

Life in a New Land: Montagnard Cultural Identity and Adaptation in the United States

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OUTLINE

- Background: *Who are the Montagnards?*
- Fleeing Vietnam: *When and why did they come to the U.S.?*
- Adaptation: *linguistic, economic, and socio-political challenges in the U.S.*

BACKGROUND

Montagnard

- ❑ Montagnard: “mountain people”
- ❑ nguoi thuong: “highlanders”
- ❑ nguoi dan toc: “ethnic people”
- ❑ Jarai, Koho, Ede, Bahnar, Mnong
- ❑ Dega



Vietnam War

- ❑ recruited by U.S. Special Forces
- ❑ fled to the jungles of Vietnam and Cambodia
- ❑ In mid-1980s, surrendered weapons to U.N. peace keeping forces



FLEEING VIETNAM

Migration

- ❑ 1986: 200 refugees resettled in North Carolina
- ❑ 1992: 400 more resettled in N.C.
- ❑ 1986 to 2001: family reunification program, Orderly Departure Program (or ODP)
- ❑ 2001 demonstrations in the Central Highlands
- ❑ over 10,000 Montagnards in the U.S.

Sponsorship

- ❑ Vietnam veterans, church groups, family members
- ❑ Resettlement agencies:
 - Lutheran Family Services (LFS)
 - Catholic Social Services (CSS)
 - Montagnard-Dega Association (MDA)
 - Montagnard Human Rights Organization (MHRO)
 - Interfaith Refugee Ministry (IRM)



ADAPTATION

Language

- ❑ Jarai, Rhade, Bahnar, Koho, Mnong tribes
- ❑ Rhade language used as a lingua franca
- ❑ Difficulties in acquiring English



Economic / educational challenges

- ❑ Jobs
- ❑ Extended family-households
- ❑ Education



Socio-political activities

- ❑ Montagnard leaders
- ❑ social/cultural misunderstandings
- ❑ Inter-tribal interaction



Conclusion

Ongoing migration

Challenges in the U.S.

Boni kō gih lu

(Thank you very much!)