INTRODUCTION

Minnesota is home to one of the largest Hmong communities in the United States. More Hmong live in the Twin Cities than in any other urban area in the United States. Originally from Laos, the Hmong supported American troops during the Vietnam War. Beginning in 1976 and continuing in four waves until 1996, many came to the United States as political refugees. The Hmong have strong kinship and clan ties. Many who originally were resettled in other areas, chose to move to Minnesota to be close to family members and other relatives.

The elder women’s experiences included maintaining home and family while their husbands fought alongside American soldiers in the Vietnam War. They fled their farms and villages and crossed the Mekong River into Thailand where they lived in refugee camps before resettling in the United States.

The experiences of the oldest members of the community are vastly different from those who came here as children and those who were born in this country. Today, Hmong women work as teachers, lawyers, and decision makers in their respective positions—opportunities not available to them in their homeland. The youngest never experienced war or resettlement and are unfamiliar with the privations of their elders.

This oral history project chronicles the contributions and experiences of Hmong women with ties to Minnesota. Members of the Hmong Women’s Action Team, a group of Hmong women community leaders and activists, interviewed each other and their mothers and grandmothers, and in one case her daughter. They share their stories of life in the Minnesota, Thailand, and Laos. Three generations from six different families are represented in this series of eighteen interviews.

The interviews help provide a greater understanding of Hmong women’s roles in the home and community, challenges and successes in public and private realms, and across time and space.
MAYKEU VANG LYFOUNG
An Interview with

Maykeu Vang Lyfoung
Narrator

Pacyinz Lyfoung
Interviewer

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Hmoob Thaj Yeeb Oral History Project

The transcript is presented in both English and Hmong.
Maykeu Vang Lyfoung

PL: What is your maiden name?
MVL: I am from the Vang clan.

PL: How old are you now?
MVL: I am 49 years old.

PL: How many children do you have?
MVL: I have five children, two boys and three girls.

PL: What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
MVL: I have had two years of college only. I am planning to go back to school in the future.

PL: What is your occupation?
MVL: Right now, I am not working. I just stay home.

PL: Currently, whom do you live with?
MVL: Right now, I am living with my husband in Fresno, California. I am currently married.

PL: How old were you when you got married?
MVL: When I got married, I was seventeen years old.

PL: Does your husband only have one wife or does he have many wives?
MVL: He is only married to me.

PL: How long have you been in this country?
MVL: I have been in the United States for fifteen years already.

PL: Where were you born?
MVL: I was born in Laos.
PL: Around where?

MVL: In the province of Xiengkhouang.

PL: What type of Hmong are you?

MVL: I am White Hmong.

PL: What religion do you believe in?

MVL: I still believe in the Hmong traditional religion.

PL: Now, let’s talk about childhood experiences. Did you go to school?

MVL: When I was little, I did go to school like other children in the village.

PL: When you were little, what were your duties at home?

MVL: When I was young, I did not have to do much because many people lived together in my family, so my older sisters and my aunts were the ones who did most of the work. We, the younger ones, all we did was go to school and come back home. We helped with whatever we could. There were no specific tasks assigned to us.

PL: Have you done anything at all to help the community or relatives?

MVL: When we were young we did not do much to help the community or relatives because we were too little. Also at that time, only men were responsible for helping the community. Women stayed home, took care of the children and family only.

PL: When you were little, what were the things that a girl must learn and know?

MVL: When I was little, I learned how to sew (ua paj ntaub) from my aunts.

PL: As a young girl, what did you do for fun?

MVL: When I was a young girl, we did not have much to do. During weekends and holidays, we went to the movies, and sometimes we went to have picnics in the park. And when there were festivals in the temples, we also participated and had fun there.

PL: When you were young, what did you dream your life would be like when you grew up?

MVL: When I was young, I wanted to go to school and be educated, to be able to pursue a higher education to fulfill my dreams. The women in that generation, we wanted to become teachers so we could teach our people; besides that, we wanted to become a
nurse or a doctor, so we could help our family, the community, and help the villages far from the cities.

PL: What were women’s jobs?

MVL: A woman's job is to take care of your husband and the children. Make sure there is enough food, that the house is clean. Make sure your parents, parents-in-law, sisters, aunts and uncles, and the people who live with you have food and clothing.

PL: What kinds of jobs were considered women’s jobs?

MVL: Women’s jobs were to look after the children to make sure there is food and clothing. Take them to school and also make sure the house is clean. You need to work so you can buy enough food for the family. Back then, you also needed to make sure there was enough firewood and drinking water available.

