No Longer 'Traitors' in a Country We Once Saved: How the National Lao-Hmong Memorial in Colorado Improves the Political Identity of the Lao-Hmongs in the United States

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Introduction

This paper analyzes how the upcoming National Lao-Hmong Memorial in Colorado can enhance the political identity of the Lao-Hmong Special Guerilla Units (SGUs) and their community in the United States. Primary research, conducted through interviews, provides valuable insights from the Lao-Hmong community, which has been working tirelessly despite the lack of detailed published information about the Memorial. This research is crucial for elevating the position of a marginalized community that has faced unfair treatment for more than 50 years in America.

The word Hmong means "free" (Chan, 1994). However, variations of the word in China and Laos contradict this definition through derogatory connotations that restrict their progression of societal status, such as Meo, meaning "savage", Kha, meaning "slaves", and interpretations of their agricultural lifestyle in Laos as being "culturally backward" and "barbari[c]" (Chan, 1994, p. 4; Monzel, 1987, p. 12). Similarly, such terminologies have evolved into racist and discriminatory descriptions of the Lao-Hmong after they migrated from Laos to the US under resettlement and refugee programs with the end of the American Secret War in Laos. Today, about 327,000 Hmongs from Laos live in the US, congregating in states like California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (Budiman, n.d.). Despite being loyal allies to the US, many Lao-Hmong veterans, known as the SGUs during the Vietnam War, are not treated equally and respectfully by the state. This is surprising in a country that highly regards war veterans (Igielnik, 2019). To summarize the exasperation of their predicament, a frustrated interviewee remarked:

"We are refugees, not immigrants. This means that we are forced out by circumstances, not by choice. One must know the difference…The US is responsible for our fate."

(Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024)

To legitimize their political identity as Lao-Hmong refugees in the American community, several SGU members and Lao-Hmong individuals have worked to raise awareness of their shared heritage and history with Americans, particularly regarding the Secret War in Laos. One such method is through the construction of memorials. In the US, six public memorials have been built to honor the SGUs' efforts in states with significant Lao-Hmong populations. These memorials include:

- The Lao, Hmong, and American Veterans Memorial in Sheboygan, Wisconsin
- The Memorial Statue at Freedom Park in La Crosse, Wisconsin
- The Minnesota Memorial for the United States and Alliance Special Forces in Laos in Minnesota
- The Lao Hmong American War Memorial in Fresno, California
- The Lao Veterans Memorial in Illinois
- The Hmong and Lao Memorial, also known as the Lao Veterans of America Monument, in Arlington, Virginia

These memorials are political because they serve as sites of power contestation and balance. Groups often use them to assert their interpretation of history as the truth, advocate for political improvements such as greater human rights and personal freedom, and commemorate servicemen who were previously ignored (Mayo, 1988). This research project examines the political identity of the Lao-Hmong through their status as refugees and their ability to integrate into US society, where they continue to face various forms of disempowerment.

The dominant discourse surrounding these existing memorials dedicated to the SGUs in the US has mostly been one of paying "tribute" from the Americans to the SGUs, state-centric to pacify the large number of Lao-Hmong members and SGUs living in these areas, and several are problematic due to historical misinformation presented on the SGUs (Lenz, 2007; Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024).

However, the upcoming National Lao-Hmong Memorial in Westminster, Colorado, seeks to challenge this top-down discourse by rallying ordinary Lao-Hmong citizens to

correct historical truths and increase collaboration between Americans and the Lao-Hmong community. This paper aims to answer the question: “How will the National Lao-Hmong Memorial improve the political identity of the Lao-Hmong community in the US compared to existing memorials?” Through an analysis of politics in heritage-building from the top, known as Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), and from grassroots perspectives, known as Heritage From Below (HFB), this paper argues that the National Lao-Hmong Memorial strategically uses HFB to counter AHD and rally the entire US nation to formally recognize the shared histories of the Lao-Hmong and Americans. Specifically, the Memorial does this in three main ways: building a more inclusive understanding of what it means to be "Lao-Hmong," preserving accurate historical truths through public education, and increasing collaboration between Americans and the Lao-Hmong community.

Historical Context

“One Hmong that died in Laos meant one American going home.”

(Minnesota Remembers Vietnam, n.d.)

