



Documents & Dialogue

DOCUMENTS AND DIALOGUE - POST FEDERATION IDEAS

These activity ideas cover the period from 1901 to now and the many people who have come to Australia.

To Consider:

Immigration Restriction Act

Could you pass the Immigration Test? Would you be allowed to stay in Australia, or would you be deported?

Following Federation in 1901, one of the first pieces of Commonwealth legislation passed was the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*. It was very discriminatory. The purpose of the act was to encourage immigration to Australia to people whose backgrounds were predominately British / European and limit migration of others (particularly Asian). The government of the time wanted Australia to remain a British Society. The act became known colloquially as the 'White Australia Policy'. A new feature of the Act was the [Dictation Test](#).

The **Dictation Test** applied to all non-European people entering Australia between 1901 and 1958. The applicant was required to write out 50 words in any European language. After 1905 there had been objections from Japan that the test could be from any language. The test was dictated by an immigration officer. As the language used was at the discretion of the officer, it was easy to ensure failure if an applicant was thought to be 'undesirable', either because of their country of origin, skin colour, criminal record, medical history or if they were considered morally unfit. A person who failed the test was deemed a 'prohibited immigrant' and deported.

805 people sat the test during 1902-3 with 46 passing. 6 passed the exam from 554 during 1904-9 and after 1909 nobody passed the test. Information found from:

<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/a-z/immigration-restriction-act.aspx>

An example of the test can be found at:

<http://guides.naa.gov.au/more-people-imperative/gallery/image011.aspx>

Consider how hard it would to do if was in Italian, French or Gaelic.

Migrant hostels

Migrant hostels, also known as immigration dependants' holding centres, migrant accommodation, migrant reception or training centres or migrant workers' hostels, were established after World War II to accommodate displaced persons and assisted migrants. The largest hostels were at Bonegilla

(northeast Victoria) and Bathurst (New South Wales). There were many other smaller hostels throughout Australia.

Migrants and their dependants could remain in the hostels from 3 to 12 months and were given training to assist with re-settlement. Much of the early accommodation consisted of disused army huts and other converted buildings. These were gradually replaced with purpose-built structures with improved facilities.

Information found from: <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs170.aspx>

What would it have been like to stay in one of these hostels?

Research more about the conditions of one of the centres.

To Research:

Many immigrants to Australia have gone on to achieve great things in their adopted country. Find out about a successful migrant and create a PowerPoint or "Prezi" presentation of your findings. The presentations should include where the person migrated from and the reason why they migrated and the field they were/are successful in.

To Listen

Arrange a guest speaker to talk your class about their immigration story. Or ask your students to interview someone they might know to collect their story.

To Consider:

Many migrants come well prepared for their new life in Australia and bring their pets and most of their possessions here. Refugees often have very little to bring except their memories. The most common items migrants and refugees bring with them are money, immigration papers, family photographs, clothes and souvenirs of their homeland. Imagine you are migrating to another country forever as a refugee and your suitcase can only fit five things. What would you choose to bring? Class / group discussion about the value of the items chosen.

To Create:

Create a comprehensive list and research a refugee organisation and the work they do to assist people when they arrive.

Curate a class immigration museum displaying immigration artefacts / stories from the student's home. The class should come up with an introduction label that describes what the display is about. Then consider the artefacts in terms of themes and possibly a sub theme. Object labels should be short (less than 50 words) and describe the importance of the artefact.

There have been many advertising campaigns to encourage migration to Australia. What factors would encourage you to leave your home country?

Create a poster that would appeal to someone who considering leaving their homeland.



P&O poster advertising reduced fares to Australia

<http://www.poheritage.com/our-history/timeline#1930s>



Poster promoting migration to Australia, 1948.
Commonwealth Department of Information
Joe Greenberg

Child migration

After WW11 some British families thought their children would have a better future in Australia, and Australia wanted more migrants, including children, as part of its 'Populate or perish' policy. However, in their new countries, the children experienced something quite different to what they had been told. While some had very good experiences, some had very bad experiences.

Research one of the organisations that were involved with child migration (Barnardos, Fairbridge):
<http://guides.naa.gov.au/good-british-stock/chapter3/index.aspx>



Image: Four children bound for Fairbridge Farm School, Molong 1938. Reproduced courtesy Molong Historical Society

Using the image of the children above, have the students estimate the size of the suitcases the children are carrying.

