

# The Napalm



## Girl

The Vietnam War was in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from the 1st of November 1955 to the fall of Saigon on the 30th of April 1975. There were many burn survivors during that period, but probably the most famous was that of Thi Kim Phuc Phan. A photograph taken by AP photographer Nick Ut became famous worldwide and was informally referred to as “The Napalm Girl,” because of the napalm bombings the Americans were dropping on the enemy. The photograph, officially called “The Terror of War”, taken in June 1972, became a Pulitzer Prize winner.

There was some controversy regarding the photo when US President Richard Nixon was recorded saying, “I’m wondering if that was fixed,” after he saw the photograph. Hearing Nixon’s words, photographer Ut commented, “Even though it has become one of the most memorable images of the twentieth century, President Nixon once doubted the authenticity of my photograph when he saw it in the papers on June 12th, 1972. The picture for me and unquestionably for many others could not have been more real. The photo was as authentic as the Vietnam War itself. The horror of the Vietnam War recorded by me did not have to be fixed. That terrified little girl is

still alive today and has become an eloquent testimony to the authenticity of that photo. That moment thirty years ago will be one Kim Phúc, and I will never forget. It has ultimately changed both our lives.”



As an adult, Phúc studied medicine at university, but she was removed by the government and used as a propaganda symbol by the communist government of Vietnam. She considered suicide because of the constant pain, but in 1982, she found a copy of the New Testament in a library and soon converted to Christianity. In 1986, the Vietnamese government permitted her to study in communist Cuba, where she studied Spanish and pharmacology.

In Cuba, she met photographer Ut for the first time in 14 years, and she also met Bui Huy Toan, a Vietnamese student, whom she married in 1992. They received permission to honeymoon in Russia, but when the plane landed in Gander, Newfoundland, they disembarked and sought political asylum.

In 1996, Kim Phúc gave a speech at the United States Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Veterans Day. In her speech, she said that one cannot change the past, but everyone can work together for a peaceful future. Also in 1996, Phúc met the surgeons who saved her life and in 1997, she became a Canadian citizen.

This amazing woman has been the recipient of several awards since becoming a Canadian citizen and as her work continued, Kim Phúc was made a member of the Order of Ontario on October 22, 2004, and received an honorary Doctorate of Law from York University for her work in supporting child victims of war around the world. On October

27, 2005, she was awarded an honorary degree in Law from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. On June 2nd, 2011, she was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Lethbridge. In 2016 she was awarded a Doctor of Civil Law, Honoris Causa, by St Mary's University, Halifax. On February 11th, 2019, she was awarded the 2019 Dresden Peace Prize in recognition of her work with UNESCO and as an activist for peace.

Today, she is married, has two children and lives in Ontario.

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