



## **DAI THAO**

- City Council Member, Ward 1, City of St. Paul

I was born in Laos, in Luang Mong, June of 1975 right after the fall of Long Cheng. My earliest memory was that we were always moving, constantly moving from village to village. And often the village that we moved to was another deserted village. Somebody was there and left, so we just go and live in their existing home. We didn't have to build. Then we moved to Nang Nyo on the Lao side, from there, we built a house there. It was one of those platform houses, Laotian type house. I think it was my father's intention to make it seem like we were gonna settle there, that we weren't gonna be on the run. Then we exiled to Thailand. Along the way, I had two sisters and a brother that passed away in what we called it "Chao Fa." During that time, I remember lots of memories going to the creek, watched my brother fish, catching frogs, and different of those experiences. I must be around five or six at that time. My first earliest memory that I can bring back is that we were moving a lot and then we came to this house up on the mountain side. My mom said that it was called Muang Mer, I'm sure that's probably not the correct pronunciation. But I remember living there and one day there were a lot of people in our house. I was very small so I said to myself why there's many big people in our house. I needed some fresh air and I remember walking through their legs, through the front door. And then I crossed the road, it was a dirt road and there were some fences and I stood on the fence. I remember looking up at the sky and said in the Hmong language "Heaven why today is such a great day." I said that and within a minute, I heard a really loud cry from our house and it scared me because I knew that that was my mother's voice. So, I came back into the house, I zig zag through all the people's feet and I got to the back of the house and my mother was crying. I remember everything was slow, in slow motion. I could see her tears coming out of her eyes and hitting the ground. I was so scared because I've never seen my mom cry before. But I heard some people behind me said that my sister had died. TIAJ (Tia), the one that's just older than me who had been taking care of us at that time. I had other siblings but Tia was the one that I felt close to. So, I started crying too because I thought that that was the right thing to do. At that time, I was really scared. Even though I didn't understand what death meant at that time I was so scared, I ran out. I remember before I ran out my mom was caressing me, a Hmong gesture of love. I ran out and I was running down the mountain. I didn't get too far but suddenly a man in

an army uniform came and picked me up and he put me on his shoulder on the left side. And I remember looking up at the sky and I asked why? Why death? If there is life.... And that's always been puzzling, so I always remember that moment and promising my sister. After that we moved to Nang Nyo. And I remember looking back at that house when we climb down the mountain and said that I'll never forget her. I'll remember this for a long time.

The story I was told about my father, the mystery of not having a father is that, it's like a puzzle. When you meet certain people, they will come and say I know your father and this is what I know about him. So, what I know from what people told me is that my father, his name is Neng Chue Thao and he is the son of Choua Tong Thao. The story that my father joined the military when he was fourteen, he joined the Royal Lao Army and he was wounded twice in combat, I remember seeing the scar on his stomach, his mid-section where they did the surgery and the stitches. And it was later, after 1975 that he became part of the Chao Fa resistance.

After we came and live in the village of Nang Nyo, my father made contact with the smuggler. And I remember one night there was a bunch of people in our house. I didn't really understand why but they told the kids to go to bed. Later when all was quiet, my dad came and wake me up, he said, wake up let's go. I didn't know what was going on so I was like wow....ok....so, I got up and everyone was already gone. People were already outside, the family, the aunts, the cousins, they were ready to go. They threw me on my dad's back and we walked all night until almost dawn. We got to the Mekong River. I remember people getting, my dad put me down, and everybody got in the boat. There's three canoes and those were scary canoes. They were not the kind of canoe we have here, they are like wood right. So, everybody got on and I was still there so, one of the Thai smuggler said, what about him? And a Hmong lady said, no, not in our boat. We're too full already. Then my father said, no, that's my son. So, they came and grabbed me and put me on the boat. I remember, thank goodness, you all gonna leave me here. I remember looking at the water and it was close to the top of the canoes, those long Lao canoes. Then we got to the other side and we waited for a couple hours. I remember I was so scared that I could hear my heart beating. There was like, there was another drum inside of me that was going Pong...Pong...and I was like, what is that? But it was just myself being so scared that we might get caught, being killed and died. But it turned out, it was ok and the sun came up. Then we went to the village, the Thai town that was there. Then they took us to this place, mostly hay. I remember it was hot, dirty. We stayed there for a couple days and then some trucks, some blue truck came and picked us up. I don't know if you remember those blue trucks in Thailand. They put us in there and they drove us all the way, that's when they took us to Ban Vinai.

