

about important things, recite poetry, and flirt with each other. They shower each other with awards once again.

The economic subsidy system died in 1987 due to growling stomachs. At that time, the line between the life and death of the economic system was clear: failure to change meant death. But the literature subsidy system has remained in place for an additional thirty-five years despite the fact that the only ration it distributes is a fleeting place on the absurd dais of literary honor.

Literary progress is always slow, but our country's literature conveys an unusually ugly and sloppy picture after many decades, and there are no signs of change any time soon.

13. DẠ THẢO PHƯƠNG

Translated by Vũ Ngọc Kiều Khanh

The Diary: Evidence of a Crime

Originally posted on Facebook by Dạ Thảo Phương on April 26, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/dathaophuongvn/posts/pfbidoX69ED64dXED5j32VtBewEMruFVVj26ELMgrYJGDKUqiKstbtt4GpWLNcVepUDM9l>.

This long-lost diary stores the deepest pain in my life. It followed me from the beginning when I was bewildered as I searched for justice, then lived with other documents of my entire case at a certain law firm named Trần H. N. & Associates, belonging to the lawyer Trần Hữu Nam, located at No. 1, Nguyễn Gia Thiều, Hà Nội.

As the years passed, I dared not think about finding it again.

But on April 23, 2022, Trần Hữu Nam found the diary and delivered it to my sister, poet Hàm Anh.

GLOOMY DAYS

It was those dark times when I was forced to abort my first child, the one that was the result of being raped for the first time by Lương Ngọc An. I lived in

loneliness, was hurt to the point of being numb, and somehow was still manipulated, beaten, and dishonored. I was too horrified, too scared to tell anyone. I decided to talk to my unborn child in a small diary. The diary can tell the story from the first time I was raped through to the suffering of the many times after.

After much effort, seeking a transparent and fair resolution from the leaders of my office and receiving only slander, libel, and unfairness, I became despondent. I tried to kill myself several times but was not successful. Eventually, I decided to bring the diary and other evidence to Trần Hữu Nam. He was a reputable and well-known lawyer in those days.

Trần Hữu Nam said that he stood by me because of social responsibility and humanitarian reasons. However, he advised me to think carefully because after filing a lawsuit, I would have to bear enormous pressure, from reliving the memories of panic to recalling all the tactics that they, the powerful people, would use to retaliate against me. The consequences would follow me for the rest of my life. (At that time, the Internet was not popular, society was very conservative, and awareness of sexual harassment was very limited.) My physical body and mental psyche were weak; could I handle the prolonged pressure and pain of the case?

Exhausted, hopeless, and lonely, my reasoning at that time was weak, and so I stopped pursuing the case.

I moved to another newspaper, cutting myself off from the old environment.

Often tormented and haunted by the past, I returned to the lawyer's office many times, planning to retrieve my documents and the diary. But I never went in. I was afraid to touch the painful past even one more time.

But my sadness lingered.

MIRACLE OF KINDNESS

When I decided to bring my case back to light this time, the very first person I wanted to contact was Trần Hữu Nam. I called him a few times but couldn't reach him. I sometimes thought I was too delusional to hope that he still kept the documents and my diary after all these years. I called just to reassure myself that I had done everything I could.

Recently, I talked to my sister about the diary. Miraculously, she was able to contact the lawyer right away. And even more incredibly, he had retained all my documents in very good condition. I understand that he acted not just as a professional, but also as a warm-hearted person. He values all those who drift into his office seeking to be defended.

The diary is still in Vietnam. I just read it again through photographic images sent to me by my sister. Each biased, twisted word borne of exhaustion and anguish took me back to a bloody, unjust past, which I have tried so hard to forget for more than twenty years, given the serenity of the present. But it is still there, an open wound that needs to be sewn shut.

With all these pages full of hurtful truth, I do not want to say anything more. Let the pain itself speak up for a crime that was condoned, buried, euphemized for more than twenty years.

Say it once, to forget forever.

14. HÀM ANH (PHAN THANH THỦY)

Translated by Chu Thị Thúy Linh and Peter Beamish

The Story of Finding Phương's Diary

Originally posted on Facebook by Hàm Anh (Phan Thanh Thủy) on April 27, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/ham.anh.phan.thuy/posts/pfbidoQWLuwDXy3sERuAsDk7VULTLTeciwHEqnMcjCyxE6ASAoq7LML6PTbUKbQUo4WUcql>.

About a week ago, Phương told me about the diary that she kept during the miserable days when she was first raped, forced to abort the fetus of her first child, and subjected to continuing rapes. This was the diary that she took, along with her case file, to a lawyer's office in the early days of her quest for justice.

When I asked who had the diary, Phương gave me the lawyer's name and address immediately, as if the information was always on her mind. Lawyer Trần Hữu Nam, No. 1 Nguyễn Gia Thiều. But she also said that decades had passed, things had changed, and her hope was fragile.