

GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY

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Monthly news on the struggle against
the Jeju Naval base project

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The first Gangjeong Film Festival ended with success

Image by Park Jung-II
Article by Joyakgol

The first International Peace Film Festival in Gangjeong (IPFFIG) ended on April 26 with success. The highlight was the opening ceremony, held on April 23 in the packed Seogwipo Catholic Church with more than 1,000 peace-aspiring citizens from Jeju and all over the world. Nobody expected this huge turnout. A documentary about the sunken Sewol ferry disaster 'Upside Down' was screened as the opening film which represents a slice of the state of capsized Korea, not functioning, incapable of rescuing its drowning people, just like Gangjeong has never been supported by the Korean government, but instead the village is being financially strangled by the state.

It was last December when a group of Veterans For Peace activists visited Gangjeong that Prof.

Yang Yoon-mo, now the executive director of the IPFFIG, publicly announced the plan of holding the film festival to stop the expansion of Jeju naval base and to surround the military with the power of culture. However, organizing an international film festival at this scale was not an easy thing to do. Time was not enough. We did not have seed money, nor did we have an intention to receive financial aid from the any government or companies. We started working hard to make it happen from early January. We solely depended on the citizens, social organizations and crowd funding. Miraculously, there were several moments where we didn't think it was going to work out and almost gave up, but the people lifted us up again. When the navy announced the completion of the base construction on Feb 26, the general

public thought it was all over. But on the same day, the people of Gangjeong declared a village of life-peace and culture. On March 28, Jeju navy filed a \$ 3-million damage lawsuit against the villagers, the whole islanders became furious and demanded to drop it. On April 12, Seogwipo Arts Center disapproved our application to use the venue for the film festival, mentioning the festival was politically motivated, which was a denial of Seogwipo people's rights to enjoy the cultural event. Now, more and more citizens came up and cheered for us. Everyone pitched in and so we could open the world's poorest yet most moving film festival. Several thousands of people visited Gangjeong during the peace film festival and we have planted trees of peace in the village that will stop the crazy wind of militarism.

The Government should drop the wrongful lawsuit

"We, Gangjeong villagers, are not activists. However, the reason that we symbolically relocated our Village Association Hall onto the street is because we have had everything taken away from us." It was the night of April 10th when the villagers set up a sit in tent, a symbolically relocated village hall across from the base. It is to demand that the South Korean government/navy drop the wrongful lawsuit in which 116 individuals and 5 groups, including the Gangjeong village association, are the accused. They are allegedly and absurdly told by the government to be responsible for the delay of base construction due to their anti-base activities.

It is not only those accused who protest to the government's such unprecedented wrongful lawsuit. Even all 40 members of the Island provincial council have raised opposition to such government stance, regardless of ruling and opposition parties. Such a stance was followed by all three National Assembly members of Jeju who were recently elected through April 13 general election. Bruce Gagnon was the first international person to write a protest letter to President Park Geun-Hye and UN Secretary Ban Ki-Moon on April 5th. He said, "The biggest crime of all is that the Republic of Korea government and the Navy rejected the will of the Gangjeong villagers and have destroyed a 500-year old community." He resonated with villagers' position that "the responsibility lies solely with the state for threatening citizens' right to a peaceful existence and causing their pain by enforcing this wrongful government policy."

As of April 30, there have been about 20 solidarity messages/ protest letters to the South Korean government. They include Veterans for Peace and Missionary Society of St. Columban. To see the collection of those messages and letters, see savejejunow.org. The government/ navy should drop the wrongful lawsuit now!



Image by Oum Mun-Hee/ In the night of April 10th, the police surrounded the villagers' newly set-up tent 'village hall' and threatened people without any legal ground. It was hours later that the police finally withdrew because of people's protest. The village representatives have been continuously taking sit-ins in the tent village hall since then.

