



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
BOOK CLUB

READ

*The Migrant Rain
Falls in Reverse*

BY VINH NGUYEN

LEARN

Impacts of war, displacement,
and intergenerational trauma.

TAKE ACTION

Oppose deportation plans, end
harmful border policies, and
defend asylum in Canada.

At a time when millions of people around the world are forced to flee violence, persecution, and disaster, Canada must not turn its back on those seeking refuge. Seeking asylum is a human right, not a crime. Together, we must stand up for compassion, due process, and the right to safety.

**DISCUSSION
GUIDE MAY/JUNE
2025**

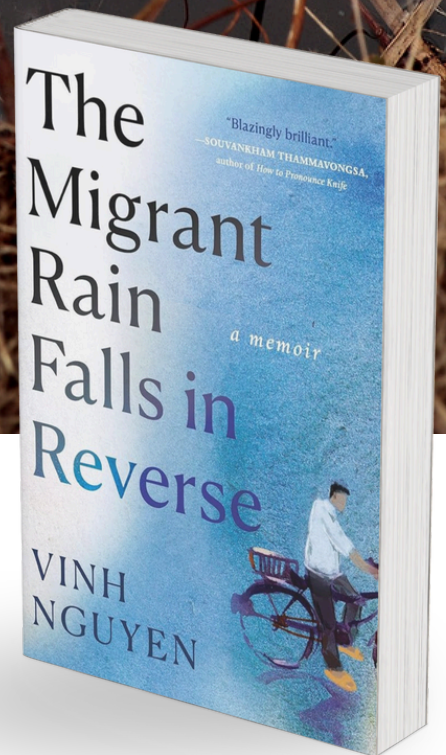


Photo above by Drew Angerer/Getty
Images: A children's boot sits in the water
in a creek at the U.S.-Canada border.

AMNESTY.CA/BOOKCLUB

A COMMUNITY THAT *READS, LEARNS & ACTS* TOGETHER



Pacinthe Mattar

HOST, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BOOK CLUB

My favourite books are the ones that take me to other worlds: pages that transcend time, space, language, cultures, countries, where I can hear different languages, taste the flavours, hear the local traffic. Vinh Nguyen's gorgeous debut novel *The Migrant Rain Falls In Reverse* is just that: a poetic, diasporic journey through space, time and imagination. A chronicle of memory, loss and possibility.

As a journalist, I've long been drawn to writers who use words, language, narrative and stories to help us experience other worlds. The power that holds, particularly in this moment, is immense. I cannot think of a better time to speak to some of this time's most powerful writers, storytellers and memorializers as the host of Amnesty Book Club 2025.

As a member of this book club, you are such an important part of the Amnesty community. The first part of working towards a better world is to read about it, understand it, and get the information you need to take action towards improving it. We've designed this guide to help you and our more than 13,000-strong community of readers delve into some of the biggest issues through some of the most memorable and powerful stories of our time.

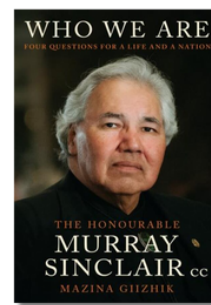
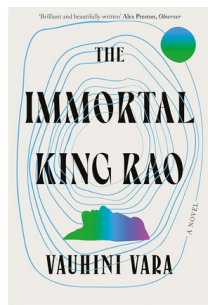
Bearing witness is at the core of my work as a journalist. I hope you'll join me and our incredible authors as we refuse to look away from the chaos of this time. Instead, let's learn together what's possible when we act in hope and solidarity.

Pacinthe Mattar

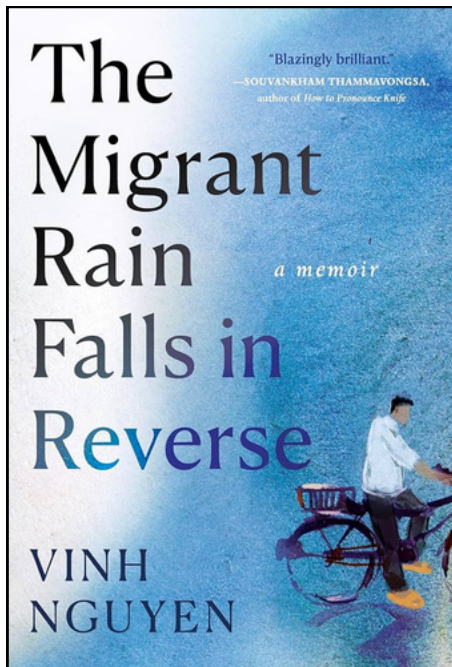
JOURNALIST, WRITER,
PRODUCER &
JOURNALISM EDUCATOR

Photo by Enzo Rodriguez

BOOK CLUB
TITLES IN
2025



THE *BOOK*



The Migrant Rain Falls in Reverse

BY VINH NGUYEN
COUNTERPOINT LLC PUBLISHING COMPANY

The Migrant Rain Falls in Reverse is a powerful, genre-bending memoir that traces one family's flight from Vietnam in the aftermath of war—and a haunting absence that follows. Decades after fleeing Saigon as the city fell, author Vinh Nguyen returns to the fragments of his family's past, searching for the father who vanished during their escape.

