"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots." - Marcus Garvey

FROM LAO-AMERICAN ARTIST SISAVANH HOUGHTON: MY LEGACIES OF WAR

Sisavanh Phouthavong Houghton is one of the first professional Lao American visual artists and educators of her generation. Together with her family, Sisavanh was resettled in Kansas in 1980 at the age of 4. Over 5,400 Lao refugees were resettled in Kansas in the aftermath of the Secret War that ended more than 40 years ago. Inspired by Legacies of War’s mission, Sisavanh created the exhibition "Legacies of War", at TInney Contemporary Gallery in Nashville, Tennessee that confronts the challenges of bicultural memory and documentation through powerful acrylic work. She will give her artist talk tomorrow on March 4, 2017 at the gallery. Part of the proceeds from the show will go towards Legacies of War's educational programs.

Dear Friends,

I met Legacies of War’s Executive Director Channapha Khamvongsa at the Lao American Writers Summit in San Diego last year where I first learned about Legacies of War's work and the depth of the bombings in Laos. Her sheer motivation for change, along with our conversation about our historical journeys as Lao refugees resonated and sparked my newest work, "Legacies of War".

I was deeply moved by Legacies’ commitment to making Laos safe for future generations, and hope that you will join me in supporting this important work. But first, let me tell you a little bit about my journey.

Today, I am a wife, mother of two daughters, an artist, and a professor of art at Middle Tennessee State University. I’ve called the United States home ever since I was a small child. But my journey began as a refugee just like thousands of other refugees who fled Laos, a country in Southeast Asia the size of Minnesota.

The Plain of Jars, 36" x 72", Acrylic, Ink, Spray Paint on Canvas

Sisavanh Houghton, 2017
My father was a doctor who was working with the Red Cross, an organization affiliated with the United States. Fear, danger, and political and economic uncertainty in Laos drove us to escape. Like many others, we made the harrowing journey across the Mekong River at night. My father spent some time in a Thai jail, but we were eventually reunited at the Thai refugee camp in Nong Khai. After two years we were accepted into the U.S. refugee program. In 1980, along with other Laotian refugees, my family and I were resettled in Kansas. Growing up in Kansas straight out of the refugee camp was not easy as we faced many cultural and social economic barriers similar to families who have been uprooted from their homelands.

Driven by these challenges during childhood, I found my calling in the arts and higher education. I pay tribute to my Laotian roots through my art work, which deals with identity, culture, refugee experiences, journey of escape, and the abstract concept of "home". As a refugee, the process of connecting and disconnecting with a place or community are abstracted ideas of migration. The collage and paintings in my newest work are an ongoing dialogue about assimilating and relocating into another culture and space.

Learning about the UXO issue through Legacies of War has inspired me to explore more about my own Laotian roots, history, and the Secret War. I recently took my first trip to Laos and Thailand where I visited the location of the former refugee camp in Nong Khai as part of my personal process of closure. I realized that even though I was in Laos for only two years, it will always be part of my life and journey. As I learned about people in Laos still being killed and maimed from a war that ended more than 40 years ago, it became important for me to contribute to a new legacy of peace in my mother country - through art as a form of advocacy.

My work has always been about social change. With my newest work "Legacies of War", I hope to help promote this crucial life-saving cause and support an organization close to my heart.

I applaud Legacies of War for its education and advocacy work and I hope you will join me today in making a difference. More bombs being cleared means more lives being saved. And that is a mission worth being involved in!

Learn more about upcoming events here or contact info@legaciesofwar.org for more information. Please consider making a tax-deductible gift today of $5,000, $1,000, $500, or $100. Help us make Laos safe for future generations - together, we can finish the job!

Thank you,

Sisavanh Houghton
Legacies of War Supporter

DONATE NOW

After you make your gift, will you share this appeal with 3 other people who might also be able to make a similar contribution?

Forward to a Friend
WASHINGTON, DC

Ready to reconnect? We are not even 2 weeks away from our hard cider tasting event at Thally Restaurant on March 12! Enjoy a Sunday afternoon tasting 10 different ciders along Rob Miller, owner and local cider producer at Distillery Lane Ciderworks. Limited tickets!

CALIFORNIA

Legacies of War is coming to the Bay area! You’re invited to a Garden Party & Fundraiser on April 8 in Berkeley Hills. Join us mix, mingle, sample authentic Lao cuisine, and support a great cause! Get your tickets here.

LOTS OF PLACES

Legacies of War is coming to your community in 2017! This year, we will bring our educational programs across the U.S., including California, Minnesota, Tennessee, Oregon, Washington State, Rhode Island, Virginia, Massachusetts and many more! Stay tuned and check out our facebook page, twitter and website for details over the upcoming months. Interested in bringing the travel exhibit to your town? Contact us at info@legaciesofwar.org

SAVE THE DATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2017
LEGACIES OF WAR BENEFIT
RECEPTION & DINNER IN WASHINGTON, DC

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