

AHN & SORSÉ WRAP-UP

Read & Write Wrap-Up

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
CAMBODIAN AMERICAN LITERARY ARTS ASSOCIATION



Executive Director Lena Sarunn and the Marketing Team, Princess Moon and Sopheak Sam

Resiliency in Times of Adversity

by Joan Chun

At the start of the year, many of us had everything planned for 2020- travel plans, goals, how we will spend Khmer New Year, when to eat out at our favorite restaurants, and more. The Cambodian American Literary Arts Association team certainly did! We couldn't wait to table at all the events in April for Khmer New Year and meet you in person to tell you about CALAA's mission. We wanted to hold in person workshops where we could chat with each and every one of you to talk about your writing passions and about your favorite books. Due to COVID-19, CALAA had to quickly re-adjust as all of us had to. The big question for us was: How do we continue our work? Gratefully, the effort and positivity from the CALAA team and volunteers kept strong, and we were able to do as much as we can with the resources that we had. We talked, planned, and maybe even cried a little as we met virtual meeting after virtual meeting trying to figure out how we can proceed under the difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, we persisted. With your support, we had a very productive year.

Recently, many of us have lost loved ones. We want to acknowledge your loved ones including the loss from our literary arts community- Jory Horn, Anthony Veasna So, and Kimarlee Nguyen- may you all rest in peace.

Thank you to the first members of our Membership Program for believing in our program initiative so we can share CALAA news with the world.

Please read and enjoy our first annual newsletter, the Ahn and Sorsé Wrap-Up.

In this issue:

Writing & Literary Arts Workshops

Social Justice & Facing the Challenges of Racism

Community Events & Book Giveaways

The Stilt House Zine

Grants, Fundraisers, & Donations

2021 Goals

2020 Operations Team

Logo Update

Thank You Volunteers & More

"I'm very fortunate for CAALA to exist because it's a space that I seek and yearn for. As someone who has constantly moved and feeling disconnected with my community, it's always wholesome and nourishing to feel a part of something. Writing is something I really enjoy and it's something I am trying to push myself to do more even when things are hard right now. I think just having heard everyone stories and collectively agreeing on various things just made me feel so much better. Thank you for existing and providing workshops for us. It is so meaningful and more so now for me."

- Feedback on Radical Description Workshop

Writing & Literary Arts Workshops

Creating brave and safe spaces for creative writing and sharing

The expectation for our writing and literary arts workshops is a room full of eager participants ready to learn something new and interesting from one of our Cambodian or multicultural workshop presenters. We were unable to meet in person this year, but we certainly still were able to gather and meet virtually. Each workshop was educational, unique, and insightful. We are grateful for each workshop presenter and each participant that showed up and shared their voice.

A big thank you to our grantors for making these workshops possible:

The Center of Hope and Healing/The Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice
Lowell Cultural Council

*We would like to give a special thank you to Khmer Linguistics Access Program Manager at CHH, **Mana Kheang**, for the amazing leadership heading the OVC grant!*



2020 Workshops

Writing Workshop by Princess Moon in conjunction with the Mosaic Project with Master Yary Livan for Jacqui Miller's students at J.G. Pyne School
Self Confidence Workshop by Princess Moon
Radical Description Workshop by Sokunthary Svay
Have You Eaten Yet Workshop by Princess Moon
Zine Workshop by Chummeng Suon

We are grateful to have had over 120 participants in our workshops!