PL: In your family, what are women’s roles in terms of making decisions?

MVL: Women’s decisions in the house were to decide how clean you want your house to be, what it should look like, how to support others, if you have the ability to do what you think is right, and also see how you want your children to dress. You can make the decision to buy the appropriate clothes. You can decide what kind of food to buy, what to prepare, what to do etc…

PL: What about in your extended family?

MVL: Within the extended family, in general Hmong women don’t make many decisions because these are men’s jobs only. Whatever problems may arise, the men will make the decision. Women, our part is, when there are family gatherings or events, we need to help out. We need to know and have our grown-up daughters go and help out. We need to help out at the funerals, weddings. The same thing with the community: both the husband and wife need to help, as well as the children who can give them a hand.

PL: What does the community think about women being leaders?

MVL: Back then, a woman leader is a good housewife. She has a good attitude, knows how to help the extended family, the community and take care of her children, then she is considered a good wife. But now, women leaders are those who hold key positions in non-profit organizations or those who, the women at the church, or the women who have attained a high level of education, and work to serve the community.

PL: What does the community think of these women?

MVL: Community members, I would congratulate them if they could integrate themselves into a Hmong woman’s role, and at the same time, they can contribute more to the community than a regular housewife. What I mean by behaving like a Hmong
woman is to act like the older generation of Hmong women. When you are out working in the public, you act like a professional, but when you get home, you should hold the Hmong woman’s role. You should still be the housewife, take care of your children, cook and help the community. The most important thing about being a Hmong woman is to respect your husband as the head of household, the most important person in the family. Coming after that would be your parents or grand parents, in-laws and the elderly, you must…

PL: What are women’s roles in supporting the family?

MVL: Back then, Hmong women’s ways of helping were mainly confined to jobs in the house. You must not be a lazy woman. You have to like farming in the fields, so that you have enough food to provide for your family. If you can raise chicken and pigs, then you would have food and meat for your family all year round. Sometimes, you might have more than enough, then you can also sell the leftovers for a little bit of money to help support your family. Today, I see that Hmong women have become more educated and can earn a living differently than in the past. For example, there are Hmong women working in offices, they are some who started their own businesses in the community and are making enough money to support their family. Those who know how to hand make Hmong tapestry, they know how to sell their work in the market, so they can earn money for their family.

PL: Who does the family planning?

MVL: Back then, having children was something that was important for Hmong people. The more children they have, the better because people farm and raise animals, so the more children you have, the more help you would have. Today, it is different, a family that has four to five children is considered a big family.

PL: What did women use to prevent having children?

MVL: Back then, there was nothing, but now, there are many things in the hospital, given to women to prevent them from having too many children. Those who want to take pills, they can. If they want to take shots, they also can. In addition to that, there are also other options. If one does not want to have more children, the doctors are very good at performing surgery, so they can tie their tubes.

PL: When is the time your family and your community respects you the most?

MVL: If you are a good woman, not lazy, have a good attitude, and know what you are saying, know how to listen to the elders’ words of wisdom, care about relatives and family members, then I think members of your family will love you forever.

PL: When does your family respect you the most as a woman?

MVL: They respect you when you stay married and have a solid family like others.
PL: What was your experience of being a refugee?

MVL: Here, I don’t know much because I did not have the experience of escaping from the communists, and I also did not live in the refugee camp in Thailand because I left Laos in 1967 already. When we lost our country, I was in France, so I would not be able to tell you about it.

PL: Next, it is going to be the adjustment to living in the U.S. Why did your family decide to come to this country?

MVL: My family decided, had decided to move from France to America in 1985 because our in-laws, and my brothers and sisters all live in the U.S. My husband also has two or three sisters living in the United States. The most important thing is that, we see that, in America, education is much easier than in France. Also, over here, the children would have more opportunities than in France, that was why we decided to come.

PL: How old were you when you came to this country?

MVL: I was thirty-five years old when we came to America.

PL: When you arrived here, what were the things that were easy for you to learn?

MVL: The easiest thing for me to learn was how to drive. In this country, you can go and take the driving permit test, and it is also easier to drive than in France, and it also costs less.

PL: What was the hardest to learn?

MVL: The hardest thing was to learn how to pronounce the English words. In France, you pronounce exactly the way you write, and you don’t make mistakes. In France you write the same as you pronounce.

PL: What has helped you to adjust the fastest to this country?

MVL: The most important was to learn the language as fast as you can, so wherever you go, you can communicate. When you drive, you can read signs and know where you want to go.

PL: How did you learn the knowledge that helped you start your new life?

