



SAIGEON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

NEWSLETTER # 126

APRIL 2019

**A COUNTRY
STAYS ALIVE
WHEN ITS
CULTURE IS
ALIVE.**

**HOPE NEVER DIES
IN THE
INDOMITABLE
VIETNAMESE MIND**

- **SACEI Newsletter** updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.
- It serves as a **LINK** between **SACEI** members and those who are interested in the Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American culture.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Florida Vietnam War Memorial Monument Has Been Vandalized	1
The 88 Project	1
Vietnam, Past is Prologue	5
A Beef Feast from Vietnam Gets a New York Showcase	5
Vietnam Magazine Vol. 1 No. 3	7

The Florida Vietnam War Memorial Monument Has Been Vandalized

It is with sadness that SACEI has to report to you that the Florida Vietnam War Memorial Monument (VWMM) has been vandalized some time before 28 February 2019, date the act of vandalism was first



discovered. As you can see in the above photographs, the Vietnamese flag opposite to the U.S. flag at the Florida VWMM was stolen (empty flag pole) and the carved flag on the marble below the flag pole chiseled out at various places. The Florida VWMM is located at Baldwin Park, Orlando, FL. It is one of six joint memorial monuments, each depicting one American soldier and a Vietnamese soldier, built by Vietnamese refugees in six states in the U.S. https://sacei07.org/Newsletter116_2018_06.pdf



The 88 Project

<https://www.vietnamhumanrightsdefenders.net/2019/03/17/74955/>



Greetings from **The 88 Project!** We are bringing you news, analysis, and actions regarding human rights and civil society in Vietnam during the week of March 11-17. Political prisoner Nguyen Van Tuc is in poor

health in prison, and the wives of two political prisoners were harassed this week while attempting to aid their husbands. This week, we remember imprisoned blogger Bui Hieu Vo, who was arrested two years ago. Public advocacy efforts by supporters of arrested toll protester Ha Van Nam and the Loc Hung community affected by forced evictions earlier this year were both thwarted after the selected venues for their advocacy campaigns both unexpectedly closed. In international advocacy, a coalition of media organizations has identified female blogger Tran Thi Nga as one of the "10 Most Urgent" jailed

Continue on next page

The 88 Project...

journalists worldwide, and Reporters Without Borders is urging Thailand to protect refugee blogger Bach Hong Quyen after fellow blogger Truong Duy Nhat disappeared from the country seven weeks ago. Plus, read about Vietnam's review of its ICCPR

compliance by the UN Human Rights Committee -- only its third review in almost thirty years. In the news, read analysis on Vietnam's cybersecurity law and a Communist Party member kicked out for criticism of Vietnam's relations with China. Coming up -- six members of civil society groups face trial this week. Five, who are affiliated with the Coalition for Self-Determination of Vietnamese People, will appeal their combined 57-year sentences on March 18, and constitutional rights activist Le Minh The will face his first-instance trial on March 20. Take action for Vietnamese political prisoners and activists by making a donation to the Doan Ket Fund.

HUMAN RIGHTS & CIVIL SOCIETY

Prisoners of Conscience



Political prisoner [Nguyen Van Tuc](#) is [enduring mistreatment at the notorious Prison No. 6](#) in Nghe An province. Tuc has been placed in a cell with a cellmate who allegedly beats Tuc in exchange for leniency from authorities, according to Tuc's wife. Prison authorities are also allegedly withholding food sent by Tuc's family. Nguyen Van Tuc is a member of the Brotherhood for Democracy and was sentenced to 13 years in prison in April 2018.

On March 11, 2019, [Nguyen Ngoc Anh](#)'s wife went to send him items at his detention center. However, a detention supervisor brought her to the main police station, which she first thought meant that they had completed their investigation into Anh. However, [she was questioned](#) for an hour and a half by four security officers while serving her son breakfast. All questions were about her friends on Facebook as well as her conversations. Police asked her to sign documents after the interrogation, but she refused. Authorities arrested Anh in late August 2018 for his online commentary on social and political issues and for allegedly inciting people to protest; he remains in pre-trial detention.