Today, the Hmong resettled in the US migrated from Laos but were originally from the southwestern Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Hunan and are called the Miao. From 1644 to 1911, the Miao faced oppression by the Qing government, which ruled the last dynasty in China in that period. Consequently, some Hmong people moved southward to mainland Southeast Asia in the mountains of northern Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam (Chan, 1994). Laos became a French protectorate after France conquered Vietnam in 1858, where it inherited Vietnamese claims in Laos.

In 1954, after the communist North Vietnamese defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu, Laos was declared neutral in the 1954 Geneva Accord, leaving a power vacuum in Vietnam during the Cold War period. Fearing that the domino effect would materialize in Southeast Asia should communism spread from Russia and China, the US increased its involvement in the region’s affairs, such as backing South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem militarily and financially. To fight against the North Vietnamese Army that built the Ho Chi Minh Trail into Laos and the Pathet Lao communists in Laos when the Vietnam War spread to Laos, at the Royal Lao Government’s request, President Eisenhower approved the CIA’s Operation White Star to send US Special Forces to train the Lao army in 1959 (Andrade, 1996). This operation had to be done covertly to avoid violating Laos'

neutrality, since neutrality means that Laos will "not participat[e] in an armed conflict or does not want to become involved" (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2002, p. 3).

It evolved into a larger American Secret War from 1961 to 1975, "secret" because the US Congress and the public were unaware of the CIA's operation (Pfeifer et al., 2013). The CIA supported Hmong leader General Vang Pao and the Hmong in Laos to defeat the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese communists. The Hmongs saw their recruitment by the CIA as an opportunity to ward off communism that had threatened their autonomy, so many willingly accepted this position (PBS, n.d.). These CIA-trained Hmongs were called the SGUs, who were known for their warrior-like behavior, loyalty and bravery in fighting the communists (Hopp, 2020). More than 30,000 SGUs battled on the ground and in the air and often valiantly risked or sacrificed their lives in search-and-rescue efforts of American pilots in planes that the communists had shot down. It has been estimated that "Hmong soldiers died at a rate ten times as high as that of American soldiers in Vietnam" (PBS, n.d.; The Special Guerrilla Units Veterans and Families of USA, Inc., 2010).

Figure 1: Search-and-Rescue Missions in Laos

(The Special Guerrilla Units Veterans and Families of USA, Inc., 2010)

With the end of the Secret War in 1973 and the communist victory by the Pathet Lao in 1975, many SGU soldiers and those who helped the Americans were considered the "greatest enemies of the Pathet Lao" and were sent to "re-education" camps for harsh punishment (Baird & Hilmer, 2020, p. 9). To escape political persecution by the Pathet Lao, many Hmong and SGU soldiers fled to neighboring Thailand to await migration to

other countries that have resettlement programs like the US. In 1975, about 15,000 Hmong SGUs and their families resettled in the US, and many more arrived in subsequent years (SGU Veterans and Families of USA, Inc., n.d.).

Lived Experiences in the US

"The public didn't know anything about the Secret War…we were called 'jerks' and 'aliens' and were told to go back." (Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024)

Due to the classified nature of the Secret War, Hmong military assistance to the US was not common knowledge to the American public. The incorporation of the Lao-Hmong into American society was met with suspicion and disgruntlement. Many Americans did not understand why these foreigners had special resettlement accommodations in their country, such as being granted to stay in apartments when there was a rising rate of homelessness when the Lao-Hmong began arriving, especially during the 1980s (National Academies of Sciences, Medicine Division, Board on Population Health, Public Health Practice, Global Affairs, Technology for Sustainability Program, & Committee on an Evaluation of Permanent Supportive Housing Programs for Homeless Individuals, 2018; PBS Socal, 2017). To the public, the Lao-Hmong were "freeloaders" instead of "necessary accomplices to the nation's war efforts or veterans who had earned political asylum". The long-term stay of the Lao-Hmong in the US indicates that many have "surviv[ed] US racism" and "overc[ame the American public's] ignorance [and] misunderstanding" (Pfeifer et al., 2013, pp. viii-ix). Additionally, their secondary migration between states in the US instead of willingly accepting their assigned locations by US officials compounds the idea that this community is "deviant," "stubborn," and "difficult" (Monzel, 1987; Pfeifer et al., 2013, pp. viii-ix).