MVL: When you arrive, you need to find a school where they have programs for people who come from other countries.

PL: Did the knowledge learned in Laos help you in this country?
**MVL:** The knowledge I learned in Laos did help in many ways because if you are used to going to school, then, when you came to this country, you learn the American language faster. Those who knew how to drive there, can learn how to drive here faster also.

**PL:** Do you think that women’s lives here are much better than over there?

**MVL:** Hmong women’s lives in the United States are much better than in Laos in many ways, because they do not have to work so hard and be so poor as before. Everything in the house, if you have money you can buy it. Any woman who has the ability to pursue a higher education, she can, because it is available. If you want to go, you are allowed to continue your education.

**PL:** Do you consider this country your home?

**MVL:** Now, I think that whichever country I live in, I consider that country my home. However, I still hope that someday we will have our country, and all of us would still get to go back to our old home.

**PL:** Are you a U.S. citizen?

**MVL:** I decided to become a US citizen in 1991.

**PL:** Do you vote?

**MVL:** I do vote when it is time to vote.

**PL:** What is your opinion about the Hmong people who run for political office in this country?

**MVL:** I am proud, and I am prepared to help support our sons and daughters, or the Hmong people who run for political office. I am proud to see them capable of competing, and when they succeed, they will come back and help our Hmong people and defend our rights.

**PL:** When the country was at war, did you know anything about it?

**MVL:** In my life, since I was little until I grew up, we lived during wartime. My dad was also a soldier since he was young until now. Whatever happened, we heard and knew about.

**PL:** Were there any leaders that were important for you, or that you liked?

**MVL:** Today, I see my father, General Vang Pao, and our grandpa, Tou By Lyfoung. Those were the two leaders who led the Hmong people for the last forty to fifty years. Both of them really have sympathy for the Hmong people. They have an open heart. They care about everyone. They treat everyone the same. The most important thing is that
they built a relationship with Laotian leaders, Hmong leaders, American leaders, and French leaders.

PL: In this country, what are Hmong women allowed to do that they were not allowed back in Laos and Thailand?

MVL: Hmong women can do many things in this country because they are educated, they know the legal systems, they want to go and work in public offices, become leaders in organizations, or involved in businesses. Our Hmong women can do anything if they get the support from their husbands and the Hmong community.

PL: What can Hmong women contribute to their households?

MVL: I see that Hmong women are capable of working outside their home to earn money to help their husband and their family, help raise their children, help support their children to pursue a higher education. Our Hmong people know how to show their tapestry (Paj Ntaub), sell them to other people, so they know about our skills and ability. First, they also established many women organizations around the country, so from that you can say our Hmong women have done so much to help Hmong people.

Finally, I don’t have much to say, but I hope that our young Hmong women who have a good education, I hope that you think and always remember that you are a young Hmong woman. Whatever you do, always remember you are a Hmong woman. Only do what is good for Hmong people.

PL: Thank you very much.
Maykeu V. Lyfoung

Interviewer (I): Koj yog nkauj Hmoob dab tsi?

Maykeu V. Lyfong (M): Kuv yog nkauj Hmoob Vaj.

I: Tam sim no koj muaj pes tsawg xyoo lawm?

M: Tam sim no kuv muaj 49 xyooos.

I: Koj muaj pes tsawg tus me nyuam?

M: Kuv muaj 5 tug me nyuam, 2 tug tub, 3 tug ntxhais.

I: Qib siab tshaj plaws uas koj kawm ntawv tiav yog dab tsi?

M: Kuv tau mus kawm college 2 xyooos xwb. Tom ntej no tseem npaj hais tias yuav rov qab mus kawm tauj ntxiv.

I: Koj ua hauj lwm dab tsi?

M: Tam sim no kuv tsi ua hauj lwm, nyob hauv tsev xwb.

I: Tam sim no koj nrog leej twg nyob?

M: Tam sim no kuv nrog kuv tus txiv nyob nram Fresno, lav California. Tam sim no kuv tseem muaj txiv.

I: Koj muaj noob nyoog li cas thaum koj yuav txiv?

M: Thaum kuv yuav txiv, kuv muaj 17 xyoo.

I: Nej muaj ib leeg niam xwb, los coob tshaj ib tug?

M: Wb yog 2 niam txiv, tug kav tug xwb.

I: Koj tuaj teb chaws no tau pes tsawg xyoo lawm?

M: Kuv tuaj teb chaws Ameslikas no tau 15 xyooos lawm.

I: Koj niam yug koj qhov twg?

M: Kuv niam yug kuv tim lub teb chaws Nplog.

