



The Dust of Life: America's Children Abandoned in Vietnam

Robert S. McKelvey

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The Dust of Life is a collection of vivid and devastating oral histories of Vietnamese Amerasians. Abandoned during the war by their American fathers, discriminated against by the victorious Communists, and ignored for many years by the American government, they endured life in impoverished Vietnam. Their stories are sad, sometimes tragic, but they are also testimonials to the strength of human resiliency. Robert S. McKelvey is a former marine who served in Vietnam in the late 1960s. Now a child psychiatrist, he returned to Vietnam in 1990 to begin the long series of interviews that resulted in this book. While allowing his subjects to speak for themselves, McKelvey has organized their narratives around themes common to their lives: early maternal loss, the experience of prejudice and discrimination, coping with adversity, dealing with shattered hopes for the future, and, for some, adapting to the alien environment of the United States. While unique in many respects, the Vietnamese Amerasian story also illustrates themes that are tragically universal: neglect of the human by-products of war, the destructiveness of prejudice and racism, the pain of abandonment, and the horrors of life amidst extreme poverty, hostility, and neglect.

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