

# All That We Are Is What We Hold In Our Outstretched Hands

Tuan Andrew Nguyen  
**Extended Gallery Text**

Sat 11 Feb — Sat 25 Mar

Tue - Sat / 11am - 6pm

**CCA:** Centre for  
Contemporary Arts



## All That We Are Is What We Hold In Our Outstretched Hands<sup>1</sup>

Introduction by Sabrina Henry (Curator)

This exhibition offers memories in multitudes. The re-enactment of memory. *Metis* memory. Memory as a counterpoint to what we understand as 'history'. The feeling of holding memory somewhere between fact and fiction. And how making real those memories can be an act of transcendence, moving us beyond our individual narratives to create connecting biographies that speak to (our) many diasporic stories and afterlives, all tied to the project of empire.

*All That We Are Is What We Hold In Our Outstretched Hands* features Tuan Andrew Nguyen's 2019 film, *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* made in collaboration with RAW Material Company in Dakar and the Senegalese-Vietnamese community. The project envisions the memories and desires of the descendants of the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, West African colonial soldiers who were among the French forces sent to Indochina to combat Vietnamese liberation uprising in the 1940s. After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu (which Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* declared as the beginning of the end of the Empire), hundreds of Vietnamese women and their children migrated to West Africa with Senegalese husbands who had been stationed in Indochina. Other soldiers left their wives and took only their children, while still others took mixed or Vietnamese children that were not their own and raised them in Senegal with no connection to their place of birth.

Though the stories told through the film and the surrounding archival material appear to reflect a geographically and culturally specific history, it is an example of what Koyo Kouoh describes as the micro-story within the macro-story of the colonial pro-

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1 "All that we have (and are) is what we hold in our outstretched hands". Fred Moten (2013) *The Subprime and the Beautiful*. African Identities.

ject and its legacies of forced migration and displaced bodies.<sup>2</sup> Through this work we experience inter-generational memory, bound to place and time through individual bodies, while simultaneously hearing the echoes of memories and histories as they form connections beyond the framing of spaces, geographies and borders that have been delineated by the legacies of colonial empires.<sup>3</sup>

The installation itself surrounds the viewer with simultaneous yet different perspectives moving forward in time. In its embrace, we experience fragments of this installation - it is impossible to experience a whole. We have access to a meaning, a feeling. Not a story, but a memory, and sometimes, a memory of something that has never been seen.<sup>4</sup>

**"It is our diasporic disposition that we have to offer, our dispersal and gathering, what we are and all that we have."**<sup>5</sup>

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2 Koyo Kouoh (2022). A conversation. *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming*, published by RAW Material Company

3 Tuan Andrew Nguyen (2022) A Conversation. *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming*, published by RAW Material Company

4 Dulcie Abrahams Altass & Marie Helene Pereira (2022). *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming*, published by RAW Material Company

5 How Don Cherry Employed the Metaphysical Body-Space to Inspire Communal Creativity. Fumi Okiji (2021). Literary Hub.

## Of Mothers & Fathers: Rejecting French Colonial Disposability in *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming*

by Justin Phan

Situated as a collaborative project performed across multiple generations of the Vietnamese community in Senegal, Tuan Andrew Nguyen's *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* walks the viewer through a multi-sensorial journey that tirelessly acknowledges what is left, missing, and generated anew in the wake of colonial and postcolonial realities. It exposes the everyday forms of resistance these mothers, fathers, and descendants enact in the afterlife of war, and emphasises how strategies of remembering might reject logics of disposability while providing the imaginative space to create memories anew.

Nguyen worked alongside *métis* and Vietnamese-origin Senegalese collaborators to remember the broader effects of French colonialism on the *tirailleurs*, soldiers that had been conscripted from the colonies to fight across the French empire. Rooting the project within the spectral legacy of the Senegalese soldiers, known as *tirailleurs sénégalais*, that had left for Viet Nam in the 1940s and 1950s to quell the Vietnamese rebellion against French colonisation, Tuan Andrew Nguyen's installation then highlights the racial-colonial logics of disposability that undergird the use of *tirailleurs*, the treatment of Vietnamese women, and the broader dilemmas that emerge for their descendants.

For the project, Nguyen and his collaborators worked to create memories and write dialogue about their ancestors that could have taken place, but never did. In each scene, Anne-Marie Niane, Macodou Ndiaye, and Merry Bèye Diouf each actively create new memories based on their own performance of histories as they imagine a conversation between their father and mother before leaving Saigon, between a father and son about the present absence of the son's biological mother, or between a grandmother and her grandchild around the intricacies of memory.

