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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 Culture

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A Look at Vietnamese Americans 45 Years Later

In *Growing Up American*, [Zhou and Bankston](#) classifies immigrants coming to America according to their age on arrival. Those arriving before their fifth birthdate are considered to be 2.0 immigrants (second generation) because "they share many psychological and developmental traits with their U.S. counterparts." Those arriving in adolescence are defined as the first generation (1.0). The 1.5 group comprises those who arrived between the ages of 5 and 12.

We have featured in this issue four young Vietnamese-Americans who are different from one another and eventually will go through or have different life trajectories. First, comedian Tien Tran born in Chester, PA graduated with a degree in biology from Boston College before switching to the field of entertainment. She is a 2.0 immigrant despite her unique Vietnamese traits. Her response to Americans who came to tap her shoulder wanting to know where she came from was a laconic song that started with "I came from a land far away..." and ended with "Erie, PA; Erie, PA..." Second, Phuc Tran must have been ten by the time he reached the U.S. shores according to the photograph in his book.

No one could tell that Michelle Giuda is a Vietnamese-American, had they not googled her name.

And Phuc Bui Diem Nguyen, whom her Math teacher asked her to "anglicize" her name is most likely a 2.0 immigrant because she is a freshman in college.

COMEDIAN TIEN TRAN



Though Tien Tran is an ensemble member at one of the most famous comedy destinations in the world, she said the word "comedian" does not exist in Vietnamese. Born in Chester, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, Tran's path has been anything but ordinary. Her parents came to America in 1979 as Vietnamese refugees and she later spent her formative years in the suburb of Mill Creek where she said her family was one of the few of color.

Tran began her comedy career on the PBS show "Ghostwriter" where she was part of a small cast of kids solving mysteries with [a ghost's help](#).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s03pjeK6LE>

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Vietnamese Americans 45 Yrs Later...

Sigh, Gone Review Comments

When I recently received [SACEI Newsletter #140](#), I was delighted to see it included a review of Phuc Tran's new book *Sigh, Gone*, a memoir I had finished reading, with enjoyment and appreciation, only a couple of days earlier.

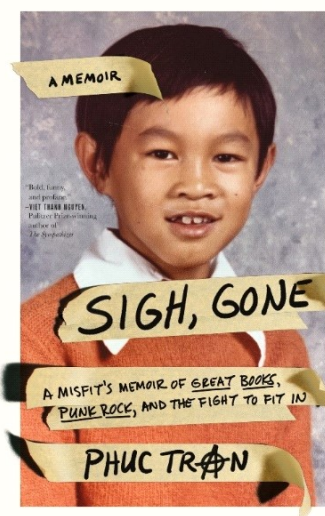
To my dismay, I found the review to be a litany of complaint, saying the book "lacks...curiosity," that it "gestures at interesting ideas without fully engaging in them," that various topics "are left unexplored," and that Tran's description of his parents "doesn't leave the realm of teenage caricature."

This last is self-damning for reviewer Jung, as Tran has described his parents in agonizing detail, his father a "vicious" monster whose "one parenting tool" is "physical violence" and who beats his child with a metal rod to the point where his injuries are so painful he cannot sit down in his classroom chair; his mother a passive nonentity who cannot, or will not, intervene to stop her husband's cruelty. The reality of this situation, a home that was, Tran tells us, the place where he "felt least safe and hardly regarded," where nights "were littered with the land mines of physical violence and emotional abuse," is a subtext that unrelentingly colors and helps explain much of the youthful trauma that Tran describes, even as he is triumphantly overcoming it.

I have no idea who E. Alex Jung is or why he was chosen to review this book, but I have nothing but disdain for the mean-spirited account he has penned. Phuc Tran deserved better—much, much better—for his honest, touching, and graceful memoir. It is a gem.

Lewis Sorley
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

SIGH, GONE: PHUC TRAN



Michelle Giuda: Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs (2018-2020)

Michelle S. Giuda's term ended [on March 3, 2020](#).

Michelle S. Giuda was sworn in as Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs on February 3, 2018. On February 5, 2019, Secretary of State Pompeo delegated to Ms. Giuda the authorities of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

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Michelle Giuda...

In May 2019, Ms. Giuda led the largest restructuring at the State Department in twenty years, merging the Bureaus of Public Affairs and International Information Programs to modernize communications and create the Bureau of Global Public Affairs, of which she serves as head.



Ms. Giuda brings a wealth of global strategic communications experience to the Department, having served as senior vice president of Global Corporate Communications and managing strategy across 81 countries for Weber Shandwick in New York until January 2018. Prior to Weber Shandwick, Ms. Giuda was a political communications strategist in Washington, DC, serving for five years as a lead member of former Speaker Newt Gingrich's communications team, including her role as National Deputy Press Secretary during the Speaker's 2012 presidential campaign. Ms. Giuda also served as Communications Director of GOPAC, working to elect and advance the country's next generation of top state and local leaders.

