

Boat people still seek democratic homeland

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

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NICKI CORRIGALL, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

David Ta says that 25 years after many Vietnamese-Canadians settled here, they still yearn to return to their homeland — if it were ruled by a democratic government.

joke, Vietnam is now the girl nobody wants. But more important, after 27 years of Communist reign, many of the images and values of Vietnam the refugees knew and treasured no longer exist.

The first generation of Vietnamese refugees, traumatized by lost dreams and dashed hopes of going back while busy integrating to the new modern industrial life, turns to its self-made communities to

nurture its young, hoping to pass on its dream torch, believing its members will define and shape the future of Vietnam wherever they are, whenever they can.

David Ta, Ottawa

Re: From 'boat people' to solid citizens, Feb 24.

Sarah Jennings's column on Vietnamese boat people in Ottawa struck a chord, especially since I landed in Canada, and Ottawa, on Feb. 24, 1979 as a boat person, and so was celebrating my 24th anniversary here.

Similar to the Jews living in different parts of the world outside Israel, the Vietnamese diaspora has a characteristic longing for their lost homeland, the "*que huong* that is always carried in their heart," as Ms. Jennings writes.

That would explain why they have created their own communities across North America, Europe and Australia, preserving their identity and heritage that emulate the images of Vietnam, or especially the life they once knew.

But unlike Jews, who seem to be able to create a home away from home, the Vietnamese created their own more unusual diaspora. It's been more than 27 years that we have been waiting for the Communist government in Vietnam to fall, and it has not happened.

Those who returned to our homeland to visit have had their dream shattered, not because Vietnam is still poverty-stricken under the Communist ruler (it is, but we are ready to cope with that), but because there are no basic human rights or freedom there. It is the worst example of corrupted government that exists in the 21st century.

As some foreign investors