I would say that it was a couple of years because my understanding now is that, my father had obligation that he wanted to fulfill. So, he didn't want to come to the United States. But we were, if I remember correctly we were in section one, apartment ten. We had to share with another family. I did go to some schooling there. It was real poor there, real dusty, real hot. I remember we didn't have a lot of clothes on. I remember seeing grasshopper. The giant grasshopper that were flying in the camp and there were like ten of us chasing them with sticks to see who can knock it down so that we can have a meal. I remember following people at the market in case they would throw chicken bones away or those flavor drink that has ice in there. I don't know what it was called but you would hope that they throw those away because ice was a

delicacy and just to have those sugar, it was so good at that time. Those are some of the memory that I remember about Ban Vinai.

We got here August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1983. It was real hot and we came to live with Cy Thao's family, Representative Cy Thao's family at the time. We were sponsored by a White couple, an elderly White couple. So, we didn't speak the language but they came and visited us a couple times. And we lived in South Minneapolis at the time. It was really difficult because we didn't have transportation. So, we would walk everywhere. I remember my father, we would walk from Highway 35 and 34<sup>th</sup> or 35<sup>th</sup> exit, we would walk all the way to Lake Calhoun because Cy them live over there. So, we would go back over there and talk to them. But it was really difficult because the area that we lived in had a lot of people in poverty. We had African American, Native American, poor working White and there was a lot of racism at that time. For me, I remember one day I was out catching grasshopper with my sister and our neighbor, his name is Thai Yang. There was an African American kid, her and her brother were across the street. There was an empty lot between us, and then the street, then her house. She kept yelling at us and I didn't know what she was trying to say because I didn't know English at the time. But we went back to catch grasshopper and suddenly she just showed up in front of me and she slapped me and she spit on my face and she hit my grasshopper cup and I was so scared, because I didn't know if I should fight her or I should not fight her. Because if I fight her, my mom would probably give me a good beating you know. So, I was really afraid of my mother, so I didn't know what to do. I felt very confused about America because in Thailand I always thought that America was paradise or place where we would be away from war, people would get along, we'll have food, and we'll have peace. But that day really shook my view or my idea of what America is about. So that was like the start and then on the bus I was called Chink, Gook, taunt, hit, it was so bad that the bus driver put me next to him so that he can keep an eye on me. And these experiences I think will later in life define who I am and why I do the thing I do to stand up for the little people and those that are underrepresented.

My father went back, it was the summer, I believe it was the summer of 1989. I was, I was between seventh and eighth grade. I was going to eighth grade. It was a time when I really needed him, my early teenage year. He had attempted to go before, but the General didn't and our family didn't allow him to go. So, they sent him back. He got as far as California, but they sent him back. And then the second time, he was able to go. He was able to cut a deal or something then he went and I never see him since. What I was told was that, when that last wave of the Hmong from the Wat (Tham Krabot), a family came and they found my sister and they gave my sister my father's driver license, county ID and all the things that was with him. And what we got was that it was for safe keeping and that my father was gonna to Laos and never come back and it's been a real mystery. I wish I would know more about my father. I know that he knows how to fix car. He was a handy guy. We'll be driving in the rain and he would stop because he sees that there were some Hmong people in the rain. And he would tell them to get in his car. He would take them wherever they wanna go. And that left a really deep impression that even though we didn't have room in our car, it is important that we give those folks a ride. He always stood up for people. He stood up for his sister, his family. He is a Mejkooob, and knows our culture and tradition well. He was a good chef. I learned how to cook, watching him cook. I learned how to stop along the side of the road to help people with their tire or to give people ride even though some friends and family say I shouldn't. My father was a man who

