

## **Displacing and Disrupting: A Dialogue on Hmong Studies and Asian American Studies**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

This article summarizes a roundtable discussion of scholars that took place at the Association for Asian American Studies Conference in San Francisco, 2014. Hailing from various academic disciplines, the participants explored the relationship between the emerging field of Hmong/Hmong American Studies and Asian American Studies. Questions of interest included: In what ways has Asian American Studies informed Hmong/Hmong American Studies, or failed to do so? In what ways does Hmong/Hmong American Studies enrich/challenge Asian American Studies? What are the tensions between these two fields and other related fields? How do/should the new programs in Hmong/Hmong American Studies relate to the existing Asian American Studies programs regarding curriculum, activism and/or resource allocation?

**Keywords:** Hmong Studies, Asian American Studies

### **Introduction:**

During the last three decades, Midwest states have witnessed remarkable demographic transformations. Hmong Americans have come to constitute the largest Asian American communities in these states. As the 1.5 generation and the second generation of Hmong Americans come of age, many of them are college bound. In reaction to this demographic shift, some colleges and universities have established Hmong Studies programs. Examples include the Hmong Diaspora Studies Program at University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee and Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University in St. Paul. There have been multi-disciplinary academic conferences focusing on Hmong Studies, such as the Biennial International Conference on Hmong Studies at Concordia, and the symposia of Consortium for Hmong Studies. The internet-based *Hmong Studies Journal* is in its 19<sup>th</sup> year of publishing Hmong/Hmong American Studies research. These are signs of institutionalization of Hmong/Hmong American Studies.

But many questions have been raised in this process of institutionalization. These questions brought us together for a roundtable discussion at the Association for Asian American Studies Conference in San Francisco, 2014. Hailing from various academic disciplines, we explored the relationship between the emerging field of Hmong/Hmong American Studies and Asian American Studies. In what ways has Asian American Studies informed Hmong/Hmong American Studies, or failed to do so? In what ways does Hmong/Hmong American Studies enrich/challenge Asian American Studies? What are the tensions between these two fields and

other related fields? How do/should the new programs in Hmong/Hmong American Studies relate to the existing Asian American Studies programs regarding curriculum, activism and/or resource allocation? Our ultimate goal is to envision future development of Hmong/Hmong American Studies in productive tension with Asian American Studies.

We started the conversation with an intention to explore the dynamics and challenges of institutionalization of Hmong Studies in relation to Asian American Studies. But the conversation took us to many more places – activism, arts, collaboration, visibility of Hmong through literature, and power dynamics in cultural production. We hope that this dialogue, raising more questions than answering them, serves as a springboard for more critical discourses regarding knowledge and cultural production with a focus on Hmong experiences.

### **Participants:**

**Monica Chiu** is Professor of English and American Studies at the University of New Hampshire, specializing in Asian American studies and recently graphic narratives. Her most recent edited collection is called *Drawing New Color Lines: Transnational Asian American Graphic Narratives*.

**Juliana Hu Pegues** is Assistant Professor of English and the Study of Women and Gender at Smith College. Her research focuses on Asian American Studies and Native and Indigenous Studies and she is currently working on a book that highlights intersections of race, indigeneity, gender, and settler colonialism in Alaska.

**Louisa Schein** teaches Cultural Anthropology as well as Women's and Gender Studies, Asian American Studies and Critical Sexuality Studies at Rutgers. She has worked with Hmong/Miao in China and the U.S. and is author of *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics* (Duke University Press 2000), co-editor with Tim Oakes of *Translocal China: Linkages, Identities and the Reimagining of Space* (Routledge 2006), and with Purnima Mankekar of *Media, Erotics and Transnational Asia* (Duke University Press 2012). In recent work concerning Asian American masculinity, sexualities and violence, she has collaborated with Bee Vang and Va-Megn Thoj on workshops, a Youtube video and publications in *Positions, American Quarterly, Cultural Studies, Hmong Studies Journal, and PMLA*. She is co-founder of the Critical Hmong Studies Collective, and co-director of two documentary films on Hmong Americans, *Better Places* (2011) with Peter O'Neill and *Shamans, Herbs and MDs* in-progress with Va-Megn Thoj.

**Ma Vang** is Assistant Professor of critical race and ethnic studies at UC Merced. Her research engages with critical refugee studies to examine the Hmong diaspora in the context of U.S. Cold War historiography with an emphasis on Hmong public engagements with the representational absence of their history. She has published in *positions: asia critique* and the *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*. She has a co-edited volume entitled, *Claiming Place: On Hmong Women's Agency*, forthcoming with University of Minnesota Press in 2016.

**Pa Der Vang** is Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas. Pa Der is the Coordinator of the Critical Hmong Studies program at St. Catherine University where she teaches the Critical Hmong Studies course.

**Hui Wilcox** is Associate Professor of Sociology, Women's Studies and Critical Studies of Race and Ethnicity at St. Catherine University. Her research focuses on the raced and gendered performances and representations of Asian America.

Pa Der Vang: I want to talk about my experience developing the Critical Hmong Studies Minor at St. Catherine University in collaboration with Hui Wilcox and other colleagues who have had backgrounds in Asian American Studies. When I first arrived at the University, I noticed that there was a large population of Asian American students (about 10% of the total student population), and the majority of them were Hmong students. Yet, in the curriculum, there was nothing about Asian Americans, nothing about Asian American identity for our students. There was a real lack there.

I went to talk to the Director of Critical Studies of Race and Ethnicity, and said, "Maybe we can do something about this? When we recruit students of other ethnicities into our campus, and there is nothing in the curriculum for them, we're really doing them a disservice." The director said, "This sounds great. Let's work on this." So we came up with a proposal. We already had three Hmong language classes on campus. We decided to build on those and incorporate a critical studies perspective. We developed a critical Hmong studies course, where the class covers Hmong in China, all the way through the Vietnam War, and then Hmong in America and other Western nations. We do it through a critical lens, analyzing representation in media, politics in terms of the Hmong involvement in the War, imperialism and colonization. We also talk about the current Hmong American acculturation issues, cultural loss and transition, and so forth.

On top of that, interestingly, we talked a lot about the question why it isn't called Hmong American Studies. Why is it Hmong Studies? I kind of rejected Hmong American Studies, because I think we don't need to declare that we are Americans. We are Americans. The second generation is born here, and many first generations are naturalized American citizens. So I thought politically it shouldn't have to be called Critical Hmong American Studies, because we don't need to declare that we are Americans. Also, we didn't want to limit ourselves to studying only Hmong Americans or Hmong in America.

At the same time, why were we proposing a Hmong Studies minor instead of an Asian American Studies minor? The practical reason was that St. Kate's had already written into its strategic plan that they were going to create a Hmong program eventually. But I thought we couldn't make it just a Hmong program, so we worked with Hui Wilcox and Sarah Park Dahlen to develop the Asian American Identities course as part of the Hmong Studies Minor. Students need to understand the Hmong experience within the Asian American context.

Our success in creating the Critical Hmong Studies Program depended on a critical mass of students and faculty. Luckily we have a director who is very supportive. We did a survey, and a focus group of students who were very passionate about this. So we had a strong momentum on campus that really supported the program.

