

AIDING KIN IN ASIA;
HELP HMONG LEARN TO WORK THE SYSTEM

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Body

All struggles of recent immigrant people pull between the past and the future, between the unjust and the unknown. The Twin Cities community is feeling the pull acutely now among the **Hmong** who are making a new home here but cannot solve particularly difficult problems of their people still on the other side of the world.

As a recent series of Pioneer Press articles chronicled, the last camps in Thailand for **Hmong** will close at year's end, further diminishing prospects for families to reunite in the United States. There is inadequate United Nations resettlement money. Life back in Laos carries special burdens for **Hmong**.

The situations facing **Hmong** should ride hard on the whole American conscience. But it is unrealistic to expect miracles from Washington. While Minnesota counts 30,000 **Hmong** among the population, Washington is counting more than a million people a year coming into the United States. On the grand scale of transnational immigration issues, the **Hmong** are a small-scaled concern to big governments.

Washington is **working** with a political and policy **system** to manage its immigration goals. These goals must be to foster stability at home and abroad.

Certainly the **system** needs more consistency and fairness. But the **system** in place is the one that must be **worked**. In Washington. In Thailand. In Laos. Here.

It is in this whole community's interest to join with the **Hmong** to build their capacity as citizens to **learn** how to apply the All-American squeaky wheel.

The squeaky wheel should sustain pressure for better treatment of **Hmong** in Laos. It should speak strongly to encouraging economic development for Laos. In the near future, the U.S. government can - if prodded - use its good offices with the Thai government to ease a very rough road.

Efforts to foster political growth in the Midwest **Hmong** communities also should aim at mastering the details for those who want to **work** the immigration **system** to bring family members here who want to come. Many a previous newcomer can testify that difficult does not mean impossible. Continuing reunions affirm this.

History cannot be undone. But this community, its **Hmong** and non-**Hmong**, have some power over tomorrow's history, pulling together instead of apart.

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