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Pham Doan Trang and her mother Bui Thi Thien Can Source: Pham Doan Trang

Bui Thi Thien Can is the name of author Pham Doan Trang's mother. On Vu Lan Day, Pham Doan Trang shares what she thinks about her mother about herself and the work she is doing.

Updated Updated 06/11/2020

By Mai Hoa

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Pham Doan Trang, as many people know, is a sharp writer, a human rights figure for freedom and democracy for Vietnam.

She is the author of a series of works that are among the favorites of Freedom Publishing House, such as Popular Politics, Prison Raising Manual, Non-Violent Resistance, Politics of A Police State, and several other titles. Other books she co-authored include Learning Public Policy Through SEZ Law.

She is also the co-founder of Luat Khoa Magazine - one of the prestigious independent newspapers in Vietnam and Tu Do Publishing House.

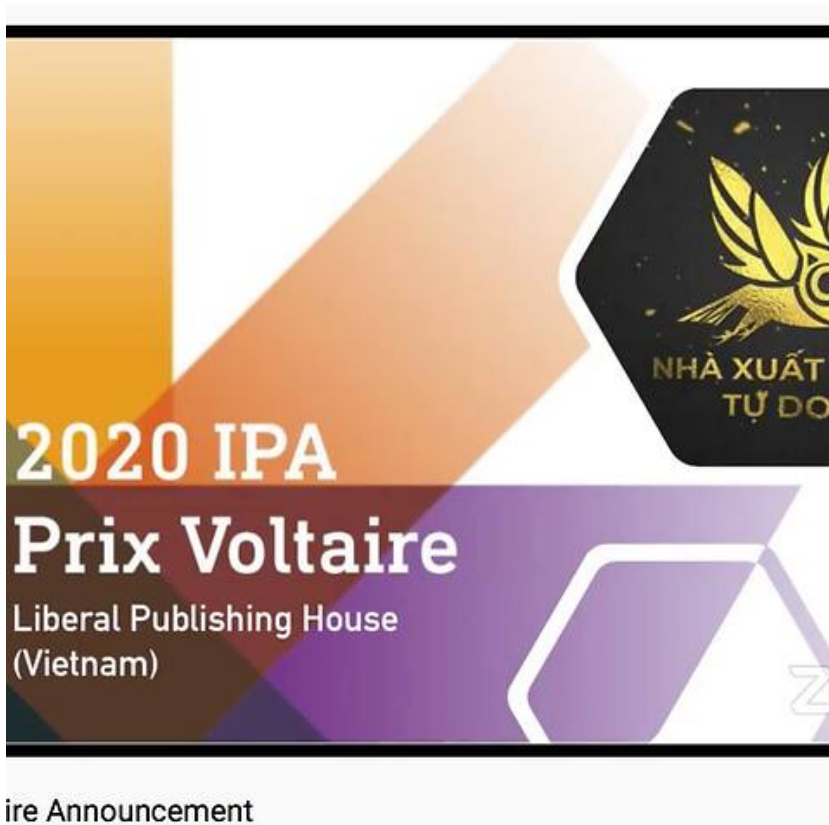


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In 2017, Pham Doan Trang was awarded the Homo Homini Prize by People In Need.

In 2019, she continued to receive the Press Freedom Award of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), in the category of Influence (Impact).

In 2020, Freedom Publishing House - was awarded the Voltaire Prize for human rights voices.



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Pham Doan Trang's parents are both teachers.

Her mother Bui Thi Thien Can - a stout, petite high school teacher, could not have imagined that the good and good things she taught her son had brought him to become a thorn in the side of the authorities.

From an outstanding and promising journalist of the state press, Pham Doan Trang has stepped out of the red world of party media to speak with a different voice from the authorities: the voice of those who are marginalized. unjustly died in prison, the voice of the people who lost their land, the voice of patriots before the sea and islands were invaded, the voice fighting for territorial integrity, human rights and justice in society.

She used her pen to speak and she was hunted and attacked.

From a healthy girl, during an anti-China protest in 2014 she was cut off by plainclothes security, causing her knee pain and permanent injury to have to fight to get around.

And yet, the authorities isolated her and made it difficult for anyone to contact or help her.

For the past two years, she has had to leave her family in Hanoi to avoid her mother's constant surveillance and uninvited government visits to their home.

