



Dear VMDT,

Once again, I received several emails containing things to share, so I decided to combine them into one online "newsletter".

Enjoy!

Nancy

Included:

- "Stealing Buddha's Dinner" book review
- Vietnamese Language Classes for Adults, St. Paul Community Education
- VSA Tet 2007 Invitation (PDF attached)
- New Moon's Jan 24, 2007 Newsletter: Ugly Betty's Beautiful Message

Book review from today's Minneapolis StarTribune (<http://www.startribune.com/384/story/960376.html>)

One girl's terrible hunger to belong

MEMOIR A Vietnamese girl's desire to become a "real" American is manifested in her obsession with junk food.

By Emily Carter Roiphe, Special to the Star Tribune

Twentieth-century American literature is mightily indebted to immigration. The immigrant's tale is a perpetually renewing source, at once enduring and changing -- creating new voices, new details and new experiences while forming its own tradition. Where would we be without Saul Bellow's cocky but anxious "Augie March," or Philip Roth's neurosis-packed "Portnoy's Complaint"? Russians, Italians, Hispanics and Somalis all have contributed their first-generation protagonists -- mixtures of energy and anxiety, shame and pride, longing and resistance.

Bich Minh Nguyen, a Vietnamese woman who came of age in super-white, super-conservative Grand Rapids, Mich., in the 1980s, takes her place among them with her memoir, "Stealing Buddha's Dinner." At the same time, she brings a new and totally individual fixation into the mix: for Roth, America is a blonde; for Nguyen, it's a Hostess cupcake.

Nguyen, whose extended family of seven arrived in Michigan with \$5, longs for assimilation with a kind of battering fierceness. It's not just a matter of feeling inferior -- she doesn't feel "real."

Her grandmother's homemade dishes -- the descriptions of which will make you salivate -- are merely obligatory pleasures. She hungers instead for the junk: the perfect white squiggle atop the shiny dark cap of the cupcake, the cloned perfection and strangely addictive medicinal aftertaste of Pringles, and always, McDonald's, the apex of perfection.

"I knew what real people ate," writes Nguyen. "Real people ate hamburgers and casseroles and brownies. And I wanted to be a real person, or at least make people believe that I was one." For her, the pies at McDonald's are "deep-fried, gorgeously oblong and brown and burning hot as they slid out of their thin cardboard sleeves." Like any child, Nguyen spends a lot of time longing and scheming for sweets, but the intensity of her obsession is operatic in scale.

The foil to all her desires is her Mexican-American stepmother, Rosa. Through Nguyen's eyes, Rosa is there to interfere and embarrass her with her unabashed differences from the other moms. Rosa works and goes to

school, she is opinionated and weak only when it comes to her hard-drinking, smooth-dancing husband. Nguyen uses her child's perspective to let the reader see how remarkable Rosa really is. As she grows, she begins to see her stepmother in a different light, but the realization comes American-style. The name of the family's favorite restaurant becomes an instruction: Ponder Rosa.

The humorous anecdotes are interwoven with more serious themes of war, displacement and the mystery of Nguyen's missing birth mother.

Nguyen brings back moments and sensations with such vivid clarity that readers will find themselves similarly jolted back in time. She's a sensuous writer -- colors and textures weave together in her work to create a living fabric. This book should be bought and read anytime your soul hungers for bright language and close observation. My only complaint is that Nguyen stops too soon -- we want to follow her more fully into adolescence and young adulthood. She is, however, at work on a novel, for which I'm waiting the way a hungry 6-year-old waits for dessert.

Emily Carter Roiphe is the author of "Glory Goes and Gets Some."

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From Caroline Ticarro-Parker

A beginner's VN Language class (for adults). The website is:
<http://commed.spps.org/2007winter/Languages.pdf>

(Note from Nancy – I couldn't access this document so tried accessing the St Paul Community Ed's catalog <http://commed.spps.org/catalog.html> and although I could view the list of course categories, when I clicked on Languages I was again denied – hope you have better luck!)

Caroline Ticarro-Parker has forwarded the following from the Minnesota VSA:

Hello!

The Vietnamese Student Association of Minnesota (VSAM) cordially invites you to its 30th Tet, Xuan va Tuo Tre - Joys of Spring. This year Tet will be held at Ted Mann Concert Hall at the University of Minnesota on Saturday, February 10th from 6:30-9:30pm (doors will open at 6:00pm come early to get a seat). VSAM members will be providing entertainment throughout the evening! So please join us!

Sincerely,

VSAM

(VSAM TET.PDF attached)

From Kim Johnson (Kim noted that fellow VMDT'er, Caroline Ticarro-Parker, is quoted in the first article):

In This Issue:

- Ugly Betty's Beautiful Message
- Create Your Own Ad Contest
- Letter to Congress Update
- Katie Couric asks, "Where are the Women?"
- Senator Clinton Announces Presidential Campaign
- Submissions Needed for "The Great Debate"
- Chat with Author Naomi Shihab Nye!
- About This Newsletter

Featured Links:

- [New Moon®](#)
- [Daughters® Newsletter](#)

Ugly Betty's Beautiful Message

"For a growing number of adolescent and teenage girls, there's something about Betty," Susan Abram of the LA Daily News reported on Monday. "They see themselves in Betty Suarez, the title character of the Golden Globes winning ABC show, 'Ugly Betty,' a comedy about a young woman determined to succeed in the world of fashion despite being anything but fashionable herself.

"I think we need more actresses who are kind of chubby because that's really how most people look," 15-year-old Elizabeth Mercado told Susan.

"I would like to see a lady play something different, like a president, to show that women can be tough," added Jessica Maldonado, 14.

