We Are All Connected By History

By Giang Nguyen

Sometimes I am faced with the questions: How does it feel to be Vietnamese? How does it feel to be part of a country that caused so much controversy and confusion in America? Well, much to my disappointment, this issue seems to have been ignored until I experienced the LOV class. I had no idea what an impact Vietnam has had on America. I was stunned to see that there are actually those who are willing to talk about this controversial war. Unfortunately, my memory of Vietnam is quite vague due to the fact that I had to leave at the age of five. My parents’ explanation for leaving was that Vietnam seemed to have no future; it’s an upside-down place where, without money, there is barely any hope.

Now I have found that beauty still exists in people, especially those who are willing to face the truth and care to share their truths with my “lost generation” who thinks that Vietnam is just another country, another war, and therefore mundane history. Yet, our Lessons of Vietnam experience proves that history can never be forgotten. It is more than just boring text contained in volumes of books. I find that history is more important than ever, and everyone and everything is connected by it. We must all live together, and we must do so by learning from each other, knowing that peace, if not now, then in the future, is not impossible.

A Gift of Knowledge

By Norma Kwée

As students in the Lessons of Vietnam class entered the fall semester, we had no idea how much we would personally grow through the Link Program. Each semester every student is linked with a person who has a close relationship with the Vietnam War. At the conclusion of the semester, students compile their experiences into a Link Project which we share with our links. Just by reading the following student excerpts, one realizes the powerful impact this program has!

“If you read a history book, many questions still remain. The link experience opened my eyes to so many truths.”

“Understanding is the most important key to acceptance. Now I can accept that although Vietnam is thought of as a mistake, there were those who fought in the war who saw it as a mission of courage, while others returned feeling lost. I can accept the differing opinions of others while holding on to my own. I can accept the challenge when someone questions me about the Vietnam War. I can share with them the wisdom of my very own personal connection to a war many people do not understand and accept themselves.”

“I feel that it is important for teenagers today to have someone who they can learn from and help them to further their educational growth. I found the Link Program to be that kind of mentoring experience. I have always gotten the feeling that previous generations all too often write off my generation as undisciplined, uncaring, and ignorant. It was comforting and rewarding for me to be able to converse with someone who truly cared about my questions and ideas.”

“Messages I receive almost everyday from my link provide me with information accessible only outside the classroom. Talking with my link via Internet results in quicker responses to my questions. Stories of tragedy and sacrifice bring to life the historical time period and fuel my quest for more knowledge.”

“I definitely learned invaluable lessons that will aid me throughout my life. History will forever be present.”

“One thing that I have learned is that this is history. We are living in history; we are making history. We have the power to change it, and we have the power to pass it on.”

LOV students will take the lessons and insights they have learned from their links with them throughout their lives. Each one of us has been given a unique gift of knowledge. As LOV student, Erin Collins, commented, “A gift. That is exactly what this project has been to me – a gift of knowledge. This is the most meaningful, because nobody can take away what you know.”