didn't dress nice. He just dressed whatever he had, torn jeans, t-shirt. And I like dressing like that. It was just recently that my mother recommended I should wear suit and tie because of the work that I do. But my father was very simple and very loving, very complex and he loved the Hmong people. Now that, when I was very young, in my teenage year to my early adult life, I didn't realize that I need my father until I became an eagle scout. So, when you become an eagle scout you bring your family together to celebrate and I realize that when I went to make my speech I saw that other boys had their father at their table. I looked at my table and I only saw my mom and luckily I got one of my teachers from Edison High to be at my table in place of my father. I start to cry and I couldn't go anymore so I told my cousin who was doing the report to finish the report for the troop. And Moua, I think that was the first time that I realize how much I needed my father that I really miss him and I didn't know how to say it. Now, this is before finding out that, this is back in 1992 but it was before I found out. You know, if I have any regret, I would regret of not having knowledge or the maturity to stop my father from going. I believe that my father believed in the ideal that the Hmong people can be free and that they can have liberty, and that they can have the ability to self-govern and self-sustain. I think that my father didn't go back because he wanted a piece of land. I think my father went to fight for an ideal and that ideal was the justice, the liberty to self-government and that the Hmong people are just as deserving as any race on earth. I think that's the idea that my father gave up his life for. And I think what I got from that is that I don't have to be rich or powerful. But I have to be able to give myself so that others can gain, so that others can live, so that others can have what I think I would accept for myself. My father was just one person of many uncles and elders of the Hmong men and Hmong boy soldiers who gave their lives. If you think about it in contrast of today, are the Hmong men today, the Hmong teenage today, are we willing to give to protect our families and our community and our lives in America? Are we to defend not just Hmong people but all races? And that is a difficult question to answer. But I think that our parents and elders during that time they didn't ask. They were willing to risk everything so that we can live. I think my father's legacy is his. And I will never be able to fulfill my father's legacy. I will never be able to fulfill his shoe. I will never be able to do the things that he does. But I am willing to try and to do everything that he hasn't done. I am not sure what that is yet. I think that we don't have to go to war with violence. We don't have to win with violence. We can win with policy, sound policy and uniting together in unity for policy, for public policy that will benefit. So, a Hmong proverb says "use your pen to fight rather than weapons." I think that we can do that. Honestly, I believe that the sacrifices that your father, my father, and all the elders before us made, they made those sacrifices so that when we get there, we can work with each other, we can come together. I saw that there was injustice in the Hmong community. I saw that the kids in my neighborhood were getting beat up. So, even though I wasn't the biggest guy, people in the neighborhood, other kids would come and ask me to help them, protect them against dudes that were twice my size and my high. So, I have to learn kung fu, right. It happened for a long time.

My first real volunteer was during KQRS back in 1999 when Wameng Thao and Cy Thao, those folks were fighting KQRS and I came at the end to volunteer. We went to record some public announcements at the station just to make sure that it's part of the plead, the deal that we had with KQRS. I started writing for Hmong Times in 2000 and 2001. In 2001, 2002 there were the parking ban at Como, so I got involved with that, I think Wameng was also involved, Sandy Ci Moua, and Bee Vue Benson. We were able to negotiate, I was watching them and learn how they do it and we were able to lift the ban. In 2003, I saw the video from, Moua Toua Ther and

the Chao Fa in Laos. And the Fact Finding brought here with Philip Blinkinsop those guys. I remember watching those videos in Central because that's where they had it. I remember sitting and I started crying when I saw those people in the jungle and I said to myself, this is wrong. How could Hmong people in this country, in the United States have it so good? How could we have it so good? We have everything we need and those people have nothing. Something is not right. We have to fight for them. We have to find justice for them. So, I wrote an article about that. The following Spring I heard that Zong Kha Yang, that he was gonna do this walk to Washington to bring awareness to the Hmong people in the jungle. So, I went to do an interview with him. At that time, he had a shop at Rice Street. We sat down for about an hour and I wrote a story about him that he was gonna go. Then he asked me if I can help him because there was not a lot of help at that time. So, I said, I will support you, I'll help you. I'll help you organize this thing, I'll help you raise money, and I'll even walk with you to Washington D.C. Then he said, I need to go meet with another group of students called "the voice of sorrow" and there were some college, mostly high school kids, they got like eight thousand petition signatures on this issue. I met with them and I was the oldest at the time so I kinda helped them run some of the meetings just based on some of the leadership training that I've been through. And then we started raising money and I became the communication coordinator. So, I was doing the logistic by putting everybody together. And the day before we will walk, it was a Tuesday, June 15 or June 14, 2004. And we had only one Thousand. Some people said that would give us a lot of money but when we did it, they couldn't give us the kind of money that they promised. So, I couldn't go because they deal was that we will raise enough money because I have a mortgage. If they can cover my mortgage for three months, I will go. But we can only raise I believe it was fourteen hundred around there. The weekend before we will walk, we had a rally, a community forum at Harding High School on the Eastside and Colonel Lee Teng, he got on the stage and said, I am helping these folks so you gotta help too. I was so surprise, I never knew that Colonel Lee Teng will be that courageous and willing to help us. And then people were just started throwing their money to help support this walk. So, I learned a lot Moua. I learned a lot from the long walk for freedom. It was very interesting. I think I've learned a little bit of the Hmong people's heart.