Example of one of the writing prompts in our workshops:

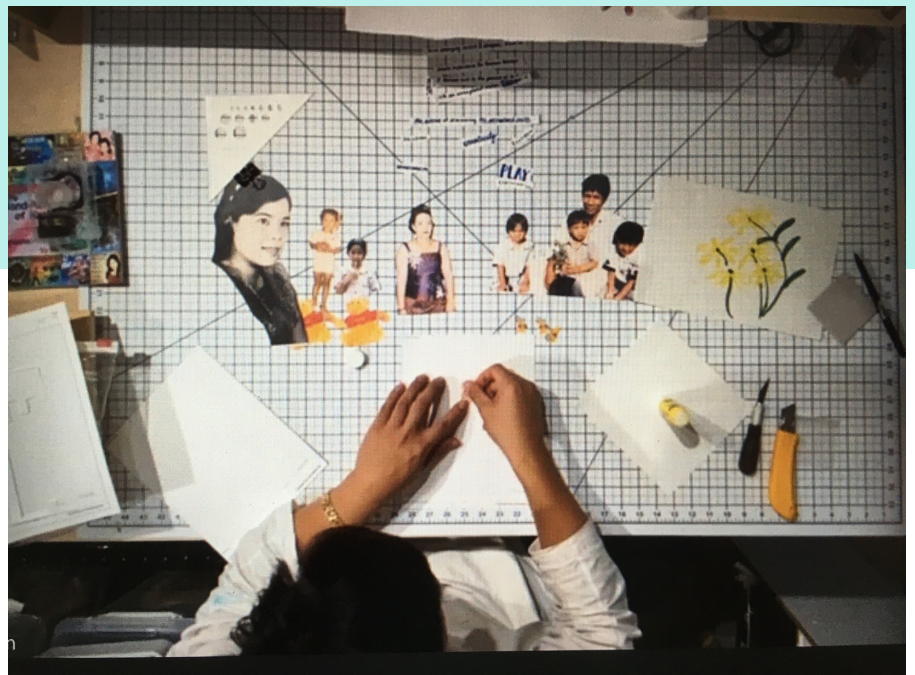
You wake up in your childhood home and your mother is cooking. It's a Saturday. You already know what she is cooking because of all the aromas that seep into your room. Jot down a quick freewrite describing how this makes you feel.

- From *Have You Eaten Yet* Workshop by Princess Moon

Is there a workshop theme that you are interested in ?

Please let us know by e-mailing:

calaa.lowell@gmail.com



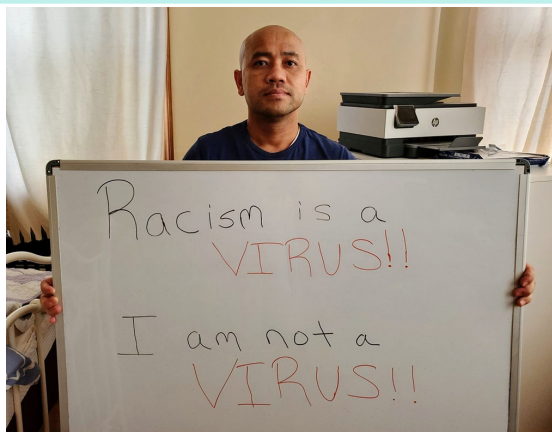
Chummeng Soun presents Zine Workshop and shows us how to make a zine

To learn more about the Khmer Linguistics Access Program, please go to: <https://chhinc.org/klap/>

Social Justice & Facing the Challenges of Racism

The Cambodian American Literary Arts Association (CALAA) participates in social movements and fights racism through discussions and writings, Black Lives Matter Translations Project, and poetry

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the racial rhetoric from the US federal administration caused hurtful incidents to those with Asian descent across the globe. In Lowell, MA, CALAA participated in the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA)'s Anti-Hate Campaign in May 2020, the same month that George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police. After this the Black Lives Matter movement re-ignited and we knew that we must stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters and address issues like police brutality and systemic racism.

