

## **This is an essay written by Xue Vang's daughter about her trip to Laos in December 2019**

Hmong American. What does it mean to be Hmong American? That was the big question I kept reflecting on and struggled with as I went to Laos for a week, with my brother, during my winter vacation. This trip was definitely eye-opening for me. I've traveled to so many countries, but this was the first time I've felt so emotionally connected to a place and felt the need to come back. This was my parents' homeland. Where they grew up. Where they escaped. Where my people lived and still do. I usually don't write long posts about my trips, but for this one, I feel the need to share my thoughts.

As a Social Studies teacher, the essential questions I posed to my students kept replaying in my mind: Why are names important? Why is culture important? When is war justified? And, how much power should the government have? As a Science teacher, I wonder what will happen to all the natural resources when the powerful, richer countries continue to exploit and take them over, the impact plastic will have on this country, and with the advancement in technology in the US, why we don't readily share that with other countries.

Growing up, I was upset that my parents didn't give me a 'white' name. Myzoom. Two English words put together. Americanized to help Americans be able to pronounce Maivzoo. Yet, so many people still struggled with it. I was envious of kids who didn't have a weird name. Growing up, my parents pushed my siblings and I to assimilate to white culture, to speak only English so we wouldn't be put in ESL, and to follow the 'American' way. Growing up, I wished I was born white. Wished to be have the same things as my white peers. Wished that I didn't need to add "Hmong" or "Asian" in front American. That I was simply just an American. However, since college, I started to embrace my Hmong culture and my identity. Now, I'm embarrassed at how basic my Hmong is. Embarrassed at how late it took me to feel pride in my own culture and identity. Embarrassed at the lack of representation we have in US history.

This trip opened my eyes to how ignorant I was about the struggles and travesty people faced during the Vietnam War and the aftermath. I've heard stories, seen pictures, watched videos, but none of that prepared me to see it in person. To see how far my parents had to travel, on foot, to escape. To realize just how much devastation the United States actually caused in Laos - things you never read in the history books or hear about. The Secret War. In each city we went to, we were reminded that over 270 million cluster bombs were dropped on Laos. That Laos is the most heavily bombed country in history per capita. That this was the equivalent to a US bombing mission occurring every 8 minutes, 24 hours a day for 9 years. Of the 270 millions cluster bombs dropped, about 30% (80 million) failed to detonate. These bombs killed about a tenth of the population in Laos. Imagine living in a country like that. Imagine not knowing when and where a bomb might go off. I had gone to a country that I knew killed my people to learn that the country I call my home killed them as well, possibly even more. Xieng Khouang Province, one of the most impoverished areas in Laos, where many Hmong people live, allies to the US, was the most bombed area. And, heartbreaking to know that the very first sitting US President to visit

Laos was President Barack Obama in 2016, 43 years after the US stopped bombing Laos.

So, what if...what if the US and Vietnam didn't disobey the Geneva agreement that Laos was a neutral country? What if the US didn't drop bombs on Laos? What if the US didn't let the fear of Communism spreading get to them? What if my parents didn't have to run to Thailand to escape death and persecution? It's sad to realize that the reason why I am American, why I have so many rights and privileges, and why I am to afford to travel and have so many opportunities is because of the Vietnam War, because the Hmong people sided with the Americans, because they were hunted like animals and became refugees after the Americans pulled out. It's sad to know that much of this history, this past, will still remain unacknowledged in US history and unknown to so many US citizens.

However, this is why I love to travel. Traveling and learning about different countries' histories and perspectives always reminds me to be grateful for what I have and that there are many sides to a story/past. I am fortunate for the life I have and fortunate that I have the opportunity to teach my students that not everything we learn is in our history textbooks. It is often the things left out and unsaid that we need to know. We cannot change the past, only educate the present to build a better future.

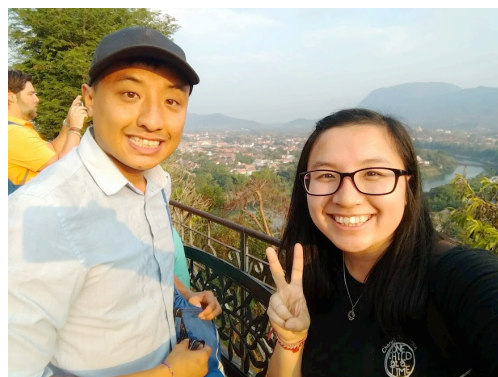
Overall, Laos is a beautiful country. It reminded me that you can be happy with less. You can be full with less. And, there's so much joy in nature.

