



Youk Chhang.

Chronicling his country's painful past to bring its victims justice

BY JOHN KERRY

"CAMBODIA IS LIKE BROKEN glass," says Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia in Phnom Penh. "Without justice, we cannot put the pieces together." Putting the pieces together is the mission of the man who made himself the keeper of Cambodia's darkest memories.

Standing up to powerful forces that feared reopening the past, Chhang has documented the three years, eight months and 20 days of cruelty that claimed the lives of 1.7 million Cambodians under Pol Pot's genocidal Khmer Rouge. Six hundred thousand pages of documents, maps of 20,000 mass graves and 4,000 transcribed interviews with former Khmer Rouge soldiers are testimony to Chhang's conviction that there is no future without making peace with the past. They will provide the evidence at a long-delayed tribunal on the genocide, which it is hoped will finally start this year.

Confronting painful history is never easy. But for Chhang, 46, it is personal. Under Pol Pot, his sister was accused of stealing rice. A soldier slashed open her stomach to prove her guilt. Her stomach was empty. She died a slow and horrible death. This is one of the unspeakable acts that have gone not only unpunished but unexplained.

The tribunal will allow the world to hear the architects of these crimes speak about why they inflicted such suffering. In pain revisited, there will be a chance for a nation's healing—and in Youk Chhang, a hero confronting the past's villains.

Senator Kerry brokered the U.N.'s Cambodian-genocide tribunal

Timothy Gittins.

Representing the bravery that all Americans salute

There is a comforting ordinariness to Army Captain Timothy Gittins. Based at Fort Campbell, Ky., the 31-year-old Southern Baptist is devoted to his wife Shelley and their two sons T.J., 6, and Cole, 4. He drinks Bud Light and tries to find time to zoom around on his new Harley.

Yet history has thrust Gittins into America's hot zones in Afghanistan and Iraq. He was deployed deep in Afghanistan's Shah-i-Kot valley battling—and being wounded by—the Taliban during Operation Anaconda in 2002. And last year he was prowling the dangerous neighborhoods south of Baghdad when a G.I. under his command was killed in a nighttime ambush in a vehicle just 10 ft. away.

Although Gittins' unit is likely to return to war sometime next year, he is transferring out and will train soldiers before taking on a third combat assignment in 2009. He is an apt symbol of the heroism that the U.S.'s pair of lengthening wars have demanded of the roughly 1 million men and women who have fought them. The Army recently recognized Gittins as one of its most outstanding young officers. The highly decorated Ranger says he loves leading troops in combat. "We have liberties that we stand to lose if we aren't willing to fight for them," he says. And he insists the U.S. is making more progress in Iraq than most people realize. At the same time, he has no problem with the wars' critics and appreciates those who oppose the conflicts but still support the men and women fighting in them.

While policy is cast in the White House and hammered out in the Pentagon and Congress, it is soldiers like Gittins who influence, through grit and courage, what actually happens on the ground.

—BY MARK THOMPSON