Using these dimensions students then calculate the capacity (volume) of the suitcase.

Divide students into groups. Provide each group with materials necessary to make a box of similar dimensions to the suitcase.

Students are asked to bring in the objects they would take and talk to the class about why they have chosen them. The chosen objects must fit into the box. If all the objects don't fit, students must choose which objects they would leave behind.

Students must be reminded that they'll need to have enough room for clothes and toiletries!

Discover more on Britain's Child Migrants:

<https://www.sea.museum/discover/online-exhibitions/britains-child-migrants>

The Lederers



Image: This silver gelatin photograph shows Arthur and Valerie Lederer with their son Walter, on a beach with palm trees. It was probably taken in Colombo, Ceylon, one of the ports they visited en-route from Europe to Australia aboard SS ORAMA in 1939. [ANMM Collection](#) Gift from Walter and Jean Lederer Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program.

The Lederers were a Jewish family who fled their home in Nazi-controlled Austria before the start of World War II. They managed to escape the day before [Kristallnacht](#) (The Night of Broken Glass) – when the Nazis targeted Jews across Germany and parts of Austria and Czechoslovakia, destroying Jewish-owned shops, buildings and synagogues.

Arthur Lederer was a talented tailor who made uniforms for European royalty and high society. In 1938 Arthur, his wife Valerie and their 16-year-old son Walter travelled by plane to Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Here the League of Nations issued them with Nansen passports (identity cards that were given to refugees). Arthur then started writing letters to all of his important clients seeking their help to leave Europe. Most of them did not reply in case they were punished by the Nazis for assisting Jews. Finally, the wife of the British Ambassador to Spain provided them with tickets to Australia on the ship SS *Orama*. The Lederer family arrived in Sydney in 1939 and for young Walter the ship journey remained a highlight of his life.

Their full story can be found here:

<https://www.sea.museum/2012/05/08/object-of-the-week-the-importance-of-doors-the-lederer-collection/>

'Doors' by Arthur Lederer 1938:

*Some doors have hearts it seems to me
They open so invitingly;
You feel they are quite kind – akin
To all the warmth you find within...
Oh, may mine be a friendly door;
May all who cross the threshold o'er
Within find sweet content and rest,
And know each was a welcomed guest.*



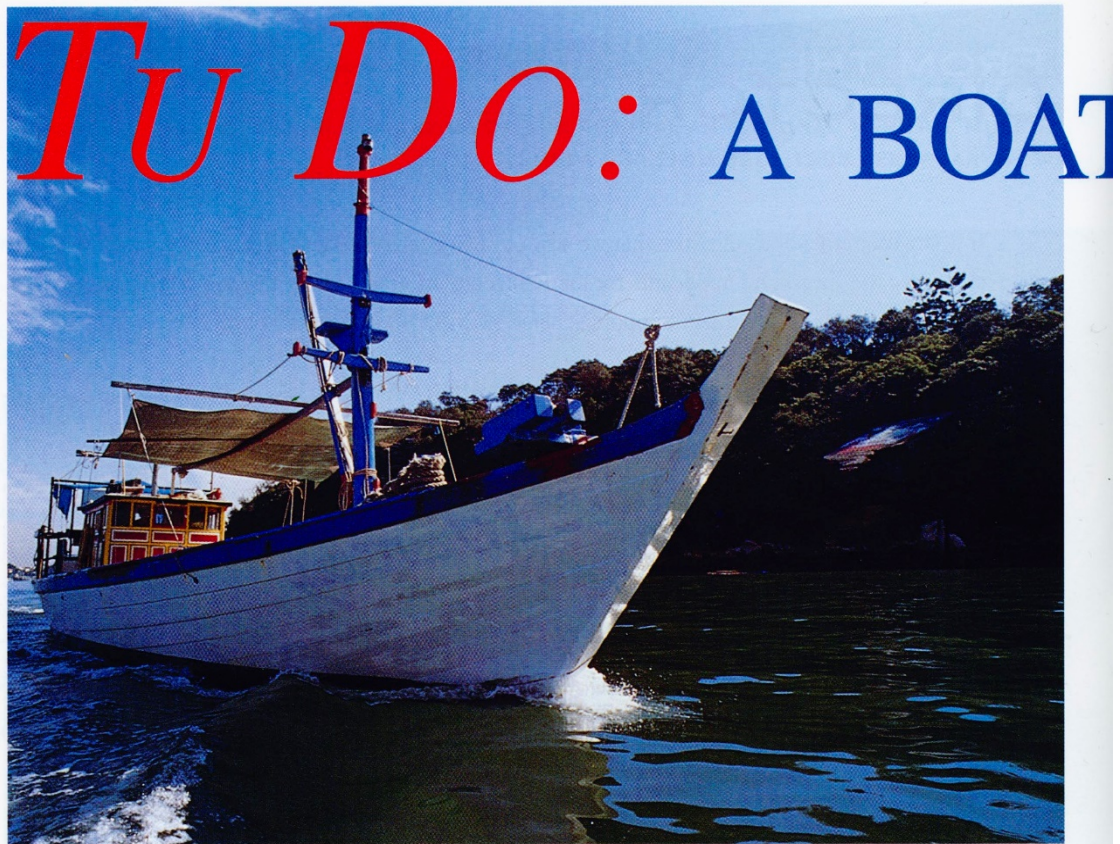
Lederer House Key: [ANMM Collection](#) Gift from Walter and Jean Lederer. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program.

