



# AAP Interview: Souvankham Thammavongsa

*SOUVANKHAM THAMMAVONGSA is the author of Small Arguments (Pedlar Press, 2003). Small Arguments started off as a series of chapbooks printed by the author and bound with Elmer's glue. It is 'a delicate and graceful hand naming the fragile materials of poetry' (Dionne Brand). Recently it was awarded the 2004 ReLit Award for excellence in poetry and an Alcuin Society citation for excellence in book design. Souvankham has also been featured at Harbourfront's Premiere Dance Theatre and International Reading Series. Small Arguments is her first book.*

*Asian American Press recently caught up with Miss Thammavongsa to talk about her writing and her work.*

**Asian American Press (AAP): Let's start with the basics. Where were you born? And what made you decide to live in Canada?**

Souvankham Thammavongsa (ST): I was born in a refugee camp in Nongkai, Thailand. We came to Canada because we were sponsored by a Canadian family.

**AAP: How long have you been writing?**

ST: Ever since I could spell my own name. If you mean, when did I get serious about writing, I would say when I was in my second year of university.

**AAP: Which university did you go to?**

ST: The University of Toronto. I majored in English literature.

**AAP: Who or what inspired you to begin writing?**

ST: Reading inspired me to write.

Interview by:  
Bryan Thao Worra  
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American Press



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**AAP: Is *Small Arguments* your first book? Where else have you been published?**

ST: *Small Arguments* is my first full book. It started off as a series of chapbooks which I covered and bound by hand. I did it--not to please an audience but to find one. I have been published in literary magazines such as *The Malahat Review*, *Grain*, *Other Voices*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Prairie Fire*, and the *Fiddlehead*. They are all in Canada.

**AAP: What has been the hardest thing about writing?**

ST: The hardest thing about writing is never writing itself.

**AAP: Who are some of your favorite writers?**

ST: I love Marianne Moore. I also like Gwendolyn MacEwen and Irving Layton.

**AAP: What are some of your favorite themes that you like to work with in your writing?**

ST: I like to write about everything. I use fruits and insects and weather to limit my language and material.

**AAP: Do you write in genres other than poetry?**

ST: No.

**AAP: Has your family been supportive of your writing? How about other members of the Lao community?**

ST: I think it is too soon to tell you how the Lao community are responding. My family members have all been very supportive. They don't quite understand what "poetry" is but they know that it's important to me.

**AAP: Do you have any current projects that you're working on?**

ST: Yes.



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**AAP: Do you have any advice for new writers?**

ST: No. Because I am a new writer.

**AAP: What made you decide to start sharing your work with the rest of the world?**

ST: I'm not sure it will be shared with the rest of the world. There are people who don't like poetry-- or can't read and write English. I'm sad that it is kept from them. I would like to share it with the rest of the world but I am not sure the world will come to it.

**AAP: What would you like your readers to walk away with after reading your work?**

ST: I don't want readers to walk away from it. I hope I've said something in there that matters. And that they carry that with them to wherever it is they mean to go.