

GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY

April
2015

Monthly news on the struggle against
the Jeju Naval base project

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The Shifting Laws of Causality

Image: by Director Cho Sungbong
Article by Sunny

Proposing one major event that merged the April 3rd incident with Sewol tragedy or the Gangjeong issue might have generated public reflection on Jeju's current and past history. But the April 3rd commemoration event also lumped together the buoyant shamanistic ritual of the so-called "Gut", producing one confusing emotional mess in the city hall of Jeju-si. This meant merry rock bands and random street performances instead of solemn public discussions for addressing the source of victims' pains and how to treat them.

The lack of serious and individual reflection, I think, naturally resulted out of the lack of properly understanding the roots of these issues. Bishop Kang U-II's recent address in an editorial on the anniversary of Sewol's submersion highlighted this problem. Bishop Kang sharply criticized the prosecutors' reasoning behind sinking of the ship. The prosecutors focused on the sudden changing of the ship's direction as the main cause of the accident (the turn shifting the cargo in the ship and knocking the vessel off balance). However, Bishop Kang

notes that this was the result, not the root of the incident. In other words, the prosecutors have failed to address what caused the ship to suddenly turn in the first place.

Bishop Kang suggests that the misrecognition of causes from the consequences has effect of avoiding the core of the problem. Doing so leaves victims not only enraged, but also unable to find the answers they need to move on from their tragedy. The April 3rd incident and the Gangjeong issue are also confronted by similar concerns. Governor Won's public address for the 67th April 3rd Anniversary centered on heading toward the future as the solution for overcoming the pain and the injustices of the affair. But no words were said on looking at the past or the present to tackle the true sources of these pains and injustices: a basic requirement for their actual overcoming.

The Gangjeong naval base project is no less different; the Korean government has proffered many reasons for the construction, from attracting tourism and investments to boosting security measures to thwart the "North

Korean threat". But many protestors in Jeju and abroad are clearly aware that the true motive pertains to US' attempts to contain the military expansion of China in the region under the "Asia Pivot" plan. Everything else, like tourism and investments, can be possible outcomes of the construction. But they are not the origin.

The "confusing emotional mess" of an event held in Jeju-si shows us what the switching of the causes and consequences can lead to. It does not allow victims to genuinely deal with the sources of their past wounds. The unresolved tensions then drag on to the present, mixing with later devastating events that also do not receive appropriate resolution. The process mirrors a snowball effect; all heartbreaking memories from the past become packed into one undistinguishable heap of emotions that is ever-growing and festering in the present. That is what our future will also look like, not the one envisioned by the governor, and no amount of loud rock music and street performances could conceal the reality.

Solidarity with the Sewol struggle

By Emily Wang

While Sewol ferry disaster struggle has just reached its one-year anniversary on April 16th, lots of solidarity actions were taken in Gangjeong: Gangjeong Village Association sent its video and photo solidarity message; Gangjeong ocean team made a sea performance to re-float a banner written that "Re-float the Sewol ferry and uncover the truth"; the fund-raising actions for Sewol struggle were taken including a flea market, and contributing our one-day laboring to collect young bracken (a popular vegetable growing in spring) in the grass field to sell.

On the night of April 16th, Gangjeong village bus brought villagers to Seogwipo city participating in the Sewol Ferry candle light vigil. "Gangjeong Chorus" sang a song-"Oh, friend" in the candle light vigil to remember the Sewol victims.

Without planning a special event, a continuous, silent but powerful lantern for Sewol victims has been lightened in the Mass tent in front of the Gangjeong naval base. Everyday, people draw a different victim's face and leave a different message on the lantern. It has lightened and warmed passengers here.

Do you know what makes Gangjeong so precious? It is the heart to feel others' suffering.



Image: by Joan Kim - A daily changing people's lantern for the Sewol victims

Webs of Friendship

Members of Voices for Creative Nonviolence (VCNV) travel to war zones in Iraq, Palestine, and Afghanistan, to make friends with the very people that the U.S. government tells us are our enemies. While there, we see what today's weapons do: homes turned to rubble, doctors and nurses overwhelmed by injured civilians, children blinded by bullets or paralyzed by shrapnel, bridges and schools destroyed by bombs. War also destroys economies, and gives the most conservative and often violent elements of society opportunities to seize power.