Description: House door key belonging to Valerie Lederer. The Lederer family escaped Gestapo-controlled Vienna in 1938, fleeing to London. A generous client of tailor Arthur Lederer agreed to pay their passage to Australia. After the escape, his wife Valerie continued to carry the key to their front door in Vienna.

Such keepsakes are reminders of the homesickness suffered by many migrants, and a lingering nostalgia for their homelands.

Where is home? Is it the new land or the old country? Valerie held onto the key to her house for many years. Why do you think she did that?

Consider what would have been like for the Lederers to have to leave everything. How hard would it have been to create a new life on the other side of the world? Think about the many difficulties the family would have faced.



'Making the decision to escape is like going to war. You do it because you think it is necessary but you never want to do it twice,' said Tan Thanh Lu, who organised his family's daring escape from Vietnam on board the boat now in the Museum collection. Here is the story of that voyage. By Helen Trepa, Curator, 20th-century Immigration.

The soldiers of the People's Republic of Vietnam had been fooled. Tan Thanh Lu had secretly tampered with his fishing boat's engine by putting metal shavings in the oil and sugar in the fuel. Not suspecting sabotage and convinced the damaged motor would prevent the boat from sailing, the soldiers relaxed their surveillance of the vessel. They did not know that a second more powerful engine waited, hidden in a neighbouring garage, and that within four hours that same evening the motors would be swapped.

Working quickly and quietly four men installed the second engine. The adult passengers had been given only a few hours to prepare to leave, although most

had their belongings ready. To make the children sleep they were given cough medicine.

Hiding in the tidal swamp up to their waists in water and mud, they held their few possessions and the sleeping children. Then they silently pushed their boat two kilometres off shore over the tidal shallows and only then did they all board and start the engine. *Tu Do* headed out towards the open sea.

The night escape on 16 August 1977 began badly. Almost immediately after climbing aboard a head count revealed that a child was missing. Six year old Dzung had been left asleep on the shore. The passengers panicked and argued over the risks in going back to find her. Mr Lu insisted the boat be turned around — he

would not leave without his daughter. They found Dzung cold, crying and mosquito-bitten, crouched in the mud. For the second time that night *Tu Do* and its 39 passengers left the island of Phu Quoc undetected.

Tan Thanh Lu had started to plan the escape two months after the fall of Saigon. He did not want to live in a communist Vietnam. He felt the Vietcong were targeting wealthy families, expecting to share in all their possessions and profits without any reimbursement.

Tu Do, meaning Freedom, had been built by Mr Lu especially for the escape. *Tu Do* was built to the design of a traditional fishing boat, and operated as one for over six months. It was

CALLED FREEDOM

licensed to carry only 10 people. With the money Mr Lu made from his supermarket and two fishing boats, he had been able to buy diesel fuel, a spare engine, extra parts and provisions from the black market. Supplies for the trip were hidden in the garages of the passengers. The escape had to be planned in complete secrecy. Many people trying to leave at the time had been caught by the coastal patrols or were betrayed by friends and relatives who informed the authorities of the intended voyage to freedom.