In 2016, Ms. Giuda was honored with the Outstanding 50 Asian Americans in Business Award by the Asian American Business Development Center.

Ms. Giuda received her Master's Degree in Political Management from George Washington University and earned a B.A. in Political Science from UCLA where she was an NCAA Champion and Team Captain of the UCLA Women's Gymnastics Team.

She was born Michelle Mai Selesky in San Juan Capistrano, CA in 1985. Her mother fled Vietnam days before the fall of Saigon. Her father served in the military [during the Vietnam War](#).

Michelle Giuda rejoins Weber Shandwick as EVP of [geopolitical strategy, risk](#) in March 2020.

Professor Who Asked Student to "Anglicize" Her Name is Put on Leave

A community college professor in Oakland, Calif., is on administrative leave after asking a Vietnamese-American student to "Anglicize" her name because he felt it sounded "offensive" in English.

In a Wednesday night email exchange that was quickly shared to tens of thousands on social media, Matthew Hubbard, a professor in the Laney College mathematics department, repeatedly asked the student, Phuc Bui Diem Nguyen, to "Anglicize" her name because it "sounds like an insult in English."

In response, Ms. Nguyen told the professor that his request "feels discriminatory" and that she would file a complaint with the school's Title IX office if he could not call her by her given name.

"I understand you are offended, but you need to understand your name is an offensive sound in my language," Professor Hubbard replied. "I repeat my request."

Tammeil Gilkerson, president of Laney College, addressed the situation in a statement on Thursday, calling the incident "disturbing." Without naming the professor, she said the faculty member involved had been placed on administrative leave [pending an investigation](#).

Thuan Pham, Who Fled Vietnam as a child and became Uber's CTO in 2013, is leaving the company

Connie Loizos

TechCrunch April 28, 2020, 9:51 PM EDT

<https://www.yahoo.com/finance/news/thuan-pham-fled-vietnam-child-015107373.html>

Thuan Pham, hired as Uber's chief technology officer by former CEO Travis Kalanick back in 2013, is leaving the company in three weeks, the ride-share giant revealed today in an SEC filing that came out just as The Information reported that massive layoffs at Uber are being proposed to preserve some of the company's dwindling capital reserves.

The outlet suggests the discussed cuts could impact upwards of 20 percent of Uber's 27,000 employees, roughly 800 of whom could theoretically come from Pham's engineering team, which currently comprises 3,800 people.

Said an Uber spokesman to The Information's Amir Efrati: "As you would expect, the company is looking at every possible scenario to ensure we get to the other side of this crisis in a stronger position than ever."

Uber has been hard hit as much of the country and world remains at home, awaiting a vaccine for -- or at least more testing around -- COVID-19. Last Thursday, Uber said it expects an impairment charge of up to \$2.2 billion in the first quarter due to the outbreak and for revenue to nose-dive by \$17 million to \$22 million in the quarter. (The company will report its first quarter results next Thursday.)

Pham has meanwhile become the longest-serving top executive at Uber, outlasting not just Kalanick, who was forced to resign as CEO back in 2018, but also the members of Kalanick's so-called "A team" of trusted advisors. Included in this circle: Ryan Graves, who was one of Uber's first employees and a board member of the company until last May; Uber's former head of product, Daniel Graf, who has since started his own company; Eric Alexander, who was Uber's president of business in Asia and was fired in 2017 over his handling of a rape investigation in India; and Emil Michael, Uber's controversial former SVP of business who left the company in 2017, though it remains unknown if he resigned or was fired.



His career at Uber might have ended in 2017, after former Uber engineer Susan Fowler publicly accused Pham and Uber's HR department of ignoring her complaints about workplace sexism. An external investigation cleared him, however.

Pham -- who was recruited by Kalanick from VMWare, where he'd spent the previous eight years -- stood to make more than \$200 million from Uber's IPO last year, according to Business Insider. At the time, he owned 5.4 million shares.

His is an American success story. At age 12, Pham escaped Vietnam with his mother and brother in a fishing boat that was reportedly carrying dozens of other refugees. After first spending 10 months at camp in Indonesia that he has described as having no sanitation and offering only a tarp over their heads, his family later arrived in Maryland and Pham, an excellent student, wound up studying at MIT.

Pham would go on to nab a master's degree in electrical engineering from the university before being drawn to job in Silicon Valley, at the research lab of Hewlett Packard.

He only stayed three years. In an extensive interview with CNN in 2016, he said grew "bored" at HP so joined Silicon Graphics, whose cofounder, Jim Clark, would later cofound Netscape with a young Marc Andreessen.

"It was a significant move," he told the outlet, "but I broke my mom's heart. She thought I was reckless. In her view, I should have stayed to build a career at a stable company like HP for 30 years and retire with a gold watch."