

Teaching history from **DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES:** Seventh Grade Lesson on Ted Ngoy: The Donut King

GA Social Studies Standards

SS7H3 Analyze continuity and change in Southern and Eastern Asia.

e. Explain the reasons for foreign involvement in Korea and Vietnam in terms of containment of communism.

Bun Tek Ngoy, later known as Ted Ngoy, was born in Cambodia in 1941. He was raised by a single mother who sent him to study in Phnom Penh, where he met his wife Suganthini and later joined the military.

The Cambodian Civil War took place between 1970 and 1975 between the Kingdom of Cambodia (led by Lon Nol) and the Communist Party of Kampuchea, also known as the Khmer Rouge. The U.S. allied with the Lon Nol government and participated in air bombing campaigns while North Vietnam, allied with the Khmer Rouge, sent troops to fight on the ground. About 1 million Cambodians fled the country as refugees, with 100,000 settling in the United States.

In May 1975, Ngoy and his family took the last flight out of Phnom Penh and arrived in California. The Ngoy's, like many other refugees, were sponsored by a church, which helped them find a home and paid Ted to work as a landscaper and custodian. Eager to earn more money for his family, Ted found additional work at a gas station. The gas

station was located next to a donut shop, and one night a co-worker offered Ted a donut. It was love at first bite, and reminded him of noum kong, a Cambodian rice flour pastry.

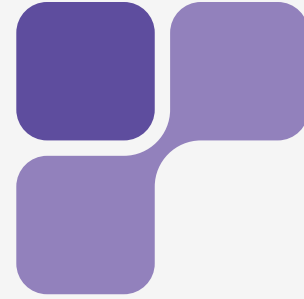
Eventually, Ted applied for a position at the shop and became Winchell's Donuts' first-ever Southeast Asian trainee. He learned all the aspects of running a donut shop, from making donuts to accounting. He managed his own store and hired his wife and children to run it, which allowed him to earn enough money to purchase his own store. By 1980, he owned 20 shops, called Christy's Donuts, and would own many more in the years to come. The white boxes that were commonly used for packaging were rather expensive, and Ted found that purchasing pink boxes was much cheaper, so pink boxes became a trademark of his shops.



As more Cambodian refugees arrived, Ted hired and trained them to work in his donut shops and co-signed loans for supplies and equipment. By the mid-1990s, there were 2,400 Cambodian-owned donut shops. As Cambodians moved across the country, many continued to open donut shops. Today, 80% of Southern California's donut shops are Cambodian-owned.

Ted's personal life consisted of many ups and downs. In 1985, he and his wife became U.S. citizens, and he formally changed his name to Ted. He was also active in the Republican Party and hosted fundraisers for George H. W. Bush. However, Ted developed a gambling addiction, and the Cambodian community that had long relied on him for economic support began avoiding him, worried that he would ask them for loans for his gambling debts. Ted moved back to Cambodia in 1993, hoping to establish a political career that might force him to quit gambling. He created the Free Development Republican Party and became a governmental advisor on commerce and agriculture. By 2002, his time in politics was over and so was his marriage. The man who was once a millionaire was nearly penniless.

To learn more about Ted's story through his own words and those of his family and friends, check out the documentary [The Donut King](#) and Ted's [autobiography](#) of the same name.



Complete Article and Lesson Plan



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1. Ted Ngoy via BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-54546427>
2. Ted Ngoy via BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-54546427>
3. The Donut King, Greenwich Entertainment
4. The Donut King, Greenwich Entertainment

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