At top speed *Tu Do* sailed away. Thai pirates were sighted while crossing the Gulf of Thailand, but *Tu Do* was powerful enough to escape easily. Because of the possibility of pirate attacks, US\$7,500 had been hidden in the housing of a winch motor attached to the wheelhouse and gold bars were secreted around the boat, to keep them out of pirates' hands. After two and half days *Tu do* reached Pekam, a port on the Pahang River on the mid-east coast of peninsular Malaysia, where it was boarded by Malaysian policemen. The voyagers were given inoculations and showers and told to move on.

The next stop, a day and a half later, was Mersing. Despite mooring opposite a Malaysian coast guard patrol, *Tu Do* was not discovered by the authorities until morning. Once again most were denied permission to land, except for eight relatives including Mr Lu's sister. The voyage from Phu Quoc to Mersing had taken its toll, and the eight did not have the courage or the strength to travel further. The group who stayed in Malaysia was allowed to emigrate to Australia the following year.



OPPOSITE:
Tu Do remained largely unmodified by the subsequent owners, and required only the removal of a radar and safety rails around the deck to return to near its appearance at the time of the voyage.

LEFT:
Tan Thanh Lu, the original owner of Tu Do, takes the helm again after 18 years.

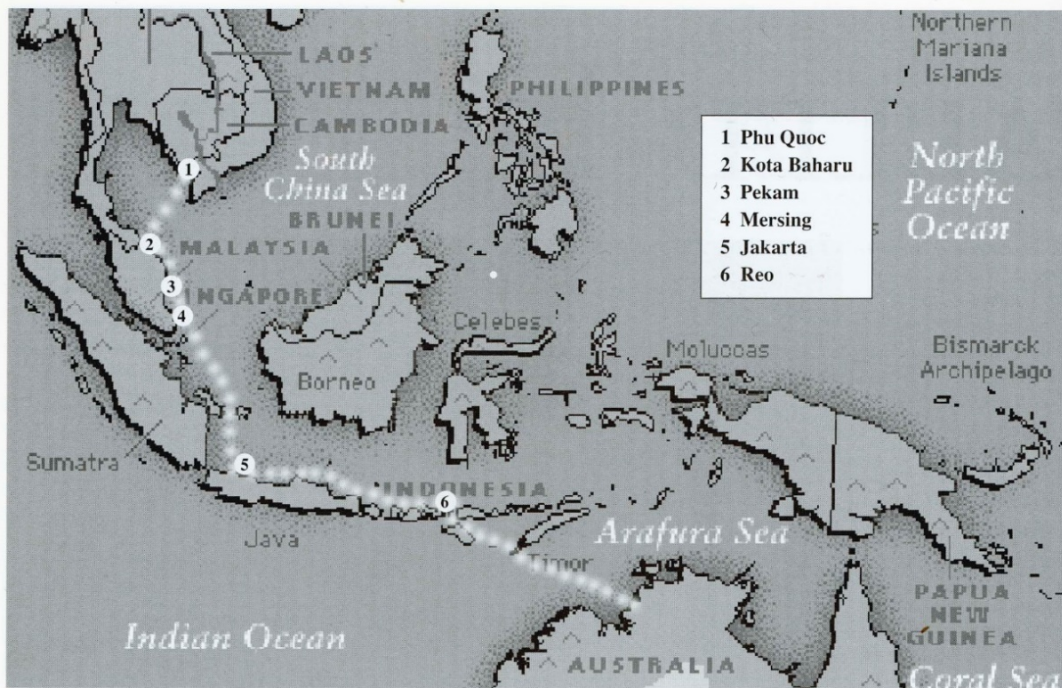
Hoping to migrate to America, Mr Lu and *Tu Do*'s passengers waited for a month in Mersing for an interview with American Embassy officials. During this month only Mr Lu and two men were allowed to leave the vessel; the others were forced to stay on board by the patrols which guarded them. The interview did not go as planned. They questioned Mr Lu's motives for leaving Vietnam, and asked why he hadn't remained to fight the communists. Mr Lu responded that if the Americans could not triumph over them, how could he? As a result of the interview Mr Lu determined to come to Australia. He sold two gold bars worth US\$2,000 for extra provisions and diesel, resisted the Malaysians' attempts to detain them and once more *Tu Do* headed off to sea with 31 on board.

