UC SANTA BARBARA
THE Current

January 14, 2019
Shelly Leachman

Family Album

Born in Vietnam only three months before the end of the Vietnam War, Thi Bui immigrated to the United States with her family in 1978. Her experience — and that of her parents — has informed her entire life. And it is the basis for her critically acclaimed memoir, “The Best We Could Do.”

Written in the form of a comic book, in the tradition of Art Spiegelman’s “Maus” and Marjane Satrapi’s “Persepolis,” Bui’s book chronicles generations of her family history in Vietnam, including her birth during the final months of the Vietnam War and her family’s early years in, the U.S. The story is rendered in flashbacks from Bui’s current life as a new mother in California.

“The Best We Could Do” is UC Santa Barbara’s selection for the 2019 season of UCSB Reads, a community-wide reading initiative featuring an array of events and activities over the winter and spring quarters. Bui will visit the campus in April to discuss her book — and sign copies — during a free public talk at Campbell Hall.

Hundreds of UC Santa Barbara students received free copies of the book directly from Chancellor Henry T. Yang, Executive Vice Chancellor David Marshall and University Librarian Kristin Antelman during a distribution event at the UC Santa Barbara Library to kick off the annual program’s new season. The book also is being incorporated into more than two dozen courses over the next two academic quarters.

Here is a rundown of UCSB Reads events scheduled to date, with more to come:

• **Tuesday, Jan. 22, 4 p.m.: Pacific Views Lecture**: "Exiled: Loss and Resilience Among Refugee and Forcibly Displaced Youth and Communities." Maryam Kia-Keating, an associate professor of clinical psychology in the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, discusses how mass migration and forced displacement of communities due to disruptions by violence, climate change and economic and political instability have heralded an era of global movement that has reached crisis levels. How do we address irrevocable loss and adversity, and support resilience for refugee and forcibly displaced youth and communities resettled in the United States? (UCSB Library, Pacific View Room)

• **Wednesday, Jan. 23, 4 p.m.: Panel Discussion**: "The Best We Could Do: Telling and Re-telling the stories of Asian America." Panelists erin Khue Ninh, Sameer Pandya, Eleanor Ty and Xiaojian Zhao, all from UC Santa Barbara's Department of Asian American Studies, address the book and its themes from a variety of perspectives. Refreshments will be served. (UCSB Library, Instruction & Training 1312)

• **Monday, Feb. 4, 6:30 p.m. Women in Comics**: In conjunction with UCSB Reads 2019, an event to preview the upcoming companion exhibition "In Her Own Image" also features Professor Brian Donnelly's undergraduate English class (which is reading the book) in an open discussion of comics by and about women. Both students and audience members will be welcomed to ask questions. With Addie Jensen, graduate student in history; Chizu Morihara, art and architecture librarian; Rachel Rys, graduate student in feminist studies; and Maite Urcaregui, graduate student in English. Moderated by Swati Rana, assistant professor of English. (Buchanan Hall 1910)

• **Thursday, Feb. 14 – Friday, June 28: In Her Own Image**: In conjunction with UCSB Reads 2019, UCSB Library is pleased to present an exhibition that explores and celebrates female comic book creators and their works. Materials are drawn from UCSB Library collections. Curated by UC Santa Barbara librarians Chizu Morihara and Leahkim Gannett.

• **Friday, March 1, 2-3 p.m.: Speed Friending for Students**: In collaboration with the UCSB Library, Health and Wellness offers an interactive afternoon of speed friending (like speed dating, but for friendships). Participants will address themes related to the 2019 UCSB Reads illustrated memoir "The Best We Could Do" such as identity, family and personal history. Refreshments will be served. (UCSB Library,

Instruction & Training 1312)

• **Thursday, April 25, 7:30 p.m. Author Talk**: Free lecture and book-signing by Thi Bui, author of “The Best We Could Do.” No tickets are needed and seats are on a first-come, first-served basis. Doors open at 6:50 p.m. (Campbell Hall)

Now in its 13th year, UCSB Reads engages the campus and the Santa Barbara community in conversations about key topics while reading the same book. UCSB Reads is presented by the UCSB Library, in partnership with the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor. A committee comprised of faculty and staff members, administrators and student representatives made this year’s selection.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.