

# Things I could never have thought possible

## The reconstruction of Cambodia

BY LISA LACHANCE

"The most tragic thing is that..."

So begins the simple inscription at the Genocidal Museum, otherwise known as the "killing fields", 5 kilometres outside Phnom Penh, Cambodia. I was travelling through the country during the Khmer New Year, an event that is held each April

Because of the holiday period and the Khmer people's openness, I had the opportunity to participate in many traditional customs during my time there. I woke up at 5:12am one morning to experience the celebratory gunfire. Although this gunfire is outlawed, it continues to ring in the new year. Monks and citizens alike doused me with water in the streets and markets. It is a traditional act that is believed to bring luck in the new year — to both the thrower and the person being drenched.

But my mind kept slipping back to questions about Cambodia's past. In May 1975, the Khmer Rouge, under the leadership of Pol Pot, took control of the country and renamed it "Kampuchea". The state, religion, family and all social ties were abolished. The cities were emptied in the two weeks following Pol Pot's victory and everyone was driven to the countryside, creating a classless agrarian society.

Millions died, directly through purges, torture and mass killings; and indirectly they died from overwork, malnutrition and disease.

In 1978, the Vietnamese entered the country to assist the citizens and by 1980 the international community was involved in the long, painful reconstruction of Cambodia.

I have never met a Cambodian friend who had not lost a family member during Pol Pot's reign. I watched the people who were raised in Pol Pot's work camps try to create a place in society. I marvelled at the small

number of old faces seen on the streets — in 1980 more than half of the population was under 40.

It was raining in Cambodia this April — an anomaly as

a former high school in an average neighbourhood. At first glance it simply looks like any two-storey high school. The Vietnamese army that found the prison after the regime's demise preserved the tools of torture they found. The graphic photographs they took left me feeling as though blood still seeped from the walls. I didn't want to breathe deeply for fear of smelling it.

As I gazed at the thousands of pictures of victims that line the walls, CNN camera crews arrived to supplement their coverage of Pol Pot's death. Khmer press did not provide coverage of his death for three days following the initial CNN report. I tried to tell Khmer friends of his death, but they did not believe me. They wanted to see the death reported by their own Khmer sources — the reason being that so many times in the past his death had been reported and had been untrue.

If it was true, the implications were vast and Cambodians didn't want to be disappointed again. After the Khmer press finally confirmed his death and pictures of the body appeared, Cambodians were quiet in their reaction, mostly because people felt that a peaceful death was too good for him. They would have liked him to suffer as their friends and family did.

My continuing interest in Cambodia's past, present and future led me to the "killing fields". Located 5 km outside of Phnom Penh, it is essentially an unearthed mass grave. The field's discovery, as well as that of other mass graves around Cambodia, helped to shed light on the Khmer Rouge's brutality.

I won't try to adequately assess the current rioting in Cambodia. However, this is a nation that has rebuilt itself

with both outside help and interference. From being stateless and structureless, towns, neighbour-

hoods and families have needed to define their own rules and sanctions. Al-

though often described as the "wild west", these societal building blocks fostered ideas of expectations, norms and justice. Working together on a national level and combining these ideas is the next step.