Monica Chiu: It sounds as if the program was created without much of a struggle. On my campus, we have been working to obtain approval for a center in critical race and ethnic studies. I've been involved in related issues for the 16 years that I've been teaching there. Just last year, the center was approved with some limited funding. It sounds like everything went pretty quickly and easily at St. Catherine, however.

Pa Der Vang: It went quickly. Within 6 months, the program was approved, and classes started the next fall. But we weren't given any substantial resources beyond the cost needed to run the courses.

Hui Wilcox: There was some foundation laid for this programmatic work. Hmong language courses had been offered before Pa Der came to St. Catherine University. And everybody is aware that we are heavily recruiting from the Hmong community. As a women's college, it is appealing to a lot of Hmong families. The administration is supportive of this initiative in that way.

Monica Chiu: Was it the same for African American Studies, Latino Studies, and Native Studies?

Hui Wilcox: It's interesting because we have an interdisciplinary program Critical Studies of Race and Ethnicity (CRST). Prior to the Critical Hmong Studies minor, the CRST program was primarily focused on the Black and White relationship, and racism in terms of the experience of African Americans. People were aware of the lack of attention to other racialized groups, and the University is also recruiting from the Latino community and the Black community. Right now we have the umbrella program Critical Studies of Race and Ethnicity, and the Critical Hmong Studies minor under it. But we do not have African American Studies, Latino Studies, and Native Studies. There are multiple factors at work. We don't have any faculty members who specialize in the Latino American experience or indigenous experiences. Being at a small college presents both opportunities and challenges. We are fortunate that Pa Der joined our faculty and had the expertise and the drive to make the Critical Hmong Studies minor a reality.

But it was a struggle for us, too, to shape the Critical Hmong Studies to be critical. Originally the language teacher (Yaj Ceeb Vaj) and a couple of other stakeholders on campus were thinking more of an anthropological perspective on Hmong culture. But Pa Der and I insisted on shaping it into a critical studies program.

Pa Der Vang: They started out with an essentialist view of Hmong, and wanted the minor to reflect the Hmong language and cultural practices. But we stuck to our vision to infuse critical perspectives. In all of the initial meetings, we said we needed a *Critical* Hmong Studies program. All the courses needed that critical analysis piece.

Louisa Schein: You mentioned the critical topics for the pre-US Hmong experience. What are the ways in which you make it critical for the Hmong American part?

Pa Der Vang: I helped students to critically examine representation of Hmong in the media, in terms of text, TV, and movies. We also look at changes in traditional practices: How do the students perceive those practices and to what extent are they aware of the implications of those practices for their own lives. We analyze the meanings of those traditional practices. Since we have all female students in our classroom, we talk a lot about the marriage practices. They would say, "Growing up, I really want a traditional wedding ceremony." Then we'll analyze, what is it –"lwm qaib"? When the woman comes to the house of her future husband, they have to wave the chicken on top of her head. What is the true meaning of that? What does that mean for women? The meaning of that is that "We are going to wash you off of your spirit (lwm saub), and that's the only way you can come into our house, culturally, one cannot introduce new spirits into another home. You have to actually be, cleansed, and become part of our clan." What that means later on is that she's discouraged from divorcing, or addressing problems in her marriage, because then they can actually reject her, throw her out of the clan, and then she doesn't belong to any clan. The far reaching implication of that is that nobody will lead her into the afterworld upon her death. It's these pieces that few students are aware of. Once we analyze that, we discuss other related questions: what does it mean for you if you're Christian? That might bring about the topic of acculturation, as we adopt American ways, we do away with some Hmong traditions. We look at our experience here in the U.S., and how that has changed Hmong culture.

Hui Wilcox: That's also the reason why we think it is so important to include the Asian American Identities course in this program. It goes with our theme here, as some of the critical frameworks come from what Asian American Studies already has to offer, in terms of thinking about acculturation, colonialism and racialization.

Panel participant: Since it's all female in the classroom, do you feel that you cover the male perspective also?

Pa Der Vang: We do. I join all the Hmong forums on Facebook, and we pull all the comments and bring them into the classroom. We also read works by Hmong researchers of both genders who have different opinions. Also, we have a Hmong man on campus, his name is Yaj Ceeb Vaj. He used to teach the Hmong language courses, and he has a very unique and different

perspective. He's a shaman, and he and I enjoy debating all of this; sometimes we don't agree but that is what makes it interesting. And the students know that we debate, and we have different opinions. We do welcome and encourage different opinions, too.

Louisa Schein: I'm Louisa Schein from Rutgers University. I'm in Anthropology and Women's Studies, and I also teach Asian American Studies and Sexuality Studies, as well as Chinese Studies. I've been around a long time, and I'm trying to figure out how to give the historical perspective some play here. I actually started working with Hmong as an undergraduate in 1977. That's a lot of decades. The 1980s were devoted to my first book project, which was about the Miao in China, but in 1990s I started working with Hmong Americans again, and that was when I started working on Hmong-made videos.

I want to talk just for a few minutes about the stuff that happened in the last ten years or so, around the formation of Hmong Studies, in relation to what we call the Collective for Critical Hmong Studies. That's when the notion of "critical" was really being put on the map, and what I decided to do here is begin an archive of actions for Hmong representation and voice (see Appendix). It's not complete. I would love to take this archive and build it up from other people's work: publications, workshops, roundtables, and various things that various collectivities did together. All of it was coming out of the chronic frustrations with the fact that Hmong Studies people keep having to talk to itself, because we still haven't made ourselves critical to Asian American Studies- witness the low attendance at this panel. Lots of Asian American Studies scholars don't think it's necessary to engage Hmong Studies as a constitutive part of the field. Secondly, anti-Hmong racism and distorted representation – going back to *Spirit Catches You* and up to *Gran Torino*, and lots of other racial incidents which Ma [Vang], Pa Der [Vang] and I worked together writing interventions about. These are under-recorded and underestimated in Critical Hmong Studies. I want to throw in the activist piece, and say that we've had a lot of interactions in the last few years to the effect that if we want to be a Critical Hmong Studies Collective that means that the onus is on us to step up when something is going down in popular media, popular culture or academia, and to speak in a collective voice. It's kind of weird, here I am, an old white lady saying that, I wonder how that will come across. You know: "What's her stake"? "Does she have the white savior syndrome"? "Why is she trying to do Hmong politics"? All I can say is... a couple of things. Personally it registers my extreme frustration, that having done this for so many decades, we are still making so little headway with becoming constitutive to not just Asian American Studies, but Critical Race Studies, Race and Ethnicity Studies, whatever you want to call it. Also, in the last ten years, my work has moved in the direction of focusing on race, especially the invisibilization of Asian race, and the dismissal of racist incidents against Hmong. As politicized scholars, whites have to own these things as our problems, too. So it's not at all about saving, it's about being part of the project. It's not only people of color who need to combat the ways they are being racialized.

I actually wrote a bunch of questions, discussion questions that we might want to come back to. These are the things that I know Ma, Pa Der and I have thought about a lot as we worked together over the years. I'm just going to read these off and maybe comment a little on them in relation to some of these points.

