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#MeToo at *Văn Nghệ* Newspaper: Dạ Thảo Phương's Allegations against Lương Ngọc An

Introduction

This forum provides translations of fifteen documents related to Vietnam's most high-profile and contentious #MeToo case in recent years.

All the documents except one appeared on the Internet, primarily on Facebook, between April 6 and April 27, 2022. Five of the documents (1, 2, 3, 5, and 13) were written by Dạ Thảo Phương, a poet who accused a coworker—Lương Ngọc An, at *Văn Nghệ* [Literature and Arts] newspaper—of raping and sexually harassing her multiple times from July 1999 to April 2000. Two documents (4 and 6) provide minutes regarding a probe of the case by a team appointed by *Văn Nghệ* newspaper in 2003. Another document (7) features the official response in April 2022 by the Vietnam Writers' Association to Dạ Thảo Phương's open letter exposing the case. Document 8 is a second accusation against Lương Ngọc An, issued by the poet Bùi Mai Hạnh, which surfaced on April 13, 2022—in the wake of Dạ Thảo Phương's original Facebook post. Document 14, penned by Dạ Thảo Phương's sister, the poet Hàm Anh (Phan Thanh Thủy), on April 27, 2022, concerns the recovery of Dạ Thảo Phương's diary, which provides Dạ Thảo Phương's contemporaneous account of the rape and harassment. Documents 9, 10, 11, and 12 provide commentary on the case by outside parties from the world of

literature and journalism. The fleeting and impermanent nature of Facebook posts enhances the value of reproducing these documents.

Document 15 is a letter recently sent to Dạ Thảo Phương from Đỗ Bạch Mai, a cadre who attended two 2003 meetings at *Văn Nghệ* newspaper in which the case was discussed. Dạ Thảo Phương shared this letter with the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies (JVS)*. As it is the only document in our forum that has not appeared in Vietnamese on Facebook, we include here an untranslated copy of the original letter.

Lương Ngọc An provided a brief response on Facebook to Dạ Thảo Phương's 2022 open letter but refused to permit its publication by *JVS*. It may be found at <https://www.facebook.com/luong.n.an/posts/pfbidouXohgks2MhjczGEbbfcQmDcQ8bQd6i1Lktius9xq9jHWNrKeCxrSsRSiJ79S4QUL>.

In addition, we include an essay about the case and the more general context of sexual violence in contemporary Vietnam, commissioned by *JVS*, by Dr. Nguyễn Thu Hương of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University of Hà Nội.

The items in this forum have been translated and edited by Peter Beamish, Cao Ngọc Đoan Trang, Chu Thị Thúy Linh, Martha Lincoln, Nguyễn Hồng Vân, Nguyễn Nguyệt Cẩm, Van Nguyen-Marshall, Trần Hạnh, Trần Thảo Uyên, Vũ Ngọc Kiều Khanh, and Peter Zinoman. We wish to thank the authors of the original texts for agreeing to allow the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* to translate and publish their writing, and to thank Phạm Xuân Nguyên for helping to secure permissions.

Document Timeline

1. April 6, 2022: Dạ Thảo Phương's first Facebook post, "My Rapist Is Now the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Văn Nghệ* Newspaper," <https://www.facebook.com/dathaophuongvn/posts/115695031084310> (translated by Trần Thảo Uyên).
2. April 8, 2022: Dạ Thảo Phương's second Facebook post, "The Light," <https://www.facebook.com/dathaophuongvn/posts/116332564353890> (translated by Cao Ngọc Đoan Trang).

