by far, the most meaningful. From the northern mountains of Sapa, to the sandy beaches of Phan Rang, there is always something new to learn in Vietnam. Living here feels like a story that never ends, and I have never been so inspired from anywhere else in the world." Perhaps one of the greatest lessons that Dave has learned in Vietnam is the importance of family. Family provides a model for both how society is structured, as well as how individuals structure their social, cultural, and interpersonal experiences. It is an

important source of tradition, and a meaningful place where things like language and culture are transmitted to the next generation. Dave is truly indebted to the Vietnamese people for welcoming him into their family, and for making this place somewhere he could truly call a second home. Dave looks forward to the continued exchange between our two countries, and hopes that it will lead to a similar sense of growth like he has found as both a person and a professional.

Dave Paulson (Vietnamese name: "Kiến Phúc"; Cham name "Ja Haniim")

Here are some links related to Dave's work:

Department of Anthropology at Temple:
<http://www.cla.temple.edu/anthro/>

Center for Vietnamese and Southeast Asian Studies: <http://www.cvseas.edu.vn/>

Cham Studies: www.chamstudies.net



I am **Cindy Nguyen** – graduate student, researcher, Vietnamese-American. Over my Fulbright tenure in Vietnam, I have learned to push the boundaries of institutional

categories. My research informed my personal life, my life inspired my art, and my art transformed my research.

During this time, I learned to question, reflect, and creatively express in new ways. I spent my days researching in the archives and libraries, my weekends writing poetry and making films, and evenings conversing and learning from Vietnamese youth.

My Ph.D. dissertation examines the cultural history of libraries in Vietnam (1887-1986). However, now I conceptualize libraries in a more dynamic way much like contemporary Vietnam—as a community of learners and as a limitless place for exposure to new ideas.

I have reframed much of my academic research to include my personal and artistic insights from my time here in Vietnam. See more of my writing and art on Vietnam, history, memory, and translation here: www.cindyanguyen.com

Hello! My name is **Jeffrey Lam**, and I am incredibly lucky to be a part of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program in Vietnam. Professionally, the Fulbright Program has given me the opportunity to collaborate with two research institutes in Hanoi and contribute to the budding field of mental health research. Personally, as a Vietnamese-American, the Fulbright program has allowed me to reconnect to the Vietnamese culture that my parents left as refugees over 40 years ago.

One of the most rewarding endeavors I have undertaken in Vietnam is learning Vietnamese, which has allowed me to exchange ideas with individuals across the spectrum of Vietnamese society about topics ranging from the small (food, family, and free-time) to the big (culture, relationships, and values). While both American and Vietnamese cultures are tremendously complex, conversing with others has allowed me to begin to understand the intricacies of each culture. As my term comes to an end,



I hope to go back to the United States with the best values from both Vietnamese and American cultures. By engaging all of the wonderful individuals who have crossed my path in Vietnam, I hope I have been able to fulfill Fulbright's mission of spreading mutual understanding and good will between Vietnam and the United States.

“Broke my shell, discovered a more adventurous and sociable self”



Before granted the Fulbright FLTA, I was a young lecturer at Faculty of English, Hanoi National University of Education. Applying for Fulbright has been my best decision and my year in Hawai'i portrayed profound self-exploration and evolution which leaves a permanent imprint on my life.

Working and studying in the US has undoubtedly nurtured my professionalism. What I earned during my program is now integrated in all aspects of my work. More importantly, the unique experience I had as both an instructor and a student made it impossible for me to see things from one perspective. It triggered a series of changes which eventually reshaped my worldview and my approach to life.

I also grew personally. I found my second

home in Hawai'i and all the places I visited, where I met amazing people and learnt tremendously from them: my fellow FLTAs, the lady who went out of her way offered to help because I “looked lost”, my hosts, the bus drivers that were so kind to wait for me when I was on the other side of the road yet the lights had turned, my students, my dorm friends with whom I share fond memories, and countless others. For me, the US manifests itself in those ordinary human beings; it is kind and lovable.

