Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine

Narrator: CLARENCE DUNG TAYLOR
Interviewer: Thuy Vo Dang
Date: December 13, 2012
Location: Westminster, California
Sub-collection: Thuy Vo Dang Interviews
Length of Interview: 1:06:34

FIELD NOTES

I met Clarence Dung Taylor by chance while visiting Vietnam California Radio where I was doing a talk show on oral history. He is a regular host on VNCR and also runs an entertainment business, promoting Vietnamese American singer Thu Phuong, whom he is engaged to. He was very outspoken and charismatic in our brief interaction. When I explained the project he was very supportive and promised to participate, especially because I told him we did not have the perspectives of Amerasians. Clarence Dung Taylor is half Vietnamese and half African-Indian-American. His father was a US serviceman stationed in Vietnam where he met his mother when she owned a restaurant in Vung Tau, a beach town in South Vietnam.

I interviewed Clarence (whom I called “anh Dung”) in Vietnamese, despite his full command of both languages. He opted to record the interview in Vietnamese to help promote and encourage the language in our community. He hosts his talk show in Vietnamese. During the interview, he recalled the period before 1975 as being very idyllic because in the South Americans had a great deal of influence and he was the son of an American. But, things dramatically changed for him after the south fell and his father left. He and his mother were forced to move to Saigon to find a living since she lost her restaurant in Vung Tau. He described how the new regime treated his mother and him with suspicion and disdain.

In 1981 he and his mother were able to leave the country legitimately through the Orderly Departure Program and they were assisted by the Lutheran Immigration Refugee Services (LIRS) based in New York. Thus, the two of them arrived in upstate New York where he went to school and eventually became a bilingual translator assisting other new arrivals to the region. He graduated from college, became an engineer and got a job in Boston. Then, during the technology boom in Silicon Valley, he was recruited to a Telecom job in San Francisco. He lived there until 2006 when he moved to Orange County. He also started a business, D&D Entertainment and met his fiancee (a popular Vietnamese singer) Thu Phuong whom he promotes. Currently he works in Entertainment and radio.