- Which is worse: explicit hate speech or ostensibly scientific or scholarly truths spoken by others about Hmong? We can think back to all of our consternation about *Spirit Catches You* and many other works.
- If there was a politically correct way of speaking about Hmong, what would it include? I say this because a lot of times in these discussions, we have talked about the fact that it's difficult to register racist, aggressive, or dismissive things that happen in popular culture vis-à-vis Hmong, because there is no standard PC [political correctness]. If it's African Americans, everyone would know that this is not OK, but it's negotiable with Hmong sometimes, such as in the KDWB incident. These various moments where people said "get over it" "Can't you take a joke?" That would just not happen with African Americans. So, if there was a PC for Hmong, what would it include?
- What are the most important things to distinguish about Hmong Americans? Should more non-Hmong Asian Americans be recruited to Hmong Studies, which speaks to the topic of this panel?
- What audiences do Hmong advocates need to convince the most?
- In your own writing, if you're Hmong, what do you think of the use of "we" versus "they"? Hmong scholars have to make that choice all the time. And when I co-author with people we have that issue, too. When we worked as a big Collective, writing with ten Hmong people and me, we tended to use "we" even though I'm not Hmong.
- Is it more strategic to publish – here I'm talking about op-eds, and interventions, public writings - under a collective name or individual names? This is an interesting question, because several times we tried to publish collectively with different results. At one point we called ourselves the Activist Alliance, or something like that. It was something we came up with because the whole Collective membership wasn't involved so we needed a new name. But then sometimes the people we were publishing with pushed back and said this would not be authorized work unless the scholars and their affiliations are listed. We thought it was more powerful to speak in a collective voice, but some of the people publishing us thought otherwise and they wanted to break us up. The larger question is what are the pros and cons of putting forward this sort of collective voices?
- Getting back to something I just mentioned, when hate speech is presented as humor, do you think it's better to get over it, or take a joke, or blow the whistle? How would you negotiate those kinds of things? And relatedly, can humor or parody or jest be a way to counter hate speech?
- How much Hmong content should be the minimum on an Asian American syllabus, or an Asian American reader? I say this out of frustration because right now, in my survey of

syllabi, it's usually one token piece. And that seems to be OK with Asian American Studies. Sometimes it's not about Hmong but all Southeast Asians, or all men, whatever. That's too low for my minimum, but I think it's an interesting thing to discuss. If it's an Asian American syllabus or reader, how much content and what should the content be?

- Do you think Hmong Studies is better articulated with Critical Race Studies or with Asian American studies? Or Indigenous Studies, now that more people are talking about that possibility?
- What are the pros and cons of mainstream visibility, mainstream inclusion, and things like *Spirit Catches You*, *Gran Torino*, *Grey's Anatomy*, which are often welcome but problematic representations. But they do at least make that move towards visibility. That's a very thorny subject.
- This is something that we have talked about a lot at conferences like Asian American Studies or American Studies: Is it more strategic to have Hmong panels or to spread out and put our works into panels that are multi-ethnic so as to get heard? We are often talking to ourselves when we have Hmong panels.
- Here is a really tough one: I don't know if people want to talk about it, but ... Is it worth it to be included in Asian American discourse if Hmong are presented as the exception to the model minority idea? If "Hmong" just stands for gangs, the criminal, the underclass, non-English speaking arrivals? Do Hmong have to be that placeholder? Is that better than being invisible?
- This comes back to Pa Der's earlier comment about naming. What difference does it make to call it Critical Hmong Studies?

Those are my questions. I'd love to take up some of them as we go forward in the discussion.

Monica Chiu: You mentioned the idea of a collective voice in *Critical Hmong Studies*. I think it's also good to have tension within the conversation, this in relation to what Pa Der said earlier about the Shaman not agreeing with her. We may wish for a collective voice among those we work with, but there are other voices that provide a place for the tension to arise. Good things come from that friction. Is a collective voice always preferable?

Louisa Schein: I don't know if Ma wants to speak to it, but I would say that it's actually rarely been a collective voice. I don't think we were ever prescriptive. It was just the idea – [to Ma] I would really like to get your take on this - that we would be able to crash the gate a little more if we presented ourselves as a collectivity – in the formal sense of the Hmong Studies Collective. So it was really a political strategy where any internal differences and contentions would just muddy the issue.

Monica Chiu: So what's interesting is that there's a collective; and the irony is that when you approach publishers, they don't want the collective. They want the individual, right?



Louisa Schein: Sometimes. It didn't happen all the time.

Monica Chiu: It's interesting how that works *institutionally* as well.

Ma Vang: I was going to say that, about collaboration and doing Hmong Studies, even Asian American Studies, there is value in collectivity, both in publishing and in working with community members, artists and activists. How does that add to the work, and perhaps complicate the work? I think that the idea of the collectivity in this particular case pushed some boundaries. For those who were more junior at the time, it allowed us to participate in writing about pressing social issues, without having to put ourselves out there on our own. But at the same time, the collectivity itself is always changing, so it's not necessarily the case that everyone is on the same page about what the issues are, and what we want to say about them. Also not everyone is part of every issue that we want to address.

Louisa Schein: And we've had some really interesting issues with online and journalistic publishing. A lot of these actions have to be done within 48 hours because it's the press, the media. I remember how we struggled--

Pa Der Vang: And on those 3 days we would be working 20 hours a day.

Louisa Schein: So many revisions! And then we were trying to do the outreach. Like Ma said, we have dealt with issues and situations such as having a pre-constituted membership and not being able to get everyone on board, and having to struggle with "Can we use the Collective name?" It's not always easy because some are against whatever the action is; perhaps they are just not responding. There are a lot of logistic issues with it. But I think you (Ma) put your fingers on something else, which is ... in some ways a lot of these actions were a privilege that I could undertake because I'm far past tenure. It did become an issue for graduate students and junior professors to do political activism during those years. So it raises a lot of questions about how to authorize Hmong Studies as a critical stance when people have that insecurity in that whistle-blowing can be perceived hostilely by senior evaluating parties.

Ma Vang: I want to ask the question: Yesterday there was a roundtable on Southeast Asian Studies and Asian American studies. We were asking similar questions. And Louisa brought up the question: How do we articulate Hmong Studies? Is it in relation to Critical Race Studies, or Asian American Studies, or Indigenous Studies? And I would say that it could be articulated in relation to all of those fields, and even more. But I think about the trajectory of your work (to Louisa Schein) and even the courses that you teach (to Pa Der Vang) in the Hmong Studies program: Hmong in Asia, Hmong in China, and Hmong in the U.S. So how do we think about Hmong Studies in relation to Area Studies? Especially if we trace Hmong experiences back further than 1975, Hmong Studies really emerged out of a lot of the anthropological, social science research on Hmong in Asia: Hmong in China and Hmong in Southeast Asia. Some of the

work that we do now is related to the history of Southeast Asia. How can we articulate it to think more broadly about Southeast Asia in terms of Hmong Studies? Because I think we are and we should be engaging with the scholarship in Asian Studies and Southeast Asian Studies. It's a specific question, but it could be a larger question about how we could articulate and think about Hmong Studies, especially with regard to program building, curriculum development, and then scholarship trajectory.