My Fulbright experience taught me to listen, love, care, understand and appreciate differences. I learned to be more independent (I thought I was independent; it turned out I can be even more so) and to value the interpersonal relationships I had.



I grasped a serendipitously better understanding of myself and others. I embraced challenges and stepped into unknown territories beyond my comfort zone to discover a more adventurous and sociable self: I would learn a new language, try riflery, go hiking almost every week, cook for

the church who gave free food to students every Sunday. I would volunteer to facilitate events at school. I just broke my shell, reached out to people, genuinely cherished every moment and made friends for life.



Teaching my language taught me a lot more about my own culture while captivated by other cultures. I realized the scar of the war on the tensions between Vietnamese communities. I was inspired to conduct research on Vietnamese heritage students' investment and identities, which hopefully will be investigated more thoroughly in my future PhD pursuit. I hope to make a positive contribution to create a sense of ownership with the Vietnamese language and culture among my students, as well as other second generation Vietnamese-Americans.

I am now back to work training teachers, facilitating research-related events at the Faculty, connecting academics and trying at best to give back to the communities. I co-author a research project funded by the Ministry of Education establishing a bilingual model for primary education in Vietnam. I also make time for alumni-related events whenever I can. The next step, I think, will be engaging in larger-scale community projects to live up to our motto: “Once a Fulbrighter, forever a Fulbrighter”.

- Ha Nguyen, FLTA 2015 -



Fulbright: So much more than a fellowship

Chào các bạn! I'm Kevin Thor, a current Fulbright ETA at Can Tho College, in Can Tho! My hometown is Stanton, Nebraska, a small, rural community in the middle of the United States. I studied Management and Communication Studies at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, and lived in Dallas, Texas working for Southwest Airlines before moving to Vietnam. Some of my favorite things in Vietnam are enjoying cà phê sữa đá, learning about the country with incredible students and friends, and practicing Vietnamese with everyone.

As a Fulbright ETA, I have been most proud of the confidence and conversational capacity my students have developed during



my time at Can Tho College. Throughout the year, we have worked on conversational skills and creating dialogue back and forth on everyday topics, like hobbies and success skills. Now, my students are having debates on the topics and are enthusiastically sharing ideas with each other. This continued passion has been shown in their dedication to practicing and challenging themselves throughout the second semester.

Being involved with the community has also been an important part of my Fulbright experience. I've had the opportunity to connect with multiple nonprofit organizations in Can Tho & Ho Chi Minh City to learn more about their programs and volunteer in



various ways. The organizations work in education access, development, medical missions, environmental issues, and sustainability for rural Vietnamese communities. Partnering with these organizations has led to the development of a “Social Engagement” series of workshops that I will present at the American Center of the U.S.

Consulate HCMC. The series is focused on community involvement, serving others purposefully, and how to develop and organize volunteer projects. I'm excited to share these at the American Center as well as in a “Speaking Zone” with students at my college!

My students, too, have been personally driven to serve the community. They organized a volunteer day with a local orphanage, where they collected food to give and we spent the morning playing games with the children. I hope that this purpose in community engagement and service continues long after my time as a Fulbright ETA ends, especially in this country that has become home for me.

The Fulbright Program has been an unbelievable opportunity to represent the U.S. while building meaningful relationships within my community in Can Tho, and across all of Vietnam. The people I meet through the Fulbright Program in Vietnam inspire me constantly, especially through the positive impact they have for students and



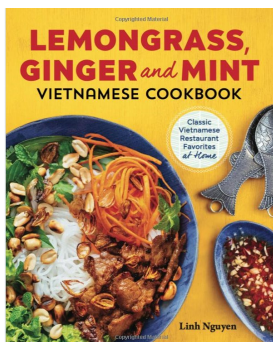
community members. The Fulbright Program has become so much more than a fellowship, but an opportunity to inspire and learn from the next generation of young leaders here in Vietnam.

