

GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY

May
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Monthly news on the struggle against
the Jeju Naval base project

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Women Cross DMZ delegates visit Gangjeong

Image: by Sunny
Article by Ann Wright

Following our historic visit to North Korea, through the DMZ and to South Korea for reunification and peace on the Korean peninsula, 8 members of our Women Cross the DMZ (WCD) visited Gangjeong Village May 27-28, 2015.

Led by Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Maguire and WCD coordinator Christine Ahn, we participated with No Bases activists in the daily morning 100 bows and the midday sit-in in front of the main gate to the naval base, which slowed traffic into the huge military complex for more than one hour. In a public forum at the Gangjeong Peace Center on May 27, delegates briefly described to Gangjeong activists the trip to North Korea. We talked of meeting women who described the continuing effects of the division of Korea and the Korean War on the people of North Korea. We told of the 7,000 women of Pyongyang who lined the boulevard in front of the

huge monument of women of Korea holding hand for reunification of the peninsula and a similar gathering of 2,000 women in Kaesong who saw us off for the DMZ. Only a few hours later, we were met in South Korea by hundreds of women and families at a park for a lively welcome ceremony and a rally for reconciliation. In both North and South Korea we participated in conferences for peace and reconciliation.

During our visit to Jeju Island, we were deeply moved by the April 3 Peace Park and embarrassed and upset to learn of the involvement in the United States military government in the killing of over 30,000 Jeju Islanders from 1948-1953 by the government and U.S. forces under the pretext of dissent and rebellion from the U.S. installed government of South Korea and the heavy handed police who were retained in the positions they held under the Japanese colonial rule.

The spirit and enthusiasm of the Gangjeong Village committee against military bases and its allies on the Korean mainland in their long struggle to protect the pristine waters of the UNESCO Biosphere of Jeju Island from the construction of the South Korean naval base greatly impressed our delegation. Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CODEPINK: Women for Peace, remarked, "I have seldom seen such long term protest that has been able to keep a large core group mobilized to challenge military bases."

About the Author: Ann Wright is a retired U.S. Army Colonel and a former U.S. diplomat who resigned from the U.S. government in March 2003 in opposition to the war on Iraq. She included in her letter of resignation a statement concerning the lack of effort of the Bush administration to address the resolution of the Korean conflict. She has visited Gangjeong village three times.

Two ancestor-memorial sites against bases

By Park Youn-Ae

I was fortunate enough to visit Sakima Art-gallery in Okinawa in May 2011. I saw significant artworks at the same time as military helicopters such as Ospreys were taking off and landing loudly. The Osprey can be seen from the rooftop of the gallery as it is located just beside the Futenma US air force base in Ginowan city. The gallery was established on the returned land from the US army in 1994 by the Sakima family members who requested the US army to return the land as their ancestors were buried there. From the fence the land of the air force base looks sunken, as if symbolizing a small victory of a family over the military.

In Gangjeong, just next to the navy fence, there is a small memorial site for 12 ancestors, built by their descendants in 1999. The navy has threatened the descendants to take over this section of land so that the fence for the navy base can be straight. The descendants used to hold a traditional ceremony in memory of the ancestors every year but the site itself is now being endangered. What is happening to Korea if we are no longer respect ancestors and see a straight fence line around our navy as more important?

While I was in Okinawa I was able to meet with Mrs. Yoo Yong-ja, a Buddhist monk and peace activist in Okinawa. She said that 'My country is the nation of equality and democracy. If we want to live as human-beings, there should be no base. Only Peace. That is the way to recompense to Buddha.'



Image by the Gangjeong Village Story: The 12 ancestors' descendants hold a ceremony in memory of them every May 8th, the Parents Day of Korea. The site is located just next to the navy fence.

Jeju Dolphins Returned Home

I still clearly remember the day I saw the wild dolphins swim in the sea. It was the summer of 2011 when we were staying 24/7 on Gureombi Rock to defend Gangjeong village from naval base construction. One day at around 6 pm, I was looking out to the vast sea and right there, about 20 dolphins were swimming from Tiger Island to the lighthouse.

I was amazed and overwhelmed by the Jeju dolphins whose natural habitat was about to be destroyed by the marine construction. Suddenly I realized why I was there and what it meant to oppose naval base project. Dolphins were epitome of freedom, life and peace, and they meant the whole ecosystem to me. I vowed to stop the detrimental military plan to save the beautiful nature. And we formed a marine environmental action group, called Hotpinkdolphin in 2011.

Hotpinkdolphins have been actively involved in sending captive dolphins to the sea. Unlike other species, Jeju dolphins live near the shore and swim around the island all around the year, which made them vulnerable for illegal whaling and dolphin show industry. They had been caught illegally for 20 years, sent to aquariums under the table throughout the country.

