



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

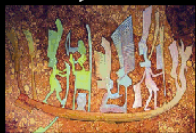
**HOPE NEVER DIES
IN THE
INDOMITABLE
VIETNAMESE MIND**

- **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.

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SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American

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COVID-19 FACTS NOT FEAR

Si Pham, MD

I'm a doctor and an Infectious Diseases Specialist. I've been at this for more than 20 years seeing sick patients on a daily basis. I have worked in inner city hospitals and in the poorest slums of Africa. HIV-AIDS, Hepatitis, TB, SARS, Measles, Shingles, Whooping cough, Diphtheria...there is little I haven't been exposed to in my profession. And with notable exception of SARS, very little has left me feeling vulnerable, overwhelmed or downright scared.

I am not scared of Covid-19. I am concerned about the implications of a novel infectious agent that has spread the world over and continues to find new footholds in different soil. I am rightly concerned for the welfare of those who are elderly, in frail health or disenfranchised who stand to suffer mostly, and disproportionately, at the hands of this new scourge. But I am not scared of Covid-19.

What I am scared about is the loss of reason and wave of fear that has induced the masses of society into a spellbinding spiral of panic, stockpiling obscene quantities of anything that could fill a bomb shelter adequately in a post-apocalyptic world. I am scared of the N95 masks that are stolen from hospitals and urgent care clinics where they are actually needed for front line healthcare providers and instead are being donned in airports, malls, and coffee lounges, perpetuating even more fear and suspicion of others. I am scared that our hospitals will be overwhelmed with anyone who thinks they "probably don't have it but may as well get checked out no matter what because you just never know..." and those with heart failure, emphysema, pneumonia and strokes will pay the price for over-filled ER waiting rooms with only so many doctors and nurses to assess.

I am scared that travel restrictions will become so far reaching that weddings will be canceled, graduations missed and family reunions will not materialize. And well, even that big party called the Olympic Games...that could be kyboshed too. Can you even imagine?

I'm scared those same epidemic fears will limit trade, harm partnerships in multiple sectors, business and otherwise and ultimately culminate in a global recession.

But mostly, I'm scared about what message we are telling our kids when faced with a threat. Instead of reason, rationality, openmindedness and altruism, we are telling them to panic, be fearful, suspicious, reactionary and self-interested.

Covid-19 is nowhere near over. It will be coming to a city, a hospital, a friend, even a family member near you at some point. Expect it. Stop waiting to be surprised further. The fact is the virus itself will not likely do much harm when it arrives. But our own behaviors and "fight for yourself above all else" attitude could prove disastrous.

I implore you all. Temper fear with reason, panic with patience and uncertainty with education. We have an opportunity to learn a great deal about health hygiene and limiting the spread of innumerable transmissible diseases in our society. Let's meet this challenge together in the best spirit of compassion for others, patience, and above all, an unflinching effort to seek truth, facts and knowledge as op

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COVID-19 FACTS NOT FEAR...

posed to conjecture, speculation and catastrophizing.

Facts not fear. Clean hands. Open hearts.
Our children will thank us for it.

#washurhands #geturflushot #respect #patiencenotpanic

Bio: Dr. Si Pham, MD

2017-present: Chairman, Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery
Lung and Heart Transplant Surgeon
Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, FL.

2013-2017: Professor of Surgery
Director, Heart and Lung Transplant and Mechanical Assist Device Program
University of Maryland, Baltimore, MD.

1998-2013: Professor of Surgery
Director of Heart, Lung Transplant Surgery
University of Miami, Miami, FL

Edu: University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

WORLD RENOWNED SURGEON COMES HOME TO THE VALLEY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lrboMrK-xQ>

One of a dozen Vietnam refugees sponsored by Lebanon Valley College in 1975, Dr. Si Pham now heads up cardiothoracic surgery at the Mayo Clinic Florida.

In 1975, eighteen-year old Si Pham fled Vietnam with no belongings and no family the day Saigon fell, boarding an abandoned Vietnamese Navy ship with about 2,000 other refugees. They were picked up in international waters and taken first to Subic Bay in the Philippines, then Guam. Now, the Lebanon Valley College alumnus is chair of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Fla., one of the best academic health care systems in the country. He recently returned to his alma mater to share his story at the College's annual Vickroy dinner for leadership donors.

Pham eventually arrived at a camp of 17,000 Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees in Fort Indiantown Gap in central Pennsylvania, seven miles from the Lebanon Valley College campus. He said he knew he would need a U.S. sponsor to be released from the camp, but families with young children, elderly parents, or large numbers were given priority over single men like him. So, he waited and studied to prepare for whatever the future had in store. And that's when fate intervened in the form of the late Dr. George Struble, Lebanon Valley College professor emeritus of English.

