



2019

# Three Poems: Charges Against a Newborn; Unanswered; For the First Generation

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## Recommended Citation

Do, Mai N. (2019) "Three Poems: Charges Against a Newborn; Unanswered; For the First Generation," *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement*: Vol. 14 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.

DOI: 10.7771/2153-8999.1183

Available at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jsaaea/vol14/iss1/3>



# Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement

Vol. 14 Iss. 1 (2019)

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## Creative and Literary Works

### Three Poems

Do Nguyen Mai

#### Charges Against a Newborn

How guiltless an infant, before she

Starved an entire nation.

Snapped soldiers' ribcages open into  
blossoms of dust in the light.

Razed ten thousand acres of heartbeat.

Gutted a bloodline.

Buried her grandmother in a hospital room  
like it wasn't already lined with white.

Scorched her grandfather's limp corpse  
until roots ran unhindered through his skin.

Taught her mother the sound  
of bullet to spine.

Cried out her first breath.



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*Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement*, Vol. 14, Iss. 1. (2019) ISSN: 2153-8999

## Unanswered

*After Joshua Nguyen*

*Em oi,*

don't look back

when my spine snaps  
against the cold click  
of the trigger,

when my lungs flood  
with the fullness  
of the night sky,

when my body drops

headfirst

when the ocean folds  
its palms over my chest,

when my ribcage whistles  
with the waking shore,

when the water ripples,

when the boat tips over,

when I become the sea  
swelling beneath your swaying ship –

*em oi,*

I will carry you

to shore.

## For the First Generation

We entered the world

gun – fire – work,  
metal, burning, bleeding.

we, born screaming  
keep our mouths shut  
(our mothers safe)  
we fear a fire  
bodies scorched

to quiet rage is to die without grave  
another corpse unnamed

we fear a fire  
we, already alight  
not the soot,  
but the ash:  
rise, rise  
afraid, a blaze.

## About the Author



**Do Nguyen Mai**, is a Vietnamese American poet and researcher from Santa Clarita, California. She completed her associate degrees in history and liberal arts and sciences at College of the Canyons, and she currently researches elections and policy for Courage Campaign. Among other awards and distinctions, Mai is a 2017 Frost Place Chapbook Contest Semi-Finalist, a 2017 Rose O'Neill Literary House Jacoby Endowment Grant recipient, a 2018 Goldstein Program in Public Affairs Experiential Learning Grant recipient, and a Junior Chamber International Santa Clarita Valley 40 Under 40 Class of 2018 honoree. Her first book, *Ghosts Still Walking*, is available from Platypus Press and her second book, *Battlefield Blooming*, is forthcoming from Sahtu Press in spring of 2019.



# Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement

Vol.14 Iss.1 (2019)

[www.JSAAEA.org](http://www.JSAAEA.org)

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