Pa Der Vang: That's an internal dilemma that I have had for a while. Just the nature of academia and program development, course development, forces us to split that up, right? Hmong American Studies implies that we are studying Hmong in America, versus Hmong Studies, Southeast Asian Studies. I wish it didn't have to be like that. But in other disciplines they do that, too. It has to be divided up so minutely. I was just in another session, where people were saying, why are we calling ourselves Asian Americans? Why can't we just call ourselves Asians? And that's because of these Academic programs. We have to use "Asian American" in our course "Asian American Identities" because it's about your identities as Asians in America. If we just say "Asian", people get confused, do you mean Asians in Asia? Language is power. Language has a lot of implications for what people think of themselves politically. It is worth pushing back. That's why the collective is important. We have to have a united, collective voice, to push back and do what we want to do. That's worth the discussion. I don't have any answers myself.

Louisa Schein: But also on the list of Area Studies that need to be engaged, we haven't even mentioned American Studies. The Collective talked about colonialism, imperialism, and war... One of my first collaborative pieces was published in *American Quarterly* and we wanted to do that partly because it was supposed to be a larger readership, but also because of the frustration of Asian Americanists not necessarily getting it about Hmong Studies. So it was kind of "jumping scales"; we hoped the readers of *American Quarterly* would be interested in the Chai Soua Vang case and race issues.

Ma Vang: Right. My work has been a critique of the U.S. empire. How do we talk about empire? How do we talk about Hmong Studies as a critique of multiple imperialist formations?

Hui Wilcox: This is a great segue into Juliana because she's situated in American Studies, and an activist as well.

Juliana Hu Pegues: Thank you, Hui, for inviting me, because I don't often identify as being located within Hmong Studies. This is productive for me. A little bit about my work: I've been living in the Twin Cities for about twenty years, so I was part of the first CAAR (Community Action Against Racism) that organized the KQRS protest (this is how I know Va-Megn Thoj). We were protesting the shock jock radio host Tom Barnard who made anti-Hmong racist remarks. Community Action Against Racism, which was predominantly second-generation

Hmong American, Asian American, and other people of color, organized one of the first major Hmong activist events that wasn't tied to the Vietnam War, but was actually tied to media representation and anti-Hmong racism in the U.S. That was in the 1990s. I come out of having those connections, from an activist angle.

Also, I'm a non-traditional student. I just finished my Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of Minnesota and I'm on a post-doc right now at Macalester College. My own project is on Asian and Native intersections in Alaska. That's my research area. So I teach on issues of Asian American Studies and Indigenous Studies at the University of Minnesota and Macalester. My questions start with an empirical observation, which is, Hmong students often have a stronger connection when I'm teaching Indigenous Studies. Teaching in Minnesota, one often teaches about the U.S.-Dakota War, and hearing about the Dakota exile out of Minnesota has very strong resonance for the Hmong students that I teach, with the theme of forced exile. So I've been trying to think this through.

Louisa, similar to what you're talking about, an Asian American framework historically starts with the Chinese. It's a very immigrant model, right? I find that Hmong students and other Southeast Asian students, until you get to the 70s, until you have a refugee framework, are searching for: "What is my connection to these earlier generations?" And they draw ties to the racism Asian Americans experience, but less often to bigger questions around empire and nation building. I don't know if it's partially the way that we articulate it, or if we have to rethink even using a historical model? Maybe linear, progressive time isn't what's going to be useful for certain students? I'm really interested in if indigenous frameworks and indigenous histories have stronger resonance with Hmong students, and what that means for Hmong Studies. This also poses a challenge to Asian American Studies, of how empire is looked at without necessarily engaging with indigeneity. And I think this gets at how Hmong are exceptionalized within Asian American Studies, because I think it's a primitivist discourse, often seeing Hmong subjectivity outside modernity, modern time vs. archaic time. This is being performed within Asian American Studies, even within a supposed critique of empire, there is still something about not understanding the indigenous framework, colonialism through that particular lens. That's my observation.

A smaller project I'm starting on involves Hmong American spoken word artists who work with indigenous spoken word artists, particularly American Indian spoken word artists. The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul has a very large Hmong population and also a very large American Indian population. There is a lot of collaboration that's happening on the ground in the Twin Cities, artists and friends who do readings or workshops together. For example, there is a homeless shelter for American Indian youth (Ain Dah Yung), where Hmong artists have had residencies. I'm really interested in this, particularly around the spoken word and hip hop community. I'm thinking through this in collaboration with two artists: one is Tou SaiKo Lee,

who's a Hmong hip hop emcee, and whom I've worked with in activist circles as well; the other is American Indian playwright, poet and spoken word artist R. Vincent Moniz, Jr., who is Nu Eta. We all know each other and I'm excited to be working with them. Tou and Vincent have collaborated in the past, riffed off of each other's work, and even have allusions to each other's pieces. I'm really trying to think about their work and redefining this kind of spoken word context as "aural history," to pose a challenge to "oral history." I'm trying to unpack some of that academic primitivism – oral culture vs. written culture. Within the academic context, orality only focuses on the speaker, and does not acknowledge the aural history. These are narratives that are spoken because they are meant to be heard by a larger community. So we're focusing on audience and collectivity as opposed only to the orality. The three of us proposed an article for an academic journal with a special issue on the politics of sound, but we didn't get accepted. So we're back to the drawing board. And there is always the question of legibility, how a recent Ph.D. and two artists make this type of intervention.

Louisa Schein: How ironic... I know exactly what you mean by legibility, and of course it's a logocentric term. The intervention you make is about a nonverbal genre. That's how it works with trying to do arts collaboration. It has to be made legible, and that means privileging writing. I wonder... I've come up with this a lot, collaborating with Va-Megn Thoj and Bee Vang. Both of them are highly intellectual interlocutors. The work we did was reciprocal and dialogic. Yet they don't register in the academy as scholars because the credentials aren't there. Bee is an undergraduate student and Va-Megn does a lot of things. So I've had these ridiculous interactions with the journals we've dealt with because they keep trying to slot my collaborators as either informants or as artists, while I'm the critic. They're the informant, the authentic. It's especially bad with me because I'm older... The age thing actually does matter, or seniority, credentials, because that makes it easier for the journals that I dealt with and the book project whenever – to essentialize this person as authentic cultural producer rather than intellectual interlocutor. It's also an interesting thing for us to think about. If we want to do collaboration with non-academics, artists or others, how do we dignify their role, instead of having the academic institutions say, "Here is the authentic source, and here is the person who's interpreting it, analyzing it." That bifurcation is so lockstep. Literally I would submit it as a joint piece, and they would send me the contract, and I would have to say "No, they're co-authors. They get a contract, too. They have to agree to the copyright, too. They have to get a free copy of the journal." It's really amazing to see that academic conceit at work, recoding us as non-collaborators.