I: Thaj tsam twg?
M: Pem lub xeev Xees Khuam, los nplog hu hais tias Xieng Khouang no.

I: Koj yog hom Hmoob dab tsi?

M: Kuv yog nkauj hmoob dawb.

I: Koj kev ntseeg yog raws li cas?

M: Kuv tseem coj kev cai qub.

I: Npaj no, hais txog childhood experiences nawb. Koj puas tau mus kawm ntawv?

M: Thaum me, kuv kuj tau mus kawm ntawv li co me nyuam hauv peb zej zog thib.

I: Thaum koj tseem yog me nyuam yaus, koj cov dej num nyob tom tsev yog dab tsi xwb?

M: Thaum kuv tseem yog me nyuam yaus, aws, kuv kuj tsi tau ua dab tsi ntawv vim hais tias hauv peb tsev neeg, peb nyob coob coob leeg ua ke, ces kuv cov niam laus thib kuv cov phauj yog cov ua hauj lwm ntawv xwb. Peb cov me nyuam yaus ces peb tsuas mus kawm ntawv rov qab los tsev. Yus pab tau ua dab tsi los yus kuj pab xwb, cav tsi muaj dej num ab tsi uas luag yuav faib nrau yus tiag tiag.

I: Puas muaj tej yam kev pab uas koj ua pab zej zog, kwb tij neej tsa?

M: Thaum lub caij peb tseem ua me nyuam yaus ntawd, peb kuj tsi tau pab zej zog los cov kwb tij neej tsa li cas vim hais tias peb tseem yau. Tiab lub caij ntawd txiv neej yog cov ua hauj lwm peb zej zog xwb. Cov poj niam ces yog hais tias nyob hauv vaj hauv tsev, yus tu yus vaj yus tsev, yus tej me tub me nyuam, yus tsev neeg xwb.

I: Thaum koj yau es yog me nyuam ntxhais, tej yam hauj lwm uas koj tau xyaum kom paub yog dab tsi?

M: Thaum kuv tseem yau, kuv kuj tau xyaum…ua paj ntaub ntawm kuv cov phauj, thib ntawm kuv cov niam tais thib.

I: Thaum koj yog hluas nkauj, nej tej kev mus ua si kom lom zem yog dab tsi?

M: Thaum kuv yog hluas nkauj, peb kuj tsi muaj dab tsi ua ntaw yam. Peb kuj uas…nyob li vas xaum vas thiv los hnuh so ntawd, peb kuj tau mus xyuas movies,… thib tej zaum kuj sib uas…yaum mus ua pinic raws cov park, thib thaum twg nyob li muaj npoo (festival), peb hais tias npoo raws cov vav, cov temples naj, peb kuj tau sib yaum ua ke es mus ua si, mus ncig xyuas tej npoo (festival) tom vav li ntawd xwb.
I: Thaum koj tseem hluas, tej yam uas koj xav tau thiab ntshaw rau kom…rau koj tus kheej thaum koj tiav niam lawm, yog dab tsi?

M: Thaum kuv tseem hluas ces kuv kuj xav kawm ntawv kom txawj, thiab kom mus tau siab tau mus…keb cov kev ntshaw ntawm peb cov poj niam yav thaum ub ces, kuj yog hais tias xav kawm mus ua ib tug xib hwb los qhia yus haiv neeg hmoob. tsi li ces xav kawm mus kawm ua ib tug ntxhais kho mob, los tsi li ib tug thaj maum los kho yus tsev neeg, thiab los pab yus cov kwv tij neej tsa, thiab pab kom yus cov zos uas nyob deb deb ntawm nroog loj.

I: Poj niam tej hauj lwm yog dab tsi?

M: Poj niam tej hauj lwm ces yog, tu yus tus txiv, yus cov me tub me nyuam. Xyuas kom muaj zaub muaj mov noj, tu vaj tu tsev kom du dais, xyuas kom yus tej pog yawg, los niam tais yawm txiv, los yus tej muam tej phauj, tej dab laug, los niam dab laug, cov neeg nrog yus nyob ntawd, sawv daws muaj noj muaj hnav.

I: Cov hauj lwm twg thiaj li yog poj niam li?

M: Poj niam cov hauj lwm ces kuj yog… saib xyuas cov me nyuam kom muaj noj muaj hnav, xa lawv mus kawm ntawv, thiab xyuas kom… tu vaj tu tsev kom du dais, es yuav tsum mus khwv yuav zaub yuav mov kom txaus yus tsev neeg noj… Thiaj yav thaum ub ces kuj yuav tsum mus xyuas kom yus muaj taws muaj dej tej siv tej no.

