



REPORT
University Lecturers Genocide Conference
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
April 1-3, 2019

INTRODUCTION

On 1-3 April 2019, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport conducted a University Lecturers Genocide Conference: Genocide and Mass Atrocities in World History at the Sleuk Rith Contemporary Art Gallery of the National Institute of Education. The main purpose of the training was to provide the university lecturers with a comprehensive overview of comparative genocides and the presentation of new textbook *Genocide and Mass Atrocities in World History: Overview for Cambodian Classrooms*, edited by Christopher Dearing.

During the course of the program, professors such as Mr. Lai Xuan Chien and Dr. Hoang Nga Hong presented discussions on Vietnam's military operations in relation to their actions against the Khmer Rouge. Visiting lecturers Professor Milton Osbourne and Professor Piotr Ostaszewski shared their expertise on comparative genocides, while International Prosecutor Nikolas Koumjian and Dr. Ly Sok-Kheang discussed the Khmer Rouge Tribunal process and reconciliation after. Two Civil Party members and Ms. Kung Thida shared their stories from the time of the Khmer Rouge. Finally, there were also pedagogic strategies shared so teachers would be able to instruct this knowledge about comparative genocide to their students from the textbook.

Day One

Opening Ceremony

On Monday morning of April 1, 2019, all participants attended the opening ceremony, presided over by Her Excellency Lok Chum Teav Ton Sa-Im, Under Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Following the singing of the National Anthem by students of Anuwat High School, three speakers welcomed the participants.

Ms. So Farina, Principal Deputy Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, first expressed her gratitude to donors and welcomed all participants. She discussed the importance of having a training such as this program for teachers to increase their own knowledge and to bring that new knowledge back to their classrooms.

Next to speak was Mr. Simon Pieri, the Head of Political Section for the EU. He thanked the DC-Cam for hosting programs such as this and discussed the importance of comparative genocide for all students. As an example, he described the mass murder of over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys at Srebrenica as an example of a modern genocide. He hoped that teachers would be able to gain knowledge while participating in this program in order to inspire future generations.

Finally, her Excellency Lok Chum Teav Ton Sa-Im, the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, welcomed participants. She thanked the DC-Cam for providing such a program, which she said was important to the participants. As she described the schools and other sites that are being found to contain graves, she expressed hope that such sites would be preserved. Her Excellency also shared she would be reviewing the new textbook for hopeful inclusion in the national curriculum.

Presentations

In his presentation, Mr. Lai Zuan Chien, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Vietnam in Cambodia, and Long Dany, the Director of Veal Veng Reconciliation Center presented a lecture and a propaganda film about Vietnam during the time of the Khmer Rouge.

Professor Osborne, who has written 11 books about Cambodia/Southeast Asia, then shared his diplomatic experiences in Cambodia from the late 50s to the the time of the Khmer Rouge and after. He answered questions about Khmer Rouge history for the participants.

Finally, Professor Piotr Ostaszewski, a diplomat from Poland, shared with the audience an overview of a several genocides, including the Holocaust, the French Revolution, and Cambodia.

Day Two

Dr. Hoang Nga Hong from the Vietnam National University graciously presented difficult subject material to participants that garnered lively and emotionally responses, which she answered with grace. Dr. Hoang began by giving historical context for Democratic Kampuchea and the Khmer Rouge, including how Cambodia under the KR attacked Vietnam by launching a series of raids on villages near the borders. She was challenged by the participants of only sharing positive aspects of the Vietnam “occupation,” but handled all with grace.

DC Cam Film presentations took place at each break in the conference. In this break, Makara Ouch shared the film *The First Witness*. Of all films, the audience was most silent for this film and audible gasps could be heard when showing the archival footage of the photographer investigating the grounds Tuol Sleng after the end of the Khmer Rouge.

The next part of the day was Mr. Morn Mao and Mr. Khien Ram, two Civil Party members who shared their stories, and Nikolas Koumjian, International Prosecutor, who described his experiences serving as a justice on six different tribunals. He also spent time describing the unique pain of the Khmer Rouge forced marriages and how documentation and education is critically important for young people.

Pheng Pong-Rasy, the director of the Prey Veng Documentation Center, defined “Holocaust” from its original Greek and gave a brief overview of the history. Then, for the first time, Christopher Dearing shared the new textbook *Genocide and Mass Atrocities in World History: Overview for Cambodian Classrooms*.

Next was the author's presentation. She gave a brief background of her work with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and the Educators' Institute of Human Rights (EIHR), reviewing five guidelines created by USHMM on how to teach about genocide:

- Define the term "genocide."
- Investigate the context and dynamics that have led to genocide.
- Be wary of simplistic parallels to other genocides.
- Analyze world response.
- Illustrate positive actions taken by individuals and nations in the face of genocide.

Defining "death marches" during the Holocaust followed this activity, including a close reading of the beginning of Elie Wiesel's chapter about the topic. Participants then engaged in a "Three Question" strategy wherein participants read the article and marked places that surprised them, confused them, or confirmed/challenged/changed what they knew. Participants were given five minutes and then asked to share their responses with someone nearby. The presentation concluded with the hopes the participants would seek survivor testimonies to share within their classrooms and to look for parallels such as forced transfer.

In the next exercise, Chris Dearing asked teachers to form groups of five and introduced the Jigsaw method. Participants were assigned a particular genocide to read about, and would work in groups the following day for 20 minutes the next day to share the material.

Day Three

Dr. Ly Sok-Kheang presented his thesis about peace and reconciliation in post-Khmer Rouge era.

Before the next presentation, Pheng Pong-Rasy showed a map of Cambodia denoting the six regions of the Khmer Rouge. Red dots showed the 390 killing sites. In addition, there were more than 20,000 mass graves and 197 prisons. Mr. Pong-Rasy concluded by illustrating to participants why the map made out of skulls from the 1980s is not appropriate for use in the classroom.

Mr. Dearing resumed the workshop on the new textbook on the history of genocides and mass atrocities, addressing questions about the selection process for which events were included in for publication. He indicated that the records for examples in the text, with the exception of Armenia, generally include substantial legal documentation, and serve as a common frame of reference globally.

Mr. Dearing re-gathered the groups from Day 2, illustrating effective implementation of the Jigsaw method for group reading. Groups were assigned three tasks:

1. Read a second chapter on a different genocide
2. Find two important points from each genocide chapter
3. Find two ways they are parallel

He recapped what each student in the group should do, emphasizing the efficacy of the Jigsaw technique. After working together, with many lively discussions, each group was asked to share out. All presentations included many different perspectives and insights, serving as an effective demonstration of the Jigsaw technique for teachers to take back to their classrooms.

In the final activity, each group opened the textbook to the last page of the genocide they had discussed. Mr. Dearing asked them to review the discussion questions, and then generate discussion questions that were not included. This activity served as an example of a critical thinking skill which teachers could use in the classroom.

The last presentation was a performance of *Breaking the Silence*, a play featuring different experiences during the Khmer Rouge.

The event concluded with remarks from Mr. Bruce Kay, the Executive Director of USAID in Cambodia.

Submitted by:

Kelly Watson
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