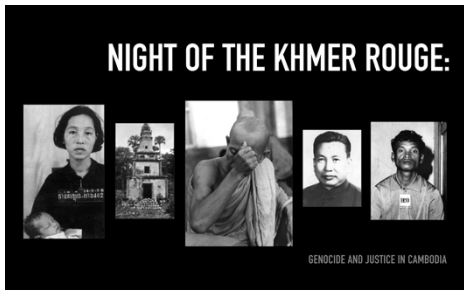


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NIGHT OF THE KHMER ROUGE: GENOCIDE AND JUSTICE IN CAMBODIA

Depicting Torture and Genocide:
Documentation Center of Cambodia and Rutgers
University's Photo Exhibition on the Khmer Rouge
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The task of preserving the memory of a horrific past is both difficult and necessary. Rutgers University located in New Jersey, America has accomplished this very task with their recent photo exhibition titled, "Night of the Khmer Rouge: Genocide and Justice in Cambodia" displayed at the Paul Robeson Gallery. The graphic photos tell a frightening story of what humanity can do to itself. The most ghastly chapter of Cambodia's history began on April 17, 1975 when Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge forces stormed victoriously into Phnom Penh after years of civil war. Their victory meant the implementation of a radical social and economic plan that would transform Cambodia into a self-sufficient socialist society. The new government was called Democratic Kampuchea. Labeling their plan a failure is a gross understatement.

The terror and killing that enveloped Cambodia during the government of Democratic Kampuchea lasted under four years and destroyed two million lives. Those who survived were left to make do in a ravaged country stripped of its schools, shops, temples, government structures, and sense of security. The photo exhibition at the Paul Robeson Gallery shed light upon the darkness that overcame Cambodia. In particular, attention is focused on the highest level security prison then known by its code name, S-21. Prisoner photographs taken at S-21 disturbingly reveal young faces, some as young as five years old. Immediately one wonders how a child could be a prisoner of S-21 which was intended for serious political offenses, but then again the Khmer Rouge considered a starving person "stealing" rice grains a crime worthy of execution. It has been estimated that 14,000-20,000 prisoners passed through the gates of S-21 from 1975-1979 where they died or were taken to Choeung Ek (a nearby field) for group extermination. The reflective essays at the gallery provide some understanding of what occurred inside Cambodia and the issues that face Cambodia now as it tries to reconcile with this tragic past. Together with the photographs, they expose a truth that must be told. This truth of what happened in Cambodia is now being dealt with in the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) which seeks to prosecute former senior Khmer Rouge leaders. It is hoped that the legal justice delivered by tribunal will help Cambodia commence genuine healing and reconciliation. DQK.

Shown at Rutgers' Paul Robeson Gallery in Newark, New Jersey from January 16 to February 22, 2007, this exhibition featured photographs from Democratic Kampuchea held in DC-Cam's archives.

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