



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

Victim Impact

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Victim impact statement written by an adoptive girl who now lives in Saipan. The prosecution at this morning's Lauryn Galindo sentencing hearing presented a video of her reading the statement.

November 19, 2004.

"Just over 5 years ago, I was a 9 year old girl living in Siem Reap, Cambodia. I lived in a small house in Slorgram commune with my older sister Le, her husband Bu'on, who was a chef at a big restaurant and their baby son, Vitbol. Our older brother Muot also lived with us.

A short walk from our house lived my aunts - all of them were my mother's sisters. They lived with their husbands & children. We were all very close.

Every day I went to school - my family were very proud of me because I was such a good student. I also used to go to Cambodian dance lessons at the dance center.

On the weekend, I used to take care of Vitbol, while my sister cooked food to sell at the market. I used to help with the farm - my favorite time was playing with my cousins.

We did not have much money, but we all helped each other. We always had food & clothes. We were happy and loved each other.

One day, a man stopped me, and told me to go and ask my family if I could live in America. The man told me if they agreed, I should move to the orphanage for two weeks, and they would take me to Phnom Penh after that.

Suddenly, they told me I would go to Phnom Penh that day and meet my new mother. I didn't say goodbye to my sister, or anyone else. Did my sister know where to find me? When would I see them again? I was scared.

I met my new mom - she was pretty. I told her that I wanted to go back to Siem Reap, but she did not understand Khmer. I asked the lady who worked in the hotel to ask her.

The next day we went to the airport, and went to Siem Reap - maybe my mom DID understand Khmer! I was very excited, and told the taxi driver the directions to my house. We arrived there and my sister came down the steps smiling & crying. My new mom was very confused and went to find someone who could speak Khmer & English. We spent the next two days with my sister, and then we said goodbye. My mom made sure Le had our address, paper, envelopes, & stamps. When we left my sister was very sad & cried a lot. But at least we got the chance to say goodbye.

In America for the first few months I would cry a lot, especially at bedtime. I tried to be brave for my new family, but I missed my Cambodian family so much. I missed my country, my friends, the smell at night of the fire and the

food. I missed my sister singing Vitbol to sleep. I used to think a lot about when I was a flower girl for my sister when my sister got married. My new Mom used to hold me and stroke my head – she used to cry too. One night, she asked me if I would like to go back to Cambodia to live, as I seemed so unhappy. I was very mixed up. My Mom promised to take me for a visit to Cambodia.

As the months & years passed, I still missed Cambodia, but it didn't hurt so much. I have my Cambodian family in my heart, and will always love them. I hardly speak any Khmer any more. My sister gave birth to another baby boy – I would like to meet him. I used to be Vitbol's favorite person – now he would not even remember me, which makes me very sad. I still remember him so well, but he is a big boy now.

I may not have had a big fancy house in Cambodia, but I did have a home.

I may not have a big soft bed in Cambodia, but I had a place where I slept safely & peacefully each night.

I may not have had a big car in Cambodia, but I had an ox & cart

I may not have had parents in Cambodia who could give me all the fine things in life, but I had a family who loved me.

I may not have had private education in Cambodia, but I went to school & studied very hard.”

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