Rather than approach the video installation as a straight-forward documentary, *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* attends to what conventional historical methods might forget. Instead, it activates historical memory through these writer's desires to generate new memories and knowledge about their families. In doing so, the project mobilises the reparative qualities of what cultural theorist Lisa Lowe calls the past conditional temporality of the "what could have been". This temporality, Lowe writes,

symbolises a space of attention that holds at once the positive objects and methods upheld by modern history and social science, as well as the inquiries into connections and convergences rendered unavailable by these methods. It is a space of reckoning that allows us to revisit times of historical contingency and possibility to consider alternatives that may have been unthought in those times, and might otherwise remain so now, in order to imagine different futures for what lies ahead.<sup>1</sup>

By lingering on moments, gaps, and elisions that were unthought then *and* now, whether due to past forms of colonial violence or present state-led determinations for how that violence is remembered, *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* attends to this space that inherently pushes us to think through coexisting potentialities across past, present, and future. It moves us to orient our attention, as viewers and visitors of the work, to how the writers, community, and artists come to re-encounter the fictions and frictions as well as the tenses and tensions around the legacy of the *tirailleurs*.

### THE DISPOSABILITY OF SOLDIERS

*Do you remember killing yourself?*

*I remember being disposable.*

—Merry Bèye Diouf, "Exterior, Courtyard, Dakar—Day".

As a colonial soldier, many *tirailleurs* come to occupy a con-

tradictory space to colonial forms of recognising value. While they're heralded as heroic collaborators with French soldiers from the metropole, the *tirailleurs* are also understood as traitors to their own people since the *tirailleurs* had also been used to quell rebellions among the colonised. Historian Ruth Ginio accounts for these two discourses, noting that the *tirailleurs sénégalais* are also remembered as victims of colonial conscription and coercion.<sup>2</sup>

The practice of conscripting colonial soldiers for empire had a much longer history than what is explicitly dealt with through the First Indochina War. Established since at least the 1850s, troops of colonised men across the French empire had been used by the French in their military endeavours. In World War I, for instance, over 900,000 colonial subjects were recruited for French war efforts. Of that number, 90,000 colonial soldiers were also recruited from Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> In addition, 200,000 of that number were soldiers from French West Africa, of whom more than 30,000 lost their lives in World War I.<sup>4</sup>

The soldiers that served during the First Indochina War didn't only hail from North and West Africa. Soldiering for the French empire was a trans-oceanic venture that conscripted and transported colonial soldiering bodies from across Southeast Asia, Europe, the Caribbean islands, and the African continent.<sup>5</sup> By connecting stories of soldiering for empire across the globe, we also come to map out a labouring geography intimately strewn across four continents.

This point is made readily apparent in *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming*. The project is attentive to how working for the French empire as *tirailleurs* is a contradictory and painful form of labour as colonial soldiers are at once valued for their military utility and devalued as a racialised and colonised Other. In Tuan Andrew Nguyen's project, the politics of disposability and valuation under French colonialism emerge frequently within the dia-

logues written, staged, and imagined. For example, Anne-Marie Niane's words remind us of this disposability when she expresses Waly's frustration against being called a French man: "Don't make me laugh. I'm French only when they need bodies to take bullets. I am black all other times." Merry Bèye Diouf also gestures to the human cost of working as a *tirailleur*. In her piece, Diouf acknowledges a moment when a *tirailleur*, after having finished his time in war, commits suicide years later.

It is important here to note how the project's interest in the community's voice provides a powerful subversion of dominant state-based historiographies of the First Indochina War. Rather than present French colonial realities through the macro-political manoeuvres of military units as dictated by the top-down perspectives of state and colonial archives, Nguyen attends to the micro-political entanglements that emerge and reside across scales of time from the position of the Senegalese-Vietnamese community. In doing so, the installation meditates on people's voices, locating the power to resist within the everyday actions of the people instead of the state.

By working with the stories of the *tirailleurs*, *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* pushes us to further understand just how race and colonialism functioned to facilitate the treatment of colonised bodies as objects to be shipped and replaced. However, rather than focus solely on the *tirailleurs*, the project decides to trace this history through contemporary activations of a later reality—the co-migration of Senegalese fathers, Vietnamese mothers, and their children from Vietnam to Senegal.