At the time of the escape Mr Lu was 30 years old, his wife Tuyet was 27 and they were accompanied by their small children: Dzung 6, Dao 4 and Mo 2. Others on board were relatives, friends, neighbours, and three men who helped build *Tu Do*. With the exception of Mr

Lu and the three boatbuilders, none had been to sea. They were all seasick, including Mrs Lu who was pregnant. Uncertain of their destiny, sad and frightened to have left their homes, families and way of life, they did not have the 'power' to be happy. Mr Lu recalls that when waking each evening to change shift he would always hear someone crying.

For one and half days *Tu Do* headed south through the Java Sea to the Indonesian port of Jakarta. The boat sailed directly into the harbour and was later boarded by Indonesian police who asked if they wanted to remain as refugees. Mr Lu gave Australia as their destination. They were again, despite their protests and explanations, inoculated and given showers. The Jakarta patrol also supplied them with fresh water, 2,000 litres of diesel fuel, two sides of beef and a box of capsicums and sugar.

This type of generosity was not uncommon; it was one way the Indonesian authorities would encourage boat people to settle in other countries.



Camps in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia were already severely overcrowded with thousands of refugees who were waiting, some for nearly two years, for resettlement. Coming into Jakarta Harbour just as *Tu Do* was leaving was a much bigger refugee boat with 200 people on board.

Unlike the many other refugee boats which left Vietnam, *Tu Do* had sufficient food stored on board to last five months. Fresh fish were caught and cooked on a small kerosene stove at the rear of the boat. No-one was greedy; people would only help themselves to whatever food they needed and no more. This was described as a sign of respect to Mr Lu who had financed the building of *Tu Do* and who had taken many risks when organising the escape. Those on board were not expected to pay for their passage.

The seven children on board were too young to understand the dangers of the voyage. They played games with their dolls and toys on deck, Mr Lu believed that they were never lonely or bored. To his dismay the children would repeatedly sing the same song they were taught in school, one which is still sung today. It is dedicated to Ho Chi Minh and Mr Lu after all this time could still remember the words:

Last night I was sleeping, I had a dream
He had a long beard and grey hair
He really loved me because he kissed and hugged me
He praised me by touching and stroking my hair
We love Ho Chi Minh.

From Jakarta, *Tu Do* sailed east along the Java mainland and south between the islands of Sumbawa and Flores. Sailing across the Timor Sea during the squally early north-west monsoon season they ran into a wild storm. In the heavy seas *Tu Do* was pitched about breaking all the crockery and glass. Everyone was herded below deck where they remained huddled together until the storm passed. Salvaging what they could, they used coconuts and tins as makeshift plates and cups. In the shallows off Ruteng on Flores Island *Tu Do* encountered the refugee boat PK3402 which had run aground. *Tu Do* towed the vessel south east through the Savu and Timor seas to Anson Bay, approximately 150 kilometres from Darwin.

Overcome with joy at seeing the coast of Australia, Mr Lu and three other men jumped overboard and swam with the aid of a buoy two kilometres to the shore. There they met two Australians who at Mr Lu's request alerted the police. The

four men swam back to *Tu Do* and slept overnight on the boat waiting for the patrol. Awoken by the noise of a helicopter, Mr Lu set off two flares to indicate *Tu Do's* position and the helicopter circled above. Within an hour a patrol boat arrived and towed PK3402 to Darwin. *Tu Do* travelled under its own steam. For Mr Lu and the 31 passengers of the *Tu Do*, 21 November 1977 is a day Mr Lu says he'll never forget. Having reached Darwin harbour, Mr Lu felt he would no longer need to worry about his family's safety and future.

From Phu Quoc to Darwin, some 6,000 kilometres, Mr Lu used nothing but an inaccurate children's map torn off the top of a study desk and a compass to navigate. Mr Lu remarked 'Making the decision to escape is like going to war. You do it because you think it is necessary but you never want to do it twice.'

