ONECITY ONEBOOK
San Francisco Reads

San Francisco Public Library
FALL 2018
sfpl.org/onecityonebook
Program Guide
Dear Readers,

Welcome to the journey of an immigrant family to the U.S. I’m so excited to present our 14th annual One City One Book, which is Thi Bui’s elegantly written and masterfully drawn graphic novel, *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir*. The award-winning bestseller tells the story of Bui’s family’s life in Vietnam and coming to the U.S. as boat people in 1978. It explores her family’s history in Vietnam, her and her siblings’ childhoods, and the struggle of her family to assimilate to their new country.

While the story is a very personal one, it is also a universal one of hope and heartbreak, of displacement and longing for the past, and of the sacrifice and striving for a better future for our children. This book eloquently delves into the human side of the immigration story and is a must-read for anyone who cares about the conversations happening across our country.

I encourage every San Franciscan to read this beautiful and enlightening graphic novel this fall; I hope this timely memoir resonates with you as much as it has inspired me. Then join us at your neighborhood library for book clubs, author talks, poetry and history programs and more that highlight San Francisco Public Library’s initiative to show that All Are Welcome in our libraries and in our City.

Michael Lambert
Acting City Librarian

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Updated event information at sfpl.org/onecityonebook or (415) 557-4277

#onecityonebook sfplibrary sfpubliclibrary
**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Thi Bui** was born in Vietnam three months before the end of the Vietnam War, and came to the United States in 1978 as part of the “boat people” wave of refugees from Southeast Asia. Her debut graphic memoir, *The Best We Could Do*, published by Abrams ComicArts, was selected as UCLA’s Common Book for 2017, a National Book Critics Circle finalist in autobiography, and an Eisner Award finalist in reality-based comics, and made several best of 2017 book lists, including Bill Gates’ top five picks. She is also the Caldecott Honor-winning illustrator of *A Different Pond*, a picture book by the poet Bao Phi. Her short comics can be found online at The Nib, PEN America, and BOOM California. She is currently researching and drawing a work of graphic nonfiction about how Asian American Pacific Islanders are impacted by detention and deportation, to be published by One World, Random House. Thi taught high school in New York City and was a founding teacher of Oakland International High School, the first public high school in California for recent immigrants and English learners. She is a faculty member of the MFA in Comics program at the California College of the Arts since 2015. She lives in the Bay Area.

“I am truly honored that *The Best We Could Do* has been selected for One City One Book 2018. As a refugee of the Vietnam War and an Asian American woman, the Bay Area’s rich history is incredibly important to me. It is where the term ‘Asian American’ was coined in the 60’s by student activists at Berkeley, and was also the site of historic protests against the Vietnam War. We are living in a time in U.S. history where anti-immigration policies are simultaneously closing doors on displaced people and separating families currently living in the U.S., and it is incredibly important that communities come together on a local level to speak out against these injustices. *The Best We Could Do* is a book about the traumatic effects displacement has on families and the individual, and I hope that in being selected for the One City One Book program it is able to inspire Bay Area readers not just to have thoughtful and nuanced conversations about these issues, but also to take action.”

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**FEATURED EVENT**

**The Immigrant Experience in Words & Pictures**  
**Author/Illustrator Thi Bui in Conversation with Author Lauren Markham**

**Thursday, October 25**  
6 p.m.  
Koret Auditorium, Main Library

Authors Thi Bui, *The Best We Could Do* and Lauren Markham, *The Far Away Brothers*, discuss storytelling, immigration and what we can do as a community to support newly arrived immigrants and refugees from around the world.

**Lauren Markham**  
is a writer based in Berkeley, California. Her work has appeared in VQR, VICE, Orion, Pacific Standard, Guernica, NewYorker.com, on This American Life, and elsewhere. Lauren earned her MFA in Fiction Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts and has been awarded Fellowships from the Middlebury Fellowship in Environmental Journalism, the 11th Hour Food and Farming Journalism Fellowship, the Mesa Refuge, and the Rotary Foundation. For the past decade, she has worked in the fields of refugee resettlement and immigrant education.

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FOOD EVENTS & FILMS

Vietnamese Fresh Spring Rolls
Wednesday, October 17
6 p.m.
Mission Bay Branch Library
Cooking expert Khanh Lu demonstrates how to prepare fresh Vietnamese spring rolls. Space is limited. Sign up at (415) 355-2838.

Biblio Bistro
Vietnamese inspired vegetables
Wednesday, October 17
11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Heart of the City Farmer’s Market
U.N. Plaza
The Library’s mobile kitchen demonstrates how to cook simple and healthy meals using fresh food from the farmer’s market. Learn how to prepare a Vietnamese spinach dish inspired by James Beard Award-winning chef Charles Phan.

Film Series
Thursdays at Noon
Koret Auditorium, Main Library
Oct. 4: The Fog of War
Oct. 18: The Killing Fields
Oct. 25: Faces of the Enemy: Justifying the Inhumanity of War
Southeast Asian Community Memory Day
Thursday, October 4 & Saturday, October 6
1 – 5 p.m.
DIGI Center, Main Library
Helping San Francisco’s immigrant communities preserve and share their collective memories. We will help you digitize your family photos, creating a digital permanent library record of daily life and cultural, historical and political contributions of the Bay Area’s Southeast Asian community. For more information call (415) 557-4277.