Monica Chiu: My colleague at the University of New Hampshire works with many of the local native communities. She's putting together a collection of New England native stories, many gathered from the elders she's spoken to, and they require a very different, non-academic, copyright agreement. The elders told her, "We will always hold the copyright. You can have it for this collection, but for any future reproductions, you'll have to obtain permission from us."

The press had to agree to that. She [my colleague] talked to some of our law school students about this particularly fascinating copyright issue that speaks to indigeneity and rights.

Hui Wilcox: I would like to talk about indigeneity a bit more. It is very intriguing to think about Hmong Studies through an indigenous framework, given the Hmong experience of forced exile. I am curious as to how Hmong students grapple with the *concept* of indigeneity? Can you (Juliana) define that for us and clarify how Hmong students understand it?

Juliana Hu Pegues: Sure. Part of it is that they (Hmong students) feel a sense of belonging to a homeland that is not predicated on the nation-state. They'll read about indigenous history and they'll say, "I'm indigenous. I'm indigenous to places in Asia that are known through my cultural worldviews and stories but not named externally, through nation-states." They'll talk about stories, knowledges, plants that were brought to the U.S. They have this deep connection to land and how important it is. Some of this is unexplored. I haven't been able to explore this completely with my students. We are looking at the question of "What is my place here?" on land that is indigenous to other groups of people – which Asian American Studies doesn't really want to talk about, either. That's a whole other issue that I have with Asian American Studies, which wants to talk about empire without talking about colonialism within the U.S. I think Hmong Studies is an incredibly generative place for that to happen. And Hmong students get that so much more quickly than other Asian American students.

Ma Vang: And adding to that, it is about epistemology. In thinking about oral history as a part of the epistemology – different ways of knowing and transmitting knowledge that is not based in state archives or written records, we can better understand why there should or could be resonances between the development of Hmong Studies and Indigenous Studies. That's also a methodological question for scholars in these fields.

Monica Chiu: That is one thing I wanted to talk about, if I may jump in. When seeking Hmong literature, where do we look? Being a scholar of Asian American Studies with an investment in literary criticism, I'm interested specifically in Hmong literature. And the question I ask myself is connected to indigenous studies – where else can we look? I'm thinking again of my colleague whose work addresses the social construction of the vanishing Indian, "Where has the Indian disappeared to?" Her reply: "They've been here all along. We just haven't looked for them in the right places." When she talks to the elders, she finds many other sources: oral studies that circulate verbally; whenever a Native American author publishes a book, the book gets circulated within that particular community, and people recite from it, say, at open-mic nights. They memorize passages from it. So it's visible; it's there. It's just not in the usual places that one might look for it. Where else do we need to search to find Hmong literature? And how can we use these other avenues, like Indigenous Studies, to find those places? Maybe we need a different definition.

One of our former questions includes, “What would you put on a Hmong Studies syllabus?” Because I’m teaching in an English Department and prefer to teach literature (as opposed to sociological or anthropological studies), I include [Anne Fadiman’s] *The Spirit Catches You [And You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and The Collision of Two Cultures]*, a journalist’s approach to culture and medicine in a specific context. But is *Spirit* really Hmong or only about Hmong? It’s now part of the canon. And then there is Kao Kalia Yang’s *The Latehomecomer [A Hmong Family Memoir]*, a memoir. I have shown *Gran Torino* and critiqued it. The collection *Bamboo Among the Oaks [Contemporary Writing By Hmong Americans]* by Mai Neng Moua] is another collection available for use on such a syllabus. It’s not a new book.

Ma Vang: *How do I Begin?*

Monica Chiu: Yes, that’s another: *How do I Begin*. But it seems as if this book’s editor had asked each of the contributors to discuss “What does being Hmong mean to you?” Thus the collection comes from a sociological perspective, and I’m looking for literature, for memoir or fiction. I often think, “When will we have more Hmong literature from which to choose?” Even in the collection that Mark Pfeifer, Kou Yang, and I edited, *Diversity in Diaspora [Hmong Americans in the Twenty-First Century]*, my essay was the only piece of literary criticism. One outside reviewer of the book manuscript said, “Chiu has done a nice book review of Yang’s *Latehomecomer*.” This reviewer did not know that I had written a piece of literary criticism in which I argued a thesis. It wasn’t a book review. I thought that was interesting; even those in the field don’t recognize Hmong and Hmong American literature, much less literary criticism about it. So what does one include on a syllabus in Hmong American Studies? The choices are pretty slim.

Louisa Schein: There are pieces by Burlee Vang and Mai Der Vang, too. What is the writer’s circle called --out of Fresno?

Ma Vang: Hmong American Writers’ Circle.

Louisa Schein: They’ve published a few pieces that you can excerpt from non-Hmong collections.

Monica Chiu: They may have had to pander to publishers, to answer to what the public is looking for. Thus, if society declares that Native Americans are vanishing, then it doesn’t even know where the Hmong are. What *Gran Torino* repeatedly suggests is that they’re invisible. We have to rehearse their history. And even my students pronounce “H-mong” with an aspirated “h”—as Clint Eastwood does when asking, “Who are the H-mong?” Like Clint Eastwood, they

themselves don't know who the Hmong are. So then I rehearse their history again. I continue, then, to repeat what we've been saying for 35 years. And still Hmong are culturally, socially, politically, institutionally invisible. Studies looking at Hmong demographics, sociological perspectives, political data mining—these are all important. But as a literary scholar, I want Hmong and Hmong American literature. In Asian American Studies, for example, in the immigrant trajectory or narrative, you'll find plenty of biographies, memoirs, ethnographic, anthropological, historical works, and the literature of Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, Japanese Americans – a huge body of literature. In many ways, Hmong, too, have benefited from sociological, historical, ethnographic studies, but a substantial body of literature, of fiction, is still missing. Or as I suggested before, we are not looking in the right places. Or we may have to rethink what we mean by literature.

Louisa Schein: But I also would add – I don't know if you would put this kind of thing on your syllabi. Play and film scripts are really important to Hmong cultural production. Katie Ka Vang is now in a playwriting program at Brown, and Mai Der Vang is in the same program that Kao Kalia Yang attended at Columbia and she's a poet. But some people would say that the most highly recognized Hmong writers in the states are Abel and Burlee Vang for their Screenwriting that got the Nicholls Fellowship out of LA, which is only given to 5 people a year. That's for screenwriting. Of course there is the issue of the copyright; they're not going to give you that for your syllabus. But it's an interesting thought to think about scripts, because I think that's where a lot of really generative creativity is appearing, as well as spoken word.

Juliana Hu Pegues: This is really interesting. In terms of published writing-- there is autobiography, memoir, anthology, and the novel, right? With any kind of community that's supposed to be the progression. But there is so much more always happening on the ground. I don't know if they're online, but (the literary journal) *Paj Ntaub Voice* was around for years. There are so many Hmong poets and playwrights when I think about it. They're not following the same trajectory. That's about aurality, how many people are reading their work and performing.

