



2012

I am from Laos

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Recommended Citation

Kotsombath, Danny (2012) "I am from Laos," *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*. Vol. 7 : Iss. 1 , Article 13.

DOI: 10.7771/2153-8999.1055

Available at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaaea/vol7/iss1/13>

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I am from Laos

by
Danny Khotsombath

I am from water buffaloes,
from muddy rice fields and sun-burned backs.
I am from the wooden huts, stilted and dusty.
I am from a million elephants, ten thousand rice fields,
from twelve powerful lords and their slaves.
I am from prehistoric stone jars that once stored rice wine for giants.
I am from more than sixty ethnic groups,
from the highlands, midlands, and lowlands.
I am from dok champa, the flower from my father's garden,
whose sweet scent I savor.

I am from shaved heads and orange robes,
from Three Noble Disciplines, Four Noble Truths, and Five Precepts.
I am from the Mekong River, lively and strong.
I am from sticky rice, papaya salad, beef jerky,
from ant egg soup and fermented fish sauce.
I am from the boat festival, rocket festival, and harvest festival.
I am from the alms that I give to each baht,
from the belief that what I give I shall receive in return.
I am from the boun, merit-making ceremonies and the baci,
whose strings I wear around my wrists.

I am from Laos.



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About the Author



Born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota to Lao immigrant parents, Danny Khotsombath is currently pursuing a graduate degree in Educational Policy Studies with a focus on Diversity and Equity through the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His work as an academic adviser at the University of Minnesota supports the achievement of students of color, especially those from underrepresented populations. Having experienced educational barriers as a student of color, his interests include diversity and equity issues, critical pedagogy, and culturally responsive instruction.



Volume 7 (2012)

Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement

www.JSAAEA.org

A peer-reviewed
scholarly journal
published by the
National Association
& Advancement of
Cambodian, Laotian,
and Vietnamese
Americans (NAFEA)

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