

Testimonials on Le Xuan Khoa and SEARAC

1. *Someday, I hope to appear before the U.S. Senate and have the dignity, poise, wisdom, and insight that you showed in your testimony yesterday afternoon.*

Jesse Bunch, Executive Director, Indochina Resource Action Center,

(Letter to Le Xuan Khoa after Khoa's testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee of the Judiciary, February 9, 1982.)

2. *I want to thank you and the entire IRAC team for the very important role you played in helping my refugee bill pass the Senate with the surprising margin that it did, and also for your work to see this Bill through Conference. Your leadership in leading a delegation overseas to the camps to report first-hand on the dire situation was very important to the consensus building effort in the Senate.*

Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R-Oregon), 1987

3. *I received your letter of 10 July 1987 prior to my departure for Vietnam and was able to receive the appropriate background briefings so that members of our delegation could raise the political prisoner, Amerasian youth and Orderly Departure Program issues with the Vietnamese. Privately, you should know we were able to do so during our discussions.*

General John W. Vessey, Jr., Special Envoy of President
Ronald Reagan to Vietnam, 1987

4. *People like you are an inspiration for all of us volunteers in the important consciousness-raising for refugees. Your words had a great impact at the Bayard Rustin Board Meeting. They were all impressed with you. I hope our roads cross again. Both in work and in life.*

Liv Ullmann, 1972 Winner of Golden Globe Award for Best Actress,
Film Director, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, 1988

5. *Thanks for your letter of March 24 and for the encouraging news of your conversation with Ambassador Lang. Many of the points you raised with him were similar to those I have raised with Vietnamese officials in my negotiations with them.*

General John W. Vessey, Jr., Special Envoy of President
Ronald Reagan to Vietnam, 1989

6. *Thank you for the copy of IRAC's statement to the Preparatory Meeting for the International Conference on Indochinese Refugees which I have read with the greatest interest. A great deal of study and reflexion [sic] have obviously gone into the preparation of this most constructive and helpful paper which focuses on many of the key areas of particular concern to UNHCR in our efforts to ensure that adoption and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Action take full account of the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees.*

Sergio Vieira de Mello, Chair, CPA Steering Committee, UNHCR, 1989

7. *The Indochina Resource Action Center, under the distinguished leadership of its President, Dr. Le Xuan Khoa, demonstrates the important role that the Vietnamese American community can and should play in U.S. policy and programs—not only the resettlement program aspects but also the larger issues of refugee rights and protection . . . Important projects under IRAC's auspices also include*

community development activities and training for Indochinese MAAs which will take on new importance with the arrivals of the former political prisoners and their families.

Robert L. Funseth, senior Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, at the Award Dinner of the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners, August 5, 1989

8. *Certain representatives of your organizations made a direct approach to the Vietnamese Mission in New York, at the United Nations, and pointed out to that mission how important it was to the one million of Vietnamese Americans that the political prisoners be released, that they be resettled (in the U.S.) . . . If it was correct for me to approach the Vietnamese to try to obtain the release of these prisoners then I think it is certainly appropriate for Americans of Vietnamese descent to do the same thing.*

Robert L. Funseth, at the White House briefing, August 7, 1989

9. *My respect for IRAC has increased over the years because of its energetic competence in encouraging Southeast Asian refugee organizations in self-reliance, community development, and networking. IRAC has performed with leadership, courage and compassion, and deserves greater support.*

Ambassador Jonathan Moore, U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, 1990

10. *This is one of the most remarkable groups we work with. . . SEARAC's courage and initiative are often ahead of policy. . . I would like to thank you for all you are doing and encourage you to keep doing it because it is really on the cutting edge of refugee work in Southeast Asia.*

Ambassador Warren Zimmermann, U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, 1993

11. *Members of the Helsinki Commission staff who served on the delegation have told us of your active participation in the discussion group on institution-building. We strongly encourage you to stay in touch with the delegates you met from other countries and to share your ideas with us as to how to develop meaningful follow-up programs and activities that will address the varied needs raised over the course of the Seminar. We know that many delegates were interested in talking to you and that you may have suggestions for training programs. . . We are proud that the U.S. delegation included such a professional, expert, and diverse range of talent and experience.*

Senator Dennis DeConcini and Congressman Steny H. Hoyer, Co-chairmen, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), 1993

12. *WE WON!!! And I was just setting off for the last train home when your fax came through . . . Yes, do write to Mr. Assadi, though I have already appealed to him on this case. Your influence is much more effective. Perhaps he would care to make a gesture (though surely not to me, but to you!) as he is leaving at the end of the year... Thank you for your prompt answer. Sometime, I wonder if there's any one out there.*

Pam Baker, human rights lawyer, Pam Baker and Company Solicitors, Hong Kong, 1995

13. *SEARAC has fought to protect Vietnamese boat people from murderous pirates, stood up for human rights and democracy in Vietnam, helped deliver public and private funds to Southeast Asian self-help groups, provided technical assistance to Southeast Asian community leaders and encouraged refugee communities to participate in America's democratic process.*

InterAction's statement of support for Le Xuan Khoa and SEARAC, April 1996

14. SEARAC and Mr. Khoa have consistently worked to resolve difficult issues. In particular, SEARAC early and persistent effort to help ensure that the close of the CPA and the return of screened-out asylum-seekers would be carried out in a humane, just manner was critical to our being able to fashion the ROVR program . . . It is always difficult to be in a leadership position where one often must take unpopular actions. Thus it is not surprising to learn that allegations have been raised recently questioning the credibility of SEARAC and the integrity of Le Xuan Khoa. This is not only unfortunate, but also unfair.

Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R – Oregon), to The Hon. Donna Shalala,
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, July 1996

15. We the Vietnamese asylum seekers living in Whitehead Detention Center, having known of Dr. Khoa's work in IRAC and SEARAC for several years, we would like it to be publicly known that we appreciate all of the work Dr. Khoa has carried out on our behalf. We consider Dr. Khoa to be an honest and honourable man who has dedicated much of his life in trying to help our situation.

Nguyen Pham Muoi (#53476), Nam Tien Dung (#51034), Le Khac Hien (#50987)
Section 5, 1996 [as mentioned by atty. Pam Baker in No. 20 below]

16. We have been through so much together, and I have always rejoiced in our collaboration and friendship. I hope my departure from InterAction and your retirement from SEARAC will not interrupt our ability to work together. You are a remarkable human being who has given such quality leadership to the Indochinese community and to the InterAction family.

Hon. Julia Taft, President of InterAction (1994-1997)
Assistant Secretary of State, 1997-2001

17. The Office of Refugee Resettlement would like to honor you for your many years of service to Refugees during our national conference next month. It would be our pleasure to have you as our guest of honor so that those of us who have worked alongside you, as well as those who have benefited from your dedication to protecting the rights of refugees everywhere, will have the opportunity to express our gratitude.

Lavinia Limon, ORR Director, October 30, 1997

18. Your leadership at the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center made SEARAC a model of how refugee based organizations can help build their communities here in the United States. Because of your untiring efforts, America obtained a better appreciation of the needs of refugees and of the great contribution refugees have made to our country.

Lavinia Limon, ORR Director, November 13, 1997

19. We believe all groups and leaders that have had the honor to work closely with Khoa feel the same way that he has an innate understanding of the broad interests of our community and country and a genuine dedication to the value that have made this country the great and diverse nation it has become.

Steve Kurzman, Lawyer, American Jewish Committee, 1997

20. In response to many inquiries this end, amongst them from Muoi (Editor of Freedom Magazine who wrote supporting you) who is in Victoria Prison and due to be repatriated on 9th September, by force, could you have a note, by fax, of the addresses of your various offices in Vietnam. There are now many people being sent back who have nowhere to go and no visible means of support when

they get there. They are going to need whatever help they can get... We will all be grateful for your assistance to these poor people.

Pam Baker, human rights lawyer, Hong Kong, 1998

21. *Having just read your farewell message in the December issue of The Bridge, I am moved to say that you are one of the most honorable men I have ever had the privilege to work with. Through all the ups and downs of the last several decades, to me you were always a leader and a hero. You were brave when it was unpopular and always collegial. Whatever you do from here on, you can rest assured that you have helped change thousands of lives for the better and that many of us recognize the enormity of your contributions.*

Roger P. Winter, Executive Director, U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1998
Deputy Secretary of State's Special Representative on Sudan

22. *You may not realize it, but you have been a key player, if not THE key player in our efforts to Reconcile the differences between the U.S. and Vietnam. Without your leadership and calm, deliberate approach to the divisions that exist on the street, we simply would not be where we are now. You are a real champion for that effort and we all admire your work.*

Hon. Douglas "Pete" Peterson, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, 1999

23. *Professor Le is well known to us, having earlier served as an adjunct professor at SAIS, and he has been a leading figure in the Vietnamese community in the United States for many years. The school believes the subject is an important one, and we are fortunate to have a scholar of Professor Le's reputation and expertise conducting this work. I would appreciate any assistance you would extend to Professor Le in his research.*

Thomas A. Keaney, Ph.D., Executive Director,
Johns Hopkins University, The Foreign Policy Institute, 2002

24. *I want to say how impressed I am with the dedication, love, hard work and money you and your organizations have contributed over many years in your humanitarian and development work in Vietnam. I didn't really realize until last night that many of your organizations have been active in Vietnam for a decade or more. This was my ignorance. I should say that I first got to know of you and your work at a conference we funded on "The Future of Relations between Vietnam and the US" in October 2003 at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace in Washington. It was there that I met Professor Le Xuan Khoa for the first time, and as they say, the rest is history.*

Charles Bailey, The Ford Foundation Representative in Vietnam,
Conference of Vietnamese American NGOs, California, November, 2005

25. *"It was his (Le Xuan Khoa's) leadership that led to the formation of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, streamlining the resettlement of not just Southeast Asians but all refugees since the 1980s," she said in an email. Khoa retired as SEARAC's president in 1996, but remained an adviser to the organization. "Decades later, his legacy lives on in our organization's mission to build and mobilize this, and the next, generations of advocates so that those most impacted by inequity in our communities are the ones calling for change," Dinh said.*

Agnes Constante, NBC staff writer, citing Quyen Dinh, SEARAC's Executive Director,
in her article "How Southeast Asian American refugees helped shape
America's resettlement system," NBC News, April 20, 2020