

Susan Phillips Reflection

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Kailyn Nguyen

Susan Phillips was a very enthusiastic and engaging speaker. Her talk felt more like a discussion as she encouraged everyone to speak their own opinions and thoughts on her book. She sparked a lot of conversation about what it means to be an American, which garnered mixed opinions from the class. She asked if anyone related to the women's experiences in her book, to which a lot of us did. I was able to speak out during class about how Thuynha's story really resonated with myself and my family. The hardships that she went through reminded me a lot of what my mother told me she and her family went through to immigrate from Vietnam to America.

My mother always told me stories of her life back in Vietnam, and how her family was very wealthy and owned lots of land and had many maids. My father also had a wealthy life, where his parents valued education and hired English tutors for himself and all his siblings. After the North took over, my parents both had no choice but to immigrate to America. My mother and her family came on a sponsorship by a family in America. When they arrived, life was very different. They worked odd jobs to make ends meet. My uncle told me my grandmother worked hours on a farm picking apricots, just so she could afford a blanket for her children to sleep with at night.

This reminded me of Xidan's story, where she had a very successful life in China but after immigrating to the United States she had almost nothing. It took her a couple years to be able to work, and even after getting jobs she still did not make enough to fully support herself. Susan Phillips' talk really opened my eyes to the stories of immigration, and how my family also went through many struggles just like the others in her book.

Junseong Hwang (505550240)

Susan Philips delivered a talk that was both enlightening and captivating. She engaged us with compelling discussions derived from her book, facilitating a space for open conversation and individual contemplation. Philips encouraged attendees to express their personal insights and experiences, making the session more interactive and intimate. Her exploration of "what it means to be an American" invoked a multitude of viewpoints, making it a stimulating part of the discussion. I felt a personal affinity with the conversation, especially with the women's stories shared. The tales of adversity, adjustment, and resilience mirrored my own or my family's experiences and journey. Philips's knack for creating an environment where personal narratives

could be intertwined with the essence of her book made the session not just educational, but also profoundly reflective and connective.

Kevin Li (805733229)

I really enjoyed the talk given by Susan Philips. It was very effective to first play an introduction video before the talk because it allowed us to become more familiar with the people she interviewed and wrote about in her book. Throughout her talk, she was enthusiastic about the work she has done around her book as well as in general. The fact that she still remembers many details of her interaction with the people she interviewed demonstrates how sincerely and deeply she cares about them. After hearing the talk, I have gained a better understanding of the struggles and challenges experienced by immigrants in the United States, which made me respect the immigrants even more considering the courage and persistence it takes to overcome all the difficulties. Another important takeaway from the talk was that people should always pay respect to the cultural background of the immigrants because most immigrants are proud of their own culture. Near the end of the talk, we were asked the question of what it means to be American, which is a question that can have many correct answers because the cultures in the United States are diverse, so that each person may view his American identity from a different perspective. As a foreigner, it's hard for me to tell what it means to be American, but my understanding of the American identity would center around freedom, such as the freedom of speech and the freedom of being your true self.

Daphne Hidley (105502680)

Susan Philip's talk that she gave in class on Wednesday was very interesting and engaging for me to listen to. I never had any personal experience in my family of immigration, so the topic always felt very distant and foreign to me. Reading Ms. Philip's book, watching her short film, and listening to her talk gave me a whole new perspective on the struggles that immigrants go through whether it's from before they came and once they arrived. Because of the stories she told of the women in her book, I was able to relate my own experiences to theirs to get a better understanding of how they must have felt. This summer, I studied abroad in Paris for two months, so I know the feeling of feeling out of place in a new country, feeling like you can't get anything right with the culture, and feeling lost in the language. I had even studied french for four years at that point, so I can't imagine how scary it must feel to go somewhere completely unlike your home country without being able to communicate. This helped me empathize with the immigrant experience in America. Ms. Philip's talk also made me think about my great-grandmother who immigrated to America from the Czech Republic and died when I was young. I

wonder what she must have been through to come here and how hard it must have been for her to adapt. I wish I could ask her these questions. The one story I remember about her is that when she came to America, she was pregnant with my grandfather and she didn't speak a word of english. When she was giving birth in an American hospital, she was so scared and she was trying to communicate with the nurses but she could only speak Czech. Then, her doctor came in and miraculously, he knew how to speak Czech too and could make her feel heard in such an important moment. I wish that all immigrant women would be treated with the same kindness today.

Aidan Ohlson

I enjoyed listening to Susan Philips talk about female immigrants to America. Hearing her speak about all of their stories was very interesting because each woman had very different circumstances that made them come to America. I could sympathize with them because of all of the bad situations that they went through. I also enjoyed the question she brought up about what American culture is. I thought it was interesting to hear everyone's opinion on what that means to them. Some people thought that it was the sense of opportunity that the country brings or the freedom for individualism. I wonder what those women would think American culture is from an outside view.