New Screenings of The King of Trash Show How David Duong Built Recycling Giant California Waste Solutions

Bay Area screenings trace a Vietnamese refugee family's escape from Saigon, start in San Francisco, and rise to build California Waste Solutions.



The King Of Trash Documentary

OAKLAND, CA, UNITED STATES, September 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As The King of Trash returns to the Bay Area for a new round of public screenings, audiences are seeing more than a refugee origin story.

Directed by Oscar-winning cinematographer Errol Webber, the feature documentary shows what it actually took for David Duong, the tireless Founder and CEO of California Waste Solutions, Inc. to turn night-time bottle collecting on the San Francisco streets into one of America's leading family-owned recycling enterprises and a major waste-management operation in Vietnam.

After an eight-city U.S. pre-screening tour that drew more than 5,000 attendees in San Jose, Oakland, Sacramento, Orange County, Dallas, Houston, Washington, D.C., and Orlando last year, the film is back in the communities where the Duong family rebuilt their lives. Nearly 1,000 people have registered or joined waiting lists for the current Bay Area dates.

The production has also been selected for the 2026 Red Rock Film Festival in Utah.

FROM THE FALL OF SAIGON TO A SINGLE USED TRUCK

In April 1975, as Saigon fell, David Duong led 23 family members onto a small boat and into the open sea. They had lost the family paper-recycling business in South Vietnam. His father, Jim Thu Tai Duong, known in Vietnam as Vua Rác, or "the King of Trash", had built that company on a simple rule: "nothing should be wasted", not materials, not opportunity, and not human potential.

“We almost died out there in the ocean. We had only one choice — survive,” Duong recalls in the film.

After months in a refugee camp in Mandaluyong, Philippines, the family arrived in the United States in 1979 as strangers in a land of promise: one apartment filled with seventeen people and without a dime to their names. At night they collected bottles and cardboard from the streets of San Francisco. By day they studied and worked. Duong’s father put it plainly: “There is honor in every kind of honest work.”



David Duong, Founder & CEO of California Waste Solutions and Vietnam Waste Solutions


The King of Trash on the Big Screen

In time, that honor became a booming business. In 1992, David founded California Waste Solutions in Oakland with eight used trucks and a promise to his parents that the family would rebuild the right way, through service, transparency, and respect for every customer.

“We came to this country with nothing but hope. Everything we built came from hard work and faith,” David Duong tells the director in The King of Trash.

WHAT IT TOOK TO BUILD A RECYCLING GIANT

The documentary and California Waste Solutions’ own operations record make the same point: the company was not built in a single leap. It was built route by route and shift by shift over more than three decades.

Today CWS serves more than 343,000 customers across Oakland and San José and operates six Bay Area recycling facilities. The Oakland operation processes about 1,000 tons of material a week. San José handles about 1,300 tons a week. Across its life the company has managed more than three million tons of material, with more than 717,000 tons processed annually. The first Oakland franchise arrived in 1993. The family later expanded into San José while building a full operating network around collection, processing, customer service, and the marketing of

recovered commodities.

A May 2026 California Waste Solutions briefing, “Behind the Scenes: What It Takes to Keep Recycling Running Every Day,” describes the unseen discipline that still holds the system together. It’s the same discipline the film traces back to those first nights on San Francisco streets.



The King Of Trash Event in Orange County



The King Of Trash Event In Houston

Each day begins before most neighborhoods are awake. Drivers and operations teams inspect vehicles, check equipment, and review routes. Once trucks leave the yard, collection moves through traffic that changes block by block. Facility teams receive incoming material, manage flow, and keep processing in step with collection. Mechanics keep trucks and sorting lines in service. When weather, volume, or street conditions shift, crews adjust without letting the system stall.

“For most people, recycling is part of a routine they rarely think about,” said Michael Duong, President of California Waste Solutions. “Bins are placed at the curb, trucks arrive on schedule, and materials are collected without interruption. It feels simple, and that is exactly how it should feel. But behind that simplicity is a system that depends on coordination, preparation, and consistent execution.”