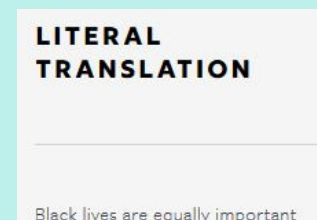
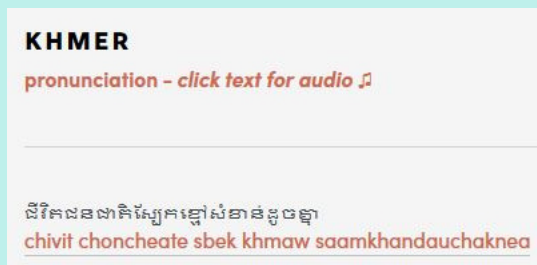


Board Clerk Jacob Som participates in CMAA's Anti-Hate Campaign

In June 2020, Board president Sanary Phen and Scholar, Poet, and CALAA Co-Founder, Sokunthary Svay came together at CALAA's first Community Dialogue, to discuss the 1978 International Rescue Committee ad entitled "Black Americans Urge Admission of the Indochinese Refugees" in The New York Times, which documents the support of major Black leaders for the admittance of Southeast Asian refugees into the United States. In Pueblo, Colorado, our deputy director worked on gathering stories on statues of oppression.

In addition, our Executive Director Lena Sarunn Board Director Sovicheth Boun, PhD, and CALAA

volunteer Sopheak Sam worked with leaders from local organizations in Massachusetts (Sovanna Pouy from CMAA and Sarorn Lin from UMASS Lowell Cambodian American Student Association) and Minnesota (Michael Khuth from Generation Magazine) on the Black Lives Matter Translations Project and translated thirty-two words and phrases from English to Khmer with accompanying audio so that the Cambodian community can have meaningful conversations with family and friends.



CALAA was challenged to speak up and to do something about the social injustices that were happening. By providing a platform to writers, artists, and creatives as well as advocates and community organizers, we encouraged all to use their medium of choice to share their heart and voice with the community.

Furthermore, we would like to give our gratitude to the international connections who have helped to amplify voices from the Cambodian diaspora, Daniel Marchette and Alastair McCready from Southeast Asia Globe in Cambodia and Simon Kaack from Sudostein in Germany.

Please continue to the following page to read how the impact of social movements has affected the Cambodian community.



"I am still learning how to have difficult conversations with family. But I am hopeful, because I was able to pull my mom to be part of this. Because she grew to have a better understanding, she jumped in and participated alongside me for the Letters for Black Lives project."

- Sabrina Im, poet and writer from California



"Why would they constantly be scrutinized and judged unjustly for the color of their skin. Thanking God everyday just to see another day, or praying just to make it through the hour. All of this ... Is about race, and it has always been since the beginning of history in the United States."

- DK, graphic designer from Minnesota

For further reading, please go to the following links:
<https://southeastasiaglobe.com/khmer-diaspora-black-lives-matter-movement/>
<https://southeastasiaglobe.com/black-lives-matter-khmer/>
<https://southeastasiaglobe.com/covid-19-cambodian-diaspora-us/>

**CALAA
 GATHERS
 STORIES
 FROM
 Indigenous,
 Chicano, &
 Multicultural
 communities
 IN PUEBLO, CO**



From open access journal *südostasien* (meaning Southeast Asian in German) with theme of Diapora- Community beyond borders, on November 16, 2020 Joan Chun shares:

„Um eine stärkere Gemeinschaft aufzubauen und Verbündete im Kampf gegen Rassismus zu werden, müssen wir das Problem anerkennen und die toxischen Erzählungen, die man uns beigebracht hat, aktiv wieder verlernen.“

"In order to build a stronger community and become allies in the fight against racism, we must acknowledge the problem and actively unlearn the toxic narratives we have been taught."

For full article, please go to:
<https://suedostasien.net/kambodscha-antirassistischer-wandel-braucht-solidaritaet/>

Recently on December 5th, the Lowell Sun decided to share an editorial titled *New arrivals, your job is to learn English*. CALAA's Leadership Team responded through poetry.