The project's decision to juxtapose and trace the history of the *tirailleurs sénégalais* with the history of the migration of Vietnamese mothers and children from Vietnam to Senegal is one of the most important paths that the project undertakes. This decision provides a deeper look into the very contingencies, connections, and convergences that are *unthought*, following Lowe's work,

within available modern historical and social scientific methods. It is within the past conditional temporality of addressing “what could have been” where *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* explores coexisting realities and genealogies that extend from and alongside the male *tirailleurs*.

### “WE ADAPT”: RESISTANCE IN THE EVERYDAY

*Will your family welcome with open arms this Vietnamese woman brought back from a soldier’s adventures? And her métis children? Vietnam will be lost for me and my children. Here they might lose their life. The black children of the French army.*

—Anne-Marie Niane, “Interior, Apartment, Saigon—Night”.

While the soldiers were seen as a disposable and easily utilised resource for the French army, French colonial women’s bodies are also seen as disposable in another sense. In colonial Indochina, Vietnamese women were often treated as concubines and mistresses. Drawing from the Vietnamese word *con gái*, which literally means young woman or girl, the French used *con gái* as a shorthand to discuss the intricate gendered-sexual system of French men forming relationships with Vietnamese women as concubines, mistresses, and/or domestic workers. Historian Dana S. Hale explains that “the term evoked the mystique, desirability, and availability of Asian women, a stereotype perpetuated in colonial writings”.<sup>6</sup>

Part of this context is also subtly embedded in *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming*. In her imagined dialogue between her parents, Anne-Marie Niane illustrates an acknowledgement of this context in Lan’s protests against Waly and his demands that the family leave Saigon. In response, Lan remarks, “So even though the war is over, the French man still maintains his control over the helpless Vietnamese”. While Waly counters with how he is offended that Vietnamese people call him *tây đen*, a Vietnamese word for Black westerner, Lan too illustrates how she is treated

by French men regardless of colour: “[*Tây đen*] is not a derogatory term. Not like the words you and the white French men call the girls here”. Lan’s words, and by proxy Anne-Marie Niane’s written words, here index a broader French colonial lexicon that figures Vietnamese women’s bodies as objects of colonial sexual desire.

In this regard, Niane’s script stages a key encounter within the gendered logics of racial colonialism; thereby, rejecting the forgetting of Lan’s subjectivity in favour of affirming Waly’s. While these women and children were not necessarily soldiers, their stories are inherently implicated in how we come to recall and remember the living legacy of the *tirailleurs*. By understanding how the French imaginary renders the Vietnamese women’s body disposable, *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* provides an opportunity to imagine the afterlives of forced displacement for these Vietnamese mothers, their children, and the fathers, however vexed.

The installation demonstrates how existing and attempting to live in the everyday as re-settled and displaced people are its own forms of popular resistance. If the impetus behind the use of colonial soldiers and colonial women is based on the idea that these bodies are disposable as cannon fodder and desired objects, the way that the Vietnamese community in Senegal still carries on performs a rejection of that racial-colonial and gendered-sexual logic of disposability.

To remember from the position of the descendants of the *tirailleurs*, then, is also to interface with the histories and memories of the Vietnamese mothers who had also come to Dakar. After the First Indochina War, at least 300 Vietnamese women had left Viet Nam for Senegal carrying their children with them alongside their Senegalese husbands. Many of these Vietnamese mothers that left never had a chance to go back to Viet Nam. Their lives, family, and culture were re-settled, forcing the mothers to adapt

to a new life in Senegal. Even in the aftermath of war, colonialism, and migration, it is worth noting that there are deep histories and stories that cannot and should not be lost in the seemingly mundane dimensions of daily life.

Despite not being in Viet Nam anymore, these mothers had to eventually adapt and, in the process, navigated Senegal the best way that they could. As newly transplanted people, many of these mothers had to also find ways to make ends meet since a soldier's salary could not always pay the bills. Some found success at Dakar's Marché Kermel where they would begin selling *nem*, a deep-fried appetiser often made from a mix of meats and vegetables that are wrapped in rice paper; thereby, popularising it to the point where today you can purchase *nem* almost anywhere in Dakar.<sup>7</sup>

Markets like the Marché Kermel would remain a useful resource for these mothers since, there, they could purchase herbs and spices in the early mornings to cook with or to sell in other venues. Others found success in creating food establishments. For example, in the historic Médina quartier, there was a bar called Le Cambodge, opened by one of the Vietnamese mothers that had come in 1956. The bar is still owned within the family and continues to run today.

