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Viet-Ams and McCain

By: **Vu Duc Vuong**, Oct 08, 2008

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Sometimes I marvel at the peculiarly Vietnamese ability to inflict wounds on themselves.

I recognize that no country or ethnic group is immune to intramural blood-letting, but after a lifetime of working among, studying about and living as Vietnamese, I can't help acknowledge that we win the prize in

being our own worst enemy.

Take politics. Most Viet-Ams escaped from the Communist regime in Vietnam, in search of freedom (or so we proclaim). But what did the Vietnamese American community do with this freedom?

A prominent dissident poet, [Nguyen Chi Thien](#), who spent 27 years in Communist jail for criticizing the government, finally made it to the U.S. and what does he do now? He's leading a protest in Orange County against the Viet Weekly, accusing it, of all things, of being insufficiently anti-Communist.

In the Bay Area, Viet-Ams got their first elected member on the San Jose City Council only in 2005, and by 2007, her own constituency has turned against her. The issue? Whether to name a commercial strip "[Little Saigon](#)" or "Vietnam Business District." Some 5,000 voters just submitted a petition for her ouster, and it seems that a recall election will take place early next year. It is anybody's guess when will another Viet-Am be elected to the City Council again.

Then comes the news this week that, of all Asian American groups in this country, Viet-Ams stand out once again for their lone support of John McCain in this election.

The [National Asian American Survey](#) of almost 4,400 APIs, conducted in August and September, shows that 41 percent support Senator Obama, 24 percent back Senator McCain and 34 percent remain undecided.

While 60 percent of Japanese Americans, 53 percent of South Asians, 41 percent of Chinese Americans and about 37 percent of Korean and Filipino Americans would vote for Obama, 51 percent Vietnamese Americans support McCain.

I'm somewhat ambivalent about the old McCain: in the 1960s, he bombed my native country 23 times before being shot down. But in the 1990s, he and John Kerry, another war hero, provided cover for Bill Clinton, a draft dodger during the Vietnam War, to normalize relations with Vietnam.

But that old McCain bears no resemblance to the current candidate. In 2008, we are in a financial meltdown. It doesn't take a genius to realize that a bitter, angry, erratic Cold Warrior like McCain is unfit for both the global market and domestic depression.

Vietnamese Americans, who are among the poorer and less educated APIs, are suffering already from unemployment, lack of health care and inadequate retirement. Many are teetering on the brink of foreclosures. Yet they are still embracing a candidate whose only valid credential is anti-Communism.

And lest we forget, he's also a candidate who in his first run for president in 2000 famously proclaimed, "I hate the gooks. I will hate them as long as I live."

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Comments

1. The attitude of "anti-communism" which was extended from the Cold War era continues to be taught in the family of the Vietnamese who exiled due to their fear of communists after the fall of Saigon and/or the harsh life under the communist rule. It is extremely similar to the Anti-Castro Cuban Americans who reside in Miami. Without understanding the full picture, there will be continuous

misunderstanding, hatred, and one-sided bias towards a certain point of view.

–Bruce Yang on Oct 08, 2008

2. Guys:

Continuing “proof” of the “ism” pudding here.

The Floridian Cubanos are into their umpteenth generation, and still they evince their visceral venoms, remember that little boy torn between ideological forces?

Well, the prognosis for the “Viet-Am” community is not much better. Take a “Chinese” exemplar like Awarthur, for instance, and he’s ostensibly “over”educated?, but still a stout supporter of “gook”-hater McCain.

On the other hand, Prof. Vuong is proving the opposite viewpoint and may well augur an earlier evolution of “refugee” politics here.