In 1975, as the Vietnam War came to a close, thousands fled the country in desperation. Among them was Nguyen's family—his mother, siblings, and himself. His father was supposed to follow them - but he was never seen again and what happened to him still remains unknown decades later. In the lead up to the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end, Nguyen embarks on an emotional journey through memory, myth, and silence to reconstruct a life lost to history.

A beautiful, aching search for his father unfurls on the pages of *The Migrant Rain Falls In Reverse*: blurring the lines between recollection and imagination, Nguyen's lyrical narrative weaves together fractured family stories, inherited grief, and the quiet echoes of displacement. Through abandoned homes, forgotten refugee camps, and the guarded secrets of loved ones, Nguyen confronts the ache of uncertainty and the weight of what can never be fully known.



Vinh Nguyen

WRITER, EDITOR & PROFESSOR

Vinh Nguyen is a writer, editor, and professor who was born in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He is a nonfiction editor at *The New Quarterly*, where he curates an ongoing series on refugee, migrant, and diasporic writing. He is the co-editor of the academic books *Refugee States: Critical Refugee Studies in Canada* and *The Routledge Handbook of Refugee Narratives*, and the author of *Lived Refuge: Gratitude, Resentment, Resilience*. His writing has been short-listed for a National Magazine Award and has received the John Charles Polanyi Prize in Literature. In 2022, he was a Lambda Literary Fellow in Nonfiction for emerging LGBTQ writers. He lives in Toronto.

Learn more!

Vinh Nguyen on CBC's *The Sunday Magazine*:



**Vinh Nguyen on
Memories of Vietnam,
50 years after the war**

Sources: UNHCR, International Organization for Migration, Refugees International, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Red Cross, Senate of Canada, Government of Canada



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR



Civilians and troops board a Navy boat during the evacuation of the city of Hue in South Vietnam on March 26th, 1975. Photo by UPI/Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

The Vietnam War (1954–1975), was a prolonged conflict between North Vietnam—supported by communist allies—and South Vietnam, backed by anti-communist forces and the United States. The war's roots lie in Vietnam's struggle for independence from French colonial rule, culminating in the Geneva Accords of 1954 that divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel. North Vietnam, under Ho Chi Minh, sought to unify the country under communist rule, while South Vietnam, supported by U.S. military and economic aid, resisted.

From 1965 onward, the U.S. escalated its involvement, peaking with over half a million troops stationed in Vietnam. Despite massive military efforts, the U.S. could not achieve a decisive victory, and in 1973, American forces withdrew following the Paris Peace Accords. In April 1975, North Vietnamese forces captured Saigon, which was renamed Ho Chi Minh City, marking the end of the war and the reunification of Vietnam under communist rule.

The Vietnam War Fallout: Refugees, Relocation, and a Generation of 'Boat People'

The war caused widespread devastation, displacing millions of people within Vietnam and prompting waves of refugees to flee abroad. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 2.5 million Vietnamese fled their homeland between 1975 and the mid-1990s, often in dangerous conditions aboard overcrowded boats—a phenomenon that gave rise to the term “boat people.” According to Refugees International, up to one-third of boat people perished at sea.

International Co-operation on Resettlement

Countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines became temporary hosts for large numbers of Vietnamese asylum seekers. Under pressure from international organizations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR, many Western nations—including Canada, the United States, Australia, and France—established resettlement programs for Vietnamese refugees.

Canada's Resettlement Role

Following the fall of Saigon, the Canadian government launched the Indochinese Refugee Program in 1979, responding to public demand to accept more refugees. Through this initiative, Canada resettled over 110,000 Vietnamese refugees by the early 1980s, most arriving through organized sponsorship programs. This effort marked a turning point in Canada's humanitarian immigration policy and contributed to the growth of a vibrant Vietnamese diaspora in the country today.

Many Vietnamese communities around the world trace their origins to wartime migration, and subsequent generations continue to grapple with the intergenerational effects of trauma, loss, and adaptation.



American soldiers survey the situation from the relative safety of a watery rice paddy as they prepare to advance on a Viet Cong sniper position, Vietnam, mid 1960s. Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

Take action!

BY THE NUMBERS

Vietnamese refugees walk down the gangway of the American ship 'Pioneer Contender' in Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam, on March 29th, 1975. Photo by UPI/Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

A snapshot of North American & European Resettlement of Vietnamese Refugees

- **United States:** Operation New Life (April 1975) evacuated around 132,000 Vietnamese to Guam for processing en route to U.S. resettlement. In 1975 alone, the U.S. resettled approximately 120,000 Vietnamese.
- **Canada:** Reacting to the 1975 crisis, Canada reformed immigration under the 1976 Immigration Act, creating dedicated refugee categories and launching the pioneer Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) in 1978–79. By 1979–80, Canada admitted over 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees, with roughly 50% privately sponsored. Sponsorship campaigns and church groups made it a national effort—so much that Canadians received the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award in 1986.