We found out about it, started a boycott campaign against it. Luckily enough, 5 captive dolphins so far have been successfully sent back home, the sea of Jeju after long years of disputes and arguments. Now it's our job to protect the dolphin habitat from environmental disasters such as military construction and other development plans before it's too late. After all, there are only 100 population of Jeju dolphins left in this beautiful region. Now is the time to act.



Image by Kim Dae-Geon, Korean participants of the Okinawa Yearly Peace March on May 15.

Interview with Wildflower

By Rez

Wildflower is a long time committed artist and activist I met while visiting Gangjeong. She is from the mainland of South Korea, but has left her home and relocated to this small village, where she works as a full time peacemaker in opposition to the U.S. Naval Base that is currently being constructed.

Wildflower's art has become a symbol of both the grief and joy shared by local villagers and peace activists here in Gangjeong. Through craft and dance she expresses both feelings of loss of the sacred Gureombi rock which was destroyed during the construction of the naval base and joy generated from the close-knit peace community which resides here. Her art celebrates friendship and solidarity in the face of the ongoing struggle to demilitarize Jeju Island.

As an American, I was eager to learn Wildflower's perceptions of U.S. involvement in Korea. She explained to me quite bluntly that she does not think of her country as an independent country. "Stating it simply" she says, "we were colonized by Japan, and now we have been colonized by the U.S." She proceeded to unfold the tragic history of South Korea, highlighting the April 3rd massacre and the May 18th Gwangju uprising, pointing to the U.S. as the common denominator in each horrifically violent scene.

When I asked Wildflower to describe some of her concerns regarding the future of Gangjeong, she compared the base to a cell of cancer, contagious and spreading. As has occurred in the past upon the building of U.S. military bases in South Korea, she believes that more and more houses will be removed, the native people will become displaced, and the community will be replaced with bars and prostitution. When she was through detailing her worries, however, as though suddenly inspired, she stated that "although we know we already have cancer we do not stop trying to cure it. Likewise, we know there is more to do."

Peace march in Okinawa

Four Gangjeong villagers have been to Okinawa from May 12-16 to participate in a peace march and demonstration. The situation there looked more serious than we thought. Even though Okinawa accounts for only 1% Japanese territory, it holds 70% of US military in Japan, an explosive storage in the region. An US base expansion plan is tearing the community apart, and moreover, Japanese Defense Forces is having a plan to build a new base in one of the islands, Miyako.

Okinawan people have had problems with every military base in Okinawa. But the Japanese and US government have been using them for their own agenda. For example, as Okinawan people didn't want the Futenma US Marine Corps base because of the dangerous Osprey, a new base with an airfield exclusively for the vertical aircraft is being constructed in Henoko.

In the past, the Okinawan community was divided into pros and cons of US bases, but recently they are starting to unite as the rage against the government is getting bigger. Naysayers have been elected as Governor, mayors, lawmakers and local council members, which showed the public sentiment against the military. Now it's going viral nationwide. On May 3, the Constitution Day of Japan, more than one million people participated in demonstrations in 100 plus cities to uphold the Clause 9 of the Peace Constitution. I was in Nagano street rally on that day, and demonstration participants did not just chant for the Clause 9, but also fought for diverse peace issues including Henoko, Osprey, Kyoto x-band radar, and Jeju naval base.

South Korea and Japan should face the same future destiny; North Korea's nuclear threat, China's expansion to the sea, and the US hegemony in the region, all of which increases military tension and war threat, creates confusion in the economy. That is why peace solidarity between Korean and Japan is critical and peace movement must get stronger.

THAAD and Anthrax

On 27 May, 2015 Steve Warren, a Pentagon spokesman announced to the public that samples of living anthrax had mistakenly been sent from a US military research centre to nine other states across the U.S. Warren stated that the same sample was also sent to the ITRP (Integrated Threat Recognition Program) at the Osan air base of the USFK (United States Forces of Korea) in Pyeongtaek, Korea. Korean civil societies pointed out that this was a violation of the Biological Weapons Convention and protested that this matter was not taken seriously by the United States who do not respect countries' inspection sovereignty or honour their duty to provide advanced notification to the affected country. When the people protested in front of the base in Pyeongtaek the next day the USFK also attended, but with clubs and shields.

Pyeongtaek is a city where the US military deployment of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) is also expected to occur. Given the location of Pyeongtaek on the west coast of the Korean peninsula and in close proximity to China, the possible deployment of the THAAD in Pyeongtaek will threaten China and escalate unnecessary tensions, preventing peace on the Korean peninsula and across Northeast Asia. It also means South Korea will be incorporated into the US-Japanese Missile defence program.

