

*Hmong in Wisconsin*, by Mai Zong Vue. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2020. 101 pp. Illustrations, chart, index. \$12.95 paperback.

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Since 1975, over 1.2 million people from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos have come to the United States, making them the largest refugee group in U.S. history. Among these are 102,000 Hmong who fled Laos after the Vietnam War to escape starvation, torture, and persecution due to their role in American Cold War efforts in Southeast Asia from the early 1960s to 1975. By 2015, the United States was home to 299,000 Hmong, 56,000 of whom were Wisconsinites. In *Hmong in Wisconsin*, Mai Zong Vue reveals, through scholarly research and personal experience, how despite the American government's reluctance to accept Hmong refugees because they were considered too "primitive" to come to America, Hmong became active contributors to the culture, economy, and politics of Wisconsin. Hmong *pajntaub* (story cloth), colorful dresses, eggrolls, sausage, and other Hmong cuisine with its "many fragrant and flavorful herbs such as lemongrass, cilantro, mint and ginger" have attracted widespread attention for their artistic beauty, tastes, and health benefits (30). "In 2000," Vue writes, "the buying power of Hmong Wisconsinites was \$234 million. . . . In the same year, Hmong paid \$3.3 million in real estate taxes and \$1.3 million in rental payments, and Hmong homeownership hit 48.2 percent, up from 9.9 percent in 1990" (61). Since the election of Thai Vue to the La Crosse public school board in 1993, a dozen more Hmong have also won seats in city councils, school boards, and county boards across the state.

Sadly, however, Hmong have also continued to struggle for acceptance in the Midwest. They were told to "go back" to their country and accused of stealing and eating their neighbors' dogs in the 1990s. Later, Hmong were pathologized as primitive, unassimilated, and dangerous invaders after a deer-hunting incident involving Chai Soua Vang and eight white hunters in Wisconsin in late November 2005. Anti-Hmong racism sometimes led to violent tragedies, such as the killing of Cha Vang in Green Bay in 2007 and that of Mai and Phia Vue in Milwaukee in 2016. While it lacks a table of contents, deeper analyses of critical issues, such as Hmong's changing religious practices, and crucial updates, including the historic election of Judge Kristy Yang to the Milwaukee circuit court in 2017, *Hmong in Wisconsin* gives an excellent overview of the legacies of America's secret war in Laos and the immense resilience of Hmong refugees who have made Wisconsin their home over the past 45 years.