

Conference Title: Cambodia from Then to Now: Memory and Plural Identities in the Aftermath of Genocide

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Abstract title **“Witnessing the Cambodian Killing Fields – Using live Histories to Create a Museum Exhibit on Khmer Rouge Atrocities”**

This presentation will chronicle the process used in collaboration between the Cambodian American Heritage Museum and Killing Field Memorial in Chicago and the Anthropology Department at Northern Illinois University to collect, process, and analyze the life histories of some 50 Cambodian American elders to use to create an exhibit on the period of Khmer Rouge rule. A grant from the Henry Luce Foundation funded the collection of 48 life history interviews in 2008; the interviews were subsequently transcribed and translated. In 2010 the interviews were reviewed for common themes, and topics and quotations selected for use in the exhibit. An additional eight videotaped interviews were conducted, some re-interviews with the original 48 persons, some with new individuals. The topics discussed: displacement and forced relocation, the work regimes of the KR era, separation from family and the inability to protect those one loved, as well as death from starvation, disease and violence, served as key themes in the design of the exhibit. The presentation will include a visual presentation of the exhibit as well as a discussion of this process of imbedding the voices of local Chicago Cambodian American survivors into the wider story of the genocide.