In other cases, the markets would also provide a meeting space for travelling Vietnamese dignitaries and political figures who transit in and out of the ports near the markets. As a contact zone, these markets would serve as one of the few avenues for Vietnamese mothers to meet with people that might help them reconnect with long-lost family members. In these ways, the Marché Kermel and accompanying spaces of connectivity enabled these mothers a space both to root themselves in Dakar through the selling of Vietnamese foods like *nem*, while also routing their connections outside Dakar via the Marché's trans-regional networks of goods, people, and ideas.

While many mothers got a chance to adapt to or in Senegal, others simply did not. As Macodou Ndiaye's contribution shows, living and existing in Dakar can also be actions denied, strategically forgotten, and/or erased. Writing from the position of a man confronting his father about the active forgetting of his biological mother, Macodou Ndiaye pens a mode of creating memory that ultimately rejects the false equivalences within a French colonial logic of disposability and recognition.

### **GENERATING MEMORY, REJECTING DISPOSABILITY**

*To my adorable and venerable father that I love to the point of not being able to forgive. I'm sure you felt the same love for me.*  
—Macodou Ndiaye, "Interior, Office, Dakar—Day".

Macodou Ndiaye's contribution writes from the position of a man, Madou, who never knew his biological, Vietnamese, mother. Written as a confrontation between Madou and his father, Ibra, Ndiaye's dialogue holds powerful importance in how we come to remember our elders whose everyday forms of existence might be predicated on the active erasure of others. Viewers could easily see how Macodou Ndiaye honours and remembers his mother throughout the dialogue. In his mourning, we can feel her absent presence as he points out time and time again how Ibra's decision to erase Nguyen Thi from Madou's life denied him the chance of knowing his mother, of hearing her voice, of remembering her scent. Even though she is not there, we see her in Madou's decision to name his daughter Nguyen Thi as he evokes the common Senegalese practice of giving children the names of family members. We see her portrait screened from personal family archives. In these moments, we can see how Macodou rejects Nguyen Thi's erasure and her supposed disposability in the afterlife of war.

What might be less apparent is how Macodou Ndiaye deals with Senegalese *tirailleurs* who choose to forget and erase. It is quite easy to empathise with Madou's sense of betrayal when view-

ing the project. We witness his earnest questions as he asks his father why he had to wait twenty years to learn that he has a Vietnamese mother and another ten years still to talk with his father about this open secret. We hear his words through the grain of Ndiaye's voice.

Yet, Macodou Ndiaye's decision to ultimately return our attention to Ibra's letter is a subversive act. His scene does not prioritise Madou's perspective over Ibra's or Nguyen Thi's. Instead, towards the end, he reminds us gently to recall Ibra's letter. By imagining that Ibra calls Madou's daughter by her name and bequeaths her with her grandmother's wedding ring, Macodou Ndiaye provides a moment of reprieve for Ibra's trespasses. At the final instance, Madou shares, "To my adorable and venerable father that I love to the point of not being able to forgive. I'm sure you felt the same love for me". While rooted in compassion, Madou's words also remind us that this reprieve is not rooted in blind forgiveness. On the contrary, Madou still insists on holding both realities as coexisting rather than a zero-sum game between competing truths.

What Madou here models, and what Macodou Ndiaye then articulates, is perhaps a radical vision of love and memory. This vision is rooted in a deep refusal of the colonial logics of disposability that push his father and mother outside the purview of History or worthy memory and attempt to supplant one for the other. This vision is also rooted in a refusal to romanticise familial ties to the point of condoning unforgivable acts. Ndiaye provides us with no redemption narrative here. No heroic victory. No easy call to victimhood.

While surviving required deep sacrifices and tough decisions, Macodou Ndiaye's script, in oscillating between the violent matters of the past and the reverberations of different possible pasts, suggests that many of the available options to remember and forget were false paths. There was no inherent need to

erase and forget Nguyen Thi for Ibra or Madou to survive. In this scene, Macodou Ndiaye reminds us of the inherent indispensability of the mothers, fathers, and children despite a broader colonial context that deemed their lives disposable and any futures implausible. Where colonised French bodies are differentiated by degrees of disposability, to vilify and chastise Ibra would also fall within the same gradated logics of disposability that justified the erasure of Madou's mother from his social life and the foreclosure of alternative life-worlds. In the end, Macodou Ndiaye's script demonstrates how choosing one parent over the other does not necessarily lead to a form of justice for the living or the dead.

