2010

Letter to My Unborn Self

Saymoukda Vongsay
Saymoukda@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaaea

Part of the Asian American Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: 10.7771/2153-8999.1005
Available at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaaea/vol5/iss1/4

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the CC BY-NC-ND license.
Letter to My Unborn Self

by
Saymoukda D. Vongsay

Your mother will slap you because out of frustration you’ll yell, “Why can’t you just learn English?” So what. You’re supposed to act as translator at the welfare office. At the grocery stores. At your parent-teacher conferences. This is why they’ll raise you bi-lingual in this strange country. On the fourteenth year of your life, you’ll be blindsided by the fact that you had a second brother. Don’t blame yourself for not knowing. Blame pain and guilt for taking residence in the hearts of your parents the night their second son died in the hospital. Blame their need to forget and their reluctance to heal, to even tell you his name. Be thankful that they didn’t give up on having more children after him because then you wouldn’t be born.

When you’re five years old, your uncle’s friend Tom will hurt you, coercing his grown man tongue into your mouth when no one is looking. Tell your uncle so he will beat the shit out of Tom. Don’t blame yourself. Don’t blame your uncle. Finish the weekend work your third grade teacher sends you home with and go to bed early on Friday nights so that you can wake up two hours before dawn. Don’t wear your good clothes. It’s only the cucumber fields. Try to daydream about Saturday morning cartoons as you move down the rows, dragging your white bucket behind you. Only pick the ones as big as your hand or your parents won’t get paid. Remember to bring a box of facial tissue with you when you go to pick up your mother at the Christmas wreath factory. Don’t be disgusted when she cups your face with her dusty sap-dried hands, then kisses you. Fall asleep on the ride home, your head on her lap, and dream of a better life for her.

About the Author

Vongsay is the Lao American author of No Regrets, a collection of poetry and haikus published by Baby Rabbit Publishing. Her work can be read in publications such as Altra Magazine, The University Register, Hmong Today, and Bakka Literary Journal. A Minnesota-based spoken word poet, she has performed nationally, having shared the stage with nationally acclaimed American artists, and internationally in Italy and Japan. She has worked with the Anchorage Urban League of Young Professionals lecturing and performing at the university level and at local high schools to urge voter registration and civic engagement and also served as liaison between local government and the Southeast Asian community regarding public policy.
Vongsay – Letter to My Unborn Self
Vongsay – Letter to My Unborn Self

Dr. David Chanpannha Ley  
Montgomery County Public Schools

Dr. Bic Ngo  
University of Minnesota

Dr. Leakhena Nou  
California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Mark Pfeifer  
Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi

Dr. Boulieng Phommasouvanh  
Minnesota Department of Education

Dr. Kalyani Rai  
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Dr. Nancy J. Smith-Hefner  
Boston University

Dr. Myluong Tran  
San Diego State University

Dr. Linda Trinh Vo  
University of California, Irvine

Dr. Zha Blong Xiong  
University of Minnesota

Dr. Sue Needham  
California State University, Dominguez Hills

Dr. Max Niedzwiecki  
Daylight Consulting Group

Dr. Clara Park  
California State University, Northridge

Dr. Loan T. Phan  
University of New Hampshire

Dr. Karen Quintiliani  
California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Fay Shin  
California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Yer J. Thao  
Portland State University

Dr. Khatharya Um  
University of California, Berkeley

Dr. Terrence G. Wiley  
Arizona State University

Dr. Kou Yang  
California State University, Stanislaus

Doctoral Student Editorial Review Board

Keo Chea-Young  
University of Pennsylvania

Peter Tan Keo  
Columbia University

Ha Lam  
Arizona State University

Monirith Ly  
Texas State University

Vanna Som  
Harvard University

Layheng Ting  
State University of New York, Albany

Tinou Tran  
University of Houston, Texas

Yang Sao Xiong  
University of California, Los Angeles

Annie BichLoan Duong  
San Joaquin County Office of Education

Polinda Keo  
University at Keo

Ravy Lao  
University of California, Santa Barbara

Giang Pham  
University of Minnesota

Rassamichanh Souryasack  
University of California, Santa Barbara

Loan Tran  
University of California, Riverside

Phitsamay Sychitkokhong Uy  
Harvard University