The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1228

Lê, Marion

(1947 -)

Born	29 January, 1947, Richmond New Zealand
Occupation	Migrant community advocate, Refugee Advocate

Summary

Marion Lê has advocated on behalf of refugees since the arrival of the first Vietnamese boat people in the mid-1970s. She has received a number of awards for her tireless work over three decades, including the 2003 Human Rights Medal.

Details

Marion Lê was born in the village of Richmond, near Nelson, New Zealand on 29 January 1947. Her father, Noble Tasman Roderick, a hairdresser, was born in New Zealand of Irish, Scottish and Portuguese descent. After serving in World War II with the New Zealand Army as a truck driver in Egypt, he married her mother in 1945, London-born Grace Eileen Tallon. Marion had three younger brothers. She was educated at Richmond Primary and Waimea Intermediate and College, then attended teachers' college and the University of Canterbury in Christchurch. She emigrated to Australia in 1971 and taught in Sydney and Brisbane and travelled until 1974, when she began a Bachelor of Theology at the Alliance College and a Bachelor of Arts at the Australian National University, completing both in 1978-79.

In 1979 she married Tong Lê, a chef and former Vietnamese soldier who arrived on the Song Bê in 1977. They have three children and cared for four stepchildren, a Vietnamese foster son, a Vietnamese ward of the Minister, and several other children from camps and detention centres.

In 1980 they opened a Vietnamese restaurant in O'Connor and another at Belconnen ten years later. Marion worked in both of these, as well as teaching in Canberra for 19 years.

From 1977 Marion was active in the Indo-China Refugee Association of the ACT, which was later used by the government as a model for its Community Refugee Settlement Service. She completed a Graduate Diploma in International Law at the ANU in 1994 and now works as a consultant and registered migration agent. She was named as the Bicentennial Canberra Citizen of the Year in 1988, awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1990, the Austcare Paul Cullen Award for Outstanding Contribution to Refugees in 1994 and the Human Rights Medal in 2003 for her work in promoting human rights over the last three decades.

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection
Interview with Marion Le [sound recording] / interviewer, Ann-Mari Jordens.

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Marion Le, 199- [manuscript]

Author Details
Ann-Mari Jordens

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