Monica Chiu: To me that brings us to canon formation right away. What is "the" or "a" canon? We have an idea of an Asian American canon. What is a Hmong American canon? I'm thinking about the second- and third-generation of Hmong youths growing up with technology. How can we access what might be posted or published on the Web as contributions to a Hmong canon? How might the field of digital humanities help in mining this canon of Hmong American literature? Or what we would call an archive, whether film scripts or plays, perhaps something that deviates from the usual trajectory of how the Asian American canon has been formed. How do we recognize or acknowledge work beyond that which appears on the printed page, to which we are so wedded? This is linked to the expectations of the publishing world, expectations of tenure, including where you publish and what publications are considered "acceptable" for institutions of higher education. Even though my own university encourages this new concept of

public engagement, for example, the institution itself can be at a loss for how such engagements “count” toward promotion and tenure. In relation to what we were saying earlier, this political activism is a form of academic work, but nobody knows what to do with it at assessment: is it academic work or service?

Louisa Schein: It’s usually counted as service.

Monica Chiu: I don’t know, because service at some universities is not going to make or break a case, right? Service holds little weight against teaching and scholarship. How do we give it value for those scholars who are actively engaged in it? How do we assist junior faculty deeply involved with public engagement, but then don’t have enough printed publications for tenure and promotion?

Lately, I’ve been looking for graphic narratives by Hmong. I haven’t been able to find any except for something on a website called *Sticky Rice*, a boys’ comic, or *yaoi*, as they are called in Japanese. This was an amateur sort of thing. But because my next project is on Asian American graphic narratives, I thought: Would such venues be useful places for Hmong visibility? Do such Web-based graphic narratives exist? If so, where can I find them?

Louisa Schein: I’m just wondering ... Are we assuming that a canon should be founded for Hmong cultural production or whatever? I can’t remember what it was, but I kind of took away from your comments that maybe Hmong cultural production should be anti-canonical, which in some way sounds ghettoizing, but I ---

Monica Chiu: But how can you get legitimacy that way?

Hui Wilcox: If you occupy the space of resistance, is one of your goals to claim legitimacy? The tension is inherent.

Monica Chiu: So you never want to be legitimized, because then you’re not resisting any more.

Hui Wilcox: Even in the context of Asian American Studies, I feel that part of the resistance by Hmong Studies scholars is – like Louisa was saying – we’re all talking amongst ourselves. There is some power in marginality, at least a vantage point of critique. But is it also important for us to have conversations with the broader scholarly community? I think Hmong Studies scholars realize this importance. However, to be a visible part of Asian American Studies conference, you have to form a panel before you even enter the space. This practice reinforces the isolation of already marginalized fields. People who already know each other and each other’s work form panels. The only way I got into this conference was because I know Juliana [Hu Pegues]. Similarly, when I attend the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA), the panels on Asian American experiences are completely silent about Hmong experiences. Again, for NWSA,



it is primarily people who know each other that propose panels. What kind of conversation does this mechanism facilitate? How does that help a more marginalized voice – to make its way into this space?

Monica Chiu: I think that's a great point, because it's true. The process of panel formation is about convenience: how many hundreds of proposals does the conference committee receive, and if they arrive already nicely packaged, it streamlines work for the organizers.

Hui Wilcox: But there are conferences where you can have organizers, you put out a theme, the theme doesn't have to be related to specific ethnic groups. It could be theoretically focused, and then you can get a wide range of works from all different directions. And then you can facilitate cross-group dialogues.

Louisa Schein: But I think there is an intermediate scale that we haven't talked about, that Ma has been actively involved in, and me to some extent, which is the various Southeast Asian initiatives. We have insisted on Southeast Asia as a focus for panels. That's actually a longstanding collectivity as well that is succeeding lately, making a point to Asian American Studies that post-Vietnam Southeast Asians need to be included all the time, that this is what Asian America is now. I think that's a scale that Hmong Studies can really enter because there is a lot more recognition among the Vietnamese, Cambodian scholars, less so Mien. There is a whole problem of inclusion there. Ma might want to say more about that, but I think that's a very strategic place of entry to get beyond Hmong Studies people talking to Hmong Studies people on their panels.

Monica Chiu: Mark Pfeifer has always critiqued this point. There are Hmong conferences in the Twin Cities and in California, both places with a dense Hmong population. When we branch out, we end up here at the AAAS, but we still feel marginalized somehow. However, this year, there are three or four panels on Hmong Studies, more than any other year.

Louisa Schein: And even if people are not coming to the conferences, at least they are seeing it in the program. That's the first step.

Pa Der Vang: Maybe we should start some type of movement in terms of a standing institute in the AAAS conference – Hmong Studies Institute.

Monica Chiu: How many universities offer courses in Hmong Studies?

Pa Der Vang: Yeah, we had to research that in order to start our minor. A handful of universities across the country actually have offerings in terms of courses. But only 4 universities offer either a certificate or minor.

Monica Chiu: Do you offer a minor?

Pa Der Vang: We offer a minor. Concordia University in St. Paul offers a minor. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee offers a certificate. There are Hmong Studies courses at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Monica Chiu: What do you have to take to earn a minor?

Pa Der Vang: It is 24 credits which is 6 courses. Our requirement includes a Critical Hmong Studies course, Asian American Identities, and the language courses. And we require the Foundation of Critical Studies of Race and Ethnicity.

Ma Vang: I have a question. Because you are at a women's college, are you going to do a critical gender studies course within the Hmong Studies program?

Pa Der Vang: I know. I'd love to. Right now it's a matter of how much we can expand the program.

Louisa Schein: It sounds like it's a big part of your class.

Pa Der Vang: Yes it is, because we're at a women's university so gender and women are already part of the conversation.

Monica Chiu: In some ways, such a course, filled with mostly women, might make it more comfortable for women to address particular issues, but sometimes when you're too comfortable, you elide issues that you really need to talk about, right? What happens at the University of New Hampshire, which is in a state that is 98% white, is that many African American students will complain that some teachers will ask them to talk about the black perspective, as if they are the authority on it. Conversely, they tell me, teachers don't ask white students to discuss the white perspective, to be the authority on it. What students or teachers give themselves license to say, and how they self-monitor, depends on who's in the classroom.

Pa Der Vang: But I think it's a wonderful experience for the Hmong students to have their perspective privileged. It is such a rare occasion. All the case studies and all the stories we pull in are about Hmong. I got comments like "This is the first time my teacher used a case study that's about Hmong families." Of course every semester we get one or two white students, but we still run our class from the Hmong perspective. Sometimes we speak Hmong, we tell Hmong jokes, and use Hmong sayings. What a great opportunity for the white students! Later they say, "Oh my God, I've never actually felt like ... I'd never been in a room where I didn't know what was going on." What a great experience! It's so amazing. For the Hmong students to be there, to

speak Hmong to their professor, to talk about things like “I have to grow my hair long because I’m considered the good girl in my family.” For them to be able to say that to me, and for them to examine the meaning of their choices with their professor – how powerful! How rare it is for Hmong students to feel that their perspective and their experiences are worthy. How important it is to have my perspective, my voice, my way to write a paper to be privileged.

It goes back to literature, too. Our students write differently, the way they see the world. It just comes out differently. That’s why publishing is so difficult for Hmong. Their voices are different. It’s so hard to articulate. The difference is so subtle. Just the way they view the world, the way they talk about things.