I: Hauv koj tsev neeg, poj niam kev txiav txim yog li cas xwb?

M: Poj niam kev txiav txim hauv yus vaj yus tsev ces kuj yog hais tias yus nyiam kom yus lub tsev huv li cas, zoo li cas, txhawb li cas, yog yus, yus muaj peev xwm ua raws li … yus pom hais tias nws zoo, thiab yus kuj xyuas saib yus tej me nyuam los cia hnav khaub ncaws ab tsi, los yus yeej muaj peev xwm yuav yus tau rau hnav. Yuav noj dab tsi los yus muaj peev xwm, yus muaj lub peev xwm uas txiav txim tau hais tias yuav ua dab tsi noj, yus yuav npaj ab tsi ua ab tsi tej.

I: Hos hauv nej pawg kwv tij?

M: Hauv pawg kwv tij mas, thas mab das mas poj niam hmoob yeej tsi tshua… muaj kev txiav txim dab tsi ntau vim hais tias tej no yog txiv neej tej hauj lwm nawb. Yog muaj ab tsi ces cov txiv neej lawv mam yog tus txiav txim. Poj niam ces tsuas muaj uas… yus hais tias muaj nab thib nav, pes tias yus yuav tsum, nyob li muaj noj muaj hauv tej ces yus yuav tsum mus pab, yus yuav tsum paub coj yus tej tub tej ntxhais loj lawm mus pab tej kwv tij thauv uas muaj noj muaj hauv, los thauv muaj kev ploj kev tuag, los muaj tshoob muaj kos tej no. Ntawm zej zog los ib yam, yog muaj ab tsi los yus kuj, yus ob niam txiv kheej kiag los yus yuav
mus pab, yus tej tub tej ntxhais loj los yus yuav tsum coj mus pab luag... khiav hauj lwm.

I: Hais txog cov thawj coj uas yog poj niam, tib neeg nyob zej zog xav li cas txog cov poj niam no?

M: Yav puag thaum ub ces, yog yus vais tias poj niam yog tus thawj coj ces, pes vais tias nws yog ib tug niam tsev zoo, nws paub coj zoo, nws paub paub zog nws pab, paub paub uas nws pawg kwv tij neej tsaj, thiab nws txawj tu nws tej me tub me nyuam... nws, ces luag quas vais tias yog ib tug poj niam zoo. Tiam sis tam sim no mas, cov luag hu ua thawj coj uas yog poj niam, ces yog cov poj niam uas nyob li tuav tej koom haum, los sis li cov poj niam uas nyob li lawy coj, cov poj niam nyob tim church, tsj li los kuj yog cov poj niam uas kawm ntaub kawm ntawv mus qib siab lawm, ces nws ho rov qab los ua kam pab tej zog thiab.

I: Tib neeg nyob zej zog xav li cas txog cov poj niam no?

M: Zej zog, kuj yuav muaj kev quhas txog cov poj niam no yog vais tias lawy txawj coj es lawy tseem coj lawy tus kheej zoo li tug poj niam hmoob, tab sis ho muaj peev xwm muaj kev txawj ntsa los tsj li kev pab yus haiv neeg tshaj ib tug poj niam nyob lub vaj lub tsev. Ntawm kuv haix vais tias yog coj li ib tug cwj pwm li tus poj niam hmoob mas yog vais tias... yuvs tseem coj li cov poj niam hmoob thaum ub, thaum tawm mus nraum zooy, mus uaj uaj kam los yus kuj mus laj mus kam, thiab thaum yus rov qab los txog hauv vaj hauv tsev, los yus kuj... tsawm muaj tej tus cuw pwm li poj niam hmoob, yuvs tseem rov qab los uas nyob tsev li qub, los xyuas yus tej me tub me nyuam, los uaz uaz mov noj, los pab tej kwv tij neej tsaj. Ohov tseem ceeb tshaj plaws mas yog vais tias yus yog ib tug poj niam hmoob mas, yuvs yuav tsum hawm yus tus txiv us tus tswv tsev, yog tus neeg tseem ceeb tshaj hauv yus lub vaj lub tsev, tas li ntawd ces yog yus niam yus txiv, los yus yuav yus yuav yuaw, niam tais yawm txiv, thiab cov neeg laus tshaj yus, yus yuav tsum...

I: Poj niam hmoob kev pab txhawb nqa ntawm tsev neeg yog li cas?

