Faculty Researcher Leads Multidisciplinary Team to Produce Film
Nominated for Best Feature Film at the Indie Fest USA International Film Festival in October 2015, the documentary weaves the stories of three generations of Hmong refugees in the United States Midwest and France while focusing on Liachoua Naolu Lee, a former refugee and son of Hmong veterans of the French Indochina War (1946-1954) and American Secret War in Laos (1961-1975) who now lives in Rochester Hills, Michigan.

Lee’s story begins in Detroit, Michigan, then takes him to France, where he and his family sought asylum before immigrating to the United States. The film ends with his emotional return to his homeland of Laos for the first time in 40 years. In an effort to piece together fragments of his family history as it intersects with French and American recent histories, Lee’s personal story is brought into conversation with others from the Hmong community, American Vietnam veterans, French Indochina War veterans, historians and government officials.

“Featuring Lee’s journey of remembrance through an interdisciplinary lens allows us to recognize the way the process of remembering the legacies of global past conflicts informs current efforts to build more reconciled, just, and stronger communities,” said Babana-Hampton, who was the Executive Producer, Producer, Co-director, and Screenwriter on the film. “Connecting Hmong refugee experience in the American Midwest and France injects complex layers of meaning into historical events and the contemporary moment, complicates our understanding of refugee crises, and helps us gain new insights into global armed conflicts that shaped the Hmong’s experience in the American Midwest and France.”

Babana-Hampton added that “the film starts from the premise that storytelling through film can be an effective means of engaging with alternative histories and making visible erased memories as mechanisms for advancing social justice and human rights, connecting communities, bridging cultures, recognizing shared histories, imagining common futures, and ultimately building sustainable democracies at a time when the global community is called upon to respond to considerable ethical dilemmas in the face of unprecedented refugee crises and the humanitarian consequences of contemporary global conflicts.”

The College of Arts & Letters’ Department of Romance and Classical Studies premiered the film in February at MSU’s Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center. Since the premiere, public screenings and round table discussions were held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Notre Dame, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. The film was introduced to international audiences in Paris, France, at the Musée National de l’Histoire de l’Immigration (The National Museum of the History of Immigration) followed by a panel discussion of internationally acclaimed scholars around the theme: “The Forgotten of Postcolonial Memories: The Case of Hmong.”

_Hmong Memory at the Crossroads_ is a production of Michigan State University in partnership with the Humanities Without Walls (HWW) Consortium based at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. MSU event co-sponsors included the College of Arts & Letters, Department of English, Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, Asian Studies Center, and Global Studies in the Arts and Humanities.

With external funds recently secured through the Humanities Without Walls Consortium, a sequel is currently in production under the working title _Growing Up Hmong at the Crossroads_. The sequel will spotlight the Hmong diasporic experience from the perspective of second- and third-generation Hmong born and raised in France and the United States.

For more information on the film, visit the _Hmong Memory at the Crossroads_ website at hmc.cal.msu.edu.