

**Cambodia, from then to now:  
memory and plural identities in the aftermath of genocide  
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**Niborom Young**

**Unspoken Words**

The aftermath of war has, in many ways, left a new country. The degree of difference from Cambodia's past, is only now starting to show itself. The infrastructure is delicate. Underneath the tourist and political façade there is little depth to filter and monitor the rapid changes the Khmer people now face. The vacuum left by the loss of so many, is being filled at any cost, with all possible speed. Global conflicts retreat from the front page, to fade in the collective memory of the next generation. Those who survived Pol Pot will continue to dwindle in number. As the social divide widens, many will focus on survival, others on keeping up, a few on prospering and expansion. For most of the population, there is little time or money for things outside the essentials of life. This leaves many aspects of social history exposed to loss and neglect, as Cambodia endeavours to maintain station with her neighbors.

This paper describes a New Zealand based oral history project centred on the lives of ten Cambodian refugee women. From different backgrounds, their stories are told, from childhood to New Zealand. The project started in 1993, Woman's Suffrage Year and is now supported by the National Library of New Zealand. The paper looks at the selection of the subject ladies and the differing approaches required to record so much of which they had never before spoken.

The presenter then considers the Cambodian community in New Zealand today. The relevance, interest and importance of Cambodia's recent history, as seen by a new generation of young expatriate Khmer.