Alumni Corner

Cookbook by Linh Nguyen

Fulbrighter Linh Nguyen recently published the “Lemongrass, Ginger and Mint” Vietnamese cookbook, which became best-seller on Amazon in its first day. The book is not only about cooking, but also enriched with Vietnamese culture.

Linh Nguyen won a Fulbright Vietnamese Student grant in 2013, and earned an MA degree in TESOL at Columbia University. She’s now working in Hoi An, and is the author of IndieChine Blog.



Tranquil. & VUI Studio

These quiet, cozy places away from the hustle of the old quarter are the ideas of Fulbrighter Khuat Tuan Anh, a graduate from Harvard Kennedy School of Government.



At Tranquil. Books & Coffee, Tuan Anh hopes to create a blissful hideaway in this busy city. The jazzy music and the big bookshelves along with the decor live up to the name. The books are carefully curated, the coffee is sourced from the most trustful roasters in Vietnam and the music is tastefully selected.

VUI Studio was born out of the wish to create authentic and tastefully designed items. Taking the form of an “open studio” where customers can enjoy a good cup of coffee while listening to music or browsing a collection of meticulously crafted products, VUI Studio aspires to become a common place for people who love culture and creative activities. Be it a carefully crafted item, an art book, space for a workshop or a good beverage, VUI is the place for you.

Tranquil. Books & Coffee & VUI Studio are not just merely a business, but are where common values about aesthetics, culture, and ethics are shared and multiplied. Guests are encouraged not to use plastic straws to protect the environment. Dozens of undergraduate students who work here benefit from the daily coaching on customer services, communications and management skills, and are inspired by influential guest speakers.



Winning project for English language teachers in An Giang

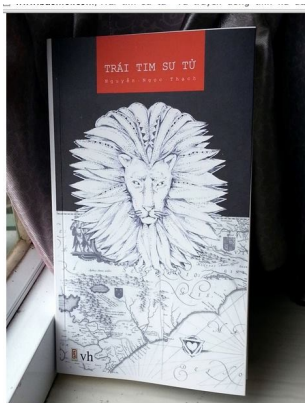
Fulbrighter Khoi-Nguyen Bui became the first Vietnamese award recipient and the only winner of the SEAMEO-Australia Education Links Award 2016/2017 with her proposal on IT-HELPS: Australia-Vietnam Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Education”.

This project is for language teacher capacity development in using telecollaboration (online intercultural exchange) models to connect language classes in Vietnam and Australia towards developing language learners’ intercultural competence and language proficiency. The proposed project includes two phases, and will be undertaken for 12 months from August 2017 to August 2018.



Khoi-Nguyen Bui is a lecturer of English at An Giang University. She won a Fulbright award in 2010, and earned a master’s degree in TESOL from Eastern Michigan University.

“Heart of a Lion”, memoirs of Tam Nguyen



Heart of a Lion was published on July 30 2014, the result of a collaboration between activist and Fulbrighter Nguyen Thanh Tam and writer Nguyen Ngoc Thach, both Vietnamese and born in 1987. The first draft of the autobiography was written by Tam in English, then translated by Thach to Vietnamese, licensed and published in Vietnam. Heart of a Lion is a chronological narrative of Tam’s transnational life events on the backdrop of economic and social transformation since the late 1980s. The book is unique as it portrays Vietnamese society at a time very few writers have written about and the ways in which a young queer person from a working-class family, Tam, navigated and thrived. The story touches on many contemporary issues, including sexual orientation and gender identity, traditional gender roles and gender inequality, the intersection of individualism and collectivism in the Confucian society following the historic Doi Moi policy in Vietnam in 1986, transnational migration, upward mobility, and intersecting identities in the time of globalization. Another feature of the book is that one of the 8 chapters is dedicated to the inception and development of the first gay Pride in Vietnam which Tam started in 2012 and has since been in the international human rights spotlight. In the first three weeks following its release, 2000 copies have been sold in Vietnam with its market mainly comprising people in their 20s or early 30s. The book is a nice blend between individual and societal elements, as C. Wright Mills said, “Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both”.