Global Days of Action on Military Spending

On April 12 and 14 we participated in the International Peace Bureau's 6th Annual Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) demonstration in front of the Jeju war base. Our actions included picketing, creating and handing out flyers in both English and Korean, and conducting a modified Penny Poll (only 8 pennies in Gangjeong) on spending priorities other than war. Over 50 people took a few moments to consider the possibility of redirecting tax money away from war, using heart stickers to indicate preferred investments. We were excited to be acting in solidarity with activists in at least 23 nations during GDAMS. One of the lies that governments use to sell war to people all over the world is that military spending is good for the economy. Our flyers included information from the University of Massachusetts Political Economy Research Institute's study, "The US Employment Effects of Military and Domestic Spending Priorities." The study, conducted by Robert Pollin and Heidi Garrett-Peltier, shows that investing \$1 billion in clean energy, health care, and education create "a much larger number of jobs across all pay ranges" than does misinvesting in war. The Jeju war base is reported to cost a billion dollars. South Korea ranks 10th in global war spending, and its 2016 war budget is over \$36 billion. South Koreans pay annual "burden sharing" fees for the US military occupation of their country. In 2016, these fees will total \$867 million. At this point, multiple Gangjeong businesses remain uncompensated for goods and services they provided during the base construction. At least hundreds of thousands of dollars are unaccounted for.

Jeju and Ukraine in a larger picture of US military operations

By Bruce K. Gagnon

I have always viewed the struggle on Jeju Island as a significant canary in the mine when it comes to the US 'pivot' into the Asia-Pacific in order to militarily control China. Since 2014 I have viewed the struggle in Ukraine through the same lens as the US-NATO regime change in Ukraine that year that was the spark to create instability and chaos along the Russian border. The US today is arming, training and funding a major expansion of the Ukrainian Army that is waging war against their own Russian speaking citizens in the Donbass region – right along the Russian border. The Ukrainian Nazi battalions are today being brought into the Army and are being trained by US Army Special Forces troops from Fort Carson, Colorado. These current Nazis worship WW II Ukrainian nationalist Stepan Bandera who joined forces with Hitler when he swept through Ukraine during the Nazi invasion of the former Soviet Union. These current Nazis for the past two years have been shelling villages, cities, schools, hospitals, day care centers, rail stations, airports and more in the Donbass. There have been several occasions where the US-NATO backed Nazis have even fired their shells into Russian territory trying to draw Russian into the fight. It's important that we all see the larger picture of US military operations happening around the world today on behalf of corporate interests.

The Power of Film

By Omi

Art + activism are two powerful paths that converge at a critical point with the force to fuel a movement. Both demand us to look closely at the present time and ask if the reality which presents itself is how we want our world to be. Like artist Nina Simone says, "How can you be an artist and not reflect the times?" And some might say, how can you reflect the times and not be an activist? Last week, the 1st International Peace Film Festival held in Gangjeong brought on-screen activism to life in a monumental moment of exchange between audiences and movie-makers, local communities and international friends. We saw how film could connect people. This, too, is how solidarity is built. Films are portals to discover new worlds and 2 hours' time are nearly not enough to explore! So our curiosity drives us to inquire. An audience member asks a director, "How does your film's story make you feel about the struggle in Gangjeong against Jeju Naval Base?" A parent comments on how refugees arriving by boat in Lampedusa remind her of Sewol Ferry. And Director Guy Davidi of 5 Broken Cameras, in reflection of Palestine, voices a thought on how non-violence is interpreted in different movements. All these questions lead to one thing. We are looking for lessons to bring back home. We want to communicate that our fights, though spread far and wide, are intrinsically linked and hopefully, strive for the same values. An intimate screening of Come Ledesert's "Persisting Dreams" was held outdoors just across the street of the navy base for those who didn't get to see the film during the official festival. Ledesert reminded us of the privilege we have to not only inform each other but to dream, beyond what any oppressive entity tells us to see.