On March 7, Kim Phuong, wife of political prisoner [Nguyen Bac Truyen](#), was [barred from leaving Vietnam](#) to travel to Germany, where she planned to conduct advocacy efforts for her husband. Travel restrictions of activists and their family members are common in Vietnam. Truyen is a religious and democracy activist who is serving 11 years in prison.

This week, we remember blogger [Bui Hieu Vo](#), who was [arrested under Article 88 of the 1999 Criminal Code](#) on March 17, 2017 and later sentenced to 4.5 years in prison for Facebook posts deemed to have "distorted the political situation" and "incited public disorder." He is accused of "inciting the use of petrol-bomb and acid to attack the leaders of the Party, State, and the police forces," but at the time of his arrest, the Facebook account in question had been closed, so we cannot verify the accusation regarding the content of that page. However, in the absence of a free press environment, any accusation by the authorities against Vo should not be taken for granted.



Continue on next page

The 88 Project...

Activists at Risk

To campaign for the freedom of Ha Van Nam, a driver arrested for protesting against unfair fees at Build-Operate Transfer (BOT) toll stations, Truong Chau Huu Danh and his group started to [collect signatures from Nam's supporters](#). On March 10, 2019, a coffee shop in Tan Binh Ward that was booked to be a venue for signature collection [suddenly closed to renovate](#), likely under pressure from the authorities. Therefore, they had to change to another location at the last minute. On social media, the Propaganda Department of Binh Tan Ward accused Truong Chau Huu Danh of "leading a disturbance of order at BOT toll stations" and called for people to not support his campaign calling for Ha Van Nam's freedom.

On March 5, 2019, the Investigation Agency of Que Vo District, Bac Ninh Province public security [arrested Ha Van Nam](#) under the charge of Article 318 of the 2015 Criminal Code for "disturbing the public order" at Pha Lai BOT toll station. Due to [protesting against toll stations](#), he was harshly beaten on January 28 while protesting at An Suong BOT toll station and live-streamed the incident on his Facebook. The BOTs have been controversial in Vietnam, with some arguing that they are placed in incorrect locations, collect tolls past the allotted contract times, or are otherwise corrupt.

Environmental Activism/Community at Risk

On the morning of March 11, 2019, Loc Hung residents went to the Department of Information and Communication in Ho Chi Minh city to [submit an announcement on their press conference](#). Under the guidance of lawyers, the citizens decided to take advantage of their rights to hold a conference for the first time since being subjected to [forced evictions in January 2019](#). Holding such a conference is legal under the Press Law. The conference was set for March 13, but in the late afternoon on March 11, lawyer Dang Dinh Manh suddenly received a message from the restaurant where the event was to be held, saying that they [canceled the conference's booking](#) because their restaurant needs to undergo renovations starting on March 13. It is believed that this incident was ordered by the command of the authorities to prevent the conference.

The venue of the conference was changed to instead be held at the house of a Loc Hung resident. However, the group was [unable to hold the conference](#). On the morning of March 13, the Department of Information and Communication in Ho Chi Minh city announced to the representatives of Loc Hung residents that the content of the conference was "[not suitable](#)." Therefore, it was said to violate the Press Law. Meanwhile, plainclothes security forces raided the Loc Hung Garden area on the morning of March 13 to prevent people from holding the conference.

International Advocacy



In light of attacks on journalists and an ever-restrictive space for press freedom in many parts of the world, several media organizations, including TIME and Reuters, have started a campaign for press freedom called the One Free Press Coalition. They recently published their "[10 Most Urgent](#)" list, updated monthly, which highlights the cases of 10 journalists who are facing significant hardship as they fight for press freedom. On the list is [Tran Thi Nga](#), a female land and labor rights activist and blogger who was sentenced to nine years in prison. Nga has faced significant harassment from an abusive cellmate in prison -- including death threats -- and has often been denied visits from and communications with family.