Frank Eng

P.S.: And on the subject of “isms” and “racial” minorities, whereas AsianWeek is avowedly and logically focussed on “Asian-American” interests and issues, it is also important to remember how thin the line is between valid and honorable confrontations and self-serving, divisive, and usually counterproductive provincialisms, including this shrill and too-fervent? voice. We’re all human first, no? And the larger picture is frequently the more intriguing and relevant in the long run. So, Hmong compatriots, don’t sweat the Eastwood patronizations, we’ve had Anna May and Joseph Hergesheimer much longer, not to mention Fu the manchu and Charley the Chan. Blacks have had to endure Step’n Fetchits AFTER “Birth of a Nation,” and “Latinos” the likes of Speedy Gonzalez after “wetbacks.” The Greeks and Romans had their slaves of every extraction, the “Chinese” their “boat people” and the Hindu their “Untouchables,” and the Euros their serfs, so much for “peasants” of every land. So, what’s the diff with today’s credit-card peons? Especially those who work two jobs to stave off the usurists.

Frank Eng

P.S.: And never forget the hypocrisies of the Beltway “Human Rights Watch” gang. James Petras recently outed same on Info Clearing House. And the cadres on the Mainland should diss their Nobel honoree Hsien? if they disavow their dissident candidates for aforesaid “human rights.” Personally, I look upon the Nobel, wasn’t he a prime armaments prince?, awards the same way I see the “Oscars,” ambivalent at best, and meaningless at worst. And, by the bye, wasn’t Hsien the guy who decamped “our” nuclear encampments after being Wen-ho Lee’d way back midcentury last? And now those upstart slanteyes are bidding fair to up the “space shot” antes. Well, what HAS our NASA accomplished in the past generation or two? Water on Mars? “Space walks” to repair useless orbiting “labs” that produce little germane to “space” much less here on earth?

Oh, well, just a few thousands more sinecures for Establishment cronies and blood relatives?

So, one and all, fasten your seatbelts, and stock up on seedlings for your “Victory Gardens” and, please, share with your neighbors. Like impecunious me.

–Frank Eng on Oct 08, 2008

3. Bulletin here:

All hands on deck.

And please read Naomi Wolf’s piece in today’s Info Clearing House lineup online.

She reports that as of Oct. 1, the First Brigade of the Third Infantry Division has already been mobilized to patrol American streets in the event of “insurrection” as defined by this administration. Additionally, at least one Congressman has reported being “threatened” hereby to vote for the Wall

Street bailout. Or else? Lese majesty?

All the requisites are in place, including the suspension of habeas corpus some time ago?

Which makes what seems “unthinkable” a fait accompli.

America has undergone a fascist coup and doesn't even know it.

Read the article. Ponder it.

Where are Obama's generals and admirals now?

P.S.: And CounterPuncher Alex Cockburn has more than a few quibbles with the Democratic contender to add to this October mix. And we think recession is the end?

Where's the passport office? Oh, well, or Hell!, I'm likely near the bottom of the list of the eight-millions already in their databas, not to mention older than McWho.

.

–Frank Eng on Oct 09, 2008

4. Vietnamese-Americans probably express the most fake American patriotism. We all know that many of the most vocal anti-communist Vietnamese here in the US make frequent trips back to Vietnam because what a janitor in the US makes can live like a king in comparison back in the old country. So it's pretty disingenuous of faux patriot Vietnamese who wrap themselves in the US flag when they continuously go back to Vietnam and spend US dollars there especially for frequent bribes and corruption to these very communist they supposedly hate. Yes I know it's dangerous to speak the ugly truth about this hypocritical practice of the Vietnamese community here in the US. But then they shouldn't feel angry if they actually believe in American ideals and values such a free speech. If you're angered by this comment, then we all know you're a fake patriot.

–caliber on Oct 10, 2008

5. By at least one quotable “authority,” “patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel.”
Hip, hip, hooray!
Mindless war and genocides are ongoing, despite the apparent collapse of economies at home and abroad, in the guise of “patriotism,” usually surrounded by umpteen furled “flags.”
So, patriots are as patriots do, which, in this view, is usually self-serving and anathema to the common weal.
Is suspending habeas corpus at one individual's whim “patriotic”?
P.S.: And, “caaliber,” in this connection, “hypicrisy” might well be the other face of “patriotism.”

