

SARA POL-LIM

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Sara Pol-Lim was born the oldest of four children in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 1966. She had a comfortable middle-class childhood in the city until the age of nine, when the Khmer Rouge took power. When the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975, she and her family were forced from their home and forcibly displaced to a camp deep in the Cambodian jungle. As an urban child, Sara was targeted by the Khmer regime for being “corrupted” by outside influence. Sara was forced to attend “reeducation” (propaganda) classes and gather supplies for the camp. She was quickly separated from her father, who was sent to a male work camp and never heard from again. Food quickly became scarce and two of her younger brothers died of malnutrition. Sara survived thanks to the help of her remaining brother, who scavenged for insects and plants for her to eat, but he eventually died of malnutrition as well. Two years after the Khmer Rouge takeover, she was separated from her remaining family and brought to a children’s camp. There, she befriended an older girl who helped her to escape through the jungle and reunite with her mother. Her journey did not end there, however; as the Khmer Rouge government began to crumble by the end of

1978. She and her mother left the now unmanned camp, and made their way to a refugee camp in Thailand. There, Sara began her education again. In 1981, she left for the United States with her mother, and they settled in Long Beach, where they reunited with family members. She earned a master’s degree from Chapman University and went on to be elected Executive Director of a Cambodian community nonprofit that seeks to help refugees. She was interviewed on May 26, 2015, in Long Beach, CA, USA.