Wild Geese Sorrow
Angel Island Chinese Wall Inscriptions
Saturday, Sept. 15 at 2 p.m.
Richmond Branch Library
Thursday, October 11 at 7 p.m.
Sunset Branch Library
The deep anger, sorrow, and loneliness of Chinese immigrant detainees held at the Angel Island Immigration Station between 1910-1940 are revealed in a new book of translations by East Bay poet and writer Jeffrey Thomas Leong.

San Francisco Archives Crawl: Immigration and Migration
Saturday, October 13
1 – 5 p.m.
San Francisco History Center
Main Library
Explore the City’s archives and engage with institutions that collect archival material during a special tour highlighting themes of immigration and migration.

Other participants in the Archive Crawl:
California Historical Society
San Francisco Public Library
Society of California Pioneers
Sutro Library, California State Library
at San Francisco State University
Environmental Design Archives, UC Berkeley
National Archives at San Francisco
SFMOMA Archives
Sonoma County History & Genealogy Library
University of California, San Francisco Archives and Special Collections
ARTISTS, AUTHORS

She Who Has No Master(s)
Wednesday, October 17
6 p.m.
Koret Auditorium, Main Library
A collaborative poetry performance and readings by She Who Has No Master(s), a collective of women and gender nonconforming writers of the Vietnamese diaspora.

Asian American Authors
Spill the Tea*
2018 Litquake Litcrawal
Saturday, October 20
6:30-8 p.m.: Friends of SFPL Members Reception
8-9:30 p.m.: Readings
Mission Branch Library
Catch six of your favorite Asian-American writers baring their souls to you in the 2018 Mission Litcrawal. The authors participating are: Kristen Chen, Soma Mei Sheng Frazier, Akemi Johnson, Rachel Khong and Nayomi Munaweera.

APAture
Sunday, October 21
11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Latino/Hispanic Community Room, Main Library
Kearny Street Workshop’s APAture returns with their Book Arts Showcase, co-presented by Kularts. This year’s featured artist, Jess Wu-O, leads an amazing roster of emerging Asian Pacific American Comics, Illustration, and Zine artists who will be showcasing their work. There will be demos, panels, and live performances throughout the day. APAture’s theme this year is RE/place, exploring the multitude of ways we regard, re-imagine, re-invent, renew place.

From Refugee to Detainee
Southeast Asian Detention and Deportation
Sunday, October 21
2 p.m.
Koret Auditorium, Main Library
Join author Thi Bui and members of the Laotian and Cambodian community as they discuss the lives impacted and how communities are fighting back.
BOOK DISCUSSIONS

Western Addition Book Club
Wednesday, September 10
4 p.m.
Western Addition Branch Library

Mission Bay Book Club
Wednesday, September 26
6:30 p.m.
Mission Bay Branch Library

Ortega Book Club
Saturday, October 20
11 a.m.
Ortega Branch Library

Excelsior Book Club
Tuesday, October 23
7 p.m.
Excelsior Branch Library

Mission Book Club
Tuesday, October 23
6:30 p.m.
Mission Branch Library

Parkside Book Club
Tuesday, October 30
7 p.m.
Parkside Branch Library

Richmond Book Club
Tuesday, October 30
6:30 p.m.
Richmond Branch Library

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The Best We Could Do addresses identity, displacement and assimilation, race, decolonization and political and historical movements and their impact on people, with advanced vocabulary, similes, idioms and historical context and culture. While blending the written word with images, it promotes critical thinking through a coming-of-age memoir laden with issues of cultural and self-identity, and intergenerational trauma and endless sacrifice within a family. Using the graphic novel format, this book serves readers through verbal and visual storytelling that supports multimodal teaching.

As you Read: A Pronunciation Guide
Some of the names and words that appear in this story may be unfamiliar to students. Visit www.abramsbooks.com/thebestwecoulddo for a list of approximately 100 names and terms in Vietnamese, French, and Malay, along with recordings of their appropriate pronunciations.

1. The author desires to be closer to her parents as an adult and realizes “proximity and closeness are not the same” (p. 31). What is your definition of proximity? Closeness? How do these two words differ? Which of the two words would you rather use to describe your relationship with your parents?

2. The births of the six siblings are told in reverse chronological order (pp. 42, 46, 47, 48, 50, and 52). What was the author’s purpose in using this storytelling element? Is it effective?

3. “And imagine each block, each day turned us a little more American” (p. 65). “I learned about America mostly through books and TV, and from what my sisters learned in school” (p. 67). If you were going to mentor a new classmate from another country, how would you share and explain what it means to be “a little more American” to your new classmate? What books, television shows, or other media would you use to demonstrate your ideas? What elements in your everyday environment shape your national or cultural identity?
4. Examine the panels where someone spits on Bô’ on page 67. What is meant by “there were reasons to not want to be anything other?” How would you have reacted if you were Bô’? How would you react if you saw someone spit on another person? What might motivate one person to react to another in that way? Can you think of similar hateful actions and tensions you’ve seen or read about throughout history or on the news?