On the surface, it seems as though there has been much progress in integrating the Lao-Hmong into the US society. Some of them have received financial aid in housing from the US government, some have been waived the English language requirement under the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000, which allows them to become one step closer to receiving American citizenship and, hence, plentiful benefits such as voting rights, and some have qualified for veteran benefits under the Pact Act, "a law that expands healthcare and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances," such as those who served Vietnam and Laos (Library of Congress, n.d.; Monzel, 1987; U.S. Department of Veterans

Affairs, n.d.). In reality, such benefits have many requirements, obstructing Lao-Hmong SGUs from qualifying for them. For example, the Naturalization Act of 2000 only covers Hmong SGUs who arrived in the US from Laos from February 28, 1961, to September 18, 1978, so those who arrived beyond that are still considered 'aliens,' or outcasts in America (Library of Congress, n.d.). Nonetheless, the upcoming National Lao-Hmong Memorial seeks to enhance the political identity of the Lao-Hmong SGUs in the US today.

Significance of Colorado as a Site for the Memorial

"*We must thank Coloradan Congressman Dan Schaefer for his immense contributions to the Lao-Hmong community*." (Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024)

Colorado is home to about 5,000 Lao-Hmong individuals, making it the sixth-largest state where the Lao-Hmong community resides, particularly in the city of Westminster (Action Against Hate, n.d.; UW Applied Population Laboratory & University of Wisconsin Extension, 2015). This figure is unlikely to change significantly, as those who have resettled in Colorado, either officially or voluntarily, are generally content, with many expressing a desire to live here permanently to reunite with their families and clan leaders and earn a decent wage (Monzel, 1987). Consequently, the outflow of this population from Colorado is minimal. Additionally, a large influx of Lao-Hmong to Colorado is improbable, as the official resettlement of Lao-Hmong from Laos and Thailand to the US ceased with the closure of the last official refugee camp in Thailand in 1997 (Stanford Medicine, n.d.). Overall, the Lao-Hmong population in Colorado is relatively stable and is expected to remain so in the long term.

Golden, a city in Colorado, was the first to publicly acknowledge the Lao-Hmong SGUs by recognizing and honoring their efforts during the Secret War in 1995. Notably, the Golden City Council, led by Congressman Dan Schaefer, declared July 22 as Lao-Hmong Recognition Day (Luning, 2020). The empathy of Golden Congress members in working with the Lao-Hmong community, led by Yang Chee—a prominent Lao-Hmong activist and former Special Intelligence Officer for the CIA during the Secret War—highlights the progressive attitude of the people in Colorado in better integrating the Lao-Hmong community into American society. It is hoped that the acceptance of the Lao-Hmong in Colorado can serve as a model for integration efforts in other states. Therefore, Colorado should continue to lead

these activism efforts (Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024).

Furthermore, Yang Chee laid some important groundwork in Colorado before moving to Minnesota two years ago. During his time in Colorado, he was the one who successfully influenced the Golden City Council members to push for the first US public recognition of the Lao-Hmong SGU veterans. He flew to Washington DC to urge Congress to remove the labeling of Lao-Hmongs as "terrorists" in the aftermath of the September 11 Attacks, which was based on unfounded fears of immigrants and refugees admitted into the US (Hopp, 2020; Y. Chee, personal communication, May 3, 2024). Today, he continues to fight to establish the National Lao-Hmong Memorial in Colorado, hoping that the state's historical importance at Golden can achieve another significant milestone for the SGUs and the Lao-Hmong community (Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024).

Therefore, building a memorial in Colorado is appropriate as it would commemorate the significant achievement of the US in publicly acknowledging the Lao-Hmong SGUs in their sacrifice for and allyship with the US and serve as a continuous activism movement to maintain or even improve the political standing of the Lao-Hmong in America.

Memorials as Political Resistance & Legitimacy

"There is, really, no such thing as heritage." (Smith, 2006)