**THE SECURITY REGULATIONS**  
1. YOU MUST ANSWER ACCORDINGLY TO MY QUESTIONS. DON'T TURN THEM AWAY.  
2. DON'T TRY TO HIDE THE FACTS BY MAKING PRETEXTS THIS AND THAT. YOU ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED TO CONTEST ME.  
3. DON'T BE A FOOL FOR YOU ARE A QUAP WHO DARE TO THWART THE REVOLUTION.  
4. YOU MUST IMMEDIATELY ANSWER MY QUESTIONS WITHOUT WASTING TIME TO REFLECT.  
5. DON'T TELL ME EITHER ABOUT YOUR INTERNAL FEELS OR THE ESSENCE OF THE REVOLUTION.  
6. WHILE GETTING LASHES OR ELECTRIFICATION YOU MUST NOT CRY AT ALL.  
7. DO NOTHING, SIT STILL AND WAIT FOR MY ORDERS. IF THERE IS NO ORDER, KEEP QUIET. WHEN I ASK YOU TO DO SOMETHING, YOU MUST DO IT RIGHT AWAY WITHOUT PROTESTING.  
8. DON'T MAKE PRETEXTS ABOUT SAMPHEA FROM IN ORDER TO HIDE YOUR JAW OF TRAITOR.  
9. IF YOU DON'T FOLLOW ALL THE ABOVE RULES, YOU SHALL GET MANY LASHES OR ELECTRIC WIRE.  
10. IF YOU DISOBEY ANY POINT OF ITS REGULATIONS YOU SHALL GET EITHER TEN LASHES OR FIVE SHOCKS OF ELECTRIC DISCHARGE.

this is the height of the hot, dry season in the mid 40s. Rain is a sign of cleansing and good luck.

The death of Pol Pot was another event that harkened the dawn of a new age. The day he died caused me to search for answers to Cambodia's haunting past at the Teoung Sleoung



Prison Museum or "Old Schoolhouse", the former Interrogation and Torture headquarters of the Khmer Rouge.

The prison was located at

OH SWEETIE, I DO WISH YOU WOULD WRITE MORE OFTEN.  
THE GAZETTE ROOM 312 SUB

**"ONE OF THE YEARS BEST."**  
Intelligent, emotional filmmaking. Meryl Streep is Oscar® bound.  
Jim Ferguson, KMSB

**"A PROFOUNDLY MOVING FILM THAT CELEBRATES THE POWER OF THE HUMAN HEART."**  
Kyle Osborne, NEWS CHANNEL 8

**"THREE OSCAR® WORTHY PERFORMANCES FROM STREEP, ZELWEGER AND HURT."**  
Dan DiNicola, WRGB

**"IT'LL MAKE YOU STOP AND THINK ABOUT THE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER IN LIFE."**  
Omar Lugo, WSNB

**"A GORGEOUS TENDER, BEAUTIFUL STORY. Meryl Streep is at her Oscar® worthy best. Renee Zellweger's strongest performance yet!"**  
Patty Spitzer, WISN

**"BRING A HANKY AND AN APPRECIATION FOR SOME OF THE FINEST ACTING OF THE YEAR. Meryl Streep, Renee Zellweger and William Hurt are three true things called gifted actors!"**  
Larry Ratliff, KABI

**"WARM, WISE AND WONDERFUL!"**  
Patrick Stoner, WHYY

**"A HEART-FELT STORY THAT WILL TRULY MOVE YOU!"**  
Anne Marie Lavoie, BOX OFFICE

**"A TOUCHING FILM! SPELLBINDING PERFORMANCES FROM THE ENTIRE CAST! The Oscar® race has officially begun with 'One True Thing!'"**  
Mose Persico, CFCF

MERYL STREEP RENE ZELWEGER WILLIAM HURT  
**ONE TRUE THING**

UNIVERSAL PICTURES PRESENTS A MONARCH PICTURES/UFILAND PRODUCTION A CARL FRANKLIN FILM MERYL STREEP RENE ZELWEGER  
WILLIAM HURT "ONE TRUE THING" TOM EVERETT SCOTT INCKY KATT LAUREN GRAHAM MUSIC BY CLIFF EDELMAN PRODUCTION DESIGNER WILLIAM W. WILSON  
PRODUCED BY HARRY J. UFILAND JESSE BEATON BASED ON THE NOVEL BY ANNA QUINDLEN SCREENPLAY BY KAREN CRONER DIRECTED BY CARL FRANKLIN  
"MY ONE TRUE FRIEND" AVAILABLE ON BETTE MIDLER'S BATHHOUSE BETTY ALBUM  
www.onetruefilm.com

Subject to Classification  
**OPENS FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup> AT THEATRES EVERYWHERE!**