Just last week, we heard from our friend, Omar, in Baghdad, telling us about a family that had been killed in their home by one of the many armed militias terrorizing neighborhoods in Iraq. This terror is a direct consequence of U.S. warfare, which destabilized the country. War turns peoples' minds towards hate and vengeance. It diverts massive resources that should be used to repair the environment and pay reparations to victims of war, instead benefiting mainly big corporations whose government contracts allow them to supply the military with what it needs.

Construction of a naval base in Gangjeong extends U.S. military strength into the sea lanes off Jeju. Instead of protecting Korean people, it will protect U.S. economic interests. In this way, it's part of a larger strategy that includes the occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine, a strategy that ultimately lead to the killing of the family in Baghdad.

As people who share this one planet, we need webs of friendship not webs of militarization. Likewise, as activists, we need connections to each other. At VCNV, we are inspired by activists in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine who have somehow remained strong in the face of decades of war. And we are inspired by the activists we have met in Gangjeong, who are willing to take great risks to stand up to their government and act for peace, human rights, and the rights of all beings.

Jeju is aching, so is my heart

By Joyakgoi

Jeju Island is standing at the crossroads. Is it going to be the island of environmental destruction and military bases which will only lead to death? Or the island of life and peace where endangered species like Jeju dolphins live freely? At every point of time, we are forced to make a choice. Apparently, we all seem to know the answer. But to many of the people, the choice is not that easy to make because it is not presented in the simple form. The capitalists are experts in sugarcoating where they make people believe military base means economic prosperity and environmental destruction means more money. And this is where documentary films can fill in. Movies can make you see through twisted information and focus on the real important issue. At least, this is what audience has confessed to me after they watched Jeju's Aching Heart, the Irish made documentary on the struggle. They said they thought Gangjeong was over now that the base construction is irreversible. In the several film screenings in Jeju and Seoul, the viewers were ready to pay attention to the suffering of the islanders. During the film they cried together with Vice Mayor Koh. And when the show was over they once again felt deep compassion for the aching villagers who vow to continue to live their hard-knock lives on Jeju. Life will go on here and Jeju people will say no to death. If you think Gangjeong has lost the battle, please watch this film which is an overture to a 21st century version of the imperialist conflicts. When the construction is done, nuclear warships will show up in the sea. And then military tension will dictate the treacherous region. What path should we take?

Interview with Uncle Oh Do-heung

By Shining Lake

Uncle Oh Do-heung is the director of Tongmul library, which is a part of the Peace movement for the children of Gangjeong village. Many residents are tired of the long struggle against the naval base construction, but Uncle Oh Do-heung continues to increase his participation within the Gangjeong community.

Q: What made you actively join in the village struggle?

A: I am the fifteenth in my line of ancestors to live on Jeju Island. I returned 5 years after a 10 year absence and my hometown seemed like a different place, many people I didn't know and the atmosphere had changed. The relationship among villagers, once harmonious had become estranged. I wanted to work to return the community to the way of life I knew it could achieve.

Q: How did you become a part of Book Village Project Team?

A: While taking a walk, I saw the construction going on at the Tongmool library and one of the staff explained the project to me. I discussed with him wanting to be involved and that's how I joined.

Q: What has changed in regard to the participation of Gangjeong villagers in the struggle?

A: The participation of villagers has continued to reduce over the past year. Ideally it would be great if villagers could get together when they are invited to an event. When I attend events and see only a few villagers in attendance I feel shameful and frustrated as a resident. Villagers do not seem to think deeply about what will happen to the village in the future. To the contrary, at the time when I returned to Gangjeong village people eagerly participated in struggle. At that time I was ashamed not to be among them, but now it has all changed.

Q: The relationship among villagers is broken a lot, how could it be restored?

A: I guess ... "Time will heal all wounds".

Q: Do you have any words to international friends who love Gangjeong Village?

A: Thank you for your solidarity.

Gangjeong US Tour Comes to a Close

From March 16 to April 16, we held 17 Gangjeong presentations, 16 Gureombi, The Wind is Blowing film screenings, 7 interviews, and 1 rally. Not to mention countless meetings and delicious meals! The end result: Many new friends were made, many old friendships were rekindled, and nearly \$8000 USD in donations was raised.