She has to move to many places

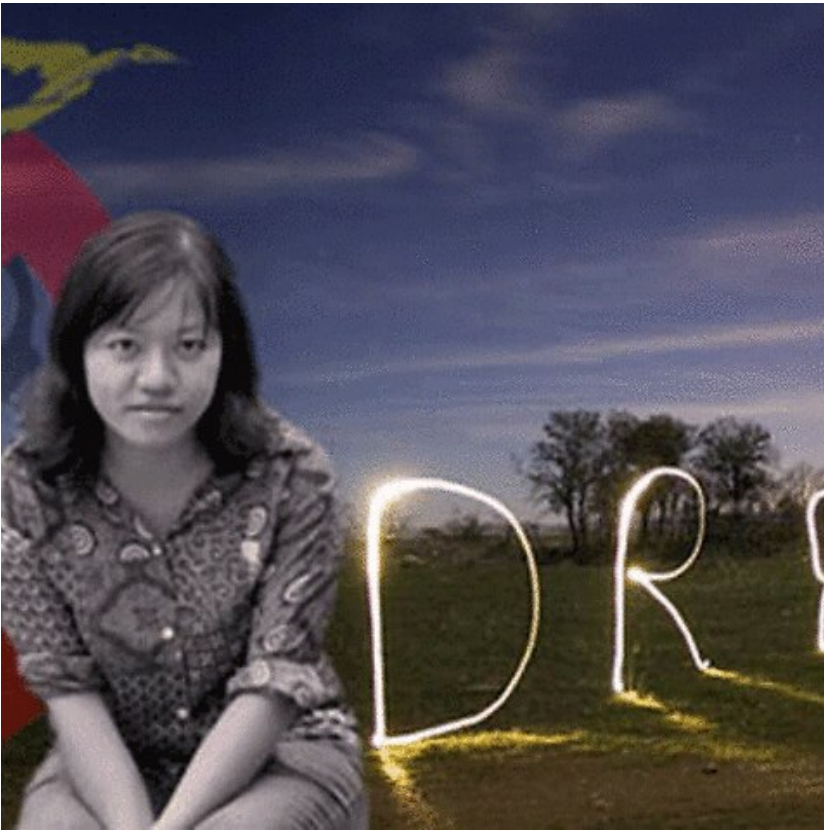
In each place, she had to move several times to avoid government loans and difficulties related to the books she wrote.

Since mid-2019 alone, she has had to relocate nearly 50 times.

However, all of this she said she can overcome.

The thing that bothered her the most was thinking about her mother, at an uncertain age, but still had to look forward to her children every day.

In the Vu Lan season, Mai Hoa talked to Pham Doan Trang about her mother.



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If you run to your mother now, what's the first thing you'll do?

I have thought about this a lot, so there is always an immediate answer: If I could run back to my mother right now, the first thing I would do is hug her. Then I sat down and listened to my mother's stories, happily talking about all kinds of things, I just kept quiet and listened. Mother is an old woman, but when she is happy, she also has the features of a child, very loving.

The memory of her mother is full, but what is the most prominent mark about her when recalling to see that you love her the most?

I love my mother the most, especially when she rushes to do something for me, or when the police come to the house, she ruffles her feathers like a mother chicken protects her child (but she can't). My mother is originally from Hanoi, she is a high school teacher, so she has a very gentle and pedantic personality. The mother is small again, the older she gets, the more shriveled she becomes. But when the police came, a thin, gray-haired old woman, unable to speak, kept glaring angrily at the police in order to protect her child, guilty?

Mother also often goes online to read current news (mainly from people who are called "reactionaries" by this government). When the network was cut or the firewall couldn't get in, my mother was still depressed, struggling not knowing what to do, looking extremely hurt.

My biggest regret is that I have never and certainly will never give my mother peaceful years, as long as this one-party dictatorship exists.

For me, the most beautiful mother is when she is happy, she feels happy. Which... that I could never do for my mother, in this situation.

I haven't been home for a long time, is life convenient for me to call my mother, what do mother and daughter say to each other?

I can only call my mom online (can't use a normal phone), but if so, I can only call her when she's online. So usually, I don't call, just wait until my mother is online, then she will call me. Every time my mother called, usually she was also chatting with me, I just listened, kept quiet, and tried to comfort her if she had something to worry about.

When I sit back and think about the furthest childhood I can remember, what is the image of Trang and her mother? What was the mother like when she was a girl? How does mother love in father's love?

When I was a child, my mother taught all day, every day went to class from morning to evening, but at that time Vietnam did not have a Saturday holiday, so I was less close to my mother than my father. But I really miss the image of my mother taking me by bike to go out somewhere, for example, once taking me to West Lake to play on the occasion of early summer, June 1 (International Children's). Mother and daughter sat under the shade of a very cool green tree and heard the sound of cicadas. My mother bought me a ripe pink whip (the Southern people call it plum). She also remembers the books her mother bought for her, mainly children's stories, such as the novel "No Family" by Hector Marlot, or the play "The Blue Bird" by Maurice Maeterlinck. Both are books that greatly influenced my childhood thinking.

My father and mother attended the University of Education together, and have been in love since college. Thinking about my parents' love and the years they spent together – from falling in love to getting married and struggling with the difficult life of the subsidy period to raise three children – I just feel overwhelmed. sadness and love for parents.

When she was young, her mother did not know how to dress, only wearing black pants, a shirt and often had long hair because she did not have money to do her hair. When I was old, my hair fell out, my mother also began to "know" to curl and get her hair done, but her clothes were still mediocre. It took 5-7 years to buy a new set of clothes. How much money do you have to save to raise your children and give it all to the world? My father is the same, saving his last pocket money to give to poor students... but he understands that his kindness can't save the whole society?

That feeling of sadness and love for my parents is a great motivation for me to join the fight with the desire to change the country. I don't want to forever have couples like my parents, gentle, honest, poor, struggling with a life of hardship and full of money and deception to raise good children. A good society is a society where honest people must live properly and do not have to suffer with the question: Is it right for me to raise my children to be such good people? ?