3. April 10, 2022: Dạ Thảo Phương's third Facebook post, "The Entire Truth about the Relationship between Me and Lương Ngọc An," <https://www.facebook.com/dathaophuongvn/posts/117032397617240> (translated by Vũ Ngọc Kiều Khanh).
4. February 24, 2003: Meeting memo (translated by Trần Thảo Uyên). Posted on Facebook by Dạ Thảo Phương on April 10, 2022.
5. April 11, 2022: Dạ Thảo Phương's fourth Facebook post, "My First Child," <https://www.facebook.com/dathaophuongvn/posts/117364987583981> (translated by Trần Thảo Uyên).
6. February 26, 2003: Meeting memo (translated by Nguyễn Hồng Vân). Posted on Facebook by Dạ Thảo Phương on April 11, 2022.
7. April 12, 2022: Letter from the Executive Committee of the Vietnam Writers' Association to Ms. Dạ Thảo Phương (Phan Thị Thanh Thúy), <https://infonet.vietnamnet.vn/gioi-tre/nong-tren-mang/hoi-nha-van-viet-nam-gui-thu-cho-nha-tho-da-thao-phuong-sau-khi-nhan-don-chi-phuong-to-cao-ptbt-luong-ngoc-an-cuong-dam-hon-20-nam-truoc-408637.html> (translated by Trần Hạnh).
8. April 13, 2022: Bùi Mai Hạnh's Facebook post, "Whoever Has Ears, Let Them Hear," <https://www.facebook.com/hanh.mai.3781/posts/5557124304299117> (translated by Chu Thị Thúy Linh and Peter Beamish).
9. April 14, 2022: Phạm Thị Hoài's commentary, "When the Poet Did Not Rape Completely," <http://www.procontra.asia/?p=6477> (translated by Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm and Peter Zinoman).
10. April 15, 2022: Huy Đức's (Trương Huy San's) Facebook post, "Lương Ngọc An Should Step Down," <https://www.facebook.com/Osinhuyduc/posts/4876330482402094> (translated by Vũ Ngọc Kiều Khanh).
11. April 16, 2022: Bùi Hoàng Tám's Facebook post, "A Comment on the Case by Bùi Hoàng Tám," <https://www.facebook.com/hoangtam.bui.9/posts/2291950677625936> (translated by Vũ Ngọc Kiều Khanh).
12. April 17, 2022: Thái Hạo's Facebook post, "Subsidized Literature," https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=379200590753633&id=100059910855657 (translated by Vũ Ngọc Kiều Khanh).

13. April 26, 2022: Dạ Thảo Phương's fifth Facebook post, "The Diary—Evidence of a Crime," <https://www.facebook.com/dathaophuongvn/posts/122105497109930> (translated by Vũ Ngọc Kiều Khanh).
14. April 27, 2022: Hàm Anh's (Phan Thanh Thủy) Facebook post, "The Story of Finding Phương's Diary," https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3070866783125247&id=100006058656127 (translated by Chu Thị Thúy Linh and Peter Beamish).
15. June 25, 2022: Letter to Dạ Thảo Phương from Đỗ Bạch Mai (translated by Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm and Peter Zinoman).

Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm

NGUYỄN THU HƯƠNG

The Case of Dạ Thảo Phương and Sexual Violence in Vietnam over the Last Two Decades

On April 6, 2022, the Vietnamese poet Dạ Thảo Phương (née Phan Thị Thanh Thủy), who currently lives in Cyprus, posted an open letter on her Facebook page addressed to the executive committee of the Vietnam Writers' Association and the editorial board of *Văn Nghệ* [Literature and Arts] newspaper. Dạ Thảo Phương claimed that she had been raped more than twenty years ago by Lương Ngọc An, who—at the time of the accusation—served as the deputy general editor of *Văn Nghệ* newspaper.¹ In her open letter, Dạ Thảo Phương described in graphic detail how Lương Ngọc An attempted to rape her on April 14, 2000, and attached a handwritten report [*bản tường trình*] signed by four *Văn Nghệ* journalists and artists who witnessed this "very unusual incident," dated April 20, 2000. Dạ Thảo Phương further alleged that between July 1999 and April 2000 Lương Ngọc An manipulated and abused her and forced her to have sex with him multiple times.

In a subsequent Facebook post on April 8, 2022, Dạ Thảo Phương explained why she wanted to expose the case. In her third post, on April 11, 2022, Dạ Thảo Phương revealed her unwanted pregnancy resulting from the alleged rape and the abortion that followed. In a fourth post, on April 26,