Memorials are often associated with heritage and cultural preservation for future generations. An overlooked aspect is its political function, which is "a process that provides the spaces necessary to those affected by human rights violations to articulate their narratives (United Nations, 2013). Crucially, it consists of the constant social construction of understandings, so our present understanding of 'heritage' is not stagnant, explaining the quote above (Smith, 2006). Laurajane Smith's Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) utilizes the past to attain present-day socioeconomic and political goals. As a top-down transmitter of expert knowledge, such as the state and academics, AHD persuades its audience to accept these insights as the truth (Muzaini & Minca, 2018). This is observed in the existing memorials in the US, where stories are narrated from the side of the US government that approves the narratives reflected and the use of the words that the memorial is "dedicated to" the SGUs, as seen in most existing memorials (Figures 2 to 5), implies

that the US government is doing an exclusive favor to the SGUs, which shifts the narrative of historical trauma inflicted by the US on the SGUs to one of quick appeasement method to quell any potential backlash against the US state for not doing enough, in light of existing discrimination in its society (Y. Chee and Y. Lor, personal communication, March 8, 2024). Additionally, except for the Sheboygan memorial, other memorials provide brief historical information about the SGUs, making them tokenistic. These implications highlight the power imbalance that the SGUs face in America today, making them marginalized citizens in a land whose ideology they once defended so dearly but have yet to be accorded the due respect and benefits.

Figure 2: Hmong and Lao Memorial in Arlington, Virginia

(Duke University, n.d.)

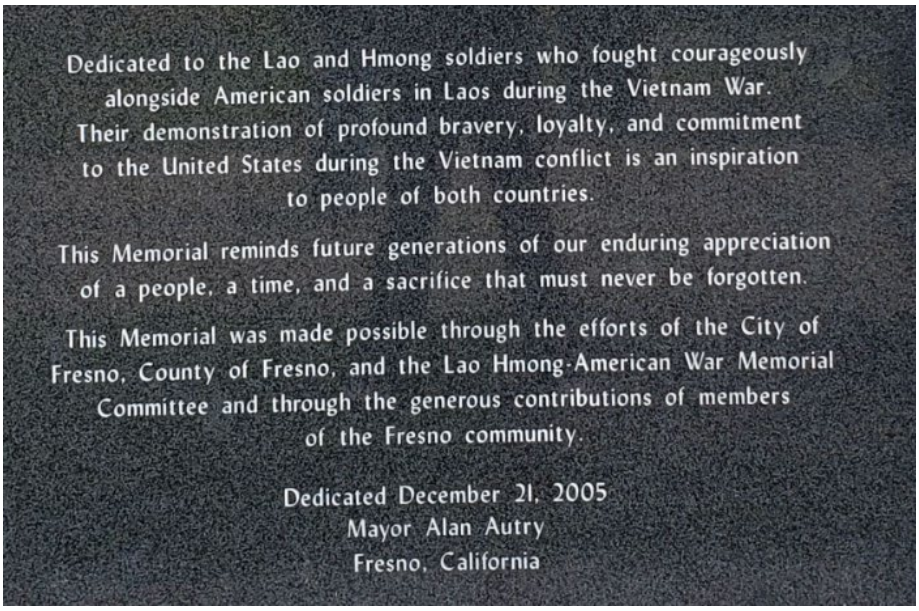

Figure 3: Lao Hmong American War Memorial in Fresno, California

(The Historical Marker Database, n.d.)

Figure 4: Lao Veterans Memorial, Illinois

(The American Legion, n.d.)

