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OPINION

Why hasn't Boston built a Vietnamese memorial yet?

There isn't a permanent public marker that honors the Vietnamese diaspora and the refugee journeys that brought so many families here.

By **Ngọc-Trân Vũ** | Updated April 20, 2026, 3:00 a.m.



A rendering of "1975: A Vietnamese Diaspora Memorial." NGOC-TRAN VU AND RABER UMPHENOUR

Ngọc-Trân Vũ is a Vietnamese [artist](#), cultural organizer, and strategist based in Dorchester who leads the "1975: A Vietnamese Diaspora Memorial" public art initiative.

I came to Boston as the daughter of a Vietnamese refugee family, including a South Vietnamese veteran, who arrived in 1992 through the US Humanitarian Operation Program. My family first resettled in Dorchester's Neponset-Port

Norfolk neighborhood with support from the International Rescue Committee. Over time, the seven of us also lived in Columbia Point and South Boston’s Old Colony Housing Project before eventually finding our way to Fields Corner, the heart of the Vietnamese community in Boston and New England.

Like many in our community, I grew up in the aftermath of war. I inherited stories of rupture, migration, survival, grief, and rebuilding that were not always spoken but were transmitted through gesture, silence, sacrifice, ritual, and love. Those histories shaped how I understand family, community, and what it means to build a life after displacement. They also shape how I understand public memory.

Boston often speaks of being a “[city of belonging](#).” I believe that aspiration matters. But belonging must be felt in the places we shape, the histories we honor, and the stories we choose to make visible on public land.

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For all that Vietnamese families have contributed to the city, there is still no permanent public marker in the heart of Boston’s [Little Saigon Cultural District](#) that honors the Vietnamese diaspora and the refugee journeys that brought so many families here.

That is why the proposed “[1975: A Vietnamese Diaspora Memorial](#)” at Town Field Park in Dorchester matters so deeply right now.

This is not just a public art project. It is an offering. It is a call to remember, to repair, and to root a history in the public landscape of the city we now call home. It is also a chance for Boston to recognize the Vietnamese diaspora not as a footnote but as part of the living fabric of this city, a community whose labor, memory, resilience, and presence have shaped Dorchester across generations.

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The absence of such a marker matters.

The year 1975 marked a profound rupture for Vietnamese people around the world. It marked loss, forced displacement, separation, and the beginning of rebuilding under painful conditions. More than 50 years later, that history still lives in our bodies, our homes, our small businesses, our places of worship, our memories, and our intergenerational relationships. In Fields Corner and throughout Dorchester, Vietnamese families have built lives with

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resilience and care. We have created culture and community even when public recognition has lagged behind.

A memorial at Town Field Park would help change that.

Public memory is never neutral. What a city chooses to mark permanently on public land reveals whose lives are seen, whose histories are valued, and who is recognized as belonging. For immigrant and refugee communities, especially in this political moment, visibility is not symbolic alone. It is deeply civic. It tells our elders that their journeys matter. It tells younger generations that their histories deserve space. And it tells the broader public that Dorchester's story is incomplete without the Vietnamese community.

Town Field Park is the heart of a neighborhood where our families have built businesses, raised children, organized community life, and sustained cultural traditions over decades. Our story is rooted here. The "1975: A Vietnamese Diaspora Memorial" would be a public site for remembrance, reflection, learning, gathering, and intergenerational connection in the very district where our histories continue to unfold.

This matters not only for Vietnamese families but also for our neighbors in Dorchester and across the city.

A permanent cultural marker would help recognize Boston's Little Saigon as an arts and cultural destination in a part of Dorchester that is too often overlooked. It would invite residents, students, and visitors to spend time in the district, learn its history, and support local businesses. It would strengthen neighborhood identity, deepen civic pride, and contribute to the kind of place-based cultural vitality that helps communities thrive. This is what happens when public art is community-driven and grounded in real histories. It becomes more than art. It becomes civic infrastructure for belonging.

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Over the past three years, community members, coalition partners, artists, small-business supporters, and cultural organizations have helped shape this vision. What is needed now is for the city of Boston to make room for it on public land, yet so far the city has been largely unresponsive.

If Boston truly wants to be a city of belonging, this is the moment to take action.

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