Yonaguni Solidarity

Yonaguni is a small island at the farthest south-west point of Japan, as close to Taiwan as it is to the next island in the Ryukyu archipelago. The national border has caused isolation, decrease of population, and limited access to health care, education, and transportation. Not long ago Yonaguni was united in a vision to restore the island through trade, tourism and exchanges with Taiwan, but the central government of Japan is using the proximity of the contested Senkaku Islands as an excuse to make Yonaguni a 'strategic outpost' in the new cold war with China. Only one month after the opening of the Gangjeong navy base, the Japanese Self Defense Forces opened a radar base on Yonaguni on March 28. A small and courageous group of local residents made signs and banners and protested at the radar base gate. In the last few years, visits between Yonaguni and Gangjeong have overcome the barriers of distance and language to build Inter-Island Solidarity. We organized a solidarity protest in Gangjeong on April 7 and shared a video of our action with our Yonaguni friends. Not long after our solidarity event, we were devastated to hear of the death of Inagawa Koujisan, leader of "Isoba's Association for a Bright Future in Yonaguni," one of the key groups opposing the radar base. Those of us who were fortunate to meet him remember his kindness, smile and steady dedication. On April 10 he went missing at sea, and his body was found on the 11th. We are anxious to hear more regarding the circumstances surrounding his death. We made a memorial for Inagawa-san in the Peace Center. During the film festival, we were glad to meet another friend from Yonaguni who has been traveling between Japan's south western islands, sharing information and building solidarity with Ishigaki and Miyako, islands which are also threatened by plans for more Japanese bases.



Image by Oum Mun-hee/ During the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, April 5 to 18, 2016, people in Gangjeong organized three events. One of them was the April 14 event of encouraging people to put stickers on the alternative tax-spending other than on military.

International Solidarity



Image by Gangjeong Village Story, Our message on April 7th to friends on the small island of Yonaguni: "You are not alone."

Presente! Daniel Joseph Berrigan
S.J. (May 9, 1921 – April 30, 2016)

Activities to remember 16 April

It has been 2 years since the Sewol ferry tragedy. We defiantly call this a tragedy, not just an accident. 304 innocent people died in this tragedy, including hundreds of students from Danwon High School who were on a school trip. Among them, 9 bodies are still missing. The government refuses to make a sincere investigation. Leading a performance at the Metburi riverside on 15 April, Choi Min-kyung stated that "The most important thing is to reveal the truth, so we will perform to ensure that we will remember them."

On 5 April we had a screening of 'Cruel State' and meeting with the parents of a student victim in the Peace Center. Then Lee Hyo-Ryp, an artist from the mainland, came to Gangjeong to make masks representing the Sewol victims with the people of Gangjeong. It was a part of a nationwide project making a total of 304 masks. People wrote messages of consolation and solidarity for the victims and their family members inside each mask.

Anticipating rain on the 16th, Gangjeong

joined many citizens of Seogwipo City for a Sewol remembrance concert on April 15. For more than a year, Gangjeong peace activist Joan has been making portraits of the victims on yellow vinyl; her portraits of the 9 missing people were displayed at the concert. It is so important that people continue to hold candlelight vigils to remember the victims and push the government to reveal the truth so the victims' families are able to rest and move on.

Dolphin Monitoring

By Hwang HyunJin,
Hotpinkdolphins

A total of 5 dolphins have been released back into the wild since marine environmental group hotpinkdolphins started campaigning for the release of all dolphins held in captivity in 2011. Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins are a locally endangered species and it's estimated that there are only about 100 Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins left in this region. Now they are being threatened by large-scale development projects in Jeju island. Gangjeong sea was an important habitat of Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins. Even though it was an absolute protection area, the navy base construction has been recklessly dumping toxic industrial waste in the ocean. Now warships coming and going from the base threaten the dolphins with sonar and water contamination. An offshore wind power generation farm is under construction off the west coast of Jeju, and a new harbor, new airport, casinos etc. are being planned without taking into consideration the lives that will be affected. But we are devoted to listening to the cry of the living creatures of Jeju who are being killed for the sake of money. Therefore, on April 17th, hotpinkdolphins held its second '2016 Meet You at the Sea' event. These dolphin-monitoring walks aim to learn how large scale development projects are destroying their marine ecosystem, and to meet dolphins in their natural habitat.



Image by Gangjeong Village Story/ On April 8, people in Gangjeong wore masks in remembrance of the Sewol ferry tragedy victims on April 16, 2014. The letters in paper cloth read "Truth: Why do they kill them?"

Trial Updates



▶ On April 20, the 1st court for the civilian case of the Jeju local court handed down the decision that the police should pay compensation for a female villager, Kim Miryang, medical expenses of around \$5,200 USD. The court acknowledged the fault of the police caused by their illegal action on 10 May, 2013 when the police failed to take any safe measures but solely focused on the arrest of people during the crackdown on villagers' sit-in tent. It was in this situation that Kim was pushed by a policeman and fell 7 meters from the bridge where she was sitting. Due to the action of the police Kim required 15 sutures and hospitalization for 34 days.

