



January 25, 2005
For Immediate Release

Contact: Asian Pacific American Program
Smithsonian Institution
Marci Xiong
202.786.2409
Francey Youngberg
202.487.8160

**The Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program announces
THE VIETNAMESE AMERICAN HISTORY AND HERITAGE PROJECT
in 2006**

The first significant movement of Vietnamese peoples to the United States began three decades ago, following the Vietnam-U.S. War. Now Vietnamese Americans are among the largest ethnic groups of Asian descent in the United States, with substantial communities established throughout the nation.

To commemorate the 30th anniversary of Vietnamese immigration, the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program (APA Program) embarks on an ambitious project to bring the first Vietnamese American history and culture exhibit to the Smithsonian Institution. Gallery space has been secured at the Smithsonian for the planned opening of the Vietnamese American History and Heritage Project in 2006. If sufficient funds are available, the exhibit will travel to several venues around the country.

Other related events will include public programming at the Smithsonian, a dedicated website for the Vietnamese American commemoration, as well as a middle school curriculum guide.

Last November when the APA Program announced its plans for a Vietnamese American commemoration, local leaders in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area's Vietnamese American community initiated a fundraising campaign to raise \$60,000. The response was astonishing, with responses from all over the country, resulting in a total of

\$107,000 raised by the end of 2004 towards commemoration efforts, almost double the original target.

Moreover, as a result of the unprecedented grassroots support in less than two months, the APA Program has set a new goal to raise \$1 million to create a permanent legacy at the Smithsonian, under the direction of Program Director Dr. Franklin Odo. Such an endowment would secure a permanent position for a Vietnamese American scholar in the APA Program and ensure that Vietnamese American perspectives are included in the research, public programs, collections and exhibits throughout the Smithsonian.

Alternatively, the endowment could also be used to present three or four public programs each year dedicated to Vietnamese American issues. With such an endowment, either of these two options would continue in perpetuity without any need for additional funding.

The 2006 Vietnamese American History and Heritage Project is the latest endeavor in the APA Program's ongoing mission to create a more expansive and inclusive definition of what it means to be American today.

The APA Program works to better reflect the Asian Pacific American experience throughout Smithsonian exhibitions, programs and research. It therefore improves the public's appreciation of the crucial roles that Asian Pacific Americans have played in American history and, simultaneously, empowers APA communities in their sense of inclusion within our national culture.

###