

My National History Day project is about the Vietnamese refugees who resettled in Iowa in the 1970s. The Vietnam War caused many Vietnamese citizens to flee to nearby countries in hopes of escaping communism. Iowa's Governor Robert Ray used diplomacy in resettling some of the Vietnamese in Iowa and influencing other governing officials to accept refugees. I chose this topic because of my personal connection to it. My grandparents sponsored multiple families who left Vietnam, and my dad even remembers meeting some of them when he was younger.

I used numerous primary sources, which gave me a first-hand look at what the Vietnamese people faced on their difficult journey to Iowa. One primary source is an interview with Thanh Quach, who told an in-depth story of his grueling journey at sea. By listening to his story, I was able to better comprehend what Vietnamese refugees endured. I also interviewed several other people, including refugee sponsors and Ambassador Kenneth Quinn and Governor Ray's wife Billie Ray, who worked alongside Governor Ray during his diplomatic Vietnamese resettlement journey. In addition, I went to the State Historical Society of Iowa where I found many letters, speeches, press releases, and newspaper clippings to help improve my project.

The secondary sources I found gave me several pieces of information to include in my project. My most helpful secondary source was the book *The Good*

*Governor: Robert Ray and the Indochinese Refugees of Iowa.* This book provided me with background of the Vietnam War and how it affected the lives of Vietnamese. I also used multiple website sources to gain detailed information regarding certain aspects of my project. I found the majority of my pictures from online sources.

My website was challenging at times; however, it helped me learn the importance of perseverance. I started by finding as much information regarding the topic as possible. After I found multiple pieces of information, I started to transfer the information onto a Google Doc. From there I formatted the information and put it on my website. After that, I started to design and add color to my website. I then added pictures, quotes, and text to each page. Another challenge was staying under the word count and deciding what information to cut out.

This topic relates to the theme of “Debate and Diplomacy.” When the Vietnamese refugees started arriving in Iowa, many citizens were outraged that Governor Ray brought them to the state. To some, it reminded them of the disagreement over the Vietnam War. Iowans also feared the loss of job opportunities with so many new people coming to settle there. Diplomacy can be seen in the various actions that Governor Ray took in order to resettle the refugees in Iowa and also in the fact that many Iowans were willing to sponsor the refugees without hesitation. Because of the humanitarian leadership of Governor Ray and

the kindness of the sponsors, the refugees were able to start a new life in Iowa and live the “American Dream.”