

To The End of Hell

Denise Affonço

About the book

To The End of Hell is the testimony of Denise Affonço who survived the genocide in Cambodia. In the book, she talks about being forcibly removed from the city to the country, her forced labour and the separation from her son. She writes movingly about the murder of her friends and relatives and about her survival. Denise wrote her testimony immediately following her liberation in 1979, it was not been published in English until 2007.

About the author

Denise Affonço was born and brought up in Phnom Penh. Her mother was Vietnamese and her father French. When Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia in 1975, Denise, her husband and two children were forced into labour camps in the countryside. Her husband was taken away and was never seen again. Denise's daughter Jeannie died of starvation in the camp. Freed by Vietnamese troops in 1979, Denise was encouraged to write her testimony. Today, Denise lives in Paris with her son and her new family and she tells her story to young people across the world.

Discussion Questions

Please note that some of these questions will act as spoilers for the book.

1. Why does Denise refer to her husband as an 'armchair communist'?
2. Why is it important for Denise to learn the Khmer language?
3. Why were the children separated from their parents?
4. Denise attributes her survival to the care she received from Vietnamese soldiers. What else can we say saved Denise?

5. What similarities can you find between Denise's experience of the genocide in Cambodia, and Anita Lasker Wallfisch's experience of the Holocaust (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/for-adults/books-for-adults-inherit-the-truth>)? Do genocides have similarities?

You can use HMD resources to find out more about the genocide in Cambodia <http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/cambodia> or you can read some of Denise's testimony <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/survivor-stories/cambodian-testimony-denise-affonco>