The two songs that represented my trip:

Shong Lee - Hmoob Zaj: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7g\\_u-zNVHE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7g_u-zNVHE)

Hmong Oklahoma - Hmoob Lub Kua Muag: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WG0vFRNjJR0>

#hmongpridetillthedaywedie







mière étude, poussée par celle des pièces de Ban Ang, Ban  
Après le grand succès de répéter pour les autres st  
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## ການສະເໜີກ່ຽວກັບທົ່ງໄຫວທິນ The Plain of Jars



**Imposing stone vessels, collectively known as the Plain of Jars, dot the landscape of the Northern Annamite Mountains. Situated on a plateau, clusters of one to four hundred jars are found nestled on sloping plains and mountainsides. This area allowed easy passage from the Gulf of Tonkin into Mainland Southeast Asia and became part of trade routes linking the former civilizations of Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam with more distant cultures.**

ອະດີດສະກຳຊື່ກາງໄຫວທິນ ແລະ ອານາຈັກ ແລະ ທີ່ຕັ້ງທຳໄດ້ຈະມີ ສູງສູງຂອງມັນທີ່ຕັ້ງຂອງ ທົ່ງໄຫວທິນ ຊຶ່ງບ່ອນນັ້ນແມ່ນແຕ່ນອກຂອງ ຊຽງຊວາງ ການກຳເນີດ ແລະ ມີສູງຂອງ ມັນອະນຸຊຽງທີ່ສຳຄັນໃຫ້ເຫັນໃນອິດທິພົນທີ່ ຕາມເບື້ອງ ຄວາມສູງເບື້ອງມີໄລຍະຂອງອານາຈັກ ແລະ ໄດ້ຖືກແຕ່ງຕັ້ງ ຜູ້ຮຽນອານາຈັກໃນເວລາ ວັກສະມິດຈະມີເປີ 19 ຊຶ່ງເວລາທີ່ໃສ່ແນວແຕ່ ທັງສອງອານາຈັກແລະມີຄຳມື້ນ ແຕ່ບ່ອນຂອງ ສິ່ງທີ່ມີຄຳທາງດ້ານເປັດຕະນອກ ແລະ ອຸກສະຫາໂນນິວນ.

The civilizations that created the jars and the Phuan Kingdom once thrived in jars' locations or present day Xiang Khouang. The rise and demise of the people who made the jars is unknown. The Phuan polity was prosperous, attracting the Chinese bandits in the late 19th century. These raiders destroyed the kingdom, looting its religious monuments.



ປະເພດລະເບີດ ຊື່ງເປັນອີງຊື່ຈາກໂຕປະເພດລາວ ມີນາມວ່າ "ລູກລະເບີດປ່ອມປີ" ມີຮ່າງກາຍແບບ ໂຕກັບລະເບີດ ເພື່ອກຳຈັດກຸ່ມເປົ້າໝາຍແບບຈຳ ແນກ, ຊື່ງມີໂຕລະເບີດບ່ອນໄວ້ກໍ່ເປັນເປົ້າ ໝາຍຖືກແຕກລ່າຍໄດ້.

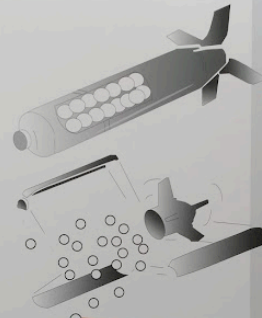
ໄດ້ມີການເຮັດລະເບີດປະມານ 580,000 ລູກ ຊື່ງ ມີນ້ຳໜັກກວ່າ 2 ລ້ານໂຕນ.

ໄດ້ມີການເຮັດລະເບີດປ່ອມປີອີງຊື່ 270 ລ້ານລູກ ໂປລາວ, ແຕ່ຫຼາຍກວ່າ 30% ແມ່ນອີງຊື່ບິນແຕກ, ເນື່ອງຈາກລະເບີດປ່ອມປີປະມານ 80 ລ້ານກວ່າລູກ ອີງຊື່ລະເບີດບິນບິນແຕກ.

Cluster bomb bomblets, better known as 'bombies' in Laos are designed as anti-personnel, anti-armour weapons, but do not discriminate and thus target and kill civilians.

580,000 bombing missions with more than 2 million tonnes of, mainly cluster bombs dropped.

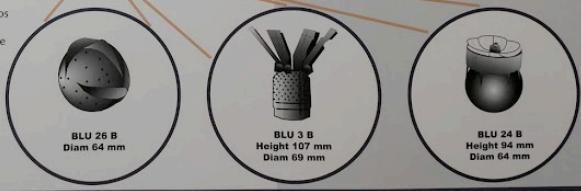
270 million bomblets were dropped in Laos and up to 30% of bomblets failed to detonate which means 80 million plus live bomblets remain undetonated.



