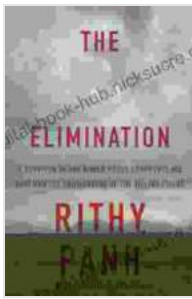


Survivor of the Khmer Rouge Confronts His Past and the Commandant of the Killing Fields

The Long Shadow of Cambodia's Genocide



In the heart of Cambodia's lush countryside lies a chilling testament to one of the darkest chapters in human history. The Killing Fields of Choeung Ek, once a tranquil orchard, became the site of unimaginable atrocities during the Khmer Rouge regime's reign of terror from 1975 to 1979. An estimated 17,000 men, women, and children were brutally executed and buried in mass graves here. Among the survivors of this genocide is Chum Mey, a former prisoner who has dedicated his life to sharing the horrors he witnessed.



The Elimination: A survivor of the Khmer Rouge confronts his past and the commandant of the killing fields by Rithy Panh

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 289 pages



On a scorching summer afternoon, Chum Mey stands on the windswept plains of Choeung Ek, his eyes scanning the desolate landscape. He is a frail man in his 80s, but his voice is strong and steady as he recounts the unimaginable suffering he endured under the Khmer Rouge.

"I was arrested in 1976," Chum Mey says. "They accused me of being a spy for the Vietnamese. I was tortured for months, beaten with bamboo sticks and electric cables. They tried to force me to confess to crimes I didn't commit."

Chum Mey survived the torture but was sent to a labor camp, where he was forced to work 12-hour days in the sweltering heat. He witnessed countless atrocities, including the execution of his fellow prisoners. "They would line them up and shoot them in the back of the head," he says. "The bodies would fall into a pit, and the next group would be led in."

In 1979, the Khmer Rouge regime was overthrown, and Chum Mey was finally liberated. But the horrors he had witnessed haunted him. He couldn't sleep at night, and he was plagued by nightmares.

"I had to find a way to confront my past," Chum Mey says. "I needed to tell my story and to make sure that the world never forgets what happened here."

In 1999, Chum Mey returned to Choeung Ek and became a tour guide. He wanted to share his experiences with visitors from around the world, so they could understand the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime and the importance of fighting against genocide.

"I want people to know that this could happen anywhere," Chum Mey says. "It's important to be vigilant and to speak out against injustice and oppression."

Chum Mey's tours have had a profound impact on countless visitors. They have helped to raise awareness of the Cambodian genocide and to inspire people to work for peace and reconciliation.

"Chum Mey's story is a powerful reminder of the importance of remembering the past," says Youk Chhang, the director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. "We must never forget the crimes that were committed here, and we must do everything we can to prevent such atrocities from happening again."

Confronting the Commandant

In 2014, Chum Mey was given the opportunity to confront the man who had overseen the atrocities at Choeung Ek, the former Khmer Rouge commandant Duch. Duch was on trial at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), a UN-backed tribunal established to prosecute senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime.

"I was nervous at first," Chum Mey says. "But I knew that I had to do it. I had to look him in the eye and tell him what he had done."

Chum Mey testified for hours, recounting the torture and executions he had witnessed. He described how Duch had ordered the killing of countless innocent people, including women and children.

"Duch listened to my testimony without any emotion," Chum Mey says. "He didn't show any remorse or regret. It was like he didn't understand the gravity of what he had done."

In 2016, Duch was convicted of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. He was sentenced to life in prison.

"I'm glad that Duch was finally brought to justice," Chum Mey says. "But I know that there are still other Khmer Rouge leaders who have not been held accountable for their crimes. I will continue to fight for justice for all the victims of the genocide."

A Legacy of Hope

Chum Mey is now a world-renowned advocate for human rights and genocide prevention. He has spoken at countless schools, universities, and

conferences, sharing his story and calling on people to work for peace and reconciliation.

"I believe that we can learn from the past and build a better future," Chum Mey says. "I hope that my story will inspire others to stand up for what is right and to fight against injustice and oppression."

Chum Mey's legacy is one of hope and resilience. He is a survivor who has triumphed over adversity and dedicated his life to making sure that the horrors of the past are never forgotten.

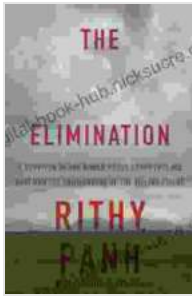
Call to Action

We must never forget the victims of the Cambodian genocide and the countless other genocides that have been perpetrated throughout history. We must learn from the past and work to prevent such atrocities from happening again.

Here are some ways you can help:

- Educate yourself about the Cambodian genocide and other genocides. Share your knowledge with others and help to raise awareness.
- Support organizations that are working to promote human rights and genocide prevention.
- Speak out against injustice and oppression. Let your voice be heard and make a difference in the world.

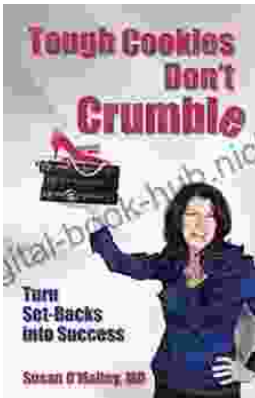
We can all be part of the movement to build a more just and peaceful world. Let's never forget the victims of genocide, and let's work together to create a future where all people are treated with dignity and respect.



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