

**Diversity Project: Culture**

**Myself, Hmong People**

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As a 43 year old white male that was born and raised in the projects of East LA (Los Angeles, California), I'm very familiar with diversity. Even though I'm Agnostic, I hold strong Christian values that I tried to instill into my only child while she was growing up. As teenagers, grandparents immigrated to the United States - from the Arian nation of Nazi Germany - to have a life of choice. I generally lean to the right on political issues but, like my grandparents, believe it's a matter of choice and the right to have it. I've managed to step up the social ladder by clawing my way out of poverty stricken government housing to a nice home in rural northeast Indiana. When I was 11 yrs. old a local Television repair shop owner (Fred) hired me part-time and taught me the skills of his trade and many other life lessons. Fred was by far the most influential person in my young adult life. I've used, and benefited from, those lessons my entire adult life. Though I don't possess Fred's patience, I try to pass my knowledge on to future generations.

Hmong people are an ethnic minority group known for their strong work ethic, communal self-reliance and independent spirit (pbs.org). The Hmong roots can be traced back in Southeast Asia to 3000 B.C.. Hmong people are spread throughout the world today. The majority (about 2 million) of Hmong people reside in China. The United States has around 200,000 Hmong people living within it. They primarily emigrated here from Laos after the Vietnam War, but there are others here from Thailand, Vietnam and China - (hmoungculture.net).

Though the Hmong are very peaceful people, in late 1950's American soldiers entered Laos and trained them to fight against the communist. In 1960, General Vang Pao led the Hmong people into secret battles and worked closely with the United States from 1961-1973. Shockingly, in 1975 American troops are completely withdrawn from Laos leaving the Hmong people there. The massacrings of Hmong people began immediately. Before the war between

300,000 and 400,000 Hmong lived in Laos. Hmong families were forced to attempt a life-threatening escape from Laos across the Mekong into the Thailand Refugee camps. In the first wave, from 1976 to 1978 only 30,000 refugees were moved from the camps in Thailand to the United States. Not until four years later in 1982, with the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980 and the involvement of the Lutheran Church, did the second wave of migration to the United States occur ([hmongculture.net](http://hmongculture.net), [pbs.org](http://pbs.org)).

One of the most interesting and unique things about the Hmong is the embroidery. As described by Xai S. Lor, “It is said the Hmong women hid the ancient Hmong Paj Ntaub script in the clothing of the Hmong people, and especially in the pleated skirts of the Green Hmong. From this time forward, the scripts became motifs or symbols of Hmong embroidery. Knowledge of the scripts was not so relevant in the lives of the Hmong and was eventually lost. Today the motifs in Hmong embroidery are used as decorations in clothing, accessories, and crafts.” ([hmongembroidary.org](http://hmongembroidary.org)).

Though there are a few different dialects, Hmong people have their own language. For years Hmong people did not have a written form of their language. According to Xee Vang, “In the early 1950s, a group of French American missionary-linguists developed a method of writing Hmong words that used the same letters as the English, German, and French language. This was the Romanized Popular Alphabet, or RPA. Within ten years, it became very popular, and remains to this day the most widely used writing system for the Hmong” ([uwex.edu](http://uwex.edu)).

In conclusion, today in the US most of the Hmong people over the age of 30 speak Hmong as their primary language and English is their secondary. The under 30 Hmong crowd uses English as their primary and Hmong as secondary ([hmongculture.net](http://hmongculture.net)). After researching the

Hmong I have a different outlook on the removal of American troops, from Laos, after the Vietnam War. I believe it was very cruel of the United States Government to involve the Hmong in the war only to later abandon them. If you're asking someone to give their life for you, you should be willing to do the same for them.

**“References”**

<http://www.pbs.org/splithorn/story1.html>

<http://www.hmongculture.net/hmong-people>

<http://www.hmongembroidery.org/>

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/hmong/resources/documents/HmongLanguage.pdf>