# ອາວຸດສົງຄາມ Weapons of War

ຢູ່ບໍລິເວນທີ່ຖືກຫຼົບຫຼ້າທີ່ 1 ລ້ານລ້ຽງໄດ້ມີລະດັບຈຳນວນ 127 ຫຼວຍອີງຊື່ຈຳນວນໃນເມັດເຈັບ. ອາວຸດລະເບີດ ຊື່ງຖືກ ລວມໄປລູກລະເບີດ, ຈະຫຼວດ, ລະປັບໂຕຍ, ແລະ ລະປັບເຈັດ ສະຫຼາຍແລ້ວລະເບີດທີ່ມີເປົ້າໝາຍແມ່ນ ລູກລະເບີດປ່ອມປີ ຊື່ງລະເບີດຊື່ງຖືກລວມລູກລະເບີດ ລູກລະເບີດ "ປ່ອມປີ" ຫຼາຍອ້ອຍລູກ ຊື່ງມີຂະໜາດເບົາກວ່າລູກໝາກນາເປັນພິດ.

At Site 1, one hundred and twenty-seven unexploded ordnances have been unearthed. The ammunition includes bombs, rockets, artillery shells, and mortars. Most of the ordnances dropped in Laos were anti-personnel cluster bombs. Each cluster bomb shell contained hundreds of individual bomblets or "bombies", the size of a tennis ball.



## COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES AFFECTED BY CLUSTER MUNITIONS IN 2010

33 COUNTRIES AND 2 TERRITORIES ARE AFFECTED



HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL

Source: Human Rights Watch / Cluster Munition Coalition

# US AIRFORCE BOMBING DATA 1965-1975 & UXO IMPACT



The United States, however, along with China, India, Israel, Pakistan, Brazil, and other heavily armed countries, has decided that they not only be allowed to stockpile these dangerous weapons, but also use them whenever they see fit.

**THE MOST SHOCKING  
STATISTIC OF ALL**

**98%**

**OF RECORDED CLUSTER  
BOMB VICTIMS  
ARE CIVILIANS.**

Yes, that's right. Despite the appalling statistics, these heavily armed world powers have continued dropping cluster bombs in

continue

**US Pol**

According to a website, international impact of munition spends... and all... why the negotia... framew... Weapo

It's true toward... shows... govern... founda... UXO... Melody... is "a tri... has allo

Americ... intende... standar... altoget... have





**1964-1973**  
**A bombing mission every 8 minutes, 24 hours a day, for 9 years**

ພະລັງໄຟທີ່ບໍ່ແລກຊາດເຮັດໂຮງຮຽນທີ່ບໍ່ສາມາດແລກໄດ້ເຮັດ  
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ທັງໝົດ 17 ພະລັງໄຟທີ່ບໍ່ແລກຊາດເຮັດໂຮງຮຽນ ແລະ ບັນດາ  
 ຊາດເຮັດທີ່ບໍ່ແລກຊາດໄດ້ຮຽນ ພະລັງໄຟຊາດໄດ້ເຮັດ ຊາດໄດ້ເຮັດ  
 ຊາດໄດ້ເຮັດ 2 ປັດຈຸບັນ ພະລັງໄຟຊາດໄດ້ເຮັດ

ບໍລິເວນ 20% ຂອງຊາດໄດ້ເຮັດໄດ້ເຮັດໄດ້ເຮັດໄດ້ເຮັດໄດ້ເຮັດ  
 ໃນພະລັງໄຟ 1964 ຫາປີ 2008 ຊາດໄດ້ເຮັດ 50.000 ກິໂລແມັດ  
 ຊາດໄດ້ເຮັດຊາດໄດ້ເຮັດໄດ້ເຮັດໄດ້ເຮັດ

ມີບໍລິເວນ 20.000 ກາດຈົນໄດ້ເຮັດໄດ້ເຮັດໄດ້ເຮັດໄດ້ເຮັດ  
 ຊາດໄດ້ເຮັດ (ປີແລະປີ 1974 ຂຶ້ນໄດ້ເຮັດ)

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) are explosive weapons such as  
 bombs, bullets, shells, grenades, land mines, etc. that did not  
 explode during the war and remain dangerously behind in  
 peace time.

All 17 provinces in Laos suffer UXO contamination, but Kiang  
 Khouang is the second most bombed province. The UXO con-  
 tributes to a cycle of poverty.

29% of all villages are UXO contaminated  
 50,000 plus victims of UXO (1964 and 2008)  
 20,000 casualties post-war (1974 on)

ທຸກໆ 8 ນາທີໄດ້ມີການຖິ້ມລະເບີດ, ເຫດການ  
 ດັ່ງກ່າວໄດ້ດໍາເນີນໄປເປັນເວລາ 24 ຊົ່ວໂມງຕໍ່ມື້  
 ຕະຫຼອດໄລຍະເວລາ 9 ປີ