Reporters Without Borders has [called on Thailand to protect Bach Hong Quyen](#). Quyen, a refugee who has lived in Thailand for two years, helped disappeared Vietnamese blogger and former political prisoner Truong Duy Nhat apply for refugee status in Thailand. Nhat disappeared a day later and has yet to be located; he was likely abducted by Vietnamese security agents. Quyen fears he could be deported back to Vietnam while awaiting refugee placement in Canada. He has been an active critic of environmental issues in Vietnam, including the Formosa environmental disaster.



Human rights groups refuted claims from the Vietnamese government that it has consistently upheld citizens' rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) during a [hearing of the UN Human Rights Committee](#) from March 11-12. Since becoming party to the ICCPR in 1982, Vietnam has only submitted three reports on the progress of its ICCPR implementation, the last one in 2002. The Committee [questioned government representatives](#) on the 2016 Press Law, the 2018 Law on Cybersecurity, police brutality,

Source: Front Line Defenders

Continue on next page

The 88 Project...

indigenous rights, and other issues raised in the shadow reports submitted as commentary by concerned civil society groups.

Vietnam Committee on Human Rights President Vo Van Ai spoke in front of the Committee and gave counter-points to the Vietnamese government's presentation; he [highlighted the increased use of Article 109](#) of the 2015 Criminal Code (formerly Article 79) -- "activities aimed at overthrowing the people's government" -- with more than double the convictions under this Article in 2018 than 2017, as well as terrible prison conditions for political prisoners, lengthy pre-trial detentions, and a wide range of physical and mental intimidation tactics employed to silence activists.

NEWS & ANALYSIS

[Vietnam's Communist Party Ousts Historian Who Criticized Its China Policy](#): "The political purge of Tran Duc Anh Son, an expert on Vietnam's claims in the South China Sea, is a rare window into how the party handles dissent among its rank-and-file members. It may also underline the sensitivities around Vietnam's handling of its relationship with China, its largest trading partner and former imperial occupier. Vietnam's state-run news media [reported](#) last week that Dr. Son, who is in his early 50s and worked for years at a state-run research institute in the central city of Danang, was expelled for posting false information and violating a code that governs party members' behavior."

[Under Vietnam's new cybersecurity law, U.S. tech giants face stricter censorship](#): "Of the 7,366 pieces of content Google has been asked to remove since 2009, 7,359 of them came in 2017 and the first half of 2018. The percentage of requests for removal honored since 2017 has never dipped below 79 percent. Nearly all of the requests pertained to content on YouTube. In one example cited by Google, the government asked the company to remove more than 3,000 YouTube videos that mainly criticized the Communist Party and government officials. Access was restricted to 'the majority,' according to the company."

COMING UP

March 18 is the new [appeal trial](#) date for [Luu Van Vinh](#) (sentenced to 15 years) and his co-defendants [Nguyen Quoc Hoan](#) (13 years), [Nguyen Van Duc Do](#) (11 years), [Tu Cong Nghia](#) (10 years), and [Phan Van Trung](#) (also known as Thich Nhat Hue, 8 years). The trial was originally set for January 21, 2019, but since one defense counsel, who was appointed by the authorities for Phan Trung, did not show up, the trial was postponed. Vinh took part in environmental and sovereignty protests and founded a pro-democracy group, the Coalition for Self-Determination for Vietnamese People; his co-defendants were tried for their alleged affiliations with the group.

[Instead of informing Vinh's and the others' families about their trials](#), a secretary from the court called their defense counsels, Nguyen Van Mieng and Dang Dinh Manh, on March 5, 2019. This is the third time that Le Thi Thap, Vinh's wife, got the news on her husband's trial from the lawyers. Nguyen Van Duc Do is reportedly in [poor health](#) in prison and has been subjected to beatings when arrested and also while imprisoned.