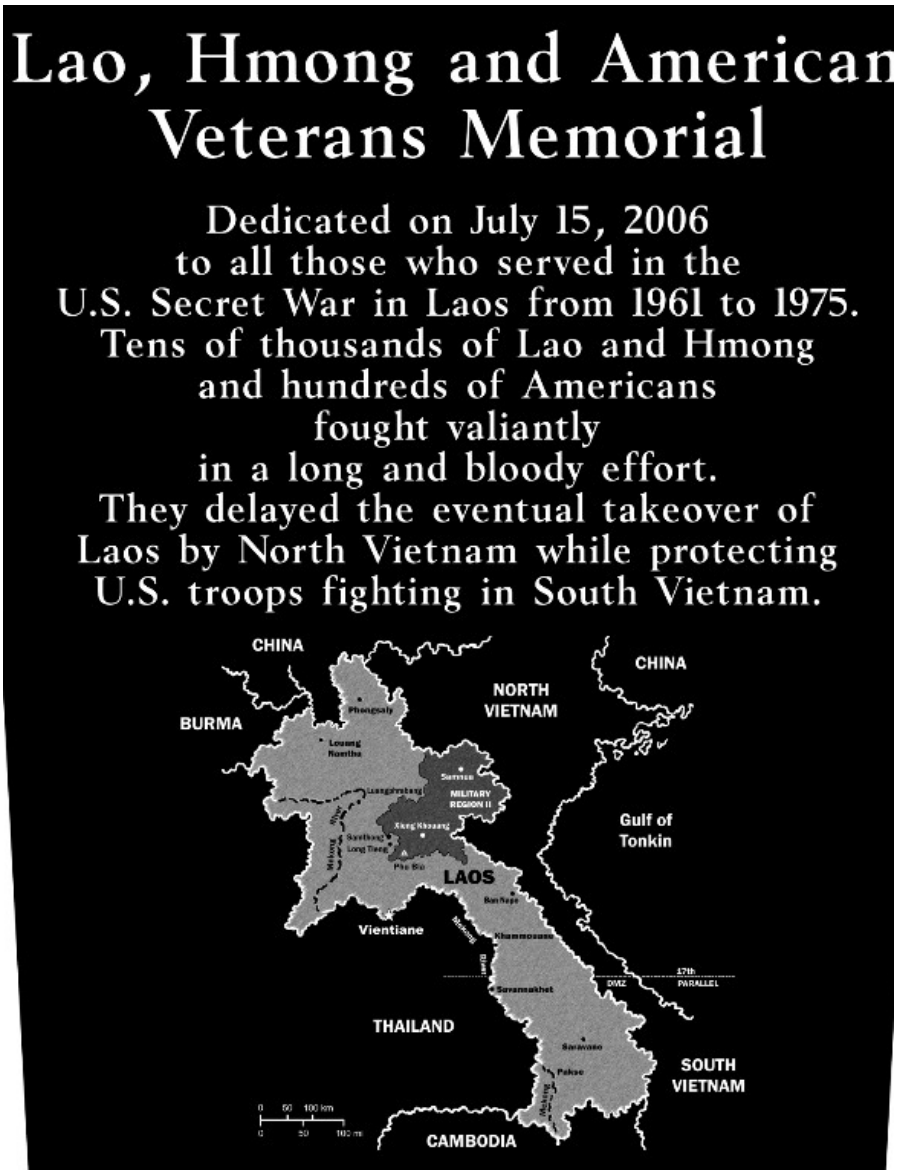

Figure 5: Lao, Hmong and American Veterans Memorial in Sheboygan, Wisconsin

(Lao, Hmong and American Veterans Memorial, n.d.)

Meanwhile, Iain Robertson's Heritage From Below (HFB) includes bottom-up narratives and initiatives done by ordinary men, such as locals and heritage site visitors (Robertson, 2012). As a check-and-balance against AHD, HFB is a counter-narrative to official ones to highlight AHD's biases (Muzaini & Minca, 2018). The National Lao-Hmong Memorial employs HFB and seeks to challenge the AHD in existing memorials that impose the meaning of who qualifies as an SGU and the political status of the Lao-Hmong as 'aliens.'

Fieldwork Methodology

Research Design

Semi-structured interviews, in the form of video calls over Zoom, were used for the project. This method was chosen due to various benefits. While it focuses on the topic, it allows the researcher to freely explore relevant ideas that may appear during the interview, which could further our understanding and fill in research gaps (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). As this paper seeks to extract in-depth knowledge from key individuals, interview questions were tailored to the interviewees to ensure greater relevance and engagement. While a fixed set of questions was prepared and sent to the interviewees before the interview, I had to ask follow-up questions according to the flow, which might not have come up in the list. Yet, this autonomy allowed me to learn about developing events whereby their information was not published on the public website yet, such as the reasons behind building the National Lao-Hmong Memorial, which is "not just another memorial" like the ones in Sheboygan and Arlington (Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024).

Positionality as a Multilingual Researcher

A researcher wields a position of privilege and power and is usually seen as an outsider, since s/he is higher up the social ladder educationally, socially and economically. My background as a foreigner from a foreign educational institute cements my positionality. Although my Singaporean background could connect with the Lao-Hmong community better since we come from the same Southeast Asian region, in which our shared geographies allow me to be "included" and reduce the possibility of me from being "othered", there is ultimately a limit to how much I could become a part of their community. My awareness of being "in place" is still structured within a wider acknowledgement of being "out of place" (Cresswell, 1992).

Nonetheless, "othering" can be overcome by having a genuine interest in their past, present and future projects. Often, the interviews began with introductory sessions followed by questions on why I wanted to conduct this research and how I learned about the individuals or organizations. While the introductory parts helped to break the ice, asking questions about the motivations behind their projects and how they are planning for the future helped establish rapport and allow critical qualitative data to be collected, many of which cannot be found in online and offline publications.

