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#34 Luk Lao

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Creative and Literary Works

“#34 Luk Lao”

Victoria Gill
Lesley University

“Mung ouk jak hee Lao, mung thong vao Lao”
You came out of a Lao pussy, you have to speak Lao
“Maa Lao, luk Lao thuo”
Lao mother means a Lao child, of course
These were my mother’s battle cries
We not only survive, we toil to thrive

School is where the head is
Keep your Lao aside
Home is where the heart is
Keep your English outside
Knowing when to use which words where
Keeps us alive

I am of her blood and bones
survival warriors of the unknown
of refugee camps, of clashing thrones
of the Khmer genocide
there’s nothing for me to decide
I embrace her unwillingness to hide
dutifully I abide

Khoun Maa, Lao Isaan
Fought for her life and now
We fight for her language
for I am luk Lao
I hold on to it tight —this legacy
it is the air I need to breathe
In this way, we, she, and our ancestors
Remain in existence —in immortality



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About the Author



Dr. Victoria Gill is a first-generation, Lao Punjabi American poet, practitioner-scholar, and Assistant Professor in the Language and Literacy department at Lesley University's Graduate School of Education. She obtained her doctorate in Reading, Writing, and Literacy from the University of Pennsylvania. Having long been passionate about issues of power and identity, she investigates their intersections and how they relate to literacies and pedagogies in ways that create pathways for teachers to build inclusive classrooms that center historically excluded perspectives and voices. Her current research examines how teaching can be impacted by understanding and using the theory of Intersectionality with aims for equity and agency with a focus on Children's and Young Adult Literature and Southeast Asian representation in secondary English Language Arts classes. Dr. Gill's research/poetry has been published in *The English Journal*, the *Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE*, *LEARNing Landscapes*, *Writing & Pedagogy*, and the *Urban Education* journal.



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