

Performer from the *Urban Moon* project

The Arts and Culture Program has also collaborated with young people of both East Timorese and Vietnamese backgrounds. The *Urban Moon* project evolved into a combination of Western urban street dance with traditional East Timorese dances and elements of Vietnamese cultures, along with cross-cultural images and iconography. The participating East Timorese girls were aged between fourteen and twenty and had spent almost their entire lives in Australia. Some were embarrassed about their cultural heritage. They were also living under stress. Despite their length of stay in Australia they were still on the Temporary Protection Visas issued to refugees from the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. The visas placed limitations on their access to social services in Australia, and meant that parents and children could be forcibly repatriated to East Timor when the visas expired.



The twelve young women in the *Urban Moon* project started 2002 with a performance at the *Tet Celebration* on the Richmond housing estate. Numerous gigs followed. They went on to appear at many other metropolitan and regional festivals. In September 2002, sixteen of the group appeared at the Richmond estate's *Moon Lantern Festival*. Their performance included a spoken word performance. *Lina's Song*, by Lina Nheu, refers to the stress of living in an emotional limbo because of Temporary Protection Visas and the possibility of being repatriated to East Timor.

*am I waiting to stay?
am I waiting to go?
this is something I've got to know
I can't move forward and
I can't go back
I carry my worries around
with my textbooks in my backpack
try to study by day
try to sleep at night
at uni I am all fingers and thumbs
dissecting a starfish – my mind goes numb
my tired eyes watch bacteria grow
in a petri dish – everything is in slow-mo
the waiting you see it makes me so tired
I can't think – I can't work
just can't get inspired
zoology, biology, science and chemistry
all I really want to know is can I get residency?
the family is in a state of confusion
my parents and little sisters are under no illusion
there is no real category for them to apply to
even if I stay - they may have to go.
am I waiting to stay
am I waiting to go
this is the thing I've got to know.*

Excerpt from *Lina's Song* by Lina Nheu.



Performers in *Urban Moon* project

Urban Moon brings East Timorese young people together – not just from Richmond but from other places in Melbourne. You can share your ideas and find out what your talent is. Even though we don't have citizenship we can show people that we can do things – that we enjoy ourselves through our dancing.

Yanti Sin, *Urban Moon Project* participant, interview

There was a smaller group of Vietnamese girls who had much readier access to their traditional culture and were not living under the pressure of the TPV situation applying to the East Timorese. We brought in East Timorese like cultural activist Bernardo Duarte to work with them on traditional dances and chants as they sought to integrate images and movements that would fuse together and create something unique.

It was fascinating to watch what was happening. The Vietnamese and the East Timorese girls related to each other through the process of art-making when before they had virtually not come into contact, even though living cheek by jowl on the estate.

Another remarkable thing was the increasing determination of the East Timorese girls, as they discovered more and more about their heritage, to show their own community what they were capable of doing.

This led to their performing not only at festivals across the city but at many East Timorese functions and gatherings.

Liss Gabb, Arts and Culture Program artswoker and *Urban MoonProject* director, interview

The Arts and Culture Program also produced the short documentary film ***My Name is Thanh***, delineating the life and thoughts of its Vietnamese-Australian narrator, Thanh Pham. The camera person and co-deviser was Pip Humphrey, a fellow high-school student who met with film-maker and media trainer Rick Randall. He remembers that *the initial sessions of discussion of issues to do with identity, peer groups and ethnicity were animated and illuminating. They provided the basis for the final film... Thanh and Pip devised a sequence of shots and set up an interview-recording session.*

My Name is Thanh screened at metropolitan and regional festivals and won the Diegesis Award for Best Documentary at a festival of Australian new media for secondary school students. It is skillfully made and retains the authenticity of its subject matter: narrator Thanh Pham's personal encounters and special places of individual and community significance. Shot in the halls and classrooms of the Collingwood College, in the units of the high rise estates, and along the streets of inner-city Melbourne, ***My Name is Thanh*** is a model of community film-making. One consequence of its authenticity has been the interest in the video from non-arts organisations such as the Transcultural Psychiatry Unit at The University of Melbourne. The Arts and Culture Program has produced copies of the video for broad distribution.



Video still *My Name is Thanh*