On arrival in Darwin they were met by Vietnamese interpreters, immigration officials and then by Customs officers. After spending 10 days in a Darwin medical centre, they were transferred to the Waco Refugee Centre in Brisbane. Here a son whom they named Quoc was born, and after a stay of six months the family was granted asylum.

While at the Waco Refugee Centre Mr Lu sold *Tu Do* (and was charged import

duty for it). The family moved to West Brisbane where Mr Lu first found work at the Peters ice cream factory but later was able to start an Asian restaurant. Mrs Lu took lessons in Asian cooking and in turn taught Mr Lu and the children. After seven years they moved to Lismore in northern NSW and opened a second restaurant. They still live in Lismore. The restaurant is the family business and every family member takes turns working there.

The Museum purchased *Tu Do* in 1990. Although it came with all its original Vietnamese registration papers, it was not until February 1995 that Kevin Sumption, the curator with responsibility for the *Passengers* exhibition, was able to finally locate the original owner/builder, Mr Lu, and his family. On Monday 24 July 1995, for the first time since they sold *Tu Do* in 1978, Mr Lu and his son Mo saw the boat again moored at the Museum wharves. With staff from the Museum Mr Lu examined *Tu Do* and noted the changes the previous owners had made. Surprised at its near-original condition and able to recognise many of the original items still on the boat, Mr Lu gave his full support for the conservation and display program

of *Tu Do*. It is envisaged *Tu Do* will be exhibited, complete with fishing gear, bedding, cutlery, crockery, clothes and stove, to represent its condition and fitout when it reached Australia in 1977.

Two extensive interviews have been conducted with Mr Lu and his son Mo who accompanied him on the voyage as an infant. Through these interviews the story of *Tu Do* and its passengers has been pieced together and will be made into an exhibition as part of the *Passengers* display. The Museum will continue the *Tu Do* oral history program with the hope of interviewing and recording the experiences of all 39 passengers.

April 1995 marked 20 years since the collapse of the South Vietnamese regime and the beginnings of an exodus of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees. Today some 40,000 boat people refugees are still in confinement. How many have been lost at sea, to storm, shipwreck and piracy, is unknown. *Tu Do* stands as a testimony to the hope and courage of all refugees, and uncovering the personal experiences of its passengers adds a dimension to our understanding of Australian history.



Tan Thanh Lu, the owner of Tu Do, and his son Mo who was an infant during the 1977 voyage to freedom.

Arriving in Darwin on 21 November 1977 with the other refugee boat which Tu Do (right) had assisted. Photo Mike Jensen, reproduced courtesy of the Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



Tu Do

From the mid-1970's, only a decade since airplanes had become the popular and quicker way of travel, a new wave of seaborne migrants began. Fleeing conflict, oppression or poverty their journey experiences were long, cramped and dangerous. 'Boat people' as they became known, came to Australia looking for a better life. The first of the refugees were from Indochina. They are represented at the Museum by the South Vietnamese fishing boat [Tu Do](#) which arrived in Darwin in 1977 carrying 31 refugees.

Tan Than Lu was a businessman who became fearful of the new regime in Vietnam. He carefully planned his escape by building *Tu Do* for the illegal voyage. To allay suspicion and raise money for supplies the boat was used for fishing. When they were nearly ready to begin the voyage, Mr Lu staged an engine breakdown so that surveillance would be relaxed. He had a larger engine installed by night and when the group were ready to leave, they pushed the boat in the dark across kilometres of shallow waters before starting the motor.

To ensure the children would be quiet they were given cough medicine to make them sleep and when all were on the boat Mr Lu did a head count and realised his 6 year old daughter had been left behind sleeping on the shore.

Dilemma

By going back, the group of 39 risked execution if caught, or being sent to a prison / re-education centre. What would you do?

The group argued against going back, fearful of what could happen, but Mr Lu said if they didn't have Dzung with them then they wouldn't be going.

During the voyage *Tu Do* had to outpace pirates before they made it to Mersing where 8 of the passengers left the boat. They resupplied in Java and off Flores they rescued another Vietnamese refugee boat and towed it across the Timor Sea to Australia near Darwin.

***"Making the decision to escape is like going to war. You do it because you think it is necessary, but you wouldn't want to do it twice."* - Tan Thanh Lu**

The decision to leave Vietnam was a dangerous one. Many people died. What do think you would have done if facing similar circumstances?