Part of it is shared below:



*We bear the burden of sorrows only the heart can tell through silent tears
 Only we know the resiliency and strength these hardships can unlock
 Mere words cannot convey the pain and tragedy endured
 There is knowledge in the words we speak that does not fit your definitions.*

*Is it fear that has you shunning what you can't comprehend?
 It's sad to think that to you human existence is some sort of competition
 Humanity knows itself in the warmth of a smile, a gentle touch of the hand*

*It is not bound by words but can be freely expressed without boundaries
 It is not the utterance of sounds but the vibrations of emotions
 Love is the common language that makes brethren out of adversaries
 Love is unspoken, clairvoyant, universal and endless
 Only when we choose to communicate with love can fear and hatred come to an end*

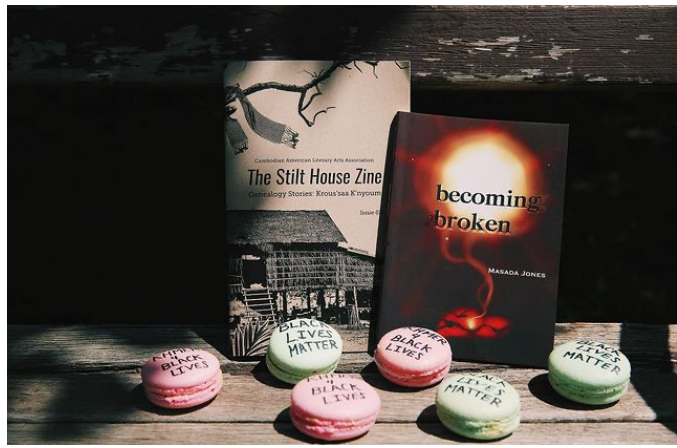


2020 US Election

CALAA urged voters to use their voice to:



Overall, it is not always easy to discuss truths. It is not always easy to address and navigate through our differences of opinions. Regardless, we must do the right thing.



Community Events & Book Giveaways

Staying connected with our community members is very important. Here are some ways that CALAA stays informed and connected with you.

One of the main ways that CALAA stays connected with you especially during these times is through social media. This is where we see the posts, likes, and comments. We also receive messages and have made some very significant connections through this. In addition, we research emerging and established Khmer and multicultural writers and scout community events that may align with our mission.

We try our best to keep "in the know," but may miss some things.

If you know of a writer, event, or anything related to literary arts that we should know about, please do not hesitate to email us at calaa.lowell@gmail.com.

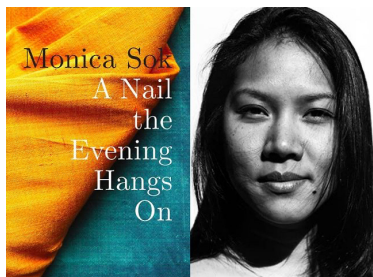
CALAA Book Giveaways

August 2020- *Becoming Broken* by Masada Jones and *The Stilt House Zine* Food and Identity Issue 02

October 2020- *On Earth Beneath Sky* by Chath pierSath

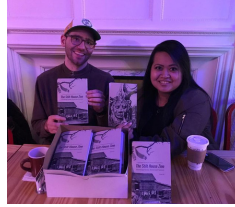
December 2020- *A Nail the Evening Hangs On* by Monica Sok

Monica Sok is also a Co-Founder of CALAA! ✓



CALAA was exhilarated to host and/or be a part of several events:

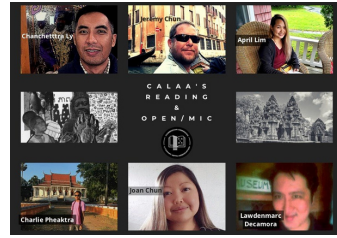
- **January 21, 2020** Poetry Night at Brew'd Awakening Coffeehaus
- **January 24, 2020** Open Mic Night at Coffee and Cotton



- **June 11, 2020** Community Dialogue: Documenting Solidarity



- **July 11, 2020** The Stilt House Zine 01 Resilience Reading/Open Mic



- **July 25, 2020** CMAA's Lowell Virtual Khmer Event



- **September 4, 2020** Pueblo Arts Alliance's The Fight: A Retrospective of Social Justice in Pueblo*