Louisa Schein: You know, the idea of the Hmong perspective, or a Hmong perspective, reminded me that I wanted to get back to the question of authorship, because I’m still trying to figure out. Did you say that *Spirit Catches You* and *Gran Torino* are candidates for the canon? Because that’s not what I would have said....

Monica Chiu: No. They are some of the only texts that lend themselves to discussing issues in Hmong Studies.

Louisa Schein: So that raises the question of who gets to author Hmong. There is the Hmong content, and there is this whole idea of cultural producers. I’m sure you’ve run into it, too. Because it’s thought of as culture, there are not authors – the individual notion is effaced, because culture is culture, right? It made me remember that I wanted to say something about all these pieces in the Hmong newspaper that I wrote about the *Gran Torino* actors, and the back story about that. We realized very early in the production, actually before production—in pre-production—that Hollywood was not going to present the Hmong actors as celebrities, or as actors crafting their work. They were going to be presented as Hmong from the street, and that’s how authentic they were supposed to be. They were producing as Hmong, not producing themselves as actors with names. So the reason I started writing all those pieces was to counter the dominant Hollywood representation of who the Hmong in *Gran Torino* were. I think I addressed it a little bit: when the film came out, journalists wanted to cover the Hmong actors; they actually found some of these pieces and did interviews with some of them. But that was the struggle in popular culture that raises the question about culture. Who would be seen as just making nameless culture, and who gets to claim authorship? This was really acute. I’m just wondering if there is more we could do on that, because Fadiman is still a go-to person, an individual expert, for knowledge about Hmong. How do you displace that?

## Epilogue:

Our dialogue, beginning with the introduction of the Critical Hmong Studies Program at St. Catherine University, delved into issues and questions related to power, resources, visibility, collaboration, and disciplinary and genre privileges, too often discovering that current institutional and public configurations of these arenas disadvantaged Hmong Studies. We explored the ways in which Hmong Studies offers new possibilities of critique, of developing theoretical frameworks, and of innovating within and across disciplines. We eventually found our way back to curricular questions specific to Critical Hmong Studies at the all-women's St. Catherine University, emphasizing the empowerment of Hmong women, but also raising critical questions about authorship and authority of the materials that we present to our students.

We now end this rich dialogue with Louisa's resounding question, "How do you displace that?" because much work in building Hmong Studies is about displacing and disrupting existing power structures in cultural production, in academia, and in everyday interaction, the structures that render Hmong either invisible or visible in pernicious ways. Our discussion traces both the displacement of Hmong Studies as distinct from mainstream arenas—whether Asian American Studies or Critical Race and Ethnic Studies—as well as its resistance to the methodologies and texts defining these traditional fields. Hmong Studies is both involuntarily displaced as well as strategically self-displaced. The latter can strengthen its viability and visibility through public engagement, confrontation over media stereotyping, collaborative work, or finding new literary forms for classroom use (Hmong-authored play and film scripts, videos created for Hmong audiences about the homeland, journals with small and/or regional print runs). However, those scholars immersed in creative confrontation often face the rigidity of academia and the publishing industry. That is, Hmong Studies traverses a search for legitimacy in its very resistance to established fields; it desires to become constituent to those fields as it forges very different scholarly, public, and community-based paths into the future. We must work within the parameters of the academic, publishing, non-profit and activist worlds to change them. Establishing Hmong Studies programs has been one significant step in this work, but we have much more work to do. The following questions may guide future, necessary discussions:

- As universities continue to explore Hmong Studies programs, minors, and studies, where are the programs housed, what is their curricula, and how are the programs funded?
- What funding can be made available for Hmong Studies projects? There must be a commitment to advocating for institutional and publishing flexibility from within a university or a community for Hmong Studies and scholars. Questions remain regarding what "counts" toward promotion and tenure; who gets published; and who gets reviewed and by whom.

We must create an archive of teaching materials in Hmong Studies; where will these archives be housed? Scholars' positions within and beyond the academy—affected by race, ethnicity,

generation, gender, institutional site, and personal and geographic background—necessitate strategizing what to say and how to say it in light of a history of past reception. For instance, Hmong Studies comprises the voices of both men and women whose work is equally influential in defining and driving the field. Here, previous dialogues on gender representation within Asian American Studies and Critical Ethnic Studies prove instructive. As past field formations have demonstrated, issues of gender parity, racialized masculinity and femininity, and intersectional analysis all play an important, if sometimes contentious, role in scholarly development. It is our hope that the field of Hmong Studies continues to embrace both male and female scholars, as knowledge should have no gender boundaries.

Furthermore, displacement—and dislocation—have been central to Indigenous theorizing, and Hmong Studies could gain insight by investigating Indigenous strategies of articulation. Our conversation reveals generative points of connection between Hmong and Indigenous frameworks of land, identity, and sovereignty outside of the nation-state, which suggest productive engagement for both fields. Work in and for Hmong Studies will require not only revising what we mean by studies in race, indigeneity, American and Asian American Studies, but also rethinking institutionalized approaches to social justice activism, publishing, promotion and tenure, and curriculum development. Hence, consideration of the limits and potentialities of displacement also could be addressed through questions of *placement* or location. Location may connote not only that marginal base from which Critical Hmong Studies scholarship challenges pre-existing canons, but also questions notions of belonging and affiliation. As we develop as a discipline, scholars will face strategic decisions about affiliation—with Asian American Studies, Southeast Asian American Studies, Southeast Asian Studies, Asian Studies, American Studies, Indigenous Studies, Diaspora and Transnational Studies, Race and Ethnic Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Urban and Economic Development Studies, as well as with a range of traditional disciplines where we should also be making potentially field-changing contributions, such as History, Sociology, Anthropology, Geography, Literature, Social Work, Education and more. Beyond the walls of the academy, Hmong Studies scholars must weigh their participation in activist, public, advocacy, service and community work, all of which may synergize with their academic production and its broader impacts.

Such tactics of affiliation are ever-present not only in matters of our scholarship and publication, but also in the reception of our work. The effort is in part about Hmong Studies' inclusion in myriad collectivities, but it is also that we are called upon to clearly articulate our *relevance* to multiple fields if we are to be read and heard. In our own and upcoming generations of work, we hope to explain less who Hmong are and what Hmong teach us, and instead to enjoy increasing recognizability. And this is one prominent place where the visibility and audibility of Hmong arts may be breaking ground in advance of scholarship. We look forward to increasingly robust dialogues among Hmong Studies scholars, reaching creatively and provocatively into an ever-widening field.

## Appendix

### Selected Archive of Actions for Hmong Representation and Voice

*The following is a sampling of actions and publications intended to bring Hmong American issues and perspectives into greater visibility in dominant spheres. While there have been many other initiatives, this listing represents works specifically associated with the Critical Hmong Studies Collective and our collaborators.*

#### Protesting Racial Incidents and Making Race Visible

- Pa Der Vang [co-authored by members of the Hmong Scholar/Activist Alliance]. "Anti-Hmong Rant and Responses Illustrate the Fantasy of a 'Post-Race' Era." *Minnpost* 11/16/11

<http://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2011/11/anti-hmong-rant-and-responses-illustrate-fantasy-post-race-era>

-Critical Hmong Studies Collective. "Persistent Invisibility: Hmong Americans are Silenced." *AsianWeek*, September 12, 2008, p. 5. Web version:

<http://www.asianweek.com/2008/09/13/persistent-invisibility-hmong-americans-are-silenced/>

**Reprinted in:** *In Voices of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Experience*, Sang Chi and Emily Moberg Robinson, eds. Pp. 312-313. Broomfield, CO: ABL:CLIO, 2012.

