

The Truth

Siang T. Dim

I am the daughter of refugees
I am a refugee myself
I escaped the corrupted government when I was nine
I almost died from my motion sickness
From the 3-days bus ride from Khampat to Yangon.

At the border of Burma and Thailand,
I starved with my brothers and my mom
I shared an eight-ounce water bottle with them too.

I walked through the forest in Thailand in the dark
Being afraid to be caught by the Soldiers
Because if I get caught, I get shot
Then I die in an unfamiliar land
The mud took one of my brother's dirty rubber slippers
But we just left it there.

I got to Malaysia by a taxi with four passenger seats
I felt nauseous squeezing in the car with eight other people
The smell of weed from the driver smoking made me sick.

I lived in Malaysia illegally
The constant fear of being caught by the police was normal
Because if I get caught, I could be sent to jail
There was no mercy even as a child.
Education was out of reach
I didn't even know where the schools were.
This isn't my full story in Malaysia though
I was sexually assaulted
But I survived
I stood up for myself to stop it when no one was there to help
I am proud to say that I am a survivor.

I got to Seattle, Washington when I was ten
This is the nation that my parents longed for
I finally have the chance to fulfill their dreams along with mine.

I am a 1st generation college student
My father's highest education level is fourth grade
My mother's highest education level is eighth grade
My older brother doesn't go to college
But I am ready to be the change
I am ready to break the cycle of poverty in my family.

When I turn eighteen years old
I became the official guardian of my two little brothers
In America where my parents can't speak the language
I serve as the translator
I advocate for my brothers' education
I am their role model
And I better act like one.

I share this from my experience
I write this with my feelings
It's hard,
Every time I held back my emotion,
It felt like something was stuck in my throat.

This is the truth
This is my truth
This is the truth of the immigrant
Who is trying to seek safety
But is forbidden to enter America
For no other reason than to let her suffer.
And if she makes it into the country,
She must live like she does not exist
Because if she gets caught,
She will be sent back to the danger she escaped from.
The story of all immigrants is a story of survival.