> We came to this country with nothing but hope. Everything we built came from hard work and faith.”
>
> *David Duong, Founder and CEO of California Waste Solutions*

Reliability, the company maintains, is not only measured by how much waste is collected but by whether communities can depend on the system without having to think about it. Preparation before dawn, coordination across people and machines, and the refusal to treat any honest job as small is the foundation upon which the Duong family’s first truck to a municipal recycling franchise that now serves two of California’s major cities was built. The King of Trash highlights all this in a vivid account and several dramatizations.

Family leadership remains the operating model. Kristina Duong oversees financial operations as CFO. Victor Duong, who started by driving trucks, leads operations and community partnerships. David's son, Michael Duong, now serves as president, carrying the work into a third generation.

BRIDGING TWO COUNTRIES AND REDEFINING WASTE

The same principle that built CWS was carried back across the Pacific. Vietnam Waste Solutions, founded by the family, developed the Da Phuoc Integrated Waste Management Facility and the Long An Green Environmental Technology Park. VWS manages up to 7,500 tons of waste a day in the Ho Chi Minh City region, introducing landfill engineering, leachate treatment, and environmental monitoring at a scale the city urgently needed.

"Recycling is not just about materials. It's about mindset, that nothing and no one should ever be wasted," Duong says in The King of Trash.

That mindset also drives community work on both sides of the ocean: a $5 million Fulbright-affiliated scholarship initiative, support for cancer patients, more than $46,000 for Vietnamese language and cultural schools, more than $105,000 in aid after Typhoon Yagi, and backing for youth programs such as the Oakland Dynamites.

WHY THESE SCREENINGS MATTER NOW

The King of Trash is not framed as a simple success story. It is a record of storm, hunger, crowded apartments, midnight collection routes, used trucks, municipal contracts won the hard way, and the daily machinery of recycling that most residents never see.

Director Errol Webber described the film as a portrait of hope rising from loss of a family who turned pain into purpose and created value from what the world throws away.

"When I met the Duong family, I saw a story that reached far beyond business or success, a story about endurance, faith, and the quiet power of rebuilding a life from nothing," Webber said. "Their journey reminds us that the American Dream is not defined by what we achieve, but by the humanity we share and the legacy we choose to build."

The Bay Area is where that rebuilding began. San Jose is home to one of the country's largest Vietnamese American communities. For many families in the theater, the history on screen is not distant but rather, it is their own.

"This is not just a refugee story," said Webber. "It's a story about the American Dream, about building bridges between nations, and about finding humanity in what the world throws away."

UPCOMING BAY AREA SCREENINGS

- Dublin Special Screening — Saturday, September 19, 2026, 5:00–7:00 p.m., Regal Hacienda Crossings

• San Jose Final VIP Pre-Screening — Saturday, September 26, 2026, 4:00–8:00 p.m., AMC Eastridge. David Duong, members of the cast, and director Errol Webber are expected to attend.
• Emeryville Special Screening — Saturday, October 3, 2026, 5:00–8:00 p.m., AMC Bay Street Emeryville
• Red Rock Film Festival (Utah) — Friday, September 25, 2026

RSVP and event details: www.thekingoftrash.us/festival-journey

ABOUT THE KING OF TRASH
The King of Trash is a feature documentary directed by Errol Webber. It tells the true story of David Duong and the Duong family, Vietnamese refugees who survived the fall of Saigon, rebuilt their lives in America, and founded California Waste Solutions and Vietnam Waste Solutions. Official site: www.thekingoftrash.us. Media: info@thekingoftrash.us.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA WASTE SOLUTIONS
Founded in 1992 by David Duong, California Waste Solutions provides recycling collection, processing, customer service, and material recovery for residential, commercial, and municipal customers in Northern California, including Oakland and San José. Through its subsidiary Vietnam Waste Solutions, the company also operates large-scale environmental infrastructure in Ho Chi Minh City. Headquarters: 1211 Embarcadero, Suite 300, Oakland, CA 94606. www.calwaste.com.

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