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### Primary Analysis #3

Both Lang Ngan and Le Tan Si arrived in the United States for similar reasons, however, they both lived the journey in different ways. For example, around the time that Ngan arrived in the United States, the US government had started to make plans at home, by March 1975, with international agencies, and other governments, “to evacuate Americans, their dependents, and at-risk Vietnamese” (Lee 200). Nearing the end of the month of April, the Khmer Rouge, which had backing from North Vietnam, captured Phnom Penh in April 1975. However, Ngan and Si had different backgrounds in many things. For one, Ngan relates that “I had worked for the US Embassy in Saigon for seven years” (Ngan). As Lee explains, the first 130,000 slots were filled by the “first wave” of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees, who like Ngan “were educated, Westernized, urban, and had ties to the US government or American officials” (Lee 201). Obviously, working for the US embassy had its perks. Unfortunately for Ngan, everything happened very quickly as he mentions. The Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot took over Phnom Penh in about 2 weeks. Ngan’s family had to leave quickly, overnight. “There was no time to talk to friends or relatives” because they had to escape overnight. About a week, the Ngan family arrived in Arkansas. As Lee explains, Fort Chafee in Arkansas was one of four processing camps, where “refugees received medical examinations, learned English, and were socialized for their new lives” (Lee 201). Ngan had to leave in the middle of Saigon being taken over by the Khmer Rouge and their secret departure was most definitely moments of adrenaline of not

getting caught by the Communist Cambodians who may have been lurking in any place at any moment in time. Fortunately for Ngan, he knew English. While “President Gerald Ford created an Interagency Task Force with officials from various federal agencies to plan for the reception of refugees” (Lee 200) there were other federally assisted non-governmental agencies “run by charities and religious organizations coordinated” whom “coordinated the resettlement and finding of sponsors” (Lee 201). Ngan’s knowledge of English helped here “because I could speak English, I started helping many of those [other refugees] who couldn’t, translating for them” (Ngan). After an encounter with the International Rescue Committee or IRC, he volunteered and ended up in New York. Lee explains that many of these organizations “took responsibility for helping the refugees secure jobs and living necessities” (Lee 201). For Ngan, the migration of Southeast Asians to the United States as refugees allowed him to prosper and “I was so happy that I could get a job right away...” (Ngan).

Things were very different for Si. Although Si made to the United States, Si was part of the “second-wave” refugees as they were “poorer, less educated, and less urbanized” and had experienced life under Communist rule (Lee 202). Many were “boat people” like Si, unlike the migration of Ngan by plane. Si was one of many migrants that were labeled as boat people, which the United States learned as “harrowing stories about the boat people being preyed upon by pirates” (Lee 204). Si mentions that (on my birthday, that was shocking), “our boat departed in good weather” (Si). However, after just 2 days, the boat started to drift downwind after its engine broke down. The following day, they met Thai fishermen who tried to repair the engine. After taking into Thailand’s territorial waters, they “displayed guns, knives, and hooks”. They understood they were pirates. The Thai pirates took their valuables. Si and the rest of the people on board the ship endured two Thai thief boats. Once they reached Malaysia after this, they

were not accepted by the refugee camp, as they were “about thirty thousand Vietnamese refugees in the camp” (Si). These large numbers were not only in Malaysia, but in Thailand and Singapore” who “had become overburdened or unwilling to assist newcomers” (Lee 202). Boat people for example, “were fleeing the country (Vietnam) at a rate of 1,500 per month” (Lee 202). 10 days after they had left, Si and the rest arrived in Indonesia. While Li lived in the “Kuku and Galang refugee camps for fourteen months...” (Si) marking the date of January 1980, “the number of Southeast Asians who entered the as refugees reached about one million” (Lee 204) by March 1980. Being part of the second wave “the adjustment to life in American was a difficult one, as it could be for all newcomers” but they “were not only unfamiliar with American life but also with modern life” (Lee 205). Si “set foot in Seattle” (Si) which was “distinctive of Southeast Asians [by] the highly orchestrated nature of their settlement by the federal government and voluntary agencies, which aimed to disperse them geographically to avoid large concentrations of new refugees” (Lee 205). Si’s experience showed that just by 4-year difference, having lived under communist rule, hundreds of thousands refugees suffered from PTSD as one clinic found (Lee 205), but also that their conditions were much harsher and difficult as the US government among others struggled to mobilize quickly when seeing the few dark lights emerging from communist ideologies.