Another way to reduce being "othered" is to speak the same language as the Lao-Hmong. Given some influence from their

migration and ancestry from China, and that several have lived in highly ethnic Chinese-concentrated areas, some Lao-Hmong can speak Mandarin Chinese besides Hmong (Coughlan, 2010). A notable observation is that Yang Chee opened up more when he knew that I could speak Mandarin Chinese in addition to English. When he explained the history of the Hmongs to me, we conversed in a mix of English and Mandarin. This helped break down the cultural and linguistic barrier between him as an interviewee and me as an interviewer.

Research Sample

The individuals chosen for this study are adult activists, selected for their extensive knowledge and experience relevant to the National Lao-Hmong Memorial and their significant contributions to advocating for better equality and rights for the Lao-Hmong community. Although the sample size of four may be small and potentially biased, their status as community leaders with numerous connections and a deep understanding of the daily lives of the Lao-Hmong community lends them credibility in providing highly accurate information. From January to May 2024, these individuals were contacted via email and participated in arranged Zoom calls. Updates about the project were frequently communicated. All interviewees were forthcoming in their responses and largely believed that the Coloradan Memorial would represent another significant milestone for the Lao-Hmong community in enhancing their legitimacy as respectable refugees in the US. Refer to Table 1 for the list of respondents.

No.	Name	Gender	Role
1	Yang Chee	M	English Professor at the College of Vang Vieng, Laos; Special Intelligence Agent for Case Officer, Jerry (Hog) Daniels of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and the Lao-Hmong Special Guerrilla Units; Chairman of the American Tribute Committee; Founder of the Lao-Hmong American Coalition; Board Member and

			Historical Advisor for the National Lao-Hmong Memorial Foundation (National Lao-Hmong Memorial Foundation, 2024)
2	Yangmee Lor	F	First-generation Hmong American; Founder of the People's Advisory Board for New Educational & Economic Goodwill (PABNEEG) & Hmong Women Lead
3	Danae Hendrickson	F	First-generation Lao American; Chief of Mission Advancement and Communications at the Legacies of War
4	Anna Phommachanthone	F	First-generation Lao American; Manager of Operations and Community Outreach at the Legacies of War

Table 1: List of Research Participants

Empirical Data and Analysis

"This is my first time coming across the usage of the hyphen in 'Lao-Hmong'" (D. Hendrickson, personal communication, March 13, 2024)

A More Inclusive SGU Community (Lao-Hmong)

Compared to the existing memorials built in Wisconsin, Minnesota, California, Illinois and Virginia, the upcoming Coloradan memorial has a more inclusive scope of what constitutes a 'Lao-Hmong'. While dominant discourses in other memorials merely use the term 'Hmong' or 'Lao' to refer to the SGUs, there are other sub-groups within the 'Lao-Hmong' group that served the CIA. Besides the Hmong, they are the Lao, Lu-Mien, Khmu, Lue and Thai Dam people (National Lao-Hmong Memorial Foundation, n.d.-b; Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2014). In addition, the word 'National' in the Coloradan Memorial aims to be a country-wide memorial to bring together SGUs across all states within the US instead of being locally centered in individual states, as displayed through existing memorials (Y. Chee and Y. Lor, personal communication, March 8, 2024).

This all-encompassing recognition will be a step forward in improving public policies that determine whether the Lao-Hmong receive governmental benefits in the US. Currently, resolutions passed in the Senate to recognize the efforts of the SGUs—such as the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000 and the Hmong Burial and Memorial Benefits—often only refer to either the Lao or Hmong SGUs, so the Lu-Mien, Khmu, Lue and Thai Dam SGUs are often left out to gain the same kind of benefits as their Lao and Hmong counterparts (Library of Congress, n.d.; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022; Y. Chee, personal communication, May 3, 2024). The official usage of the term 'Lao-Hmong' in the Coloradan memorial would prompt policy-makers to expand their definition of who constitutes the SGUs. As a result, more positive changes can follow, such as speeding up the process of the granting of citizenship to the Lao-Hmong under the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000. Hence, the Lao-Hmong SGUs' political identity as refugees—who rightfully deserve a place in the US just like any citizen due to their historical allyship—would be legitimized to a greater extent when it consists of the other Lao-Hmong sub-groups.