-Dia Cha, Leena Her, Pao Lee, Ly Chong Thong Jalao, Louisa Schein, Chia Youyee Vang, Ma Vang, Yang S. Xiong, "Knowledge, Authority and Hmong Invisibility." *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, March 14, 2008. **Reprinted in:** *Asian American Press*, XXVII (14) April 4: 5, 9. <http://diverseeducation.com/article/10828/>

- Pa Der Vang, Ma Vang, Va-Megn Thoj, Pao Lee Vue, Louisa Schein, "A Roundtable Discussion on the Racialization of Hmong Americans." *Fourth International Conference on Hmong Studies*, Concordia University, St. Paul, March 31, 2012.

-Louisa Schein and Va-Megn Thoj. "Occult Racism: The Masking of Race in the Hmong Hunter Incident: A Dialogue between Anthropologist Louisa Schein and Filmmaker Va-Megn Thoj." 2007. *American Quarterly* 59(4), December: Pp.1051-1095. **Reprinted in:** *Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*. Jean Wu and Thomas Chen, eds. Pp. 423-453. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

#### Popular Media Activism: *Gran Torino*

- Va-Megn Thoj, Bee Vang, Ma Vang, Louisa Schein. Roundtable, "Teaching *Gran Torino*." *Association for Asian American Studies*, Washington, DC, April 12, 2012.

- Ly Chong Thong Jalao. 2010. "Looking *Gran Torino* in the Eye: A Review." *Journal of Southeast Asian Education and Advancement* Vol 5.

<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=jsaaea>

- Louisa Schein and Bee Vang. "Gran Torino's Hmong Lead Bee Vang on Film, Race and Masculinity: Conversations with Louisa Schein, Spring, 2010." 2010. *Hmong Studies Journal* 11:1-11. <http://hmongstudies.org/ScheinVangHSJ11.pdf>

- Louisa Schein. "Making *Gran Torino*: The Hmong Story on Blu-Ray." *Hmong Today*, June 1, 2009. Pp. 16-17.

- *Hmong Speak Out on Gran Torino: A Discussion with the Hmong Actors at University of Minnesota, February 20, 2009.* (Louisa Schein, Producer) Screened on KBTv

Sacramento/Fresno June 7, 14, 2009. Select [6-7-2009 Gran Torino Cast Interview](#) and [6-14-2009 Grand Torino Cast Interview Part II](#) at <http://www.crossingstv/hmong-arc>.

- Louisa Schein. "Eastwood's Next Film Features Hmong American Cast: Exclusive Interviews from the set of 'Gran Torino'." *AsianWeek* Vol 29, No. 7, October 3, 2008, pp. 12, 29. Web version: <http://www.asianweek.com/2008/10/03/eastwoods-next-film-features-hmong-american-cast-exclusive-interviews-from-the-set-of-gran-torino/>

- Louisa Schein. "Hmong Actors Making History Part 1: The Bad Guys of Gran Torino." *Hmong Today* August 16, 2008, pp. 12-13. Web version: <http://www.hmongtoday.com/displaynews.asp?ID=2542>. **Reprinted in:** [http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view\\_article.html?article\\_id=9c74f65fbd40944ddeb5271a1013bd0](http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=9c74f65fbd40944ddeb5271a1013bd0)

- Louisa Schein. "Hmong Actors Making History Part 2: Meet the Gran Torino Family." *Hmong Today* Sept 1, 2008, pp.10-11. Web version: <http://www.hmongtoday.com/displaynews.asp?ID=2590> [http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view\\_article.html?article\\_id=9c74f65fbd40944ddeb5271a1013bd0](http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=9c74f65fbd40944ddeb5271a1013bd0)

- Louisa Schein. "Gran Torino Opens at Number One! Doua Moua's Big Night at New York Premier." *Hmong Today*, January 16, 2009, Pp.10-11.

- MANAA "Gran Torino" Review. Link: [http://www.manaa.org/gran\\_torino.html](http://www.manaa.org/gran_torino.html) (Critical Hmong Studies Collective Protested)

### Counter-Media

- Bee Vang, Wa Yang, Va-Megn Thoj, Louisa Schein, Co-Producers. *Thao Does Walt: Lost Scenes from Gran Torino*. 2010. 5-minute spoof. *Youtube* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMaIOFMg64M>

### Intervening in the News Media- Vang Pao

- Chia Youyee Vang. "Letter to the Editor," *New York Times Magazine*, June 1, 2008, p. 10. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/magazine/01letters-t-004.html?\\_r=0&adxnnl=1&pagewanted=print&adxnnlx=1412162221-SjIZtjUUVQndwWbbtM07g](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/magazine/01letters-t-004.html?_r=0&adxnnl=1&pagewanted=print&adxnnlx=1412162221-SjIZtjUUVQndwWbbtM07g)

- Louisa Schein. "Letter to the Editor," *New York Times Magazine*, June 1, 2008, p. 10. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/magazine/01letters-t-004.html?\\_r=0&adxnnl=1&pagewanted=print&adxnnlx=1412162221-SjIZtjUUVQndwWbbtM07g](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/magazine/01letters-t-004.html?_r=0&adxnnl=1&pagewanted=print&adxnnlx=1412162221-SjIZtjUUVQndwWbbtM07g)

- Louisa Schein. "A General's Changing Presence: Why Did Vang Pao's Arrest Become a Unifying Event for So Many?" Op ed. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Tuesday, July 3, 2007: 7B. [http://www.twincities.com/ci\\_6283124?source=most\\_viewed](http://www.twincities.com/ci_6283124?source=most_viewed)

### Film Study Guides

- *Open Season*. Directed by Mark Tang and Lu Lippold. "Study Guide for Facilitators and Educators" by Louisa Schein and Va-Megn Thoj. Center for Asian American Media, distributor. [http://caamedia.org/html/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/study\\_guides/OPEN%20SEASON%20Study%20Guide%207-31-2012.pdf](http://caamedia.org/html/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/study_guides/OPEN%20SEASON%20Study%20Guide%207-31-2012.pdf)

**Displacing and Disrupting: A Dialogue on Hmong Studies and Asian American Studies** by Hui Wilcox, Louisa Schein, Pa Der Vang, Monica Chiu, Juliana Hu Pegues and Ma Vang, *Hmong Studies Journal* 16(2015): 1-24.

-*The Betrayal (Nerakhoon)*. Directed by Ellen Kuras and Thavisouk Prasavath. Channapha Khamvongsa and Louisa Schein, Study Guide Reviewers. POV. <http://pov-tc.pbs.org/pov/downloads/2009/pov-betrayal-discussion-guide-color.pdf>

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