

The Devastating Impact of Deportation on Southeast Asian Americans

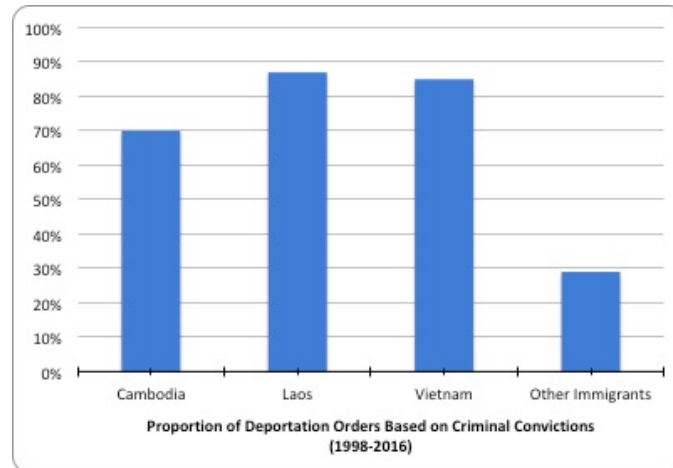
A COMMUNITY OF REFUGEES

Southeast Asians who fled from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam in the late 1970s and early 1980s became the **largest refugee community ever resettled in the United States**. Refugees of decades-long war, bombings, and one of the worst genocides of the 20th century, Southeast Asian Americans (SEAs) encountered many challenges during their initial resettlement, including high rates of poverty, post-traumatic stress disorder, and poor educational outcomes. Youth growing up in impoverished neighborhoods and failing schools sometimes turned to gangs and crime as a means of survival.

Today, more than 2.7 million SEAs live in the United States, but **at least 16,000 community members have received final orders of deportation**, more than 13,000 of which are based on old criminal records (80% of total SEAA deportation orders, compared to 29% of all immigrants with deportation orders).¹ **Many of these community members came to this country as refugee children, raised as Americans.** A significant number of deportees were born in refugee camps, and never stepped foot in their “native” country.

14,000 FAMILIES LIVING IN LIMBO

Because of the Vietnam War legacy, the U.S. only established repatriation agreements with Cambodia in 2002 and with Vietnam in 2008, though only immigrants who entered after 1995 may be deported to Vietnam. The U.S. and Laos still have no formal agreement. As a result, at least 1,500 people still remain in the U.S. with final deportation orders to Cambodia, 4,200 to Laos, and 8,400 to Vietnam: **a total of at least 14,000 people living day-to-**



day not knowing if or when they would be deported.²

Because many SEAs with final orders of removal are not immediately removed from the country, they often move on and rebuild their lives. **They start families and businesses, go back to school, and get involved in the community. It may be days, months, or decades before they are actually deported.** This presents a mental health challenge, and an economic challenge, for individuals and families who do not know if their next day with their family in the United States is their last.

REFERENCES

1. Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, “U.S. Deportation Outcomes by Charge, Completed Cases in Immigration Courts”: http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/court_backlog/deport_outcome_charge.php
2. Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, “U.S. Deportation Outcomes by Charge, Completed Cases in Immigration Courts”: http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/court_backlog/deport_outcome_charge.php & Department of Homeland Security (DHS) “Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2013, Table 41”: <http://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2013-enforcement-actions>