In addition, the People's Court of Binh Thuy Ward, Can Tho Province will hold [Le Minh The's](#) first instance trial on [March 20](#). He will be prosecuted under the Article 331 of the 2015 Penal Code for "abusing democratic freedoms." He is a member of the constitutional rights group Hien Phap and has been vocal on Facebook about public protest, the environment, and sovereignty. His trial was originally scheduled for March 6 but was postponed. Human Rights Watch [called for the release](#) of all six prisoners in both trials in advance of the hearings on March 18 and 20, saying that "[i]nternational donors and trade partners should tell Vietnam that continuing this crackdown will cause problems for the aid and trade deals that Hanoi wants to conclude with North America and the European Union."



Từ trái qua: Nguyễn Quốc Hoàn, Nguyễn Văn Đức Độ, Phan Trung, Từ Công Nghĩa, Lưu Văn Vĩnh. Ảnh: TTXVN - RFA edit



Vietnam, Past is Prologue

Tiffany Chung

MARCH 15, 2019–SEPTEMBER 2, 2019

Smithsonian American Art Museum (8th and F Streets, NW)



Internationally acclaimed artist Tiffany Chung (b. 1969, Đà Nẵng, Viet Nam) is known for her multimedia work that explores migration, conflict, and shifting geographies in the wake of political and natural upheavals. *Vietnam, Past Is Prologue*, probes the legacies of the Vietnam War and its aftermath through maps, videos, and paintings that highlight the voices and stories of former Vietnamese refugees. Through this work, Chung documents accounts that have largely been left out of official histories of the period and begins to tell an alternative story of the war's ideology and effects. A centerpiece of the exhibition is a new series of video interviews with former Vietnamese refugees who live in Houston, Southern California, and Northern Virginia that was commissioned by the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Vietnam, Past Is Prologue is presented in conjunction with SAAM's major exhibition ***Artists Respond: American Art and the Vietnam War, 1965-1975***, which emphasizes how American

artists grappled with the dilemmas of the war as it was unfolding.

Vietnam, Past Is Prologue makes visible a history hidden in plain sight for the past forty-five years. Her subject, the War in Vietnam (1955–1975), has achieved a nearly mythic significance in the United States. In Vietnam, “the War” devastated life as it had been known, dividing time into a “before” and “after.” Yet missing from the narratives told by these two sides is the perspective of the South Vietnamese, on whose behalf the Americans entered the war.

Through meticulously drawn and stitched maps, emotional interviews, and intensive archival research, Chung explores the experience of refugees who were part of the large-scale immigration during the post-1975 exodus from Vietnam. She begins with a fine-grained look into one person's story—that of her father, who fought for the South Vietnamese military during the war, widens out to encompass the stories of former refugees from Vietnam, and pulls out further still to show the global effects of their collective migration in the war's wake.

Sarah Newman, the James Dicke Curator of Contemporary Art, organized the exhibition.

A Beef Feast from Vietnam Gets a New York Showcase

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/05/dining/madame-vo-bbq-review.html>



By **Pete Wells**

March 5, 2019

The main attraction at *Madame Vo BBQ*, now two months into its run on Second Avenue in the East Village, is a seven-course dinner on the theme of beef. This is a familiar concept in Vietnam, where it is known as bo bay mon, as well as in San Jose, Calif., Houston and other areas with robust Vietnamese populations. In New York, where the Vietnamese restaurant scene is more anemic, bo bay mon is still a rarity. The rough outlines of the set-up at Madame Vo, though, will be familiar to any New Yorker who has gone out for Korean barbecue.

New York City bureaucracy is unwelcoming to the tabletop charcoal grills seen in Hanoi, so an electric grill under a metal screen is embedded in each table. Once the grill is switched on and the metal rods down at kneecap

level begin to warm up, an array of sauces, condiments and vegetables will arrive. When the rods are red, a server with a pair of tongs will lay some meat down on the screen, return periodically to fiddle with it and eventually decide when it is ready to be eaten.

