

Suggested Interview Questions

I. Life in Cambodia: Biographical Background and Childhood

A). Early life

- Where and when were your parents born? In what village, district, province?
- What is your ethnic background?
- What was the occupation of your parents? Your grandparents?
- Where were you born?
- What was your early life like? Where did you live as a child? In a village? In a town? Tell me about the living conditions. What was your house like?
- How many brothers and sisters did you have? What is your birth rank in the family?
- What did your family own? (land? farm? number of acres? oxen? poultry?)

B). Faith / education / customs

- What was your religion? How was it practiced?
- How many festival days did you have in the year? When were they? What did people do on festival days? Any special food? Describe activities.
- Tell me about your daily religious activities: Kitchen gods, door gods, fertility gods, fortune gods, etc.
- Tell me about the funeral and burial practices and rituals: describe ancestor worship; describe funeral taboos concerning death and disposal of body.
- Tell me about the moral teaching and upbringing of children.
- Can you tell me about some other values you learned as a child?
- What did you want to be when you were a child? Whom did you admire most when you were a child?
- Did you attend school? How long? If not, what did you do?
- What tasks did you perform as a child? Did you work in the fields? Who taught you?

C). Adult life

- Did you marry while still in Cambodia? Whom? At what age? How did you meet your spouse? (i.e., Was the marriage arranged? How was it arranged? Was there wealth exchanged? How much? Was there a courtship period? What's the age difference between bride and groom?)
- Where did you live after you married?
- What work did you do? Did you work for the government/military?
- Tell me about the income distribution and house work distribution in your household. Who did most of the chores in the household?
- Tell me about the diet at home in Cambodia, what did people eat?
- Did you have children? How many? How old?
- Tell me about some customs and rituals surrounding a person's birth.
- What is the ideal family size? Preferred offspring's sex, if any? (Are sons and daughters equally valued?)

D) Political transitions

- Do you remember how life was like under the French?
- Do you remember World War II? What was its impact on your life?
- What was life like when Prince Sihanouk was in power? What was the impact of the war in Vietnam on your life? What was the impact of the bombings?
- When did you first hear about the communists? Did any communists live in your village?
- Where were you when Pol Pot came to power?
- What happened to you during those years?
- Where were you sent? What was life like?
- What was your role under the Khmer Rouge? What work did you do?
- What happened to members of your family? To your friends?
- Did you get enough food during the KR reign? Medicine? Health care?
- Did you witness / participate in any torture? Any killings?
- How did you survive? How did you keep your family together?
- What kept you going and gave you the strength or the will to persevere?
- What is your saddest memory? Your happiest? Scariest? Angriest?
- What did you do when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia?
- Do you feel justice has been served in regards to the Khmer Rouge? What would you like to see happen to them?

II. Leaving Cambodia

A). Escape

- How did you escape Cambodia?
- Were you able to take members of your family? Was anyone hurt or killed? Were you able to keep members of your family together?
- Did you have to pay to get out? How did you get into Thailand? To the Philippines?
- What was life in the refugee camps like?
- Tell me about the activities, food, education, etc.
- Who was the authority in the camps? How did they treat you?
- Were you helped or recruited or sponsored by a church? Which church? Did you convert? What was your experience?
- How did you leave the camp?
- Who made the decisions about your trip? How did you decide where to go?
- Were you able to go where you wanted to go? Why or why not?

B) Coming to the United States

- How did you get to the United States? What was the path of your trip? Who determined your route?
- What was the hardest thing about your trip? Did you have any pleasant surprises?
- How did you choose the place where you settled? Where did you go first? Why? How did you end up in Stockton?
- What was your first impression of the United States? What special experiences did you have? Have you experienced hardships in getting settled? Who helped you? Who did not?
- Who was your sponsor? How did you find him/her/them? Has your sponsor been helpful to you?

- Did you have problems with immigration?

III. Life in the United States

A). Family life

- Has life in the United States been what you expected it to be?
- Have you been able to keep your family together?
- Have different members of your family adjusted differently?
- Have there been changes in parent-child relationships?
- Who heads your household?
- Do you have special problems raising your children here? What kinds of problems?
- How are your children/grandchildren doing in school?
- Have there been changes in your diet? How?
- Tell me about some other noticeable changes in lifestyle for yourself and your family?
- How many of your children are married? At what ages? Do they have children? What are their ages?
- How did you learn English?
- Did you go to school? To a regular school? To a Cambodian school?
- Have you had difficulties because you did not know English? Any embarrassing experiences? Any funny ones?
- Do you live in Park Village or another Cambodian community? If so, how has this affected your life here in America?

B). Faith/Culture

- What is your religion now? Has it changed? If yes, why did you change?
- If you've converted to Christianity, what denomination / church do you belong to? How does it help you?
- Has the practice of Buddhism here changed from the practice in Cambodia?
- Do Buddhist monks help the community locally deal with past and present trauma and the challenges of living in a new land?
- Are there healers in the community? What do they do?
- How are Cambodian customs different from American customs? Weddings? Funerals? What are they like?
- Are you doing anything to preserve your Cambodian heritage? How?

C). Civic life

- What are the political differences in the Cambodian community? Do you know any former Khmer Rouge? How did they become so? How are they treated by the Cambodian community?
- Are you a U.S. citizen? Do you hope to be one? What does that mean to you?
- Have you had difficulties dealing with Americans?
- How do you get along with other Asian Americans? Vietnamese? Chinese?
- Japanese? Have they made you feel welcome?
- How are Cambodian laws different from American laws?
- Do you or other members of the community send money to Cambodia/family there?
- Do you take part in the political practices there? Voting? Do you follow news from Cambodia?

- Do you want to return to Cambodia?
- How do you feel about Cambodians having to have fled their homeland and settled in other countries all over the world?

D). Economic life

- What kind of job do you have now?
- Do you have trouble surviving economically?
- What is your source of income here?
- Have you been able to get work? If so, how did you get your job? Do you like it?
- Are you doing what you are trained for?
- Have you had problems with welfare?

E). Crime

- Have you experienced any violence?
- Do you know any families who have been impacted by their children joining Cambodian gangs? How does this impact your community/family?
- Why are Cambodian youths joining gangs? Who do they fight against?
- How were you impacted by the Cleveland School shootings? Did you know any of the victims?

IV. Is there anything else we haven't asked you about that you would like to discuss?