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New Documentary Looks at Montagnard Youths in North Carolina

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, December 17, 2014 - The Center for Asian American Media is proud to announce a new documentary about the lives of three Montagnard families in Greensboro. It will be offered to public television stations across America in April 2015 and be available to libraries, universities, high schools and community groups interested in the estimated 30,000 refugees from the Southeast Asian highlands who now live North Carolina.

The half-hour program is being produced by the Greensboro Historical Museum in association with CAAM. It builds on an oral history project that involved 12 Montagnard teens in the *Young Historians, Living Histories* initiative, which was a 2013 collaboration of the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, Smithsonian Affiliations, and CAAM. Filmmakers Mariah Dunn Kramer and Dean MacLeod are producers of the documentary, which features Mai Butrang, Philip Krongkon and sisters H De and H Lysa Nie.

Although the first Montagnard immigrants, a group of about 200, were granted refugee status in 1986 in recognition of their support of U.S. Special Forces during the Vietnam War, the majority are more recent arrivals fleeing religious and political persecution. Montagnards (French for “mountain people”), a hill tribe in Vietnam and Cambodia, have settled in states such as California, Florida, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Washington, but there are more Montagnards in North Carolina than anyplace outside of Southeast Asia. The four young people being profiled have arrived in the past decade. They and their families are living in two worlds, supported by those who have come before them but also by community members who have sponsored them or are looking after their educational and social needs.

“They are maybe wise beyond their years,” Kramer, who was also involved in the Smithsonian project, said about the subjects. MacLeod, the museum’s curator of education, sees the documentary as part of the museum’s commitment to explore and document the histories of all communities in the greater Greensboro area: “This is a significant, relatively unknown and underserved cultural population, but the documentary will have universal themes that will be meaningful to all people of all backgrounds.” The producers hope to show the diversity of the experiences these new Americans are facing. Challenges include navigating everyday life, academics, job placement, and bridging generations.

Donald Young, director of programs for CAAM, says the documentary will complement future programs that look back on the Vietnam War, including *The Last Days in Vietnam* in April 2015, and a major series by Ken Burns in 2016: “We think it’s important to support the Greensboro project that looks at ripples that continue to this day, and particularly gives voice to young people whose futures lie before them.”

The program will be completed by spring and distributed by CAAM to public television stations across the country. Unlimited rights will be extended for educational uses off the air, including classroom

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instruction with a teacher's guide. Web content is being created for the CAAM and Greensboro Historical Museum. Preview showings are planned for Charlotte, Raleigh and Greensboro.

About the Greensboro Historical Museum

The Greensboro Historical Museum is a premier source of history of the Piedmont area of North Carolina, particularly of Greensboro and Guilford County. Extensive archives, collections, and exhibits located in several historic buildings reveal the region's important role in American history. The museum, operated by the City of Greensboro in partnership with GHM Inc., a non-profit membership organization, is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a Smithsonian Affiliate. Carol Ghorsi Hart is the museum's director. To learn more, visit www.GreensboroHistory.org.

About the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM)

A non-profit organization headquartered in San Francisco, CAAM is dedicated to presenting stories that convey the richness and diversity of Asian American experiences to the broadest audience possible. CAAM funds, produces, distributes and exhibits works in film, television and digital media. The bulk of its support comes from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and CAAM supplies a number of public television programs annually to PBS and its affiliated stations. Stephen Gong is the executive director of CAAM.

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