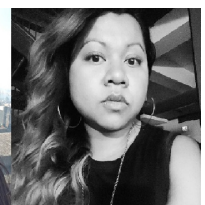
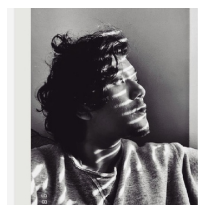
- **September 19, 2020** Southeast Asian Arts & Culture Coalition's 10th Mid-Autumn Harvest Festival



- **October 10, 2020** Pueblo's 2nd Multicultural Festival*

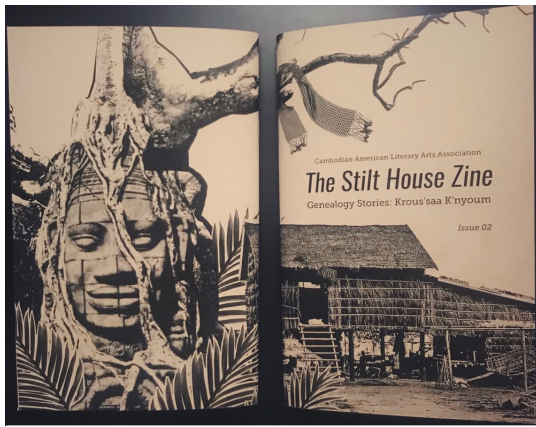


- **October 20, 2020** Untitled Open Mic



THANK YOU

to Tooch Van at CMAA for Khmer translation of our workshop fliers and Khmer interpretation at our first Community Dialogue!



Grants, Fundraisers, & Donations

CALAA would not be here without your continuous support. We appreciate every cent donated to our growing literary arts organization.

Through grants and donations, CALAA was able to move forward with all planned programming. In 2020, we received grant funding from the Office for Victims of Crime through The Center of Hope and Healing, Lowell Cultural Council and the Literary Arts Emergency Fund (Shout out to Sovanna Pouy for sharing this opportunity!). Kudos to CALAA Board Treasurer Sopoline Teng for helping with our financial inquiries as we look for more funding opportunities.

In addition, CALAA supporters can donate when signing up for our free workshops and through our suggested donation of \$10 per zine. We also created the Membership Program for those interested in joining. After signing up, each member receives a certificate, letter from the ED, a copy of the latest zine, first release of next year's The Stilt House Zine theme, and our annual newsletter.

Recent fundraisers: Giving Tuesday & GroupRaise

The Stilt House Zine (TSHZ)

CALAA's annual literary arts magazine got a taste of success this year with its theme of Food and Identity អាហារ និង អត្តសញ្ញាណ (Ahar ning at tak sanh nhan).

The Stilt House Zine was lead by Lena Sarunn and Joan Chun this year. We received 40 submissions from the Cambodian and multicultural communities. Along with The Stilt House Zine Committee members, Brad DeMatteo and CALAA Board Director, Laura Ly, and the talented consultants that worked tirelessly on the zine, we can all expect the printed and online edition by January 2021.

Tremendous thank you to all involved with our third issue:

Theme Translation: Mana Kheang

Editor: Christine Su

Print Design /Cover Designer: Chann Chum

Online Design: Malisa Kuch

Grantors: Lowell Cultural Council & Literary Arts Emergency Fund

Supporters: Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association & Clemente Park Committee

Black-Owned Publisher: Willow Books, the Award-Winning Division of Aquarius Press

To make a donation:
 PayPal: calaa.lowell@gmail.com
 By check: Cambodian American Literary Arts Association,
 PO Box 9687, Lowell, MA 01853



2021 Goals

- Finalize TSHZ Issue 03
- Raise enough funds to print TSHZ Issue 01
- Start process for TSHZ Issue 04
- Roll out Journaling Program
- Recruit three members for the Community Ambassador Program
- Complete the Monsoon Montage and Zine Project
- Kick off CALAA's Official Book Club
- Diversity, equity and inclusion training for Operations Team and Board
- Find an office space
- Community Dialogues and more Workshops (Of course!)