International Solidarity



Image by the Gangjeong Village Story: On May 24, the International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament, the people of Gangjeong held a small event in remembrance of the day. After the day's mass, people lining up and holding banners, exchanged short speeches. After that, they planted flower seeds of peace in front of the main base construction gate.

A Hopeful Encounter

By Rez

I am an American who left the States about 3 weeks ago to join peace activists in Gangjeong who are opposing the construction of a U.S. Naval Base in their small Jeju Island village.

Right now in the U.S. people all over the country are rising up and speaking out against police brutality being perpetrated primarily against black men and women. Furthermore, as activists seek to hold police officers accountable for their violent actions, violence between activists and police officers seem continually to escalate. I arrived in Gangjeong carrying a heavy heart due to the ever-increasing destructive and violent dynamics that continue to develop in the States between peace activists

and police officers.

For the past three weeks I have been appearing daily at the gate of the naval base. Also appearing daily at the gate are rows police officers. I can't help but watch these young Korean officers and wonder how different we really are from one another. What would it take for us to walk hand in hand, working toward peace together?

One day I found myself face to face with a Korean police officer who had just succeeded in pushing us to the peripheral of the gate entrance. As construction machinery roared past us, I stared at her thoughtfully. She noticed this and said to me in nearly flawless English that she was sorry, but that it was necessary that she

perform her duty in keeping me safe.

My impulse was to inquire whether or not she thought it safe to live on a militarized island, and since when has the U.S. military ever succeeded in keeping the people of Korea safe?

Instead, rather, I complimented her on how well she spoke English. She smiled and I smiled back.

I then gestured to all of the activists gathered around me singing and dancing joyfully and asked her if someday she would join us. She lowered her head and sighed deeply. She again raised her eyes to mine and said that she hoped to one day. I put my arm around her shoulder and told her that I couldn't wait for that day to come.

The Mystery of Gangjeong

By Sister Roselina

On the naval base land, one can see buildings with tired roofs, signaling the final process of the construction. Though that scene can leave villagers prostrated with sorrow, many have attended the Gangjeong masses on May 2015 with uncrushed vigor. This is perhaps because many people who have visited Gangjeong came not with the intention of success and results (of stopping the base), but out of love and concern for the people. With that said, I would like to introduce some of the guests on this monthly article.

Two American peace activists came to the village on the 1st of May to stay for two months, in addition to 45 sisters (belonging to diocese of Uigeongbu) who attended mass in a heavy rain (on May 11th), The Community of Labor Ministry (on May 16th), a Jesuit priest from Indonesia (on May 22th), Park Hyun-dong abbot of Order of St. Benedict Waegwan Abbey, and Sewol family members. Among the members was Kim Young-oh, the father of Yumin who had done a 40-day hunger strike at Gwanghwamun for his daughter who died from the sinking of Sewol. At the time of human band after mass, he said, "The Navy had not saved anyone from the sinking ship, but have ironically been making the naval base on the pretext of protecting a nation against foreign enemies. I am too shocked by the naval hypocrisy." And as final words, he supported the Gangjeong movement, promising that he will do his best until the truth of Sewol incident comes to light. Many visitors thus have been joined the community of Gangjeong by a mysterious allure, who have made us to see the valuable treasures of the inner Gangjeong family rather than the crude and devastating realities existing outside the circle.

Why should you serve in the military service?

By Emily Wang

On May 15th, the Peace Seminar at Jeju University was held to mark the International Conscientious Objectors' Day. This was the second event following the seminar a year before, with this year's theme being: "The most peaceful question that we have lost: why should you serve in the military?" The topic was picked in remembrance of Kathy Kelly and her speech (she spoke for last year's Peace Seminar). She said, "True nonviolence is to constantly question whether I use violence or not."

The seminar was composed of four lectures. First was Bak Gil Su (an activist from the World Without War), who chose to be a conscientious objector by opposing the military service. Afterwards, Sunny (a former priest and a current peace activist and a member of Catholic Workers) came onto the stage and shared his life story of living for peace with the theme of 'To kill, or not to kill; that is the question'. The third presenter, Dr. Kang-ho Song, proposed the peace service as active act of peace with the title of his presentation: 'Do not do military service, let's do peace service'. Lastly, on the topic of 'The military and the military service of Jesus Christ', Kyung-jung Kim, who majored in irenic theology, shared the story of the Christian life in order to love enemies without resorting to violence.

Singer Seong-mi Yang also joined in to celebrate the International Day of Conscientious Objectors with song of peace. Currently, South Korea has more than 600 conscientious objectors in prison. The accumulated number of CO in the past years reaches to approximately 20,000. As we share the question of 'Why should we serve in the military?' raised by the COs, we can make Jeju an island of peace that rejects a military base.



