

International Colloquium

Cambodia, from then to now: Memory and plural identities in the aftermath of genocide

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Abstract

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Two years ago, I began to write short chapters of my life. This later turned out to be a semi-autobiographical one-woman show in which I also performed about being Khmer-Canadian, specifically Khmer-Krom Canadian, on my own terms called *Someone Between*. It deals with the push and pull of my roots; distancing myself from it in order to see where I stand and being pulled back to it to do exactly that. It was the inaugurating production of Apsara Theatre Company, founded by Milena Buziak and myself, in order to create theatre that is socially, politically and culturally relevant to the Canadian mosaic. Since its birth in March 2008, it has been invited to present at various festivals and conferences and continues to develop to this day.

Within that process, I discovered the activist in me. I began to volunteer with the Khmer-Kampuchea Krom Federation Youth Committee, which has led me to be a delegate at the Ninth Session of United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in April 2010. I have recently begun to work on a new project called the *Khmer-Kampuchea Krom Oral History Project*, in which we will be interviewing the elders of the community to document and preserve their life stories for generations after.

I am personally and artistically fascinated with the gap, the in-between I speak of in my play, that puts distance and misunderstanding between my parents' generation, those who have escaped their homeland, and my own generation within the context of the diasporic experience. I believe it is possible to shrink, if not close that gap, through true respect, compassion and deep listening on both sides.