

DITH PRAN

CAMBODIAN HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

Dith Pran's wartime life was portrayed in the award-winning movie, *The Killing Fields*. Pran and Sydney Schanberg, then a New York Times correspondent, covered the encroaching civil war in Cambodia from 1972 to 1975. While Americans and Cambodian dependents were evacuated from Phnom Penh on April 12, 1975, Pran and Sydney stayed to cover the fall of the capital to the communist Khmer Rouge.

Shortly after the takeover, Pran, Sydney and two other journalists were arrested by the Khmer Rouge and held for execution. Pran saved their lives by persuading the Khmer Rouge that the three Westerners were neutral French journalists. Released, the four took refuge in the French embassy until foreigners were asked to turn in their passports and Cambodians were ordered to leave. Exiled to the killing fields, the forced labor camps in the Cambodian countryside, Pran endured four years of starvation and torture. In 1976, Sydney Schanberg received a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of Cambodia and he accepted the award for himself and Pran. In October of 1979, Dith Pran escaped to Thailand and to freedom.

Born on September 27, 1942, in Angkor Wath, famous for its historic temples, which attracted many tourists, Pran was in the tourist business until the war spilled over from Vietnam. He then found work as a war correspondent. The Cambodian holocaust has changed his life forever. He lost over 50 relatives by the Khmer Rouge, including his father, three brothers, one sister, and their families. His mother died later of malnutrition. Only one sister and he survived.

- Photojournalist for *The New York Times* since 1980
- Appointed Goodwill Ambassador by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 1985
- Attended meeting of the International Red Cross in Geneva that promoted respect and international safe passage for war victims
- Testified several times before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives regarding the Cambodian situation
- Member of the Asian American Journalist Association
- Board member to many non-governmental organizations
- Received four honorary doctorate degrees
- 1998 Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipient
- Founder & President of *The Dith Pran Holocaust Awareness Project, Inc.*
- Compiler of *Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields: Memoirs by Survivors* (Published by Yale, 1997)
- An authority on Cambodia, holding countless interviews with newspapers, magazines, wire services, major

television and radio stations in the US and around the world

- Gives lectures to colleges, high schools, world affairs councils, and other interest groups

"I'm a one-person crusade. I must speak for those who did not survive and for those who still suffer. Since coming to America, I have visited Cambodia three times to evaluate the ongoing Cambodian crisis. The problems Cambodia faces are not only political but also economical and social. The Khmer Rouge have brought Cambodia back to year zero and that's why I'm trying to bring the Khmer Rouge leaders to the World Court. Like one of

my heroes, Elie Wiesel, who alerts the world to the horrors of the Jewish holocaust, I try to awaken the world to the holocaust of Cambodia, for all tragedies have universal implications."

"Part of my life is saving life. I don't consider myself a politician or a hero. I'm a messenger. If Cambodia is to survive, she needs many voices."

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