LEAVING HOME, MAKING A NEW HOME

Objective

- To introduce students to the conditions and circumstances unique to immigrant and refugee experiences.
- To encourage students to think about tangible and intangible forms of cultural memory.
- To introduce students to the concepts of community building and transformation.
- To provide students with the opportunity to analyze and engage with primary and secondary source materials.

Introduction

Before beginning this activity, take a few minutes to read the 2 history panels titled "Escaping for New Futures" and "Evacuating the Homeland" as well as ONE of the 8 portrait banners or ONE of the 4 life story panels along the walls featuring life stories from the Vietnamese American Oral History Project (VAOHP) at UC Irvine. As you will see after exploring these panels, there are many different methods and reasons why some people have chosen to leave Vietnam.

In fact, there are special words used to describe these unique types of journeys. The word "immigrant" refers to a person who has *chosen* to live in a new country. While, the word "refugee" refers to a person who is *forced out* of their home country because it is not safe due to war or political instability.

Directions

1) After exploring this exhibition, what do you think a refugee physically leaves behind?

2) Now, take a moment to explore the six exhibition cases featuring artifacts and family treasures. Some of the items presented in these cases were actually brought by refugees on their journeys to Orange County, and other items reflect the new lives they forged in the United States.

   After exploring these cases, discuss why you think their owners brought these items. How might have these items been used?

3) What else do refugees or immigrants take with them that cannot be touched or seen?
   Example: memories, feelings, etc.

4) What challenges do you think refugees or immigrants face when they arrive in a new country?

5) What are some things that immigrants or refugees do to make a home in a new country? For some examples, take a look at the panels called "Creating Little Saigon" and "Transforming Community."