

LOUNG UNG – BIOGRAPHY

Representation: Creativewell Lecture Management (www.Creativewell.com)

Agent: George Greenfield +1 973 783 7575



“Courage is when you dare to be yourself, in whatever ways you want to be – to not be afraid, to just be authentically you.” ~ Loung Ung

LOUNG UNG is a bestselling author, activist, and co-screenplay writer of **First They Killed My Father**, the critically acclaimed 2017 Netflix Original Movie based on her memoir, that was produced and directed by Angelina Jolie and is now streaming on Netflix in 190 countries. The film received the “Hollywood Foreign Language Film Award” at the Hollywood Film Awards in 2017.

Born in 1970 to a middle-class family in Phnom Penh, Loung Ung was only five years old when the Khmer Rouge Soldiers stormed into her city and her family was forced out of their home in a mass evacuation to the countryside. Orphaned and separated from her siblings, Loung was trained as a child soldier in a work camp for orphans where she was taught to hurt and hate. By 1978, the Khmer Rouge had killed Ung's parents and two of her siblings. In 1980, she and her older brother escaped by boat to Thailand, where they spent five months in a refugee camp. Her first memoir, the national best-seller ***First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*** (Harper Perennial), details her survival of Cambodia's killing fields, one of the bloodiest episodes of the twentieth century. From 1975 to 1979, some two million Cambodians -- out of a population of just seven million -- died at the hands of the infamous Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge regime. Of her family of nine, five survived. Harrowing, yet hopeful, Loung's powerful story is an unforgettable account of a family shaken and shattered, yet miraculously sustained by courage and love in the face of unspeakable brutality.

In 1995, after attending a memorial service in Cambodia, Ung was shocked and saddened to learn that 20 of her relatives had been killed, and thousands of the survivors of the Khmer Rouge genocide were still being maimed, injured, and killed each year by antipersonnel land-mines. Returning to America, Ung served as the spokesperson for the **Campaign for a Landmine Free World** from 1997-2005, a project of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines which was co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize. She has since made over forty trips back to Cambodia.

First They Killed My Father was a 2001 recipient of the Asian/Pacific American Librarians' Association award for Excellence in Adult Non-fiction Literature, and is widely taught in high schools and universities across the U.S. and internationally and selected for community and all campus One Read programs. The book has been translated into 15 languages, including Khmer, German, Dutch, Norwegian, Danish, French, Spanish, Italian, and Japanese. In her second book, ***Lucky Child*** (HarperCollins), Ung picks her story back up in Burlington, Vermont, where she and her brother relocated, and describes the arduous process of adjusting to a new country and culture. Her latest book, ***Lulu in the Sky: A Daughter of Cambodia Reunites with the Sister She Left Behind*** (Harper Perennial), tells the next chapter in Ung's life, revealing her daily struggle to keep darkness, anger, and depression at bay while falling in love at college with Mark Priemer, who is now her husband.

Today, she has shared her messages of building resilience, healing from trauma, civic service, activism, and leadership in the U.S. and across the world. She has spoken at numerous schools and universities and organizations, including: Stanford University, Boston College, Yale University, Phillips Academy, Cathay Pacific Airlines, U.S. Coast Guard, the Young Presidents' Organization, The Million Dollar Round Table Plenary, Linkage Inc., Crowe Chizek and Company LLP, SONY, Omega Women's Leadership, the UN Conference on Women in Beijing, the UN Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, and the Child Soldiers Conference in Nepal, among others.

Named one of the "100 Global Youth Leaders of Tomorrow" by The World Economic Forum, Ung is the subject of an hour-long documentary for the German ARTE, Japanese NHK, and U.S. NECN. She is also a contributing writer for the groundbreaking film *Girl Rising*, which profiles nine girls from nine countries, including Cambodia, who are struggling against odds to achieve an education. She has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Boston Globe*, *London Sunday Times*, *Biography*, *Glamour*, *Jane*, and *Ms.* magazine. In addition, Ung has shared her story on *The Diane Rehm Show*, *Talk of the Nation*, *Weekend Edition*, *Fresh Air with Terry Gross*, *The Today Show with Matt Lauer and Katie Couric*, and has appeared on ABC NEWS *Nightline*, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox, and C-SPAN. She is a recipient of the "Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kil Medal of Honor" (2018).

When not writing or traveling for speaking engagements, Loung can be found riding around Cleveland, Ohio on a tandem bike with her husband Mark Priemer, or at one of their three restaurants and two microbreweries they co-own in Ohio City.

"For me, writing is an internal journey where you go in deep, you reflect, you try to heal your inner child and pains. As an activist, it's an outward, going wide journey, where you realize that you are connected to a much larger world. And that the story you tell isn't about you. It's about a culture, a people, a nation, a family." ~ Loung Ung

SPEAKING TOPICS:

- **First They Killed My Father: An Eyewitness Account of the Cambodian Genocide**
Also available with a Netflix Original Movie screening/discussion + Q&A
- **Getting to Resilience: The Key to Bouncing Back Faster and Stronger**
- **Ordinary Citizens, Extraordinary Leaders: How We Can All Transform Our Community**
- **War, Love & Survival: lessons from a Cambodian Genocide Survivor on overcoming trauma, finding joy, and standing up against injustices.**
- **The Power of Narratives: Why Rewriting Your Story Will Change Your Life**
- **The Art of Memoir Writing: 7 tools to bring your story to life.**
- **Lucky Child: A Refugee's Story of Transformation**

Loung can also tailor her talk to your organization's mission and event.

