

# Far East: Migration and the American Dream

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In the years immediately following the Vietnam War, over 125,000 refugees emigrated from the war-ravaged country to the United States. During this time, Diep Cuong attempted to depart Vietnam by boat three times. On the first two tries the boat sank, but the third was successful and he made it to North America. Cuong ended up in Champaign where he started a family and bought and expanded Far East Grocery Store, located in Champaign.

My creative endeavor leverages photojournalism as a tool of visual ethnography and historical research to explore themes of family, migration, cultural identity, and assimilation. I am photographing the Diep family as a means of understanding the role of first and second generation immigrants in modern American society, how that role has changed over time, and how the ideal of the American Dream manifests itself among immigrant families.

This photograph, made on March 28, 2019, shows Cuong carrying a box full of food into the store while family members Ken, Dan and Chin handle boxes in the background. The image gives the viewer a sense of the busyness of everyday life at the store, and of the hard work that goes into maintaining it.