Our friend Caroline Ticarro-Parker, executive director of Mind on the Medi! a, told Susan that she's excited about the buzz the show is generating among girls. "'Ugly Betty' is basically starting up the conversation of beauty within," Caroline said. "The message can be that women are active, powerful consumers who need to make a difference." If YOU want to make a difference, register for the 2007 Turn Beauty Inside Out Girls' Leadership Retreat at www.tbio.org!

What do you think about "Ugly Betty"? Send your thoughts to blog@newmoon.org.

[Read the full LA Daily News article.](#)

Create Your Own Ad Contest

Speaking of TBIO ... why don't ads show the beauty of being a real person who cares about more than plastic perfection? Our friends at Mind on the Media think advertisers can do better, and they want you to help show them how! As part of

- [New Moon® Blog](#)
- [Letter to Congress](#)

the Turn Beauty Inside Out campaign, Mind on the Media invites all students ages 11-16 to create your own original ad that celebrates Inner Beauty. What's that? Inner Beauty is the beauty of action, the beauty of being true to yourself, the beauty of making the world a better place, the beauty of being a good friend, and the beauty of standing up for our beliefs.

First prize is FREE registration to attend the 2007 Turn Beauty Inside Out Girls' Leadership Retreat June 27-30, 2007, in Manhattan, NY--a value of \$380! All entries must be postmarked by April 1, 2007, and sent to tbio@mindonthemedia.org or to Mind on the Media Ad Contest, 710 St. Olaf Avenue Ste. 200, Northfield, MN 55057, USA. Include your full name, age, full mailing address, phone number with area code, and email address.

Ads must fit in one of these four categories:

* TV: A 15, 30 or 60-second public service announcement. Must be submitted on 1/2 inch VHS tape.

* Radio: A 5, 15, or 30-second public service message. Must be submitted on audio cassette tape.

* Print: An 8-1/2 X 11 black and white or color message.

Original must be submitted. Keep a good copy for yourself.

* Web: A banner ad must be a gif file that is 465 x 84 pixels. Or, create a full web page. Submit banner ads by emailing the gif. Submit a web page by emailing the url.

Questions? Email tbio@mindonthemedia.org or call 952-210-1625.

[Get more info about TBIO!](#)

Letter to Congress Update

As you know, New Moon's Girls Editorial Board is asking girls everywhere to write their OWN letters to Congress and send them to New Moon! We've already received postcards from dozens of girls. Eliza from Virginia sent us TWO letters—one to a Virginia Senator and one to her Representative in Congress. And Eva from Washington sent us THREE letters, addressing her Representative and both of her Senators. Great work, girls!

New Moon is collecting girls' letters to Congress through March 1, 2007. If you haven't written YOUR letter yet, please do so! today! If you're not sure where to start, visit our "Letter to Congress" website for some helpful tips.

[Use your voice!](#)

Katie Couric asks, "Where are the Women?"

In New Moon's current issue, "Letter to Congress," girls say they want to see more women in politics, in Hollywood, and in safety testing. Katie Couric recently spoke up about another place where SHE wants to see more women--in national news media.

"Last Wednesday, President Bush gave his address to the country about 'the new way forward' for Iraq, and lots of journalists--including me, of course--were in Washington to cover it," Katie wrote. "And yet, the meeting was a little disconcerting. As I was looking at my colleagues around the room I couldn't help but notice, despite how far we've come, that I was still the only woman there."

[Read Katie's full commentary.](#)

Senator Clinton Announces Presidential Campaign

Senator Hillary Clinton announced last weekend that she's running for President of the United States in 2008. That's good news in the eyes of more than 1,000 girls who took New Moon's online survey about politics in 2006. Of the girls surveyed, 98% said they'd consider voting for a woman for president. Even more encouraging, 58% of the girls said they'd consider running for a political office someday!

We hope Senator Clinton's high-profile campaign for the presidency catches the attention of girls everywhere and inspires them to dream big! To see more results from our survey, go to www.newmoon.org/congress and click on "Inside the Moon."

[Read more about Senator Clinton's campaign.](#)

Submissions Needed for "The Great Debate"

Hey, girls! By Thursday, February 15th, we need your submissions for New Moon's September/October 2007 issue, "The Great Debate." We can't wait to hear what kind of debates YOU want to read about in New Moon!

Please send your article ideas, stories, letters, poems, and artwork to girl@newmoon.org or mail them to New Moon, 2 W. First St. #101, Duluth, MN 55802, USA. Don't forget about "Go, Girl!," "Herstory," "Women's Work," and "Check it Out!"

[Click here for submission guidelines.](#)

Chat with Author Naomi Shihab Nye!

Has your family ever moved? Ever moved to a country where you don't speak the language? Liyana does just that in Naomi Shihab Nye's book, "Habibi." The day after Liyana gets her first real kiss, her father announces that the family is moving from St. Louis all the way to Palestine. There, Liyana feels nothing but homesickness until she meets Omer. But Omer is Jewish, and their friendship is forbidden. Can they make their families understand? Read "Habibi" to find out.

Sign up for the New Moon Book Club today and chat with Naomi Shihab Nye on Monday, January 29th! Book Club members can log in to the chat room at 7 p.m. Central (that's 8 p.m. Eastern and 5 p.m. Pacific) on the 29th. Join us to discuss "Habibi" and anything else you'd like to ask this fabulous author.

[Get in the club!](#)

About This Newsletter

New Moon's Friends News is a free email newsletter published by New Moon® Publishing. It contains news and information of interest to adults who care about girls.

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From Catherine Conover, Communications Coordinator, and the rest of the New Moonies

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