Image by Pang Eunmi. Mr. Kim Young-oh, a father of a student victim of Sewol Ferry tragedy who visited Gangjeong holds a banner that says 'No more construction in Gangjeong'.



Image by Lina: A fundraising event for the Gangjeong Struggle was held in Seoul in May. A lot of supporters and friends of Gangjeong joined. The funds raised on the day will help Gangjeong activists pay their fines.

Trial Updates

▶ On May 7, the executive group of the SKY_ACT (Ssangyong-Kangjeong-Yongsan joint act) including four people such as Kim Duk-Jin, Kim Deuk-Joong, Boo Jang-Won, and Park Rae-Goon got the court decision of no guilty in the 1st court held in the Seobu regional branch of Seoul court. The police had indicted the group under the charge of interrupting general road traffic and violation of the rally law during the 2012 Nationwide March for Life and Peace. The judge found them not guilty on the basis that they had made the right decision for the safe and effective traffic for the crowd and vehicles and that the police had indicted them with no justifiable reasons.

▶ On May 28, the Public Law center of the PSPD (People's Solidarity for Peace and Democracy) filed a civilian suit of damage compensation on behalf of Park Sung-Soo (nicknamed Dungere). Park was arrested under the charge of violation of the assembly law during the press conference in front of the Prosecutors' Office in Seoul on April 28 and has been imprisoned in the Daegu detention center since then, primarily for the charge of damage on the honor of the president Park Geun-Hye (See the April newsletter). PSPD claims that the police and the state took illegal execution of government affairs by arresting him during a peaceful press conference in violation of the Constitution. People are making effort to bail him out within June.



2nd Year Anniversary by the Book Village Friends Team

The Village Festival was held to celebrate the 2nd anniversary of the Book Village Project right in front of 'Tong-mul' Library on May 16th. Gangjeong Village laughed. The stage was filled with poem readings by Gangjeong children, songs by guest singers, and a singing contest for the villagers.

Gangjeong laughed again. Tong-mul, where spring water once bubbled up out of the ground, now became stage and stairs for people to sit. Gangjeong laughed harder. Gangjeong villagers laughed until it got dark and the sun had set. They screamed with laughter.

I was glad to see again villagers who hadn't shown up at an event for a while. Gangjeong laughed. Just a week ago, there was an event for giving away books to villagers, which was also hosted by the Book Village Friends Team. Gangjeong laughed. Those books were from all the supporters across the country to stand in solidarity with Gangjeong people through the sending of books. Gangjeong laughed.

As we laugh, there is still one question that we should not let go; What facial expression should Gangjeong Village have on her face even after the naval base is built? Gangjeong Village, she laughs.

**In remembrance of 25 April 2015,
Nepal's recent earthquake tragedy.
Here in Gangjeong, we convey our
heartfelt condolences and express our
grief and solidarity with all the victims
affected by the earthquake.**



Image by Song Dong-hyo: On May 24, Gangjeong farmer's market called Gae-Gureombi was held on Meotburi Rocks just next to the naval base construction site. It is a monthly market organized by a cultural activist who lives 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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The Line

So-won placed her chair where she always had: right on the invisible line marking entrance to the base.

She was quite definite about it.

For naval base security, however, the line came and went.

When protesters were absent, the line wandered off on four feet, following a scent, and settled near the street.

It was a living thing that obeyed their orders, and today the tall security guard with the light blue AFNY hat told it to lie down in front of So-won's chair, putting her over the line. But So-won wouldn't budge.

She bent forward and with both hands rubbed the line roughly around its face and ears, then leaned back and smiled up at the guard.

The line whimpered softly, settling in at her feet.

The guard stood over her, and cursing, leaned into her chair, trying to force her forward.

In one smooth, deft move, So-won stood, lifted her chair, slipped behind him, and sat down.

Frightened, the line followed, hiding behind her.

The guard was frightened too.

Standing next to So-won, he looked around.

It seemed everyone was watching him:

the other guards, the priests and nuns protesting, the international activists, the military police, the surveillance cameras.

Down the street, the congregation continued its recitation of the rosary, but everyone at the base entrance was aware something was afoot.

Sitting comfortably in her chair, So-won lifted her left leg and with the toe of her shoe bumped the security guard's boot.

He looked at her and stiffened.

What is she doing? he wondered.

Sensing tension, the line came around from behind her chair and jumped into So-won's lap.

She smiled up at the security guard and bumped his toe again.



Image by Haksoo: Gangjeong Village Traditional Music Team performs at the event for the Children's Day on May 5th in the nearby city.