The way forward, as Ndiaye's story suggests, is to tell this story, to generate a new memory, in a way that can hold the complexities of Ibra's, Nguyen Thi's, and Madou's positionalities together. By holding onto the imaginative space around the "what could have been", he chooses them all: Ibra. Nguyen Thi. Marème. Madou. In doing so, Ndiaye's dialogue models the ability to love, remember, and honour in ways that can hold onto a compassionate form of care without compromises. He reminds that not forgiving can too be a testament of genuine love.

While there is much more to say about the project, I find that one of the main lessons that we continue to learn by viewing Tuan Andrew Nguyen's *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* is just how productive re-encountering the past through speculation, imagination, and an acknowledgement of subjective desire could be for the present. In identifying the conditions and accompanying racial-colonial logics of disposability that make colonial soldiering and the forced displacement of hundreds of Vietnamese women and children possible, the installation suggests a Lowe-ian rejection of the liberal humanist affirmation of European humanity that is premised on the denial of other models of humanity illegible or unthought by conventional modern historical or social scientific methods. Whether this be situated within

conceptual decisions to focus on people's narratives over colonial and state archives or in deciding to mobilise the creative capacity of feeling multiple coexisting pasts and pathways from the Senegalese-Vietnamese community, Tuan Andrew Nguyen's *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* moves us to imagine, mourn, and reckon "other humanities" within our received genealogy of "the human".<sup>8</sup>

By focusing on the community's desires, imagination, and mobilizations of speculative writing, the project also demonstrates the ongoing rootedness and resilience of the Vietnamese community in Senegal. We are constantly shown how these families adapt: their embeddedness within the larger histories of the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, navigating through everyday economies of foodstuffs at the Marché Kermel and Médina, within the imagined time-space created by Tuan Andrew Nguyen's installation, and even the moving family portraits within the videos.

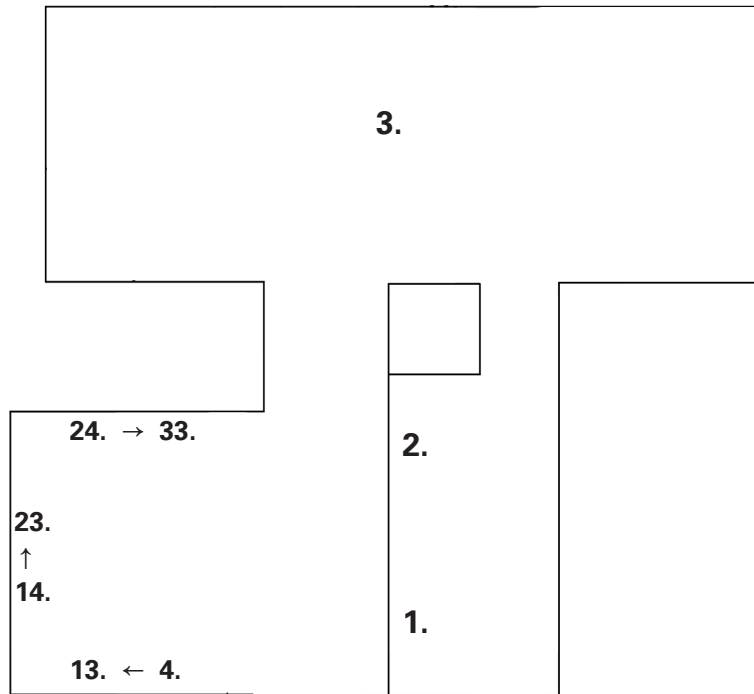
Perhaps in denying the empty promise of colonial recognition, we can see that adapting to disposability was never the point. Rather, the point might be found within the spaces of communal or generational re-cognition, re-encounters, and re-enactments where real understandings of the indispensability—and thus, other humanities—of the Vietnamese community in Senegal emerge. *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* performs this task without fail—a constant practice of remembering that thinks relationally, acts collaboratively, and works ethically. A project whose work, as haunting as it is, is then always already becoming.

Essay originally published in *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* booklet, commissioned by RAW Material Company.

