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Selected Poems: Write More, Create More, Say More; Koun Khmer, Neariy Khmer

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Cambodian, Laotian,
and Vietnamese
Americans (NAFEA)

Selected Poems

by

Phira Rehm

Write More, Create More, Say More

Saasay chroeun, Bangkaoet ... bandoh aoy chroeun, Niyeay chroeun ... prap aoy doeung ... kom bambat chaol

(Write more, Create ... cultivate more, Say more ... tell so people know ... do not forget it)

Write more, Create more, Say more

Ma thaa, prueh neang khnyom trov kaa doeung

She says, for I need to know,

Neang khnyom trov kaa banghanh plov dal kone chao

I need to show my children the way

It is always this way, no matter which day

Her ears are intent, she continues the wait

Each word is precious, each memory treasured

Each breath she takes

Saasay chroeun, Bangkaoet ... bandoh aoy chroeun, Niyeay chroeun ... prap aoy doeung ... kom bambat chaol

(Write more, Create ... cultivate more, Say more ... tell so people know ... do not forget it)

Write more, Create more, Say more

Ma thaa, prueh neang khnyom trov kaa doeung

She says, for I need to know,

Thngay muey neang khnyom noeng banghanh plov dal kone chao

One day I'll show my children the way

As the years wither away

Each word, each memory becomes faint

Remembering is pain, not knowing is sure death

Won't you tell me before your last breath?



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Saasay chroeun, Bangkaoet ... bandoh aoy chroeun, Niyeay chroeun ... prap aoy doeung ... kom bambat chaol

(Write more, Create ... cultivate more, Say more ... tell so people know ... do not forget it)

Write more, Create more, Say more

Ma thaa, prueh neang khnyom trov kaa doeung

She says, for I need to know

Neang khnyom trov kaa banghanh plov dal juun jeat yueng

I need to show our people the way

Your pain, your suffering is not in vain

Release them to me, don't pocket your fears

There is fierceness in me, I'll stand for truth

Don't end it with the cycle of psychological abuse

Saasay chroeun, Bangkaoet ... bandoh aoy chroeun, Niyeay chroeun ... prap aoy doeung ... kom bambat chaol

(Write more, Create ... cultivate more, Say more ... tell so people know ... do not forget it)

Write more. Create more. Say more.

Ma thaa, prueh neang khnyom trov kaa doeung

She says, for I need to know

Thngay muey neang khnyom noeng banghanh plov dal juun jeat yueng

One day I'll show our people the way

Ma speaks,

My child, I fought far too long

My time is up, My life is gone

You are My strength, you are My legacy

I trust in you to carry Me, in truth, in honesty

My silence is not fear, it's instilled in Me

My pain is My own, my suffering is karma, you see?

I will not pass down to you what was passed down to Me

I will not instill in you, what was instilled in me

I was taught to be silent, I was taught to *please*

Jiivit Ma min maen robah Ma te, Jiivit Ma daoembey prae doch maassine, doch obpakaa

(My Life is not mine, My life is for use like a machine, like an instrument)

A life, not my own, but a machinery

Saasay chroeun, Bangkaoet ... bandoh aoy chroeun, Niyeay chroeun ... prap aoy doeung ... kom bambat chaol

(Write more, Create ... cultivate more, Say more ... tell so people know ... do not forget it)

Write more. Create more. Say more.

Ma thaa, prueh neang khnyom doeung

She says, for I know

Jiivit khnyom noeng min maen doch Ma te

My life **WILL NOT** be the same as yours

**Koun Khmer, Neariy Khmer
(Child of Khmer, Lady of Khmer)
“Khmer child, Khmer woman”**

Koun Khmer, Neariy Khmer
(Child of Khmer, Lady of Khmer)
"Khmer child, Khmer woman"

Her eyes will always see past her disappointments
the unspoken words buried deep within her being
her dreams of her eldest as the seam that binds culture and tradition
Unraveling

Koun Khmer, Neariy Khmer
(Child of Khmer, Lady of Khmer)
"Khmer child, Khmer woman"
Weak! I don't want your cries!
Be strong! Silence is strength
Keep it inside! Don't show your heart
Don't allow for others to see into your soul
Whore!

Koun Khmer, Neariy Khmer
(Child of Khmer, Lady of Khmer)
"Khmer child, Khmer woman"

Walk softly, speak softly, sit with respect
No ambitions, no talents, you will be bred
to be the best cook, mother, wife, and daughter
Your life is mine and for no other
Stupid!

My LIFE, My BEAUTY
Dear mother, I tried my best
To do everything you've taught me
To never forget
But my beauty will not allow for deterioration
My life will not allow for no other master

My LIFE
I cry with heart and feeling
I cry for you; for healing
My heart is full; my will is my strength
I will not keep it inside; I will not forget

My soul is beautiful how could it hide?
My being is soulful; it is full of pride
I speak, walk, and sit with respect
But not as softly as you would expect
My ambitions and talents are bountiful
I am a great cook, mother, daughter, wife, artist, woman, human
My LIFE is my own, just how it should have been for you

About the Author



Phira Rehm is a first generation Khmer Minnesotan artist born in a refugee camp, Khao I Dang/Site II in Mairut, Thailand and raised in Minnesota. In 1999, Phira founded Khmer's Next Generation. The organization focuses on utilizing Arts and Crafts to bridge the gap in communication, culture, and traditions between elders and youths in the Southeast Asian Communities. For Phira, art IS a tool for expression and a process through which she can achieve freedom and recognition of self from oppression and without censorship. Phira uses her art to create a dialog about the issues in society that people tend to sweep under the rug or hide behind masks in hopes of initiating change and inspiration for her and others. Her current artistic vision is to stop the silent sufferings of women and children within the Southeast Asian community, who have experienced sexual abuse, molestation, and rape, by utilizing art as a way to help find their voices to tell their stories and begin the process of healing and self-love. To learn more about Phira Rehm please visit: www.mnartists.org/Phira_Rehm or <http://khmersnextgeneration.wordpress.com/>



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