Struble taught English at the camp and encouraged Pham and others to apply for admission after then-president Frederick Sample decided to sponsor a dozen refugees and work with them to get loans and work-study opportunities. Struble also made sure Pham continued to learn English, bringing him to his home every week to watch 60 Minutes.

"At that time, I thought that just four months prior, I had left my country with nothing but a shirt on my back," said Pham. "I didn't know if I would survive the trip on the open seas or where I would end up living. Now, I was going to go to college to study chemistry in a free country. What a blessing! At last, I saw some light at the end of a tunnel."

Pham recalled how so many others on LVC's campus helped him and his fellow refugees get acclimated to campus life, American culture, and the English language. Among those was Dr. Owen Moe, professor emeritus of chemistry.

"Dr. Moe was a great mentor," said Pham. "He introduced me to basic science research, a passion that I continue to this day. Through this work, I was included in two research papers, my first ever scientific publications, an achievement I was so proud of. Today, 40 years later and with more than 170 scientific publications under my name, I still consider those two papers we published together among my proudest achievements."



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WORLD RENOWNED SURGEON...

A 1979 graduate of the Lebanon Valley College chemistry program, Pham went on to earn his M.D. at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and later became a faculty member in the department of surgery. In 1993, he was a member of the surgical team that performed the historic combined heart and liver transplant on the late Pennsylvania Governor Robert P. Casey. As director of heart and lung transplantation at University of Miami School of Medicine, he and his team kept two patients alive on machines without their own hearts for months until donor hearts became available for transplant. As leader of the Heart and Lung Transplant Program at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, he performed the first minimally invasive implantation of a left ventricular assist device in Maryland. "The last 43 years have gone by so quickly," said Dr. Pham. "I have met and become friends with many people, and received help from many to start a new life in this country. It all started at LVC. I am eternally grateful for the help that I had received at LVC and beyond. I will continue to do what I can to pay it forward."

RIP LT GEN. LÊ MINH ĐẢO (1933-2020)



Lt Gen. Lê Minh Đảo, the hero of the battle of Xuân Lộc (Picture taken in 2015)

The late Lt. Gen. Lê Minh Đảo passed away in a Hartford, CT hospital on March 19, 2020 at the age of 87. He became famous when he stood up against the NVA at the battle of Xuân Lộc, 20 miles northeast of Saigon. He had 2,500 men of the 18th ARVN Division against three NVA divisions. Once known as the 10th division (the worst in the ARVN), Gen. Đảo molded it into an aggressive 18th division that did more fighting in 1975 than the other divisions.

"The communists could throw their entire Army at Xuân Lộc. The 18th division will stand fast. And I will knock them down here even if they bring two or three divisions!" Đảo answered in an emotional interview before the battle. For two weeks his 18th division held on to Xuân Lộc before his soldiers were overwhelmed by the NVA. He told Peter Arnett of the Associated Press, "Please tell the Americans how the 18th Division can fight and die. Now, please go."

Đảo was captured after the fall of Saigon and spent 17 years in communist reeducation camps. After his release in May 1992, he received political asylum in the U.S. in April 1993.

<https://freedomforvietnam.wordpress.com/2012/04/30/southern-heroes-le-minh-dao-the-18th-division-and-the-battle-of-xuan-loc/>

<https://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/stories-of-death-exile-and-miracles-mark-40th-anniversary-of-saigons-fall>

VIETNAM COPIES CHINA MODEL OF FORCED CONFESSIONS ON STATE TV REPORT

2020-03-11

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/tv-confessions-03112020181739.html>

Vietnam is adopting the techniques of fellow Communist state China when it comes to televising forced confessions of human rights advocates and other political prisoners, a Spain-based rights NGO said in a report on Wednesday.

In the report "Coerced on Camera: Televised Confessions in Vietnam," the NGO Safeguard Defenders identified 21 people since 2007 who had been forced by authorities to confess on TV, and found videos for 16 of them.

Of the 16, 14 were human rights defenders -- rights lawyers, citizen journalists, villagers protesting against land grabs -- while one was a state oil executive accused of corruption and another was a farmer charged with murder.

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VIETNAM COPIES CHINA FORCED CONFESSIONS...

"That number is likely much much higher," the group said in a statement.

"Vietnam's poor human rights record makes it more than likely that many of these victims are also routinely exposed to arbitrary detention, mental and physical torture and threats," it said.