The similarities with, say, *Han Joo Chik Naeng Myun & BBQ* in Queens end, of course, with the actual food. Yes, both offer lettuce

Continue on next page

A Beef Feast...

for wrapping, but at Madame Vo BBQ it is part of a Vietnamese table salad, along with fresh herbs; raw cucumbers, pineapple and apple; and pickled carrots and daikon. The restaurant also sets out a nifty caddy that holds circles of rice paper and warm water, in a miniature bathtub, for wetting the paper until it is soft enough to fashion into rolls.

Rather than gochujang and sesame oil, there is a classic Vietnamese nuoc cham, an intoxicatingly good version of the pineapple-and-fermented anchovy sauce known as mam nem, and lastly a tamarind sauce, which suggests Madame Vo BBQ can follow or leap over Vietnamese tradition at will.

This is about what you'd expect if you've eaten at another restaurant, a few blocks north, simply called *Madame Vo*. Jimmy Ly is the chef in both places; he and his wife, Yen Vo, are the proprietors. Each was raised in the United States by immigrants from Vietnam, and like many children of immigrants they seem to be fluent not just in two languages but in two cultures, enabling them to serve dishes their families might recognize in a setting that outsiders might embrace.

The wings at Madame Vo, sticky with caramel and fried garlic, are drive-straight-from-the-airport good. The restaurant produces some of the only pho in Manhattan worth talking about. One of them, in a porcelain bowl the size of a baptismal font, is filled with a potent beef broth, a short rib on the bone and enough other cuts to make a butcher smile.

At least one dish at the couple's new restaurant can stand alongside the wings and the pho at their first: the oxtail congee. Congee, or chao thit bo, is customarily the last course in bo bay mon. It frequently takes the form of a cloudy beef-and-rice soup. Mr. Ly cooks his congee with some chicken stock until it has the consistency of polenta, then spoons over it some sweet and savory braised oxtails in honey, fish sauce and brown butter. Everything about it is wonderful, even the scallion greens on top.

The first of the seven beefs is typically bo tai chanh, a raw beef salad, and this is a high point, too. Lean eye of round cut into thin pink sheets is the canvas for an action-painting whirl of fried shallots, raw red onions, chopped peanuts and slivers of fresh mint. Pretty standard stuff so far, but then Mr. Ly bathes the salad in tangerine-lime vinaigrette, which has a positively buoyant effect, and splashes it with a bright-green, lemony pulp of fresh rau ram puréed in oil.

In the middle of this \$59 menu come the grilled meats, the courses for which the table salad and rice paper wrappers have been waiting. The finest of these might be the relatively straightforward five-spice tongue, although the betel-leaf-wrapped bundles of seasoned ground beef — bo la lot — are soothing and stimulating at once, and the New York strip with marrow butter is a clever way to acknowledge Manhattan's own beef-eating rituals, even if it would draw blank stares on the streets of Saigon.

If you, like me, are naturally skeptical when servers persistently push a big-ticket item, you might be tempted to blaze your own path through Madame Vo BBQ's menu. But once you've tried the bo bay mon you have, by and large, seen the kitchen at its best.

Yes, you could get the whole catfish, and if you are not into beef perhaps you should. Despite what the menu says, the catfish is not grilled, but fried and then baked. It was perfectly done the night I had it, and was filleted at the table by a server who knew his way around a fish skeleton. By that time, all that was left to do was to wrap a chunk of fish in lettuce and rice paper with a squeeze of grilled lemon and some of the sautéed shallots, lemongrass and bird chiles that the kitchen had ladled along the snaking curve of the spine.

If you are thinking about a vegetable, the skewered and grilled okra pods in soy are crunchy and unslimy. The other appetizers, though, can be tricky. One night, the grilled scallop brushed with duck fat was transporting; on another, it tasted too much like the grill. Spring rolls filled with short rib and bone marrow seemed pointlessly indulgent, and so did their truffle hoisin dipping sauce in which I couldn't taste the truffles.

