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Selected Poems: To Own My Own; The Last of Her Generation

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Cambodian, Laotian,
and Vietnamese
Americans (NAFEA)

Selected Poems

By
Pacyinz Lyfoung

To Own My Own

I filled all the holes, cracks and dents in your walls
I coated you in virgin first skin and second skin
Healed all your octogenarian scars
Reborn into the blank canvass where I could explore
All the shades of my dreams

Underwater ocean waters caught between the blue of the sky above
And the glow of golden treasures sleeping in the deep
For one night you were aquatic green, so intense, the light sank
In a violent embrace, never to resurface

Then, I made you lacy cream, foaming with a hint of coconut steam
Dripping on the island sand where my toes could spread
All the pores of your smooth ivory skin like the tusks of an elephant scream
The reminder of my Southeast Asian jungle fever
Melting in this Minnesotan Norwegian winter

All those years I never dared to drive a nail in such delicate dissolution

In other places I painted you the reflection of running water, the breath of a winter morning, the
seed of sunflower, the belly of a sleeping fish, the footstep of a child

This evening, I run my hands over your wooden bones, peek into the water-lily glass of your eye,
and play with your crystalline tonsils teasing the roof of your buffet,

Then silently close your door...



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The Last of Her Generation

Fingers reaching into the universe
Patiently pull threads across
Tiny stitches sealing rents
Tearing fabric and time

Fingers reaching into the universe
Life etches from the brush
From empty space to blank paper
From shoulder to calligraphy
The chi breathes within the page

She never said she was a mountain
For a mountain stands too tall and too magnificent
Too far away on the horizon
For a mountain stands too strong and too ancient
Too brave, facing time and the elements

She never said she was lucky or smart
That was for boys, who went to school
While she bit back jealousy
Bent under the produce basket on her back
Or over her belly always growing round and ripe

She never learned the mysteries of letters
And always fingered books wistfully
Frustrated by the knowledge locked within her hands
So she became a living memory
Recording the world with her eyes and ears

She never gloried or burned under the bright light
Except for children who followed her like the sun
Starting their days and tucking them at night,
And who aimed for the stars reflecting in her eyes

About the Author



Pacyinz Lyfoung is a French-born, Minnesota-grown, Hmong American, Asian American woman activist, attorney and poet. Coming from two family lines with legacies of national and international public service, she recently completed a second master in international law and is currently seeking her place in the global scene. The last place she truly called home is referenced in her poem, *To Own My Own*, a 1913 typical Midwestern home of hardwood and stained-glass located in her home state of MN, as she has currently evolved to be from everywhere and be with everyone, within the flow of time, space and our human experience, as much as possible. In that spirit, wherever she is, she works on doing some good and shares a good life with those around her, building a better world in the process, and sustained by the constellation of all her people who have nurtured her, keep her in their hearts and keep her rooted and motivated.



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