–Frank Eng on Oct 10, 2008

6. I helped a married couple move to a new home years ago. He was white and she was a Vietnamese immigrant. So for appreciation for helping them move they took me and a friend out for dinner. It was hearty meal and there were leftovers. I asked the waitress for a container for the leftovers and I was given the most ugly snarled look from the Vietnamese members of the family that were there. Why? Apparently, I was told later, according to Vietnamese culture I'm suppose to leave the leftovers and not take them home because to them taking leftovers home means you must be poor. Ironic since they were poor themselves. Well first of all, I'm American, we're eating at an American food restaurant, and we're not in Vietnam! If the Vietnamese want to live by this superficial status-conscious practice, then they themselves can live by those values all they want. But what is so un-American is expecting me, who I am not Vietnamese, to be expected to follow Vietnamese custom here in the United States of America. So keep the snarling looks of disapproval to your own. And BTW, when we were helping

them move, only I and my friend were moving belongings. None of the Vietnamese there helped. So it's not like they were doing us a favor so we had to respect their culture in kind.

–caliber on Oct 12, 2008

7. Caliber: So it is un-American to visit your homeland where a majority of your family still reside? Just because you don't believe in communism doesn't mean you can't visit your communist homeland. Should the US have boycotted the Olympics in Beijing because that would have been un-American? Or is it just ok for us to exploit the labor in communist countries? I am also sorry that your dinner left such a bad impression about Vietnamese people. Being Vietnamese myself, I have never heard of this cultural standard, and growing up in a Vietnamese American community a overwhelming majority of us had little to nothing when we immigrated here so we know what it is like to be poor. Maybe because most Vietnamese families I knew, rarely went out to eat because they were saving money and because they enjoyed traditional Vietnamese cooking. But what do I know, I'm just a naive Vietnamese-American. Pardon me for the generalization.

–Huu T. Ly on Oct 13, 2008

8. Huu,

I saw on TV during the torch run through SF there were vocal Vietnamese calling for a boycott of the Olympics. So that charge was already made. There was a nasty little Vietnamese poster in here a while back making accusations of other Asian ethnicities being un-American. When I read those posts then, I thought that as pretty hypocritical of a Vietnamese charging other Asian ethnicities with being un-American when Vietnamese are probably the most fake and hypocritical with their patriotism. It's quite obvious that the anti-communist Vietnamese don't know what being an American is beyond waving the flag. You don't want to be judged? Then don't throw stones from glass houses.

–caliber on Oct 14, 2008

9. So what is your point on this article? Telling Viet-American to vote for Obama?

–Nixk on Oct 14, 2008

10. My username used in vain for McCain again? (hey that rhymes...) Yay, only 41% of chinese americans would go for the man of no-integrity, that's even better than the Vietnamese. Dunno where this fellow comes from, most Vietnamese, whether communist or anti-communist prefer the ex Skyhawk pilot who flew to protect Vietnamese from communist expansion, as Americans are now giving their lives to protect people from islamic terrorism. Why do you think McCain detests the idea of leaving a battle for the bad guys to win, like they did in Vietnam (or do all you folks still think the communists were and are the good guys like Barack's buddies Ayers and Wright, and Jane Fonda?)

Is there anybody or anyplace in the US called "Little Ho Chih Minh City"? Why do you think it's called Little Saigon? Why do you think the only flag US Vietnamese Americans fly is the red / yellow Republic flag, not the communist or Viet Cong flag favored by American radicals?

The "real" chinese and Vietnamese favor McCain. And let that gook thing go, he apologized back in

2000, it has nothing to do with any inherent racism, that's what the military called the enemy in wartime, just like krauts, russkies and commies.

At least McCain doesn't inspire the cult of personality that Obama seems to be following in the path of other ultra-inspiring people such as Stalin, Kim Il Jung, Mao, etc, as the "sing for change" video seemed to fall into.

–awarthurhu on Oct 14, 2008

11. Looks like he was on the same side as Jane Fonda:
 “in the 1960s, he bombed my native country 23 times before being shot down”

The same side as the Viet Cong terrorists who were blowing up stuff and killing people in Saigon where my wife lived just like Al Queda is doing today in Iraq. Which side is this guy rooting for in Iraq?? Even Obama thinks the terrorists are the bad guys.

