

Genocide Education Project

The Teaching of “A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)”

Inauguration of Anti-Genocide Memorial

Boeng Trabek High School, Phnom Penh, February 19, 2011

On February 19, 2011, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) will inaugurate an anti-genocide memorial at Boeng Trabek High School in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Placed in the center of the schoolyard, the granite memorial has two slogans engraved in gold lettering, which read: *"Talking about experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime promotes reconciliation and educates children about forgiveness and tolerance,"* and *"Learning about the history of Democratic Kampuchea helps prevent genocide."* The two slogans are designed to promote forgiveness, tolerance, education and reconciliation and are part of the larger initiatives between DC-Cam and the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports' Cambodian Genocide Education Project to honor Khmer Rouge victims and to promote learning about Khmer Rouge history. By 2013, the Documentation Center of Cambodia will have inaugurated over 1000 memorials on Cambodian high school grounds.

Boeng Trabek High School has particular relevance to recent Cambodian history. During Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), the Khmer Rouge transformed the high school into a prison. Several survivors from the former prison have stated that approximately one hundred intellectuals who returned from abroad were brought to this site and lived at the Prison. Prisoners' daily tasks consisted of transplanting rice, harvesting crops, gathering *kamploak* (a kind of edible flower), building dams, and other agricultural work. Vegetables were also grown at the site to produce food. Although it is believed that the Prison's intellectual group members were able to raise comments or concerns, any criticism directed at *Angkar Revolution* would result in disappearance, and presumably death. After the Khmer Rouge regime's collapse in 1979, Professor Hem Vanna, a survivor from that Prison, recognized some intellectuals' in prisoner photographs at Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. Mr. Lun Chheng Kai, Boeng Trabek former high school principle, also recalled seeing ten to twenty pairs of shackles scattered in front of the school building in 1979.

In 2015, the former Khmer Rouge site will be transformed again, except this time it will be a space that will promote, rather than destroy, memory and justice as the site is the future home of DC-Cam's permanent center, the *Sleuk Rith* Institute. The permanent center derives its name from dried leaves (*Sleuk Rith*), which are documentation methods Cambodian religious leaders and scholars have used for centuries to write history, disseminate knowledge, and preserve culture during periods of harsh rule. The *Sleuk Rith* Institute, which strives to be the foremost research institution in Cambodia and Southeast Asia, will house a state-of the art library, a research center, a museum, and a university for master degree programs in human rights.

During the inauguration, DC-Cam will distribute the textbook “A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)” and the monthly magazine *Searching for the Truth*, as well as anti-genocide posters to students and teachers. Such distribution hopes to broaden students' understandings of the Democratic Kampuchea period and the work of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. All the students (over 2,000 of graders 9-12) are expected to join the event.

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