Thuong Ho: “A small fish in a big pond”

*Choose a job you love,
and you will never have to work a day
in your life. (Confucius)*



I would have woken up every morning questioning myself if my job were simply for me. Then, I would have gone to work with doubt hovering in my mind all day until I fell asleep.

But thanks to the Fulbright Program...

I am now happily busy at work as an interventionist for children with autism after graduating from a Master Degree in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). ABA is an evidence-based treatment for people with autism, but the program is not yet available in Vietnam. Under the sponsorship of the Fulbright Program, I was granted an opportunity to study in the U.S. as one of the pioneers in Vietnam in this field. Since my return in May, 2016, I have been realizing the three objectives I made in my application to the Fulbright Scholarship. First, I have provided direct intervention to many children, teaching them playing, academics, and social skills, sharing the laughs as well as the difficulties these children suffer. Second, I have also coached parents in Hanoi and other areas of Vietnam on how to interact joyfully with their children and support their children to develop through daily routines. Third, as a program manager at MOSAIC, a social enterprise committed to support families and provide professional training, I will hold the first workshops in March 2017 for teachers who work with

children on the spectrum and once each month afterward in many provinces for the purposes of disseminating the ABA approach to many practitioners across the country. In May, MOSAIC will co-host an international workshop with autism experts from the U.S. And I believe our work is just beginning.

Yet, this turning point in my career is not what I am most grateful to the Fulbright Program for, but rather, the experience of living in the U.S., eating American food, working and interacting with people from different backgrounds that shaped my current viewpoints of life. That was when I realized how Vietnamese I truly am and how much I

missed the atmosphere of the whole family gathering around the wood stove and cooking Chung Cake, missed the small street market with sticky rice wrapped by lotus leaves, missed Hanoi with different flowers all the year, peach flower, milk flower, daisy, flamboyant, etc. I realized how much I looked forward to coming back to contribute to my beloved home and “home” for me now is broadened beyond the apartment I live in, but the familiar streets or families I have worked with every day.

Those two years in the U.S. was a time of me being a small fish in a big pond. I met a single mom who worked full time, taking care of her son, and at the same time, doing her PhD; where my professor woke up at 4 am and worked until 5pm, enjoyed time with his family and back to work at 9 pm till late night. It turned out the big U.S. “pond” has been built up by people who work efficiently and work hard. Most im-

portantly, I had a chance to be such a small fish that even a little help meant a lot to me. That was when my used car’s battery died on a cold rainy day or when the engine could not start at a traffic light, there was always someone pulling their car over to help me. That was when I ran into another car, and then the mechanic came to help tow it back to his shop, took me to my daughter’s preschool to pick her up. That was when my daughter’s teacher supported me by taking care of my daughter on the days I had late shifts at my campus-based center for autism treatment. That was when friends from other states stayed up with me during the night, comforting me to overcome a time of financial and



personal challenges.

Only after living in another country, I learned how much I want to return to be a Vietnamese.

Only after working with “big fishes,” I realized how hard and efficiently they invested in their work to make the U.S. a leading country in many fields, including mine – ABA.

Only after being in the situation of a person in desperate need of help, I recognized how much I want to pay it forward, to pay what I have been lucky to experience in my Fulbright years.



Fulbright Program in Vietnam
Public Affairs Section - U.S. Embassy
Rose Garden Tower, 170 Ngoc Khanh, Ba Dinh, Hanoi
Phone: (+844)3850-5000/ Fax: (+844) 3850-5120
Email: vnfulbright@gmail.com
Website: <https://vn.usembassy.gov/education-culture/fulbright-program-vietnam/>