M: Yav thaum ub ces peb cov poj niam hmoob txoj kev pab tsev neeg ces kuj muaj ntay yam, tab sis mas kuj yog pab txog hauv vaj hauv tsev xwb. Yog li, yog ib tug neeg nquag es nyiam mus ua teb, cog mov noj, los mus cog qob cog loo, ces yus kuj... nquag tu yus tej qob loo kom zoo, es kom yus lub tsev neeg muaj noj muaj hauv, tsj txhob (nqjab kham) dab tsj. Yog yus ho paub tu qab tu npuay tej thiab, ces yus kuj muaj zaub muaj mov, muaj nqaij noj thawm xyoo es tsis txom nyem, thiab tsj tas li ntawd, tej zaum yus tej qob loo no tseem ho muaj ntaj tshaj txaus yus noj lawm, es yus tseem coj mus muaj thiab, ces yus kuj tau nyaij ob peb kis coj los pab yus tsev neeg thiab. Niaj hnuv no mas kuj kuj hauv tias peb cov poj niam hmoob no, txawj ntses ntay yam tuaj thiab lawy kuj txawj mus kwv yuav kwv hauv txawj yav thaum ub ntau lawm. Xwa li kuj tawm mus ua laj ua kam nraum tej office... cov ua luam los kuj kwv teeb lab ua luam kiaj nrog
zej zog lawm, ces lawv kuj khvw tau nyiaj tau txiaj los pab lawv tsev neeg ntau. Cov txajw ua paj ntaub los niam no lawv kuj txawj coj lawv tej paj ntaub mus muag raws tej taj laj, ces lawv kuj tau ib co nyiaj los lawv tsev neeg thiab.

I: Leej twg yog tus los pab npaj txog tej kev muaj tub ki?

M: Yav thaum ub mas, txoj kev muaj tub ki no mas yog ib qho cov hmoob ntshaw tshaj plaws. Muaj coob npaum li cas mas haj yam zoo xwb vim hais tias sawy daws ua teb mov noj, toob kas cov kom muaj neeg los pab yus ua teb mov noj, tu qaib tu npua...niaj hnuh niarn no mas kuj txawv yav thaum ub ntau lawm. Tsev neeg twg muaj txog 4-5 tug me nyuam ces yeej hais hais tias tsev neeg ntawd yog tsev neeg loj tshaj plaws lawm.

I: Poj niarn siv dab tsi tiv thaiv kom tsi txhob muaj me nyuam tub tuab?

M: Yav thaum ub mas yeej tsi muaj ab tsi pab tiv thaiv kiaj nawb, tab sis tam sim no ces muaj muaj ntau yam uas nyob hauv loos maum, luag kuj muaj pab cov poj niarn kom tsis txhob muaj me nyuam kom tuab tuab thiab. Cov xav noj tshuaj pab thaiv kom tsi muaj los tau, cov xav mus xav koob tshuaj pab thaiv kom tsi muaj los tau, tsi li lawv kuj muaj lwm txoj kev pab thiab. Tus twg tsi xav muaj me nyuam kiaj los luag cov thaj maum niarn no luag yeej keej ces luag kuj xam maj muab koi lub tsev me nyuam ntawd khi cia, ces kom koi txhob muaj me nyuam tau lawm thiab.

I: Zej zog, ib tsev neeg hwm koi tshaj yog lub caij twg xwb?

M: Yog yus yog ib tug poj niarn zoo…nquag thiav txawj hais lus, hais ab tsi los raug luag siab, txawj mloog tej laus lus, txawj mloog tej laus tej lus qhiaab qhia, txawj hlub kwv tij nej tsa... hlub yus tsev neeg, ces kuv kab hais tias zej zog yeej yuav hlub yus mus ib txhis li.

I: Thaum lub sij hawm twg luag tej thiaj li saib taus koi tshaj plaws uas koi, uas koi yog ib tug poj niarn?

M: Luag tej saib taus yus tshaj plaws ces yog thaum yus tseem muaj yus tus txiv nrog yus nyob. Thiav yus tseem muaj cuab muaj yim, ua neej...nrov neeg nrog luag tej.

I: Tom ntej no mus kuv yuav mus txog qhov "The refugee experience"

I: Tom ntej no mus yog qhov adjustment to live in the US. Yog vim li cas koj tsev neeg ho txiav txim siab tuaj teb chaws no?