Living in Gangjeong, we often had international visitors and we made many connections between similar struggles around the world. And yet, even as members of the international team, it was sometimes difficult not to seem isolated, to seem alone, and to not realize the full scope of support. But we have been given a great gift. Through this tour, we met tremendous support, from all kinds of people and we could experience first hand just how loved we are, just how blessed we are, just how many do really care about this tiny village on this small island.

Everyday, we went before people and shared our small stories in earnest, hoping that they could see the pain, joy, suffering, loss and triumph in the faces and actions of the Gangjeong villagers and their friends. At times, we doubted. There is so much death and misery happening in the world, could they still be moved by the sincerity of the people? Would they still see the beauty and sacredness of Gureombi Rock? And yet every time, event after event, people were challenged, inspired, overwhelmed, and thankful. And in return so are we. The international solidarity in support of Gangjeong is incredible. You have blessed us all with your actions big and small, and you have lifted spirits, warmed hearts, and saved lives. We are so glad to call you friends. And for those of you engaged in working for justice, anywhere in this small world, let's continue to stand in mutual support. You inspire us! We'll be your hope if you be ours!

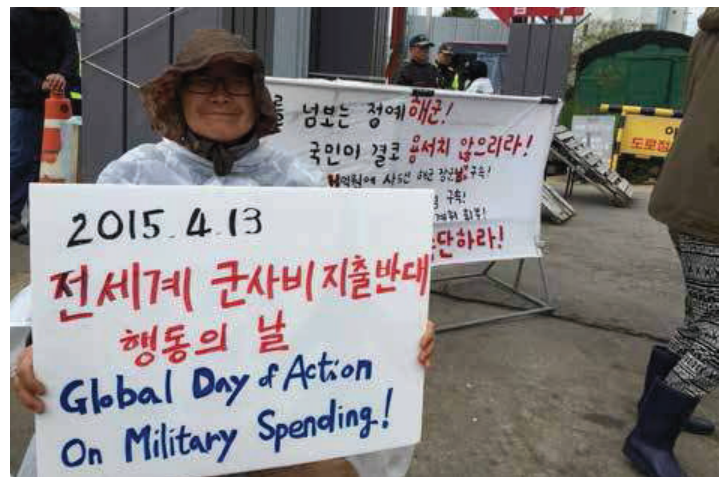


Image by the Gangjeong Village Story.

People joining GDAMS in the daily mass site in front of construction gate, April 13.

International Solidarity



Image : by the Gangjeong Village Story

The village welcomes the release of Kathy Kelly. On April 21 (USA time), Kathy Kelly who has visited Gangjeong before was released after three months in a prison in the US for her drone protest in front of an air force base in the state of Missouri.

Dream of resurrection

By Sister Roselina

On 2nd April 2015, during the Easter week, the brutal conduct of the Republic of Korea government provoked the Sewol family members to shave their heads. Feeling the pain of the Sewol Ferry tragedy, along with political instability in the air and pressure on my heart, I decided to maintain a vigil of prayer for resurrection over the Holy three days of Easter.

The Catholic Group in Gangjeong had planned a ritual washing of the feet ceremony to take place at the time of the Lord's Last Supper near the Gangjeong stream at 5pm. However due to poor weather the ceremony was held in the mass tent. In spite of the rain and his poor mobility Father Lim Han-Wook travelled from the mainland to participate in the ceremony, washing the feet of the people sitting around the altar. I was touched by this scene and felt as if my own feet were

washed.

On Good Friday, the march of the Cross (Via Crucis) began in front of a daily mass tent at 3pm, passing through the Samgeori restaurant where Gangjeong activists eat and rest, through to Gangjeong port where many SOS (Save Our Seas) members have been arrested, past the military residence construction site, the epicenter of the tower struggle and finally arriving at the Gangjeong Life and Peace Pastoral Center being built. There we stopped and sang in chorus.

Generally the Easter vigil mass would be held with the grandeur and splendor as the most important liturgy of the year, but in Gangjeong the mass was held with reused candles and without burning any incense. We met the timing of great Resurrection of Jesus in humble forms in Gangjeong.

On Easter Sunday, Bishop Kang U-II served as the priest over the Catholic Mass, followed by a meal with the community, confessing that he was "happy whenever he is here." His Easter sermon stated that on this day in the Gospel (John 20, versus 1-9) Jesus' resurrection was announced and the word of "tomb" appears 7 times.

