

Vietnamese scholars talk of future

By Colleen Pohlig
Oregon Daily Emerald

After decades of pain, loss and bitterness for both Vietnamese and Americans, it's time to close the doors of the past and look forward to a future of peace and friendship, two Vietnamese scholars said.

Marking a historic moment, the University is hosting two of Vietnam's most distinguished scholars, Nguyen Kim Cuc and Hoang Cong Thuy — the first exchange agreement between major universities in the two countries since the end of the Vietnam War.

Cuc, a pediatrician and Vietnam's leading expert on women and families, and Thuy, a professor and member of the board of the Vietnam-USA Society, said they accepted the month-long professorships mainly because they want Americans to know of the mutual need for friendship.

"Now that the war is over, we need to heal the war wounds as well as the health and minds of Vietnamese and American people," Thuy said. "We're here to show our good will and our readiness to make peace with the people in the U.S., and to make friendship."

Arriving last week as visiting professors with the International Studies Program and the Center for the Study of Women in Society, Cuc and Thuy are packing their schedules with lectures ranging from the war to the Vietnamese language to contemporary social, political and economic development in Vietnam.

Cuc is also spending the majority of time speaking with women students and faculty as well as women's organizations about the strives for equality in her country and the status women in the United States. She serves on a 10-member committee that oversees the Vietnamese Women's Union to which 80 percent of Vietnamese women belong.

"Women have very good conditions here," Cuc said. "They are working very seriously and effectively for equality."

University Professor Robert Proudfoot, who has taught in Vietnam through the U.S.-Vietnam Sister University Project five times in the last four years, said the visit is what Americans need to discard the negative stereotypes and see Vietnamese people in a true light.

"This is the first time that Americans can really get an understanding of contemporary Vietnam," Proudfoot said. "And we have a lot to learn. They are so generous and forgiving — it rekindles optimism for me."

Proudfoot will return to Vietnam in August to teach as a visiting professor, this time for five months. He said Cuc's and Thuy's visit has already opened up many doors for student and faculty opportunities to study and teach in Vietnam.

Also, plans are in the works for the first ever delegation of American students and faculty to visit Vietnam next year. Proudfoot said Vietnamese students and faculty members will then



Visiting scholars Hoang Cong Thuy (left), Dr. Nguyen Kim Cuc and University Professor Robert Proudfoot have been working to ease relations between Vietnam and the United States.

have a U.S. delegation.

Cuc and Thuy said the friendship process is being slowed by things like the recent discovery of a 1972 letter that reported Vietnam had at the time been secretly holding more than 600 Americans who were not freed in 1973 under terms of the Paris peace accords.

"We don't have any POWs (prisoners of war)," Thuy said. "Why would our government hold them, and how could they keep them a secret from the Vietnamese people?"

The discovery of the letter, found in Communist Party archives in Moscow, is believed to be stalling the Clinton administration from lifting the 18-year trade embargo on Vietnam that his officials had signaled to do earlier this year. Most U.S. experts have since rejected the letter as inaccurate.

In fact, the U.S. embassy refused Cuc and Thuy visas and they were stuck in Bangkok for six days because U.S. politicians and activists demanded an accounting. Proudfoot said his request for help from Rep. Peter Defazio, and ultimately Vice President Al Gore, made the visit happen.

While Cuc and Thuy admit to being nervous about how they would be welcomed by Americans, they said they were surprised to find only friendly people who are eager to talk, and listen, to them.

"We're doing the best we can to consolidate between Vietnam and the U.S.," Thuy said. "The policy of openness shows that Vietnam is ready and willing to be friends for peace, cooperation and development."

COURT

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voted during the primary elections.

If the constitution court did rule the elections board violated elections rules, would it be worth the cost of having another election, court members asked.

Tracy Dennis, elections board coordinator, said the cost of a second election would run between \$2,000 and \$5,000. It would take about two weeks to make up the ballots and get ready for the election.

Student Sen. Michael Omogrosso filed a complaint against *Oregon Daily Emerald* Editorial Editor Martin Fisher and Editor Pat Malach. Omogrosso lost his re-election campaign for a one-year seat on the senate.

In his complaint, Omogrosso alleged the newspaper ran a write-in campaign for Fisher. On April 19, Fisher wrote in the *Emerald's* "Write Angles" column: "I am hereby announcing my write-in candidacy for an ASUO position. Any position. Every position."

"I agree the press should be granted extreme latitude but a line needs to be drawn," Omogrosso told the constitution court. "Mr. Fisher stepped out of the ring of protection of journalists and into the ring of politicians."

The *Emerald* is an independent paper governed by the U.S. Constitution and the Oregon Constitution, and not governed by the constitution court, Malach said.

"With respect to the constitution court, I don't believe the court can tell us what we can or cannot publish," Malach said. "The *Emerald* respectfully declines to respond to this case."

Fisher said Omogrosso's complaint was irrelevant because elections rules don't supersede the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

"If you took my column seriously, you need more help than you're going to get from this court," he said.

Oscar Garcia, who was a write-in candidate for a Student Senate seat, filed a complaint against the elections board because no elections board member called him to tell him he had to file as a candidate prior to the general election.

Garcia also alleged the board violated elections rules when it placed his name on the general elections ballot, even though he hadn't filed. In the general election, Garcia received 64 votes, which were enough votes to win.

Brad Anderson, a write-in candidate for the same senate seat, filed an amicus brief with the court because he believes he should be declared the winner.

"I was the only candidate," Anderson said. "Therefore, I am the winner."

ASSEMBLY

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Americans and Latinos/Chicanos to courses on all "racial/ethnic minority groups in the U.S.A." The amendment passed the assembly 196-129.

Religious studies Professor J.T. Sanders, who proposed the amendment, said the first part of the requirement should include other groups, such as Jews.

But political science Associate Professor Sumi Cho said the four racial groups that had been specified in the first course have historically suffered more prejudice than any other racial or ethnic group, and they deserve special attention.

Other racial and ethnic groups, she said, can be addressed by the requirement's second course.

When the amendment passed, international studies Professor Robert Proudfoot walked out of the assembly, saying, "This assembly just took away Native American identities and lumped us together with

everyone else. Our voice has been taken away today. Thank you very much."

About 30 students followed him, yelling at the assembly and calling assembly members racists.

"There is no multicultural requirement with that amendment," one student shouted. "It's bullshit."

A shaken assembly spent the next 20 minutes trying to decide whether it could vote by secret or mail-in ballot, instead of by raising hands as it normally does.

A secret ballot is against Oregon's public meetings laws, said University legal adviser Peter Swan. A mail-in ballot would have been legal, he said, but the assembly failed to get the 2/3 vote necessary for it.

Several other amendments were suggested, but the assembly adjourned before voting on any of them.

One amendment would reverse the Sanders amendment, which broadened the first course to deal with all U.S. racial and ethnic minority groups.

Sociology Associate Professor Sandra Morgen, who introduced the amendment, added language to encourage comparative discussions of racial and ethnic groups in the first course but maintained the course's original intent.

Under her amendment, she said after the meeting, a course on relations between blacks and Jews would be acceptable for the requirement's first part. However, she said a course just on anti-Semitism would not.

Another amendment would establish a committee to assess the fiscal and academic implications of the requirement.

A third amendment would reduce the requirement back to one course.

In the next few weeks, more amendments will likely be considered at senate and assembly meetings.

Supporters say even if the issue is not resolved by the end of the school year, they will not give up.

"We'll just keep on doing this as long as it takes," Morgen said.

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