## Endnotes

- 1 Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015, pp. 175. Print.
- 2 Ginio, Ruth. "African Colonial Soldiers between Memory and Forgetfulness: The Case of Post-Colonial Senegal." *Outre-Mers: Revue d'histoire*, vol. 350-351, 2006, pp. 141-155.
- 3 Ho, Mireille Le Van. "Le Général Pennequin et le projet d'armée jaune (1911-1915)." *Outre-Mers: Revue d'histoire*, vol. 279, 1988, pp. 145-167.
- 4 These practices also informed how France made use of colonial soldiers during the First Indochina War and the wars afterwards. From 1946 to 1954, an estimated 120,000 North African and 60,000 West African soldiers had fought for the French against the Việt Minh. After French defeat at Điện Biên Phủ, many tirailleurs were then stationed in Algiers to fight against the Algerian resistance. For more, please see: Fogarty, Richard. "Tirailleurs Sénégalais." *1914-1918-Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, 2016. DataCite, doi:10.15463/ie1418.10876.
- 5 For example, Arlette Pacquit's documentary *Héritiers du Vietnam* (2015) works through the lens of the descendants of *tirailleurs* from Martinique who too had ancestors that fought for the French during the First Indochina War and then returned to the Caribbean afterwards with their wives and children.
- 6 For more, see Hale, Dana S. *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples, 1886-1940*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2008, pp. 72. This use can also be seen in French colonial popular culture as a number of pulp fiction novels produced through the early to mid-20th century that depict romantic stories where the white French male protagonist forms a romantic relationship with an Indochinese woman only to leave them when they return to the metropole. For a critical examination of the agency of French colonised women in the context of Vietnam/French Indochina, refer to Huong Ngo's installation *Reap the Whirlwind*. <http://huongngo.com/reap-the-whirlwind>.
- 7 For more, reference Peyton, Nellie. "How Spring Rolls Got to Senegal: The half-century of war and colonialism behind a favourite snack." *Slate.com*, 2016. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2016/11/the-strange-story-of-how-spring-rolls-became-senegals-go-to-snack.html>.
- 8 Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015, pp. 175. Print.





### CCA 1

**1.** *Our Empty Uniforms Marched To The Echoes Of An Invisible* (2020)  
Two-channel video installation, 7 minutes. Music by Zach Sch with audio archives courtesy of Humboldt University Berlin Sound Archives.

**2.** *Mother, Métis, Memory* (2020 - 2022)  
Interviews with the Senegalese Vietnamese community in Dakar, Senegal, 30.22 minutes.

### CCA 3

**3.** *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming* (2019)  
Four-channel video installation  
28.30 minutes

### CCA 2

**4.** Mr Madiaw Beye Ibrahima surrounded by his brothers in arms. Haiphong, Circa 1940. © Merry Beye Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bop.

**5.** Family portrait. Mrs Beye Nguyen Thi Nii surrounded by her children (Madiaw Beye - Marie, Massata, Assane, Ousseynou). Dakar, date unknown. © Merry Beye Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bop.

**6.** Wedding reception of Mrs. Seck Sophie Kamara and her husband, Mr. Seck Djibril. Saigon, Circa 1956. © Sophie Diagne Family Photographic Archives, Gorée.

**7.** Members of the Vietnamese Community in Senegal at the Embassy of the Republic of Vietnam in Senegal. From left to right: Mrs Guy, His Excellency Ambassador Nguyen Van Toan, Mrs. Hô Thi Chau called Mrs. Jacky is accompanied by her husband Mr. DÔ Van Ky (in white on the right) and their children, Jean Claude DÔ Van and Marie Thérèse DÔ Kim Long. Mrs Dabo, Mrs Moc, Mrs. & Mr. Tran Van Coï, Mr. Moc, and Mr. Pierre Phuc. Dakar, Circa 1962. © Jean Claude DÔ Van Family Photographic Archives, Grand Dakar.

**8.** Brothers in arms. Group portrait with Mr Aly Barry (husband of Mrs Barry Soeum Prean) and his future brothers-in-law, Mr. Massaer Dièye (husband of Mrs Dièye Mariama Soeum Sek) and Mr Kébé, husband of Mrs Kébé Dang Soeum Sek. Vietnam, date unknown. © Carmen Leissa Barry Family Photographic Archives, Medina.

**9.** Walking tour in the streets of Saigon. From left to right: Mrs Seck Jeanne Michèle Fontan, Mrs Seck Sophie Kamara and their friends. Circa 1944. © Pape Charles Seck Family Photographic Archives, Pikine.