Lessons and Legacy

The Vietnam War's refugee aftermath highlights root causes Amnesty International is tackling—war, environmental degradation, political persecution—for modern migration challenges. Today's global crises (e.g., Sudan, Palestine, Myanmar, Ukraine, Afghanistan) are a reflection and continuation of these patterns. Humanitarian bodies including Amnesty International as well as Human Rights Watch, IOM, and Refugees International all emphasize the need to address these root causes, protect refugees, and facilitate safe resettlement.

Urgent Action to Halt Mass Deportations

Write a Letter to the President of the United States of America to say STOP All Plans for a Deportation Campaign:

President Trump has announced plans to launch a mass deportation campaign targeting millions of immigrants and individuals seeking safety. These plans involve mass arrests, detention, and removals, affecting both long-standing community members and recently arrived individuals. This approach denies people the chance to seek safety, forces individuals into arbitrary detention, returns them to dangerous situations, separates families, dismantles communities, promotes racial profiling, spreads fear, and undermines security, prosperity, and human dignity. We call on President Trump to uphold the human rights of immigrants and those seeking safety by halting this mass deportation campaign.



[Write an Urgent Letter](#)

Canada: End the Safe Third Country Agreement

The Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) between Canada and the United States puts refugees at risk. Because of this agreement, Canada turns away most refugees who show up at the border seeking safety and sends them back to the United States. In the United States, people face arbitrary detention and are at risk of being deported to their country of origin, even if they would face persecution or torture.

Canada has a legal obligation to ensure that people are not deported to torture or other serious harms. It cannot count on the United States to carry out this obligation.

We know refugees will continue to be harmed while awaiting yet another court decision, which is why we are calling on the government to withdraw from the Safe Third Country Agreement NOW.



[Send an Urgent Message](#)



[Read More](#)





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Two American soldiers are waiting for the second wave of combat helicopters during the Vietnam War. Photo by Patrick Christain/Getty Images

1. Vinh Nguyen's book blends both memoir, memory, history and imagination and magical realism. What impact do all these styles have on the story he tells?
2. Nguyen notes his relative lack of comfort with the Vietnamese language, but occasionally uses Vietnamese writing in the book. What impact does the presence of his native tongue have on the book? If you understand Vietnamese speakers, what did it do for you? For non-Vietnamese speakers, what impact did it have?
3. Many of Nguyen's scenes centre around shared meals, living in close quarters, and being intimately close to the family members as he digs into his father's story. What do those scenes around food, drink, and family evoke? What function do they serve in the telling of Nguyen's story?
4. What was your reaction to the moment when Nguyen slips into magical realism and imagination, deviating from his memoir and real-life memory?
5. It's been 50 years since the Vietnam War. What impact does learning about its legacy through the intimate story Nguyen weaves have on your understanding of it? What more did you learn?
6. Nguyen wrestles with his identity as Canadian, "outsider", refugee, as well as his sexuality as a gay man. How do these identities change, evolve, or challenge him as he moves through Canada, Vietnam and the refugee camps of Thailand?
7. What did you think of the 'conversation' Nguyen has with his mother about his decision to tell this story, her obsession with the facts, and her weariness of him being so public about it? Did you identify with her? Did you feel protective of him? Who has the right to tell a family's story?
8. Nguyen writes: "The war is not over. The war continues to kill. We have yet to know how many lives it will claim whether by bomb or gunfire or drowning or grief." What do those lines evoke in you reading this as wars continue in Sudan, Ukraine, Palestine and Iran?
9. We often hear about "the refugee experience" in general, and rarely hear one singular refugee story with such nuance and intimacy. What impact has reading this book had on you? What windows did it open up for you in understanding the lived experience of refugees? If you are a refugee yourself, what felt familiar to you about Nguyen's story?

Stop Bill C-2, Canada's new border bill, an attack on the human right to seek asylum

Amnesty International Canada says Bill C-2, the federal government's sprawling new border bill, is an attack on refugees' right to seek asylum. If passed, **Bill C-2** would make it virtually impossible for most people entering Canada via the U.S. to have their refugee claim reviewed by the Immigration and Refugee Board.

The bill would also effectively block people who have been in Canada for more than a year from seeking refugee status. People who face persecution, torture or worse in their countries of origin could be unfairly denied refugee protection by Canada as a result.



E-mail your politicians to say NO to Bill C-2



"Intentionally or not, Bill C-2 paints people escaping persecution and violence with the same brush as serious public safety concerns such as the flow of illegal fentanyl or weapons. Stigmatizing refugees and linking them to public safety problems not of their making is cruel, irresponsible, and heightens their risk of facing violence, harassment and discrimination in their everyday lives."

France-Isabelle Langlois

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AMNISTIE
INTERNATIONALE CANADA FRANCOPHONE



Read Amnesty's June 2025 statement: 'USA: Trump's travel ban will harm people seeking safety, spread hate and discrimination'



Donate to support Amnesty's work on World Refugee Day 2025