LOUNG UNG | SPEAKING TOPIC DESCRIPTIONS ...CONNECTING PEOPLE AND IDEAS TO CREATE CHANGE....

“To all the survivors out there, I want them to know that we are stronger and more resilient than we ever knew. We survived, that should be enough but it isn't. We must work hard to become whole again, to fill our soul with love and inspiration, to live the life that was intended for us before it was disrupted by war and horrors, and help rebuild a world that is better than the one we had just left.” ~ *Loung Ung*

FIRST THEY KILLED MY FATHER: An Eyewitness Account of the Cambodian Genocide

(Themes: Cambodia, Genocide, War, Children in War, Refugees)

From 1975 to 1979, 1.7 to 2 million Cambodians, a quarter of the country's population, died under the Khmer Rouge regime. One of seven children of a high-ranking governmental official, Loung Ung was only five when the soldiers stormed into her city, forcing Loung's family to flee and, eventually, to disperse. Orphaned, separated from her siblings, Loung was trained as a child soldier in a work camp for orphans where she was taught to hurt and hate. Harrowing, yet hopeful, Loung's powerful story is an unforgettable account of a family shaken and shattered, yet miraculously sustained by courage and love in the face of unspeakable brutality. From an innocent chatty girl to a silent child soldier to a bewildered refugee in America, Loung Ung shows that your past does not have to predetermine your future. Through her work, writing and activism, Loung shares how she was able to reclaim her voice, redeem herself, and help many others learn of their own stories.

RESILIENCE: Moving Beyond Surviving to Thriving

(Themes: Resilience, Overcoming Adversities, Leadership)

Since its emergence, reporters and public officials have been comparing the global outbreak of coronavirus to fighting a war. A Khmer Rouge Genocide survivor, Loung Ung knows all too well that we will need to be strategic, united, and most of all, resilient to survive this war and to bounce back from the economic ravages that so many are challenged by. Thankfully, being 'resilient' isn't something one is born with but a set of skills one can build, cultivate, and learn. In her talk, Loung shares the keys to her 'resilience', and how it has helped her move from surviving to thriving.

ORDINARY CITIZENS, EXTRAORDINARY LEADERS: Creating Change Through Activism and Volunteerism.

(Themes: Activism, Volunteerism, Leadership)

Peace is not a wish. Peace is not something you want, dream of, and wait for others to deliver. Peace is an action. Many, many actions. Whether in one's heart, community, or world, peace requires our daily actions. With over three decades of experience as a student activist, a professional agent of change working on campaigns to end violence against women, landmines, and child soldiers, Loung explores how we can all lead in our daily lives to make a difference in our world.

THE POWER OF NARRATIVES: How Rewriting Your Story Will Change Your Life

(Themes: Writing, Creativity, Journaling, Health)

As a child, driven by her inability to speak the words to describe her pain, Loung recorded her thoughts onto the pages of her journals. Many years later, those pages would become her memoir, *First They Killed My Father*. And through the writing of it, she also came to understand the healing power of writing her story, and of rewriting her narrative from victim to survivor, from scared child to an advocate for peace. In this talk, Loung shares the tools on how you too can rewrite your narrative.

THE ART OF MEMOIR WRITING: 7 Tools To Bring Your Memoir To Life

(Themes: Writing, Creativity, Art, Health)

Having turned her life into three books, Loung Ung knows a thing or two about writing memoirs. In this workshop, Loung shares the seven creative writing tools that will help to bring your words to life; your scenes vivid, and your story memorable and moving.

FIRST THEY KILLED MY FATHER: A Netflix Original Movie Discussion + Q&A

In 2015, humanitarian-actor-director Angelina Jolie called Loung Ung with a proposal to turn her book into a film. This begins Loung's three-year journey of learning to write a screenplay (she co-wrote the screenplay for the movie with Angelina), and making a big budget movie in Cambodia with Khmer actors and 20,000 extras. Using film clips

and her personal photos, Loung takes the audience through her sometimes-traumatic and other times hilarious four-months stay in Cambodia to bring her words to the screen.

LUCKY CHILD: A Refugee's Story of Transformation

(Themes: Refugees, Trauma, Activism, Volunteerism)

At the age of eight, Loung Ung was an orphan living on the streets, eating out of garbage cans, hating the world, and wondering why the world hated her. At ten, Loung, 'the lucky child' was selected by her adult brother, Meng, and his wife, Eang, to emigrate to America as refugees and start their second life. To do this, they had to leave behind Loung's beloved sister and two brothers, who she would not see again for fifteen years. Loung's refugee story is one of overcoming trauma, dislocation, racism, cultural and language barriers to build a successful new life in America. In a world where leaders are often people with well-known names, Loung's personal heroes are the ordinary people who do extraordinary things on a daily basis. Their act of kindness and generosity restored her faith in compassion, kindness, and humanity.