A few dishes might have been improved if they'd arrived while hot, like the extra-large grilled oysters under caramelized sea urchin mayonnaise or the charred sea urchin, basted in its shell with butter, sake and fish sauce. Grilled prawns brushed with a lovely orange butter were slightly more mushy than two prawns sold for \$38 should be. And while the 44-ounce tomahawk steak was more than a fair deal at \$90, it would have been helped by a more aggressive sear and more salt.

Continue on next page



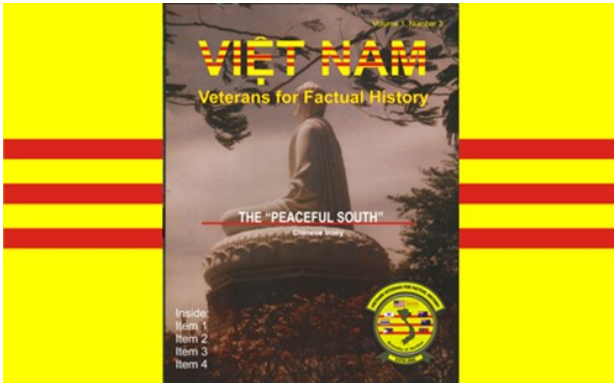
Yen Vo and her husband, Jimmy Ly, opened Madame Vo BBQ after the success of their first restaurant, Madame Vo. Credit: Karsten Moran for The New York Times

On certain nights, the whole operation had a slack, inattentive feeling that's rare in new restaurants. The catfish sat on the table, getting cold, while we waited for the table salad to show up. The thick stems of stir-fried morning glory would have been better cut into shorter lengths.

Madame Vo BBQ may eventually run as smoothly as its older sibling. While it works out the mechanics, the surest route to happiness is to eat the bo bay mon while sipping cold coconut water through a metal straw out of a whole green coconut that you hold in one hand, like a cup of coffee.

A Beef Feast...

Vietnam Magazine Vol. 1 No. 3



CONTENTS

A New Way of Being Vietnamese
 Vietnamese Nationalism
 The Myth of Resistance to Chinese Domination
 Misunderstood Vietnamese Revolution
 Viet Nam War: Facts vs. Distortions and Lies
 A Letter to my Children and Grandchildren
 HALL OF VALOR: The Quiet Hero: Nguyen Van Kiet
 Battlefield Observations of a Vietnamese War Correspondent
 This is All I Choose to Tell
 Viet Nam and American Academia
 The Best We Could Do
 A Brief History of Vietnamese in America
 Vietnamese American Artists
 Kindred Spirits
 Old Enmities
 What is it to be An American
 VOICES: Kim Vui interviewed by VVFH
 I Am Angry
 Strange Bedfellows
 Vietnamese Americans Speak out on Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's "The Vietnam War"
 HOMEFRONT: South Vietnamese Students during the War: Spies and Peaceniks
 South Vietnamese Soldiers
 An American Intel Officer on ARVN
 Nail Salons
 What I was Taught about the Vietnam War in High School
 The Vietnamese Generation 8X
 Vietnamese Under Communism 2011
 The look Into the Future: Bridging the Generation Gap
 America's Gain from the Viet Nam War—Vietnamese in America
 Reflections on a War
 SLanguage

*Nghia M. Vo
 Stephen B. Young
 Keith W. Taylor
 Tuong Vu
 Hoi B. Tran
 Nguyen Van Phu
 Darrel Whitcomb
 Thanh Thuy
 Isabelle Thuy Pelaud
 Nam Phu Nguyen
 Thi Bui
 Sang Ngoc Nguyen*

*Hiep Ksor and Neil Ngay
 Tan Dara Thach
 Quang Nguyen*

*Nam Phu Nguyen
 Richard Botkin
 Natalie Bui
 Roger Canfield
 Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen
 Bill Laurie*

*Dan Truong
 Nguyen Hong
 Dennis Praeger
 Mayor Tri Ta
 Lewis Sorley
 Charles Hunt
 Stephen Sherman*