The tomb itself is darkness and something that takes life away, but it is the time when the Resurrection appears. When man's ability and achievement have disappeared, God will start to work. After these three holy days in Gangjeong I reached internal peace thanks to the word, and I continue to dream to share the hope of the resurrection with the sick and those in need.

Free Dungree Free Democracy

On the 28th April Park Sung-Soo, who is known in Gangjeong as Dungree, was arrested while he and his 10 colleagues were holding a press conference outside the Supreme Prosecutor's Office in Seoul to denounce President Park Geun Hye's Government oppression on freedom of speech. The prosecutors, whom Park Sung-Soo criticized for their dog-like blind loyalty to the President, regarded him to have violated the law on assembly when he and press conference participants made a dog like barking sound three times as a protest to the prosecutors' warning. Park has previously sent dog food to regional police stations in protest to the Government's oppression on people through the mobilization of prosecutors and the police. The Court issued an arrest of warrant against him on May 1 for the charge of damage to the President's honor. Park Sung-Soo has video recorded the daily Gangjeong protests for the last two years and has previously volunteered to be imprisoned instead of paying fines for protesting in 2013. After leaving Gangjeong he has continued his own work for democracy and the environmental movement through the publication of his own book.

Gangjeong Fundraiser or a Fun-raiser?

By Sunny

On April 29th, hundreds of people gathered in Jeju-si to partake in a fundraising event to alleviate the prodigious and unjust fines imposed on the Gangjeong people. The event started from 12 pm and continued until 10 pm.

The long hours were marked by merry consumptions of nonstop food and wine, along with boisterous laughter filling the massive hall crowded by villagers, lawyers, activists, and artists.

Quite a scene it was to gaze upon such diverse groups of people all brought together with the motive of lessening the financial burdens. But one could almost forget this part with the roars of laughter and kids enjoying the plentiful food. It seemed more like people were there to just have a wonderful time.

Thinking about peace and justice

By Joyakgol

Jeongbang Waterfall is a famous tourist point on Jeju Island, known for the water directly falling to the ocean. But not many know this was the one of the major April 3 massacre sites in the southern part of the island. Hundreds, if not thousands, of civilians were shot or bamboo-speared to death and then tossed off the 23 m (75 ft) cliff down to the ocean.

The annual shamanist ritual, Haewon-Sangsaeng Gut was held April 11 at the waterfall this year to honor the victims and remember the state violence. On the sunny morning, the historical and tourist attraction was filled with people, busy taking photos. But then a ritual presenter announced that if the Sewol ferry carrying 476 people, mostly high school students on a field trip, hadn't capsized about a year ago or the government had done the right job rescuing the passengers, then the young minds too could have appreciated this beauty of the nature. We had a moment of silence. Behind the beauty is the land of tragedy.

The shamanist ritual of Gut was considered traditionally as the village festival and arts performance. And Haewon-Sangsaeng means relieving deep-rooted rancor for coexistence. This memorial service is organized by Jeju shamans and socially conscious artists who have gone to the actual massacre sites annually. In 2012, it was held in Gangjeong village where many islanders believed the Jeju naval base project was another April 3 state-inflicted violence.

At the waterfall ritual, I felt that victims of the massacre, sunken ferry Sewol and military base were all somehow interconnected in the tragic history of Jeju and thus we must work hard for peace and justice not to repeat it.



Image by Emily Wang. Two marching groups met in front of the military housing construction gate guarded by lots of police. One marching group is people from Korean Confederation of Trade Unions to memorize the 4-3 suffering and spirit, and the other is the praying marching by Catholic group to comfort people in Gangjeong, the village experiencing another April 3rd incident.



Image by the Gangjeong Village Story. Colt Coltec workers produce about 30% of guitars in the world. Upon its 3000th day strike against unjust lay-off, they are having a nationwide tour, having Gangjeong as their 1st spot on April 21. Organizing themselves as a band, they deliver the hearts of workers through their songs.

"A Call for an End to the Korean War and the Elimination of Nuclear Threats on the Korean Peninsula"

*A joint petition to be declared on May 4 by People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) and Solidarity for Peace and Reunification of Korea (SPARK)
(Excerpts from the long proposal)*

First: Immediately reconvene the lapsed Six-Party Talks in order to find ways to establish a nuclear-free zone on the Korean peninsula to resolve the nuclear crisis.