5. “Don’t be such a REFUGEE!” (p. 285). What is meant by this comment? When you hear the word “refugee,” what do you think of? How do perceptions of refugees affect their experience?

6. What is the difference between leaving a country voluntarily and being forced to leave your homeland? What are some positive and negative effects of a dislocation?

7. How did French colonialism influence Thi’s parents while they were growing up? Cite specific examples from the book that show that impact. How might a French colonist’s description of this influence differ from a Vietnamese nationalist’s?

8. How did class differences affect people’s experience of war and their decisions about which side to take?

9. Describe the various authorities that the Buis encounter during their refugee experience. Who are they and from where do they derive their power to make decisions about refugees? Consider our national discussion on refugees today. How is it similar to the Buis’ experience? How does it differ?

10. Examine the four panels on pages 128 and 129, and the quote “I had no idea that the terror I felt was only the long shadow of his own” (p. 129). Compare Bô’s upbringing in Viêt Nam to Thi’s upbringing in San Diego. How are they similar? Different? What is meant by Thi’s quote? How is trauma passed down between generations?

11. Page 66 refers to California’s Proposition 187, which voters passed in 1994 but was subsequently struck down in a federal court. What were the arguments for and against this law? What similarities do you see to debates today on immigration?
SUGGESTED BOOKS & FILMS

Tell Me How it Ends by Valeria Luisella

Sin Nombre 2009, R

The Displaced: Refugee Writers On Refugee Lives Ed. Viet Thanh Nguyen

The Visitor 2007, PG-13

Fruit of the Drunken Tree by Ingrid Rojas Contreras

The New Americans 2003, documentary

The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity by Nadine Burke Harris, M.D.

Which Way Home 2009, documentary

The Far Away Brothers: Two Young Migrants and the Making of an American Life by Lauren Markham

Journey From the Fall 2006, R

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2018 SELECTION COMMITTEE

Michelle Jeffers, Chief of Community Programs and Partnerships, SFPL
Naomi Jelks, Adult Engagement Coordinator, SFPL
Alejandro Gallegos, Adult Engagement Manager, SFPL
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Anthony Costas, Chair, Louise & Claude Rosenberg, Jr. Library & Learning Resource Center, City College of San Francisco

Emerging Artist Showcase: The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui

August 30, 2018 – January 14, 2019
The Cartoon Art Museum
781 Beach Street, San Francisco

The Cartoon Art Museum’s ongoing Emerging Artist Showcase features Thi Bui’s groundbreaking graphic novel, The Best We Could Do, published by Abrams ComicArts. A selection of Bui’s original artwork will be on display.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Address Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANZA</td>
<td>(415) 355-5717</td>
<td>550 37th Ave. (near Anza)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAYVIEW/LINDA BROOKS BURTON</td>
<td>(415) 355-5757</td>
<td>5075 Third St. (at Revere)</td>
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<td>BERNAL HEIGHTS</td>
<td>(415) 355-2810</td>
<td>500 Cortland Ave. (at Moultrie)</td>
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<td>1135 Powell St. (near Jackson)</td>
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<td>1 José Sarria Court (16th Street near Market)</td>
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<td>2825 Diamond St. (near Bosworth)</td>
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<td>(415) 355-5666</td>
<td>1801 Green St. (at Octavia)</td>
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<td>INGLESDIE</td>
<td>(415) 355-2898</td>
<td>1298 Ocean Ave. (at Plymouth)</td>
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<td>MAIN LIBRARY</td>
<td>(415) 557-4400</td>
<td>100 Larkin St. (at Grove)</td>
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<td>MARINA</td>
<td>(415) 355-2823</td>
<td>1890 Chestnut St. (near Webster)</td>
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<td>MERCED</td>
<td>(415) 355-2825</td>
<td>155 Winston Dr. (at 19th Ave.)</td>
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<td>MISSION</td>
<td>(415) 355-2800</td>
<td>300 Bartlett St. (at 24th St.)</td>
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<td>MISSION BAY</td>
<td>(415) 355-2838</td>
<td>950 Fourth St. (at Berry)</td>
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<td>NOE VALLEY/SALLY BRUNN</td>
<td>(415) 355-5707</td>
<td>451 Jersey St. (near Castro)</td>
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<td>NORTH BEACH</td>
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<td>380 Bacon St. (at Goettingen)</td>
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<td>POTRERO</td>
<td>(415) 355-2822</td>
<td>1616 20th St. (near Connecticut)</td>
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<td>PRESIDIO</td>
<td>(415) 355-2880</td>
<td>3150 Sacramento St. (near Baker)</td>
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<td>RICHMOND/SEN. MILTON MARKS</td>
<td>(415) 355-5600</td>
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<td>VISITACION VALLEY</td>
<td>(415) 355-2848</td>
<td>201 Leland Ave. (at Rutland)</td>
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<td>(415) 355-2886</td>
<td>190 Lenox Way (at Ulloa)</td>
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<td>(415) 355-5727</td>
<td>1550 Scott St. (at Geary)</td>
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