I played many roles but the title that they gave me was communication coordinator, what I did was being the more matured person to organize the subcommittees, helping him (Zong Kha), so he raised thirty four thousand dollar during that time. So, the deal was that Zong Kha will do the walk and I will be the messenger, I will create all the speeches, all the talking point, all the press releases, and organizing the big rally in Washington D.C. So, when there was down time, we would drive to see where they are and we would walk with them along the highway. The first day we got to Cottage Grove and there some Hmong that didn't wear socks, it was a long hike right, when we got to Cottage Grove, the cop came and told us that we can't walk on the highway, it was highway 61. So, we were going back and forth walking with those folks, finding money and sending them food, doing the press, and organize the rally in Washington D.C. It took us from June to August 17<sup>th</sup> I believe. We organized buses from St. Paul, from all over the country to meet them in Washington D.C. to have the big rally there. So, myself, Seng and Amy before we left, there's a bunch of Hmong politic that I don't want to get into right now. But at the end we didn't get the support that we need because of politic. So when we got there, I wanna say around four hundred people that rallied in D.C. It was really powerful. It was also interesting that there were some people that told Senator Dayton, when he was still there. Even our own

delegation, some people already call in advance not to meet with us, not to talk to us. So, we have to go meet with other leaders from other part of the country to talk about this issue. And those are the kind of things that were happening. We were getting threats, yeah, it was crazy. When I came out of there, I was all wounded, I was hurt. I was wounded and I have two choices. I said, I can just leave the Hmong people alone or I can continue to do what I believe. And this is when I began to develop this idea that my self-worth depends on my ability to love others and to serve and help others. And that I was gonna dedicate my life to that at a very adult level of thinking that it was something I wanted to do. So, I continue to help the Hmong people and the non-Hmong community. When Fong Lee was killed in Minneapolis, I was involved with that. Lee Pao and I actually went and filed for the investigation. I remember we walked in there together. There were a couple of us, but I remember Lee Pao was one of them. I worked on, you know when General Vang Pao was in custody for allegedly trying to overthrow the Lao government. I was involved with creating awareness for that and holding rally. I also pissed off some people. I said that the Hmong elected (officials) at that time, they need to be here at the Capitol. They need to fight for the Hmong people because if there were no Hmong people they will not win those seats and I took some heat for that. But, you know they weren't there. So, you gotta tell it like it is. And then I worked on the KDWB case where the song, I'm sure you remember the racist parody song. It was really fun because that one when we went to rally over there, we got a bunch of people rallied and KDWB had security all over the facility and we couldn't get in. So, we had some White people, White colleagues from SCIU. They went in to see how we can get in there and then they came back and they said look, there's no way we can get in there. At that time, I was one of the delegates that was gonna go in there but I sprained my ankle really bad so I was on crutches. Yeah, so what I said to them was, let's do this, let's spread it up. Let's send a group that's really gotten hold, they go in the front and we gonna sneak in in the back. And so they went and they created a bunch of commotion then all the security came to the front door. Then we snuck in through the back and we got to their offices. Yeah, right into their offices and they were like, what are you doing here? We were like, we're here to demand this and we wanna meet with the station manager...da..da...da... and they were like, ok, wait right here. And then the manager didn't come, the cop came. They came and they escorted us out of the building. But we were like, we gonna leave this with you. This is what we want. And so, it was always interesting because when you are activists like that, the power, the people in power, whether the bank or the radio station or government they always split you, they always try to split you. They always say, we'll only work with this group and we won't work with you or they are the real leaders and you're not, things like that. And then some people in the community will be like, all right, well, I'm gonna go in the back and make my own deal, you know and leave the mass out. So, there was always something like that. We were very fortunate that the 18 Council (of Minnesota) was with us and the whole time they were working with us trying to bring the different community, different community groups together with us and make sure that KDWB came to the Hmong community 'cause they wanted us to go meet at their place. And we were like we weren't gonna do that. You gonna come to the 18 Council's office. So, they were so scare and they didn't want to get beat because there was all these posting on facebook that people were gonna get hurt things like that. But they came and we negotiated. It was really fun Moua because the work that I do it's not about me. It's about how many people that we can develop so that when I'm not around, we have a new generation of leaders, good community organizers, and good leaders who know how to play the game of the superpower. There were a lot of time like that where you're very lonely, like nobody understand you, nobody

