

# THE HOUSTONIAN

WITH THE GLOBAL CENTER FOR JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY

## My Upstream Journey

KHOI NGUYEN  
GCJD

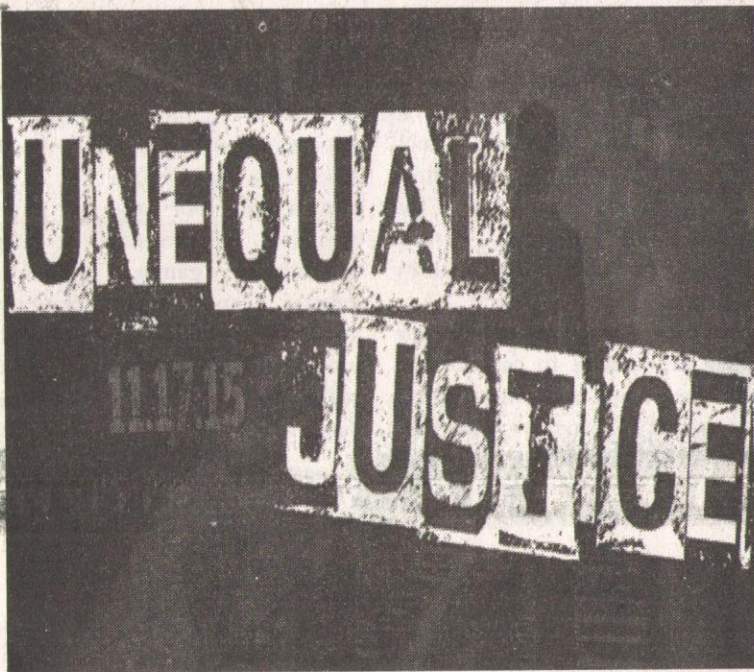
I am living The American Dream. Don't get me wrong, I am still a broke college student. I am not the Wolf of Wall Street. I still struggle to pay my tuition like everyone else. But here's why I am living the dream; 11 years ago, I was living in a third world country, with no future in sight. I was living in a country that would make most homeless people in America feel like they are living in luxury in comparison. It's been quite a change. I am living independently, going to college, and paying for everything on my own. I am on a career path that I love, and I create my own opportunities when it comes to living the kind of life that I want.

Growing up as an immigrant has shaped who I am today in more ways than I can imagine. I spent the first few years living in fear, just like most other immigrants. Not being able to communicate, or understand anything; the people, technology, law, society, racism, bullying, etc. As I got through the fear by learning the language, studying society, and overcoming my fears, I found a voice. And that is the reason why I chose to be a filmmaker, so that I can be the voice for those who don't get the chance to have one. I do it for others who went through the same hardship as I did, and still continue to struggle, thinking that they are alone.

My immigration journey began when I was adopted at 11 from Vietnam, to come to the

U.S. The whole process took about 2 years, and just like that, I was on a giant metal bird traveling halfway around the globe. Since I went through an adoption process, I was granted US citizenship the moment I set foot on U.S soil. This being the case makes my situation quite unique. I don't have a green card, or a birth certificate, however I do have a US Passport.

As it turns out, my passport is my ONLY proof of citizenship aside from my Social Security card and that has caused major problems for me. Each and every time I enroll in a new school, or with a government agency, I am automatically flagged as "not a US citizen". With each new chapter in my life, I am reminded of where it all started.



Global Center for Journalism and Democracy web page

The Global Center for Journalism and Democracy is partnering with the Common Reader Program to bring author Sonia Nazario and another special guest to campus to speak about immigration.