"Like China, some of Vietnam's victims are made to frame their crimes as being anti-state or anti-Party, a reflection of how authoritarian countries criminalize dissenting or critical voices," said the group, which in 2018 produced a landmark report on China's televised forced confessions.

"Like China, Vietnamese victims confessed to anti-State crimes and thanked the authorities for showing them the error of their ways," it said.

The report noted that Hanoi's forced-confession broadcasts have long been less sophisticated than those of Beijing, but said Vietnamese authorities have started raising their game in recent years.

"Starting in 2017, the confession news packages appear to become more elaborate," it said.



Will Nguyen (C) is escorted by policemen to a courtroom for his trial in Ho Chi Minh City, July 20, 2018.

Family members forced to confess in murder case

Among examples of the more slick confession videos, it said, was that of William Nguyen, a U.S. citizen of Vietnamese descent and the only foreigner subject to the practice.

"He was shown carefully framed against a blue background and an attempt was made to make it seem natural and not a simple police questioning session," they said of Nguyen's confession in 2018, when the graduate student from Houston, Texas, found guilty of "disturbing public order" for taking part in rare, large-scale protests and then deported to the United States.

This year, Vietnamese state television went even further in showing the confessions of family members of elderly community leader killed by Vietnamese police during a land protest outside Hanoi in January.

Le Dinh Kinh, 84, was shot and killed on Jan. 9 by police who attacked his home in Dong Tam's Hoanh village in an early morning assault that involved about 3,000 security officers from the police and armed forces.

"On 13 January, just four days after the attack, four villagers, including Kinh's son, grandson, adopted daughter and another male relative, appeared on state broadcaster VTV1 to confess to taking part in the violence. Their faces were bruised and cut. All four were accused of murder," the report said.

"The case is an extremely sensitive one for the Party and clearly it was at pains to urgently control the narrative," said Safeguard Defenders.

"This explains why four coerced confessions were aired—an unusually high number—and the sensitive story was reported at length in an effort to persuade the public, many of whom may also have felt sympathetic towards the villagers," it said. In an interview with RFA's Vietnamese Service on Wednesday, Safeguard Defenders Director Nguyen Quoc Ngu said the report aims to "remind many different countries that they have ignored human right abuses in Vietnam."

"Safeguard Defenders wants to raise concern from international organizations about this issue, hoping that they will call on

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Hanoi to end human rights abuses and comply with the signed international commitments," he said.

VIETNAM COPIES CHINA FORCED CONFESSIONS...

Televised forced confessions violate Vietnamese laws under the 2015 Penal Code forbidding extortion of confessions and also go against articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Vietnam signed in 1982, Ngu said. "We need voices to pressure the Vietnamese Communist Party to comply with laws and international commitments," added Ngu.

Reported by RFA's Vietnamese Service. Translated by Huynh Le. Written in English by Paul Eckert.

Provided by Bill Laurie

RIGHTS GROUPS CONDEMN 10-YEAR JAIL TERM FOR VIETNAM BLOGGER

HANOI: The jailing of a Vietnamese blogger for 10 years was condemned by rights groups Tuesday as "unacceptable" and an attack on free speech.

Truong Duy Nhat, a regular contributor to Radio Free Asia, was found guilty in a brief trial Monday of defrauding the public of \$560,000 when he worked for a state-owned newspaper in the central city of Danang in 2004, state media said. Describing the sentence as "harsh and totally unacceptable", Reporters Without Borders (RSF) called for the "immediate release" of Nhat who had posted articles critical of the government on his blog.

RSF ranked Vietnam 176th on its 2019 World Press Freedom Index as one of the world's biggest jailers of journalists and bloggers.

"Officially convicted of abusing his professional position, he is in fact paying dearly for his professionalism," said Daniel Bastard, RSF's Asia-Pacific director.

Radio Free Asia also condemned the conviction as "unjust" and "a blow against free speech and free expression." All media in Vietnam is state-run and independent journalism and bloggers are banned.



Since its hardline leadership took power in 2016, the country's single-party state has tightened its grip on criticism and different viewpoints.

This is Nhat's second prison stint. He was jailed for two years in 2014 for "abusing democratic freedoms" for critical blog postings.

He was discovered in a Vietnamese prison in March last year after fleeing to Thailand seeking refugee status with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The circumstances of Nhat's return to Vietnam were never clarified by Hanoi.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1875704/rights-groups-condemn-10-year-jail-term-for-vietnam-blogger>

Provided by Bill Laurie