understand that it's important. You're on your own and you find yourself alone. And.....for some reasons....and especially when you can't pay your bills....because in this country you gotta be able to pay your bills and have a roof over your head, you know, care for your family what not. So, you can do those things. Those are always challenging. But I always.....I always came back to um...you know I'm only gonna on earth for a short amount of time and there is no guarantee when. So, the time that I have I must do...I must...I must keep pushing forward and see what I can do and how many people I can find that's willing to do these things, to do good and to fight for what's right. It wasn't something that happened overnight right. I saw how power work in this country and that the people who are making decision for us were the people who are elected to office, the people who are really rich and powerful. We're just the....we're just the taxpayers. We're just feeding into the system so that the system can make decisions for us and it didn't make sense. And I also saw that...I didn't like how, Black and White and Asian, I didn't like how we weren't together. And I just feel like it was real weak, a weak system. And I think there was, I feel like there was more that we can do to serve the community and to work across races and cultures, and generation and be inclusive. And I feel like we needed that kind of leader in Ward 1 and in Saint Paul. And so when, you know, when Council member Melvin Carter resigned I knew right away that this is what I gotta do....base on those past experiences. And I also felt really strong that the Hmong people were not represented, Hmong Americans, among communities of color, African American, Hmong, we weren't represented. And I always feel like if we didn't have anybody and a position where we can help make some good decisions for Hmong people then we weren't respected. And that's why I feel like I needed to run and to do the best I can to help not just the Hmong community but the community at large. Imagine, at a Hmong household, the father or the parent are the head of the household, so they take care of the household. Well, the clan leader, its responsibility is the entire clan. And so, the city council person, he or she is able to impact the entire ward and the entire city. And so from that perspective, you're absolutely right, like I...I feel like more Hmong Americans needed to be in the position, and communities of color, we need to be in the position where we can make sound solid public policy decisions that can benefit the people of color and the Hmong community.

I think...I think the first that I will say is to look deep into your own story whether you are man or woman. Look at your own story and look at how much this country has given us. We couldn't do this in France, Australia, or other parts of the world. And this country, even though is not a perfect country, it has given so much to the Hmong people. It has...it has opened us up to technology and a different way of life that we may never have in Laos, they still don't have it over there. So I think we need to be connected to that and say we need to give back to this country. And the way to do that is to serve this country...and not just one race or one culture but this entire country. Because when we look at it from the big picture our country need to be real strong against, in the global scheme. And so I think to be connected with that and to find something that they really care about in their community and to do something about that. And run for office. I encourage anyone to run for office so that they can make a difference in their community.

I think we come a really long way and I have so much to be thankful for General Vang Pao, Touby LyFoung, all of our elders who has...who came before us as leaders and elected official in Laos. Think of it as, forty or fifty years ago we didn't know how to read and write and we didn't have many people in school. We were from the dark age, I mean the iron age, we've

never seen an airplane before. Within the last fifteen years, we've advanced very far. Politically to answer your question, let's put it in this perspective, the United States has over two hundred years to develop its democracy...to get it this far and this good. We got fifty years experimenting with democracy and I think we're doing ok. We still got....so we never got a country where we can play, where we can experiment in politics. So here we got some of that and it's hybrid 'cause it's Hmong and it's mainstream politics. And so we can do more. And I truly believe that the Hmong people will...will let go of some of the hurt and some of the practices in the past, of clan, family division, sexism and really unit around an ideal that we can all progress together. I think, so we're making progress, Senator Mee Moua, State Representative Cy Thao, Senator Fong Hawj, bunch of other elective officials that has come before me. And, again I probably never be able to step in their footsteps but I definitely look up to them and what they had done and hope that more of our youth and our community will get involve. If we don't get involve in the political arena as you said, if we don't help make these decisions, somebody else will make those decisions for us.

I think that, you know I am not an expert in this area but, even culture and system, the Hmong has a set of system and a set of culture and if those systems and cultures do not adapt, so when we say Hmong politics, if that doesn't adapt to the present day that will go away. And then the system that is more adaptable, that people adapt to, that's more fair, more democratic, I think that system will rise up and be stronger. So I think more young people will get involve in the future. I believe that.