M: Kuv tsev neeg tau txiav, tau txiav txim siab tuaj rhais tim Fabkis teb los nyob teb chaws Ameskas teb no xyoo 1985 vim hais tias kuv niamb tais yawm txiv thib kuv tej dab laug, tej viv ncaus puav leej nyob tim Meskas teb no tag, tsis tag li ntawd kuv tus txiv tseem muaj ob peb tug muam tuaj ua neej rau tim Ameskas teb no lawm thib. Qhov tseem tseeb tshaj plaws mas yog wb pom hais tias Ameskas teb no tej kev kawm ntaub kawm ntawv zoo li yooj yim tshaj nyob tim Fabkis teb, thiab sab tim no mas cov, cov tub cov ntxhais yuav muaj txoj kev vam meej mus tom ntej ntau tshaj nyob Fabkis teb, vim li ntawd wb thiaj li rhais tuaj.

I: Thaum tuaj teb chaws no koj muaj pes tsawg xyoo xwb?

M: Thaum tuaj Amesliskas teb no kuv noob nyoog muaj 35 xyoos.

I: Thaum koj tuaj txog teb chaws no, yam uas xyaum yooj yim thiab kawm tau sai tshaj plaws yog dab tsi?

M: Yam kuv pom hais tias kawm yooj yim tshaj plaws ces yog kawm tsav tsheb, tim teb chaws Ameskas teb no koj muaj peev xwm mus... xeeb lawv daim permit los tsi li mus tsav luv fais yooj yim tshaj nyob rau sab tim Fabkis teb, thiab them nyiaj los kuj them tsawg dua thiab.

I: Yam twg xyaum nyuaj tshaj plaws?


I: Dab tsi pab koj yoog tau sai rau lub neej tshiab nyob teb chaws no?

M: Qhov tseem ceeb tshaj plaws ces yog yus yuav tsum kawm lus Ameslikas... kom paub sai tshaj plaws es yus mus qhov twg los yus thiaj li hais tau, koj tsav lub fais tej los koj thiaj li nyeem tau tej kev, koj thiaj mus txog qhov koj xav mus.

I: Kev txawj tej yam ntawd uas pab koj pib ib lub neej tshiab yog kawm li cas?

M: Thaum tuaj txog ces yus yuav tsum mus nrhiav qhov chaw kawm ntawv, uas luag muaj qhia pab cov neeg tuaj poob teb chaws Ameskas tshiab no.

I: Tej kev txawj tim Nplog teb puas pab koj nyob teb chaws no?
M: Tej kev txawj uas yus paub nyob tim Nplog teb los kuj pab yus ntau yam thiab vim hais tias yog tias koj yeej khawai kawm ntawv dua lawm ces thaum koj tuaj txog Meskas teb no koj mus kawm luag cov lus los yeej kawm tau sai dua. Cov twb ho paub tsav luv fai lawm los tuaj txog tim no ces koj mus xyaum kawm lub fai los koj yeej xyaum tau sai dua… ib yam nkaus.

I: Koj puas xav tias poj niam lub neej nyob teh chaws no zoo tshaj li tim ub?

M: Poj niam hmoob lub neej nyob tim teh chaws Ameskas no mas yeej zoo tshaj thaum nyob Nplog teb ntau yam vim hais tias lawv tsis tau khhv khhv, tsi tau mus txom txom nyem li thauk ub lawm, ib puas tsav yam yeej muaj hauv vaj hauv tsev, tsuav yog koj khhv muaj niaj muaj txiaj xwb ces koj yeej muas tau. Yog tus poj niam twg uas…muaj lub peev xwm xav mus kawm ntawv ntxiv los xav mus kawm ntawv kom txawj tshaj qub los yeej muaj lub peev xwm mus tau vim hais tias txoj kev kawm ntawd yeej muaj tsi tag li…tsuav koj muaj lub siab kawm xwb ces luag yeej muaj chaws rau koj mus kawm.

I: Koj puas xav tias lub teh chaws no yog koj lub vaj lub tsev?

M: Lub sij hawm no mas kuv yeej xav hais tias yus nyob chov twg ces lub teh chaws ntawd yeej yog yus vaj yus tsev, tab si s kuv tsawm yam thiab cia siab hais tias muaj ib hnuab tom ntej no peb yuav rov qab tau peb lub teh chaws rov qab, ces tej zaum tag nrho peb sawv daws tseem yuav tau rov qab mus nyob peb qub vaj qub tsev tiag.

I: Koj puas yog xam xaj Ameslikas?

M: Kuv kuj tau txiaub ua xam xaj Amesliskas xyoo 1991 lawm.

I: Koj puas nrog luag pov niawv xaic nom tswv?

M: Txog lub caij xaiv nom tswv ces kuv yeej nrog luag mus pov ntawv.