–awarthurhu on Oct 14, 2008

12. Here's the ranking by Obama / McCain ratio. All groups favor Obama except the Vietnamese.

McCain	Obama	Other	Undecided	Ratio	
Japanese	17	60	0	38	3.53
AsInd	13	53	0.6	33	4.08
All	24	41	1	34	1.71
Chinese	12	41	3	43	3.42
Oth Asian	26	38	1	35	1.46
Korean	27	36	0	38	1.33
Filipino	29	35	1	34	1.21
Vietname	51	24	1	24	0.47

–awarthurhu on Oct 14, 2008

13. Caliber,

I still don't see your point. So protesting is un-American? Standing up for a regime that the Vietnamese have been oppressed by in their country of origin is un-American? Spending money on a vacation overseas is un-American? It was not right if those post about other elasticities were true and I condemn them.

awarthurhu,

Just want to state that I am no way for McCain or Communism. Ayers terrorism had nothing to do with Barack and he has condemned him a long time ago and he has committed those act when Obama was just a kid. Rev. Wrights comments were taken way out of context watch the entire speech and you would understand. There is no way of winning an occupation in Iraq. What is there to win? The terrorist are coming from different countries to kill us, and Iraq can only stabilize themselves once they are not dependent on us, hench, the timeline for withdrawl. Aren't Republicans for self reliance anyway, or does oil profiteering trump that? Speaking of cult of personality... all I have to say is

Palin.

–Huu T. Ly on Oct 14, 2008

14. McCain has far worse connections if you want to play that game. Turn off fox news for once and look these up for yourself: Keating 5, G. Gordan Liddy, Rick Davis and now his new appointed transition chief, William Timmons had lobbyist connections to AID Saddam Hussein. So who's the real American now?

–Huu T. Ly on Oct 14, 2008

15. sheesh so much out there... Rev Hagee, and Palin's witch doctor priest and secessionist husband.

–Huu T. Ly on Oct 14, 2008

16. Thank you for demonstrating that not all Vietnamese Americans necessarily follow the narrow right-wing party line. Although I do understand why some do, after the trauma that our people have been through, so I can't be too judgmental about them... Their politics and their bitterness are a manifestation of their suffering.

That being said, it gives me hope that (at least some of us) might be able to move beyond our painful past, embrace the future, and embrace a politics of progressive change.

Despite what we've been through, we cannot continue to support a politics that puts war before peace, the rich before the poor, and tolerates (if not outright encourages) racism, sexism, homophobia, and hatred.

–Dzung on Oct 14, 2008

17. Dear Huu T. Ly
& Dzung:

Thanks. And felicitations.

As for awarthur and his voodoo math, dude, get a grip.

Better yet, go online yet once more and access today's No. 1 piece on London Guardian online.

Wherein, one 75-year-old Nguyen Tien Tran, the prison guard assigned to John McCain, insists that said POW was NEVER "tortured."

In fact, McCain was nursed and coddled, as a VIP pawn.

So much for your "hero" and his self-anointed crucifixion for God and country.

And if the McCain, in point of fact and logic the Palin, campaign continues its racist, read violence, bent, then this electorate must choose between self-delusion and authentic self-interest, as in jobs, and healthcare, and reregulation of both Wall Street AND our so-called "public" "utilities."

And the new generation of Viet-Ams should pull a reprise on the "great schlep" by Jewish Americans into the Floridian landscape. Your parents and grandparents must respect YOUR viewpoints as well as that of the apparent common wisdom of old men on Viagra, apologies to Roseanne Barr.

Frank

–Frank Eng on Oct 14, 2008

18. This is what Ayers and wife were doing during the war, no wonder Ho prefers Ayers to Palin for American leadership. They were supporting insurgent terrorists in South Vietnam, who were pioneering the murderous tactics used today by Al Qaeda in Iraq. And we're just weeks away from voting in a guy whose moral foundations are built on folks like this whose ideology come from Max, and condemning those who fought for freedom and human life, and whose ideology comes from judeo-christianity. How far have we come from the ideals of the founders???