What dish do you remember most from your mother's cooking? What's your favorite song, or the song that your mother used to hum when you were young, or the song that I remember most now, from my mother?

I miss the shrimp dish (also known as moi) braised with green star fruit, every time my mother makes it, I eat 3 bowls of rice.

When she was young, her mother sang very well, until the middle years she lost her voice, due to the sequelae of pharyngitis - an occupational disease of teachers. Her mother's musical taste is high and varied, and has influenced her greatly; I must say that I would not have been able to play or sing without the influence of my mother's love of music. Mother sang, she lulled me with many classical songs, by professional vocalists, such as Beauty of Petal, The Song of Solveig, Then a bird flew (Polish folk song), Willow, Volga River, Bengawan Solo (Indonesian folk song)... There are verses that my mother sang that to me, became a classic, imprinted in my mind from 4-5 years old until now, never to be forgotten, such as:

"The day they took him away, was when the couple separated. My parents want to advise me to end my love for you."

Or: *"The Volga, dreamy nights!
Time, please don't pass."*

Did your mother ever get angry with you or regret that you weren't 'better' than a fool?

She's not mad at me, but she certainly is, and regrets that I didn't get wiser, didn't live a less stormy life.

Does your mother know that you are sad about her and this makes you suffer a lot?

I don't know if my mother knows.

Have you ever put yourself in the situation of a mother with a child, how do you think you will be?

If I had a child like... I would be very sorry, and most likely I would prevent him from going down the road of struggle. So I really sympathize with parents who try to prevent their children from "getting involved in reactionaries". Because it's really a struggle, but which parent doesn't love their child, pity their child. That's why I'm lucky I don't have to go to jail.

What do you think can help your mother be as strong and secure as possible when thinking about her child? In other words, if you could do something for your child, what do you think your mother would do?

I think mom is only at ease when I'm safe and happy. And that's what my mother and I can't do. If she could do anything for me, I'm sure my mother would try her best to make me go abroad to live, giving up all the way to struggle.

And if you could give your mother a hug or do something for her now, what would you do? Why?

I just want to be with my mother and be with her forever.

What is the last thing you want your mother to think of you?

That I love my mother and always try my best, desperately, to fulfill a part of the responsibility of a child to her mother. I know I'm an unfilial child, I can't make my parents happy, but I hope they know that I've tried a lot.

The last thing that comes to mind is my mother - even if the days fade, even if time erases the image, what is it?

I always know and always remember that my mother is a wonderful mother who has sacrificed her whole life for her children: Sacrificing her youth years, teaching, working to raise her children to adulthood, and sacrificing peace love of the old years so that their children can safely follow the path they choose, never blame them, a love and support them unconditionally.

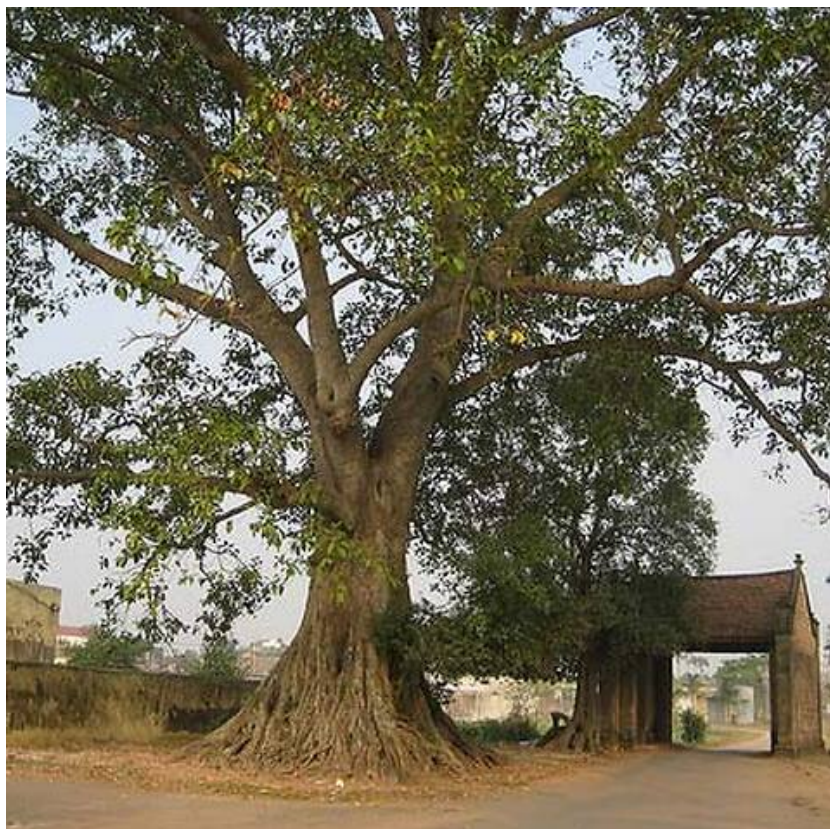
Quê hương (Hoàng Giác) - ...



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