I: Koj xav li cas txog cov hmoob uas tau mus nrog Meskas sib twv ua nom nyob teh chaws no?

M: Kuv kuj muaj lus zoo siab, thiab kuv yeej npaj yuav txhawb peb cov tub ntxhais hmoob los cov niam txiv kww tij neej tsab hmoob uas tau mus nrog Ameskas sib tw ua nom nyob teh chaws no. Kuv muaj lus zoo siab hais tias lawv tseem muaj luv peev xwm yuav mus nrog luag txeeb ua nom, thiab yog thaum lawv mus tau…ua nom lawv tiag, lawv yuav muaj lub siab rov qab los peb peb haiv neeg hmoob…pab txhawb peb, thiab pab txheem peb tej cai tiag.

I: Tom ntej nov yog yuav hais txog public life nawb. Thaum teh chaws ua tsob ua rog koj puas paub txog?
M: Nyob hauv kuv lub neej ces txij thaum kuv ua me nyuam yaus los txog ntua kuv loj… los peb yeej nyob nrog tsov nrog rog. Kuv txiv los yeej yog ib tug thab ham, txij puag thaum nws ua tub hluas los txog ntua hniaj hnub no, ces muaj ab tsi los peb yeej hnov, peb yeej paub txog tas tib si.

I: Puas muaj tej nom tswv, thawj coj uas tseem ceeb rau koi los yog koj nyiam lawv?

M: Txog niaj hnub no mas kuv kuj pom kuv yawm txiv nais Phoo Vaj Pov thiab peb yawg Phas nyas Tub Npis Lis Foom uas yog 2 tug thawj coj uas tau coj peb cov hmoob ua neej los tau tsheej plaub tsib caug xyoo yav tag los ntawm no. Nkawv ob leeg muaj txoj klub peb haiv neeg hmoob tiag, nkawv muaj siab loj siab dav. Nkawv klub txhua leej txhia tus, nkawv saib xyuas sawv daws sib luag zos. Qhov tseem ceeb tshaj plaws mas yog nkawv ntaus kev, ntaus tej kev ua phooj ywg zoo nrog tej nom tswv Nplog, nom tswv Hmoob, nom tswv Asmesliskas, nom tswv Fabkis.

I: Nyob teb chaws no poj niam hmoob muaj cai ua tej yam dab tsi txawv uas thaum nyob teb chaws Nplog thiab Thaib teb ua tsi tau?

M: Peb cov poj niam hmoob muaj cai ua ntau yam nyob teb chaws no vim hais tias niam no lawv mus kawm txawj kawm ntse, lawv paub tej kev cai lij choj ntau yam, lawv xav mus ua kam nyob tej public office, mus ua tej thawj coj koom haum… los mus ua lag ua luam. Peb cov poj niam hmoob yuav mus ua ab tsi los yeej zoo tag yog hais tias lawv tau kev txhawb ntawm lawv tus txiv, ntawm lawv tsev neeg thiab ntawm peb haiv neeg hmoob, pab lawv ntxiv.

I: Koj pom tias poj niam hmoob kev txhawb pab peb haiv neeg hmoob uas rau ntawm… hauv lub yaj lub tsev xwb yog dab tsi?

M: Kuv kuj pom hais tias hniaj hnub no peb cov poj niam hmoob muaj lub peev xwm mus ua laj ua kam sab nraud, khhv tau nyiaj tau txiaj los pab yus tus txiv, pab yug yus tsev neeg, pab yug yus tej me tub me nyuam, pab xa yus tej me tub me nyuam mus kawm ntauw kom txawj kom ntse. Peb cov poj niam hmoob kuj txawj ua lag ua luam, txawj coj yus tej paj ntauw hmoob no coj mus show, coj mus muag rau lwm haiv neeg kom luag ho paub txog yus tej txuj ci thiab. Peb kuj muaj uas koom haum poj niam Hmoob ntau lub nyob thoob Ameskas teb no, ces xam los mus ces kuj yog peb cov poj niam Hmoob no pab tau peb haiv neeg hmoob ntau kawg lawm. Thauam kawg no kuv tsi muaj dab tsi yuav hais tab sis kuv kuj vam hais tias peb cov ntxhais hmoob uas niam no kawm txawj kawm ntse, kuv vam hais tias nyaj nej yuav xav tau thiab nyaj nej yuav nco ntsoov hais tias nej yog ib tug ntxhais Hmoob, ua ab tsi los nej yuav tsum… nco hais tias nej yog ib tug poj niam Hmoob es yam twg yuav zoo rau Hmoob nej mam ua nawb.

End of conversation.