Second: Parallel to, or preceding, the Six-Party Talks, the countries involved -- including South Korea, North Korea, the US, and China -- should conduct negotiations that would lead to ending the armistice system and replacing it with a permanent peace system, based on the conclusion of a peace treaty.

Third: Parallel to, or preceding, the Six-Party Talks, North Korea-US, and North Korea-Japan bilateral talks should be initiated in order to comprehensively improve relations between these states.

Fourth: The two Koreas should expand their dialogue and cooperation with each other, with the active support and encouragement of neighboring countries.

Fifth: There must be an end to the US-Japan-ROK military cooperation, including the missile defense system, which perpetuates the arms race on the peninsula and in the wider East Asian region.

Sixth: Japan must be prevented from exercising the right of collective self-defense, as interpreted by the Abe administration, because this would nullify the Japanese peace constitution, particularly article 9, which has served as an anchor of peace in East Asia.

Seventh: Together with the conclusion of the Korean peninsula peace treaty, hostile military alliances must be phased out, stage by stage, and replaced by peaceful reciprocal relations, in order to contribute to the common security of the Korean peninsula and all East Asian countries.



Image by Sunny: Gonggan (meaning 'space'), opening of a new meeting place in Gangjeong.

How You Can Help

1. Write a letter to the South Korean government to stop the Jeju base project and to the US government to stop the support for it.
2. Write letters to Gangjeong's prisoners of conscience.
3. Stay updated by joining our Facebook groups and following us on twitter.
4. Organize a solidarity event (concert, movie screening, protest, etc...)
5. Then share about it on social media.
6. Visit Gangjeong!
7. For other ways to help and more visit us on the web.

For More Information

<http://www.SaveJejuNow.org>
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/NoNavalBase>
<http://www.facebook.com/SaveJeju>
<http://www.twitter.com/SaveJejuNow>

For Gangjeong related videos, visit savejejunow.org or check these Vimeo/YouTube users :

Vimeo : cho sung bong / DH Song / Regis Tremblay
Youtube : Gang-Jeong Il-Gi / Shalomsea / 1234yz100 / Sungbong2012

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Sail on the Sea of Peace! Inter-island Solidarity for Peace

By Dr. Song Kang-Ho

Military bases are like monsters, which survive by sucking the blood of people. US military bases in Okinawa have shed the blood of Vietnamese people and another base on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean has sacrificed people's lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. New military bases occupy land expelling the people who have lived for a long time in that place. And the bases are surrounded by "red-light districts." It's so sorry that the beautiful and holy rock "Gureombi" is now paved over by cement and concrete and will be surrounded by prostitutes. Soldiers are the killing tentacles of these monsters.

They are wild animals without reason and machines without spirit. Otherwise they couldn't kill human beings, who have the image of God, as if they were pigs or cows. This monster in Gangjeong tried first to set up at Hwasoon in west Jeju but after it was kicked out of Hwasoon, it came to Wimi near Seogwipo City. But after it was expelled again from there, finally it came to Gangjeong. If it had been rejected by Gangjeong village, it would found another victim in another place. This is why we have to make a peace zone in which no more monsters can survive.

We campaign to make Jeju a demilitarized peace island. And we try to encourage Okinawa people to expel all of the US military bases and demilitarize their islands. Even though Taiwan people have a more complicated identity, we try to persuade them also to join as a point of the triangle of the demilitarized peace sea in East Asia.

Sail on the sea of peace and coexistence!

Let's open new era of peace and living together, closing the old era of confrontation and hatred! Let's erase the East China Sea from the map and draw a new name for the blue ocean which embraces Jeju, Okinawa and Taiwan: the Sea of Peace and Coexistence! I will call youth from Korea, Japan, China and islands surrounding this ocean to sail together to proclaim peace and life on the sea.

We will visit every border island fighting against the building of military bases and encourage them to rise up and to be aware that we who are the villagers of the islands are the real owners and stewards for keeping the peace of our sea. Let's sail together on the sea of peace! Let's be born again as new creatures filled with the spirit of peace and freedom by sailing on the blue ocean of dolphins and dugongs!



Image by Paco.