Among many other crimes, Dohrn traveled to Cuba in 1969, where she met with of the Vietnamese Provisional Revolutionary Government. In that meeting, Dohrn and other Weathermen agreed to "wage armed struggle" within the United States. In appreciation for their efforts, Huyhn gave Dohrn, and later Ayers, rings forged from the metal of downed American fighter planes.

One wonders whether John McCain's A-4, downed in Hanoi in 1967, was the source of either ring. One also wonders whether Ayers and Dohrn were wearing those tokens of fraternal solidarity when they introduced Barack Obama to the political world from their home some 13 years ago.

–awarthurhu on Oct 15, 2008

19. "Wherein, one 75-year-old Nguyen Tien Tran, the prison guard assigned to John McCain, insists that said POW was NEVER "tortured.""

Sure, believe him...give me a freaking BREAK...when communist took Vietnam, they tortured their own people

–Nixk on Oct 15, 2008

20. Those that don't understand my posts. It's pretty simple. The vocal anti-communists Vietnamese are hypocrites. Hypocrites contract themselves. Meaning you don't care about anything that you contradict yourselves on. Hypocrites are motivated by one thing only... their self interests. So quit with the bull that you know what is better for everyone else. You don't understand nor practice American values therefore cannot judge others like you do especially when petty nationalistic rivalries are involved.

And you should quit being a hypocrite in regards to torture. The North Vietnamese practiced torture and so did the South Vietnamese.

–caliber on Oct 15, 2008

21. Hi Hu,

You said, "The 'real' chinese and Vietnamese favor McCain?" Sorry, have you seen AsianWeek's latest online poll on the homepage? 72% of Asians vote for Obama. Are you saying we aren't "real?" If so, no wonder you seem to have a very loose grip on "reality," and constantly lump Communists, terrorists, and hippies together. Face the facts, Bin Laden's terrorists fought a war with the Communists in Afghanistan and drove them out of there. The hippies taught love, peace, and harmony, and had lots of sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll, which Bin Laden opposes vehemently. And 72% of Asians support Obama. Does that make all Asians hippies? Or terrorists? Or Communists? I

think not. You may not like these facts, but they're true. And yes, we pro-Obama Asians are real.

–Michael Wong on Oct 16, 2008

22. Michael Wong for Councilman! Or Supervisor. Of Anything. Maybe if Cindy can't unseat Nancy, Congressperson as well.
Oh, and Emil, great piece today, although this kudos may buy you more Bronx cheers from the galleries.
As for poor Art, what can we say? Other than chip in for a good analyst. Not necessarily neurotic, but for sure "fixated."
And for all hands on deck today, I personally found the Mike Whitney/Robert Pollin CounterPuncher piece today educational and maybe even constructive in re the "collapse" and the "recession" and the plight of the "neoliberal" "global" "capitalist" Rube Goldberg model. It's a bit of a read, but no denser than Art's recent voodoo math on fictional/factional breakdown of APA votes.
So, Obama may very well be but a silly-millimeter diff from the warhorse model on "foreign policy," whadat?, and maybe a foot or a yard more "community activist" on the domestic front, but there IS that distinction.
We'll likely get more practical and positive action on jobs and "stimulus," New New Deal anyone? and at least a truly "diplomatic" conversation BEFORE nuking anyone.
P.S.: Did anyone else note that headline, was it yesterday?, of a Massachusetts campus lion who has come out in public as a potential prosecutor/Nemesis for Dubya AND his gang as perps of "war crimes" once they're out of office. Hey, Nancy, how 'bout that?

–Frank Eng on Oct 17, 2008

23. 1. Are Vietnamese and Chinese –not all of course– afraid of black people, a mild way to say they may be racist?
2. Vietnamese came from China, didn't they?
3. According to archaeologist Leakey, Africa was the cradle of humanity, then Chinese must have come also from Africa?

Vicious circle yes, getting out of it, no... funny argument, funny people :o)

–Don Bosco on Oct 19, 2008

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