Preserving Accurate Historical Truths

The National Lao-Hmong Memorial aims to reduce discrimination against the Lao-Hmong in American society by preserving

accurate historical truths. By doing so, it minimizes power imbalances stemming from misunderstandings and unawareness, thereby improving the Lao-Hmong's political identity in the US. For example, the Memorial Statue at Freedom Park in La Crosse, Wisconsin, is problematic because it refers to the Hmong and Lao SGUs as "Hmong-Lao" veterans (Aarsvold, 2019). "Hmong-Lao" refers to Laotians who are Hmong living in China, whereas "Lao-Hmong" are Hmong who have lived in Laos, so the reversal in terminology references the wrong group in the US (Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024). The National Memorial in Colorado aims to correct such inaccuracies and uphold the truth in historical narratives, thus validating the presence of the Lao-Hmong as rightful refugees in the US.

Furthermore, the Coloradan Memorial's restoration of the American T-28 Trojan Plane, used in the Secret War, as a centerpiece is a bold statement highlighting US involvement in the War. International aid to Southeast Asian countries—such as Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia—still recovering from the Secret War due to unexploded ordnances and the aftereffects of the chemical defoliant Agent Orange, has been slow. Fifty years have passed, yet citizens in these countries continue to suffer from the War's effects. The US government has been reluctant to admit its involvement in the War, evident in its denial of using Agent Orange as a "chemical weapon," instead calling it a "wartime herbicide" (Phan, 2022). Through the installation of an authentic artifact from the War, the US government can no longer deny its complicity in the Secret War. More importantly, it can reveal its role in the War more truthfully to the American public, many of whom are still unaware of this event (Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024).

Therefore, the National Lao-Hmong Memorial improves the political identity of the Lao-Hmong in the US by maintaining historical truths, reducing racial discrimination, and fostering social harmony. By encouraging both the Lao-Hmong and Americans to coexist and work towards social, political, and historical reconciliation, the Memorial promotes a more inclusive and accurate understanding of shared histories.

Increased Collaboration

Another way the Coloradan Memorial can improve the political identity of the Lao-Hmong community in the US is to treat them as equals through increased collaboration in building memorials. The building of the existing memorials took a lot of effort from the Lao-Hmong community living in the US to

convince the American political leaders. As such, these memorials are tokenistic since they serve the purpose of pacifying the disgruntled Lao-Hmong people who desire more recognition for their efforts during the Secret War (Y. Chee and Y. Lor, personal communication, March 8, 2024). However, the National Lao-Hmong Memorial would be the first of its kind in rallying *concerned* US citizens and the Lao-Hmong to enhance the political status of the Lao-Hmong from being mere US refugees to respectable allies (Y. Chee, personal communication, March 8, 2024). Specifically, the planning and building of the memorial are spearheaded by *informed* American citizens, such as the Memorial's Board Chair John Horan and designer and sculptor Vietnam War veteran Ed Dwight (National Lao-Hmong Memorial Foundation, n.d.-a; National Lao-Hmong Memorial Foundation, n.d.-b). These American citizens will then be able to persuade their own people that the Lao-Hmong community has played a crucial role as historical allis and should be welcomed as refugees in the country. Through increased collaboration by US citizens who genuinely care about the political status of the Lao-Hmong in the US and the Lao-Hmong community, the Memorial will be able to convince and educate the wider American audience and further reduce ignorance, discrimination and the looking down upon the Lao-Hmong as 'aliens.'

Conclusion

The upcoming National Lao-Hmong Memorial in Colorado will enhance the political identity of the Lao-Hmong community in three main ways. Firstly, by expanding its scope to include other sub-groups within the Lao-Hmong community, the Memorial will influence public policies to better account for those who are not solely Lao or Hmong. Secondly, the Memorial's preservation of historical truths through its naming and the careful selection of a restored artifact will encourage US leaders to work towards social and political harmony by educating the broader American public. Thirdly, the increased collaboration between concerned US citizens and the Lao-Hmong community in building the memorial will inspire greater respect for the Lao-Hmong and encourage their acceptance as part of the American people.

Future research can evaluate the effectiveness of the National Lao-Hmong Memorial after its completion and opening to the public. This can include factors such as the number of visitors to the Memorial, the responsiveness and receptiveness of the American public in accepting the Lao-Hmong

as historical allies, and tangible changes that improve the lives of the Lao-Hmong, such as positive changes in public policies.

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