

## Preface

I did not know Dr. Sophia Law until one day in 2009, when my daughter-in-law, Anicha Ha, introduced her to me for a project that Dr. Law called “a part of Hong Kong history”.

She was right, because what Dr. Law had discovered within hundreds of pages of articles, poems, songs, and short essays written in Vietnamese were shocking evidences of human tragedies. They were not the cry for help of an individual but of a generation of Vietnamese people. Most of them were children, young men, and young women who were disrobed of basic human rights and had to waste the most beautiful years of their lives in various detention camps in Hong Kong.

These “boatpeople” have tried to escape persecution in their homeland in the hope of living freely. However, upon arrival at the “free land”, they were immediately put behind barbed wires and tall fences, under strict patrol day and night by the Hong Kong police.

Le Huynh, an inmate, described a “long prison” as not merely a jail with four walls, but an enclosure to incarcerate the souls of freedom seeking people, as follows:

*This bestial prison is a thousand miles long,  
With its head in Vietnam and its tail in Hong Kong.*

- *The Prison* -

It is hard to imagine that an innocent 13-year-old girl, in her story entitled “Tale from a Fence”, could personify a fence that sobbed:

*... I brutally carried out a mission to imprison all of you...*

However, while they can imprison an individual, they cannot imprison the spirit of freedom. Positive thinking always existed, as dreamt by a 15-year-old girl, who wrote:

*...A bird was singing, bringing me back to the reality. I looked up, the bird flew away, high above the fence and into the sky. I wished and prayed that someday, I could be free to fly high and far to a horizon of eternal spring..*

In the darkness of frustration and despair, there was always hope, as expressed by an ex-refugee in his “Sleepless in Winter Night” poem, one of the “Writings from a Cage”, a collection of beautiful poems from different authors:

*Our country is suffering day and night  
In cold dark winters, people are longing for a light  
One day the sun will rise, frozen souls will be thawed,  
And from the devastated land, new buds will grow.*

Needless to say, it was a huge challenge for me when trying to convert what people want to express in one language, i.e., from one cultural background, to another, especially when attempting to translate poems and songs. I am not a professional writer, but from my heart and my soul, I have tried my very best to help Dr. Law in translating these Vietnamese writings into English, because like my countrymen in Hong Kong, I once experienced what they have had to endure and spend in detention camps.

My hope is that, in the future, no such things will happen again to mankind. I would like to thank my daughter-in-law Anicha Ha, who introduced me to Dr. Law. I would like to thank my wife, Aichau, who read the original articles and made valuable comments. I would also like to thank Ms. Leanne Schweitzer, my co-worker, who helped edit my translation.

Finally and most importantly, I would like to express my deepest thanks to Dr. Sophia Law, who gave me a privilege to participate in her extraordinary project.

Sincerely,

Tung Buu  
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