**10.** Canoe trip. Mrs Barry Soeum Prean with her husband Mr Aly Barry and their two children. Vietnam, date unknown. © Carmen Leissa Barry Family Photographic Archives, Medina.

**11.** Wedding of Mrs Boissy Lena Camara and Mr Christian Boissy at the parish of Sainte-Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus. Lena is walking the aisle with her father-in-law Mr. DÔ Van Ky, called Mr Jacky Dakar. Circa 1965. © Jean Claude DÔ Van Family Photographic Archives, Grand Dakar.

**12.** From left to right: Mrs Diallo, Mrs Diouf Nguyen Thi Thanh, Mrs Faye Ngo Thi Con, Mr. Gueye Alioune. Dakar, date unknown. © Marie Nguyen Thiva Tran Family Photographic Archives, Patte d'oie.

**13.** Reception at the Embassy for the Têt Festival. From left to right: Mrs Ndiaye Deo Nang Phong and her husband Mr. Mamadou Ndiaye, Mr and Mrs. Moc. Dakar, date unknown. © Amy Ndiaye Family Photographic Archives, Hann.

**14.** Family Portrait. From left to right: Mrs. Diouf Nguyen Thi Ly, Céline Falla Seck (Mrs. Seck Han Thi Lan's daughter), Mbaye Diouf (Mrs. Diouf

Nguyen Thi Ly's son) and Mrs. Seck Han Thi Lan, in the centre Mrs Doucouré Huy Thi Hien. Dakar, unknown date. © Céline Falla Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bargny.

**15.** Family portrait. Mrs Beye Nguyen Thi Nii surrounded by her friends and family. Dakar, Circa 1970. © Merry Beye Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bop.

**16.** Some family portraits on the cover. Mrs Beye Nguyen Thi Nii and her husband Mr Madiaw Beye Ibrahima surrounded by their children (Madiaw Beye - Marie, Awa, Massata, Assane, Ousseynou, Mame, Fatou, Lika, Khary, Mbathio, Fama). Haiphong, Marseille, Dakar, Circa 1937 to 1950. © Merry Beye Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bop.

**17.** Portrait of Mrs Diouf Nguyen Thi Ly and Mrs Seck Han Thi Lan. Dakar, date unknown. © Mbaye Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bargny.

**18.** Family portrait. Mr Madiaw Beye Assane and his twin brother Ousseynou. Dakar, date unknown. © Merry Beye Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bop.

**19.** Studio photo. From left to right: Fatou Faye, Jeanne Faye, Ousmane Faye, Badiène Astou Faye, Assane Faye, Badara Faye, Omar Faye, Mme Faye Ngo Thi Con. Dakar, Circa 1956. © Ousseynou Faye Family Photographic Archives, Thiaroye-sur-Mer.

**20.** Reunion between friends. From left to right: Mrs Ndiaye Bà Cu, Mrs Diouf Nguyen Thi Ly and her son Mbaye Diouf. Dakar, unknown date. © Céline Falla Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bargny.

**21.** Lunch between friends at Mrs. Jacqueline Hô Thi Chau bar-restaurant Thang Long in Ouagou Niaye. From left to right: Jean Claude DÔ Van, Marie Thérèse DÔ Kim Long, Mrs. Faye Ngo Thi Con, Mrs. Diallo (Fann Hock), Mr. & Mrs. Ndoye (Fann Hock) and their daughter Amina, Mr. & Mrs. Ndoye (Bop) and their daughter Ami, Mrs. Lam, Mrs. Ndoye (Colobane), Mrs. Hô Thi Chau known as Mrs. Jacky and her daughter Marilou DÔ Kim Van. Dakar, unknown date. © Jean Claude DÔ Van Family Photographic Archives, Grand Dakar.

**22.** Portrait of Mrs Barry Soeum Preat and her husband Mr Aly Barry. Dakar, date unknown. © Carmen Leissa Barry Family Photographic Archives, Medina.

**23.** Family portrait. Mrs Beye Nguyen Thi Nii surrounded by her sisters-in-law and children. Dakar, date unknown. © Merry Beye Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bop.

**24.** Family meal. Mrs. Hô Thi Chau called Mrs. Jacky surrounded by friends, Mrs Ndiaye Deo Nang Phong, Mrs Ndiaye Bà Cu and her grandchildren. Dakar, Circa 1985. © Jean Claude DÔ Van Family Photographic Archives, Grand Dakar.

