

AVON

# Vietnamese Refugees Share Stories

## Intense Desire For Freedom, New Start In U.S. Brought Them To Connecticut

By **KEN BYRON**  
kbyron@courant.com

AVON — The fighting stopped in Vietnam in 1975, but for Hia Trinh, trouble did not.

Because he was an officer in the South Vietnamese navy, the communists of North Vietnam sent Trinh to a “re-education camp,” and after that he could not find work. So he decided to flee to the United States, the country whose war effort he had supported.

On his third try, Trinh escaped the

country in a small boat and reached the United States in 1983. He was not able to get his wife here until 1994.

The couple live in Torrington.

On Wednesday, Trinh said their two daughters are attending college. His story of suffering and escape from repressive conditions in Vietnam after the communists took control was among several shared by immigrants from Vietnam at the Avon Free Public Library.

All said they were grateful for the second chance they have had in this country to live free and prosperous lives, something they

said was impossible in Vietnam.

“I want to thank Americans, who welcomed us with open arms, so that we could make our very simple dream come true,” Trinh told a crowd of more than 70 people.

Anhdon Le said she was 14 when she fled Vietnam in a small boat in 1982.

She said her family was persecuted for having supported the Americans, but also because they are Catholic. Le lives in Windsor.

“There was only one reason: We were all looking for freedom,” Le said of her choice to flee to the U.S. “Everyone wanted to get

out, even though a lot of people did not make it. We had no choice.”

The library and the Gildo T. Consolini Post 3272 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars collaborated on Wednesday’s program. It is part of a series of programs to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American involvement in the war in Vietnam.

Bill Newman, a post member who helped put the program together, said focusing attention on the experience of the Vietnamese is important.

“They are at least half of the story of the war in Vietnam,” Newman said.

### YOUR REPORTERS:

The Courant’s town news reporters cover communities throughout our region, bringing you the latest news and information online at [courant.com](http://courant.com) and in print.

 **SHAWN BEALS**  
MIDDLETOWN  
[sbeals@courant.com](mailto:sbeals@courant.com)  
[www.courant.com/community/middletown](http://www.courant.com/community/middletown)

 **KEN BYRON**

### HARTFORD

## EMANUEL CARRIES ON TRADITION

**MARIA FLANDERS**, wearing glasses, and Molly Swanson will play the role of St. Lucia during the St. Lucia Swedish Festival at Emanuel Lutheran Church in Hartford on Friday. This year marks the 100th year that the youth of Emanuel have performed a traditional St. Lucia pageant. There are two performances, 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. Flanders and Swanson will split the shows.

