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

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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?
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 obpakaay
(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”

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
Rehm—Selected Poems

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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