Did You Know?

The Cambodian American Literary Arts Association is a partner for the 1960's Cambodian Music Program (2020-2021) hosted by Tufts University and Angkor Dance Troupe



Collecting memories about 1960's pop music
រំលឹកអនុស្សាវរីយ៍មរតកបទភ្លេងសំនៀងដើម

A free program by and from November 2020 to March 2021.

បទយេយៀ
Yeye Music
រំលឹក
Roamvong

Special thank you to Stéphanie Khoury, Ph.D, Chummeng Soun, Tim Thou, Kimhan Meas, and Nate Hun for expanding our knowledge on Cambodian Music!

2020 Operations Team

May we present to you the faces behind CALAA's 2020 Operations Team



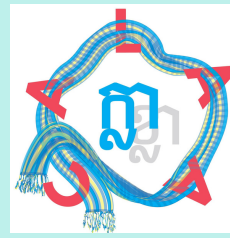
Executive Director, **LENA SARUNN** is a second-generation immigrant with both parents from Phnom Penh, Cambodia. She was born and raised in Lowell, Massachusetts. Lena obtained her Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Massachusetts Lowell and completed her Master in Business Administration. Lena enjoys bringing the community together through CALAA's mission.



Co-Founder and Deputy Director, **JOAN CHUN** grew up in Lowell, Massachusetts and currently resides in Pueblo, Colorado. She is dedicated to preserving Southeast Asian culture in the United States and to helping Cambodian-Americans who are struggling with their cultural identity to learn about their history and culture for better understanding of themselves. Joan believes that CALAA is an important way for those with Cambodian descent to connect through literature to address issues that affect the community.

Logo Update

To keep up with the changes and growth of the organization, CALAA received a makeover with a new logo created and donated by Designer Malisa Kuch.

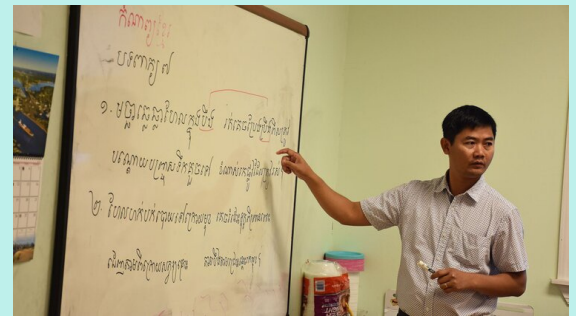


The New Logo Concept

An open book – a motif that symbolizes CALAA's mission to foster a unique space for storytelling and preservation of those stories.

Known for its distinct pattern and versatility, the krama is a symbol of the Cambodian experience.

The two elements together represent the unique perspectives of the Cambodian diaspora through literature.



Special thank you to Co-Founder and Volunteer Recruiter Tararith Kho and to our amazing volunteers!

- Brad DeMatteo
- Jeremy Chun
- Malisa Kuch
- Sopheak Sam
- Chann Chum
- Princess Moon
- Sabrina Im
- Melanie Chhouy

Thank you for taking the time to read our first newsletter, Ahn and Sorsé Wrap-Up. Wishing all a great and safe holiday! We feel blessed and give an ode to those who helped create CALAA's foundation. To end this newsletter, we would like to use one of our favorite phrases from one of our Board of Directors, Chris Miller- "Keep on keepin' on." See you in 2021!

2020 CALAA Board



- President- Sanary Phen
- Treasurer- Sopoline Teng
- Clerk- Jacob Som
- Director- Laura Ly
- Director- Sovicheth Boun, PhD
- Director- Chris Miller

Join the CALAA Family!

Help us empower the Cambodian and multicultural communities through the literary arts movement.

For volunteer opportunities or to apply for Vice President or Director position on the Board, please email calaa.lowell@gmail.com.