

**IPTV Interview of Experiences of Tai Dam Coming to Iowa  
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INTRO: In 1975, a distinct ethnic group called the Tai Dam wanted to settle as a group in the United States. Natives of Vietnam, they had been in Laos for 20 years in 1975. An American overseas petitioned many Governors to help. Governor Bob Ray responded, but he had to work with the federal government to get permission to bring them as a group. Ambassador Kenneth Quinn explains why that mattered to the refugees.

I think it would have meant everything. People coming with their own culture, their own language, it was incredibly difficult to be split apart. There was one family who was resettled in Iowa in a rural town who were from Laos but they were from a different kind of tribe, and the absence of the support ended up causing suicides to occur. It was awful because people would be so isolated. And so having somebody around who could speak your language, some feeling of semblance of the culture being there was probably more crucial than even the refugees themselves knew. But instinctively they knew, they had this intense desire to keep the clan together, to keep the extended families together. And the thought of them all being split apart and some going to Brooklyn and some going to Broward County and others going to Beaumont was just the end of the world. After already having gone through the end of the world, getting out to Thailand and then getting on the plane to a camp and being in this strange situation and the weather being different and everything in your life, everything you had known discombobulated, gone. And what's going to happen to me? Where are we? Where are we going? I don't think you can fully convey to people how terribly upsetting and difficult that could be.

I'm sure if you ask every refugee would they have preferred to stay in the life they had before versus coming here they all would have wanted to stay in the life they had before. Although many of them thought the streets were paved in gold here so I think coming for a visit would have been alright. But the culture that everyone lived in was so strong and powerful and familiar that to be removed from it is terribly difficult. So, but, the real question is, do I want to stay in some semblance of that with all my freedom gone and my future gone and no hope for my children? No, this is, you know, a great opportunity. So, I think it is always, in terms of the positive because within a terribly difficult human situation.