So I've been in office for about six months. Some of the thing that I have done is resolution to Women Security Act, to make sure that all the companies that come to do business with St. Paul, they have to pay fair wages to women. What I believe is that, what if the husband gets hurt, the wife still need to be able to care and provide for the family, just like the head of the household. So, I really think that that's something that we have to do. And then I am working on responsible banking, making sure that the banks, right now the big banks only give money to the people who don't need the money because they have credits right, the big corporations, the big businesses. They don't need the credits, they don't need the capital, but they're getting because they have money already. Well, the people like you and I and the middle class and working poor and communities of colors, if we don't have access to their capital, we can't get a house, and we can't get a car. We can't start our own life. We need that small push and so we're working on a responsible ordinance, responsible banking ordinance so that the bank and the community and the activists, we can come together to see how we can provide capital to help families build a good life in America. I've been helping with an ordinance to make sure that Tobacco Company doesn't sell cigarette, cigar, to young people, which right now, they make cigarette really expensive so that kids can't have access to it but the cigar's still very cheap. So, we're working on an ordinance that kids can't just buy those.

I think Minnesota is great...you know, the weather, the winter is tough for us, for me anyways. I was born in Laos, in the jungle of Laos so I prefer Florida's weather. But Minnesota is that place that has opened its arm to the Hmong people, has taken us in and has given us opportunity to integrate into American society, Western society. It has given us a wealth of knowledge, economic prosperity. It has created a really strong vibrant community for Hmong and I love Minnesota. I did spent a couple years in Montana. When I was over there, my uncle Lue Yang,



Lucky Yang who was a liaison with Jerry Daniel. Jerry was from Missoula so after the war he took General Vang Pao and other leaders to live in Missoula and so I was out there for a couple years. I'm tell you the story because you don't know what Minnesota was like, I mean I didn't know what Minnesota was like until I was away. And then I started looking at Minnesota and I said, you know, Minnesota is really where I belong because that's where we have the most. Yeah, we have a lot of opportunities here but we also have a lot of issues, a lot of problems, discrimination, racism, and structural racism. There's still so many things that we can do here and we couldn't do this kind of political work that we can, in Florida. What we can do here, we can't do in Florida, North Carolina, Wisconsin, even in Wisconsin we are not as powerful as we're here. So, I really appreciate Minnesota and I hope that more Hmong Americans will consider making Minnesota and Saint Paul, the Twin Cities area, especially Saint Paul, their home.

I think, I think the best thing we can do as Hmong American and how we can contribute to Minnesota is to get a solid education, a solid education, four year degree or more. Because with a solid education we can recruit more businesses, we can be attractive to big corporations that are constantly looking for a strong workforce, intellectual workforce to be in this area. And so we can provide that service because the United States, the population in Minnesota is changing. And so there will be more and more community of color and a lot of other, the older Whites are retiring and so we need to be really educated so that we can fill in those positions to help our country run. If you look at a big engine of a car, if we're one of those pistons, if our piston is not firing the engine is not gonna go. So the Hmong people have to see themselves as one of those piston and we have to get that piston going. So that we can contribute along with the other pistons to get that motor running, so that our state and our country can run.

We don't have a population the size of the United States or of the Whites so there's a lot of goods in the Hmong community as you have named. But because we don't have, there's not many of us, when something negative happens, we only see the negatives and we miss out all the goods. But when we are at the population of the Whites or two three hundred million, these negative things don't impact the good as much and so I think from that perspective I do agree we've come a long way. You know I think, I think my first feeling to that question is that I feel very blessed, very humbled and very fortunate and lucky that I had the support of the community and that um....maybe God, you know those.....I'm just lucky that I was able to be in this position. I do feel proud that the Hmong people has come very far that we have professional such yourself and the work that you do and you're very good at it. But you need the opportunity to be shooting in Hollywood, to be in the mainstream. That is the kind of opportunity that we need for the Hmong community and Hmong professionals. And we don't, there are still many barriers that's a glass ceiling for us. And so that's why it's important for us to be in, like elective officials or to be in position where, like Mai Kao Hang where she can open doors to allow other people to thrive and be higher. And so for me, I'm very humble to be where I'm at and I look forward to breaking that glass so that I can push more people forward and become Governor, Mayor, Senator, Congress person. That's really important and I hope that other professionals in our community believe in the same thing that I believe and that they're willing to open their hearts and minds to break those glasses to pull people, to push them forward so that we can all thrive together because there's still structural racism that prevent us from getting those opportunity.

**Transcription completed by: Kao Chang**

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