**25.** Reunion between friends. Among the guests, Mrs Doucouré Huy

Thi Hien, Mrs Seck Han Thi Lan, Mrs Hô Thi Chau called Jacky, Mrs Nghiem called Mrs. Charlie. Dakar, unknown date. © Céline Falla Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bargny.

**26.** Family Portrait. From left to right: Charles, Paul, Thi Hai and Sophie Diagne. Saigon, 1956. © Sophie Diagne Family Photographic Archives, Gorée.

**27.** Reunion between friends at Mrs. Anne-Marie Heurtaux's house. From left to right: Mrs Hô Thi Chau, known as Mrs. Jacky, Mrs Diallo (Fann Hock), Mrs Anne-Marie Heurtaux, Mrs Ndiaye Deo Nang Phong, and some guests. Dakar, Circa 1985. © Amy Ndiaye Family Photographic Archives, Hann.

**28.** Reunion between friends at Mrs Hô Thi Chau's house, called Mrs. Jacky. From left to right : Mrs. Gomis Kim Hoan Doan, Mrs. Diallo (Fann Hock), Mrs Ndiaye Deo Nang Phong, Mrs, Mrs, Mrs... Dakar, date unknown. © Amy Ndiaye Family Photographic Archives, Hann.

**29.** Celebration of the Têt Festival at the restaurant le Dragon d'Or, of Mr Hoang Van Hop, on Jules Ferry street. Among the guests: Mrs Sonko, Mrs Thanh Keller, Mrs Dabo, Mrs Ndoye, Mrs Faye Ngo Thi Con, Mrs..., Mr Faye, Mr Fara Gomis, Mr DÔ Van Kim, Mr. Ndoye. Seated: Mrs Hô Thi Chau called Mrs Jacky and her son Jean Claude DÔ Van, Mrs Gomis Kim Hoan Doan, Mrs Diallo and her daughter, Suzanne Diallo (Fann Hock), Claire Gomis, Monique Gomis. Dakar, 1958. © Jean Claude DÔ Van's family photographic archives, Grand Dakar.

**30.** Two soldiers during prayer time. Service Presse Information - Section Ciné-Photo. Hanoi, date unknown. © Sophie Diagne Family Photographic Archives, Gorée.

**31.** Wedding of Mrs Gueye Suzanne Camara and Mr Mamadou Gueye. They are surrounded by their friends and family. Dakar, Circa 1962. © Jean Claude DÔ Van Family Photographic Archives, Grand Dakar.

**32.** Portrait of Mrs Barry Soeum Preat and her husband Mr Aly Barry. Dakar, date unknown. © Carmen Leissa Barry Family Photographic Archives, Medina.

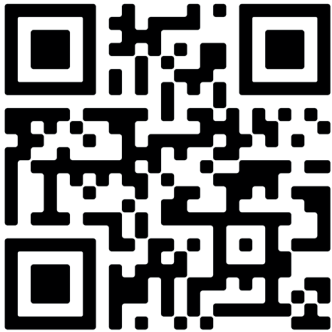
**33.** Portrait of Mrs Diouf Nguyen Thi Ly. Haiphong, unknown date. © Mbaye Diouf Family Photographic Archives, Bar

## Credit

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**With special thanks to RAW Material Company, co-curators of the exhibition.**

For further reading relating to *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming*, please use the QR code below or log on to CCA Annex to view a collection of essays published by RAW Material Company in 2022 to mark the first exhibition of the film.



<https://cca-annex.net/>

**Credits**

Tuan Andrew Nguyen, *The Specter of Ancestors Becoming*, 2019. 4 - channel video installation, color, 7.1 surround sound, 28 minutes, with family photographic archives of the Vietnamese-Senegalese community in Dakar, © Carmen Leissa Barry, © Merry Beye Diouf, © Sophie Diagne, © Mbaye Diouf, © Céline Falla Diouf, © Jean Claude Dô Van, © Ousseynou Faye, © Amy Ndiaye, © Pape Charles Seck, © Marie Nguyen Thiva Tran, overall dimensions variable.

The film was commissioned & produced by Sharjah Art Foundation with additional production support from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Courtesy of the artist, Tuan Andrew Nguyen & James Cohan, New York.

RAW Material Company, Dakar co-curator of *All That We Have Is What We Hold In Our Outstretched Hands*.