▶ Also on 20 April the Jeju criminal court handed down the decision that an elderly female villager Ahn must pay fines of around \$1,740 USD for the charge of violation of Special Obstruction of Justice. Ahn resisted the police's illegal force to physically move her during the daily mass last year.

▶ On April 27, the High Court of Jeju dismissed the appeal by Kim Miryang, the same female villager mentioned above. In one of her other trials, she had been charged with damage to a public asset and received a decision from the local court of 1 year and six months imprisonment, suspended for three years and 200 hours' social service. These charges were brought against Kim for dumping police two-way radios into the sea in 2012.

Gangjeong residents protested navy soldiers arriving in the village

By Joyakgol

I was having an interview about the film festival at the book cafe with a reporter on the peaceful afternoon of April 28 when I heard Miryang's shrieking voice. Knowing something was going down, I instantly jumped out to the 4-way intersection village center area with my camera on. At first, I couldn't believe what was happening in front of my eyes; a group of marines with assault rifles on a military truck passing through the elementary school protested by 10 villagers.

I kept filming as the village mayor was telling the lieutenant sitting at the front seat, "Do you have real bullets in the magazine? Did you point the rifle at us? You invaded our village and now you're out here with the gun?" Other residents were shouting at the soldiers "Back off."

Some of the villagers still vividly remember what happened to their neighbors during the April 3 massacre. About 12 people were shot to death right at the place where Gangjeong elementary school now stands. And so it was a careless and egregious act of intimidation by the navy. With the 3 million dollars damage lawsuit filed by the military against the village, the soldiers should have known better and must keep the military stuff within the base.



Image by Joyakgol/ A group of marines with guns in their military training appeared in the center of village on April 28.



Image by Gangjeong Village Story/ Koh Gilchun, a Jeju artist, collapsed due to cerebral hemorrhage during the Jeju Grand March in 2013. It is after 2.8 years that he showed his art work again in a group show remembering the 68th year of April 3rd. In his piece, he connects the Gangjeong struggle to the April 3rd massacre.

No air show and no war exercise!

The clear skies of Gangjeong were disturbed three times on the 20th, 22nd and 24th of April. Approximately seven combat black eagle planes screeched through the sky with a terrible roaring noise. On each occasion this occurred without any prior notice to residents. It was ironic that this occurred on 22 April, also recognized as earth day. Children cried with fear and people suffered from the extreme noise. This tax-wasting and air-polluting air show is a part of the annual nationwide Space Challenge event sponsored by the Korean air force who promotes the militarization of aerospace. In addition, from 15 to 29 April about 1,200 US army personnel and 640 Republic of Korea force jointly carried out the largest annual flying exercise on the Korean peninsula, named 'Max Thunder 16'. Both the annual air show and any war exercises which promote militarism and war culture must be stopped.

Protest Against the Navy's Concerts

By Joan

Since March 25, the navy has conducted a concert every Friday under the banner of 'civilian-army harmony'. But with the current lawsuit and recent armed military drills in the village, such concerts seem disingenuous and deceptive.

The Navy filed suit for damages of approximately 3 million USD against 116 individuals and five organizations. Three days later, they held their first concert, as if celebrating Gangjeong's funeral. Although villagers asked the navy to stop the concerts, the navy said they would continue.

Also, on April 28, armed soldiers carried out training exercises throughout the village for three hours. The war drills even took place by the elementary school, exposing the surprised children to unnecessary violence.

Music is a beautiful art. A civilian-military music festival to create harmony seems like a good idea, but many issues must be resolved first if a truly win-win situation is to be. Empty claims of unity actually work to suppress and isolate the village.



Image by Hwang Hyun-Jin. The Inter-Island Solidarity Sailing Team practiced sailing on April 19 and 20 off the southern coast of Jeju Island. Their vision is to sail from Jeju to Okinawa to Taiwan.

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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Image by Oum Mun-hee/ On April 15th, just one day before the 2nd remembrance year of the Sewol ferry tragedy, Choi Min-kyung, a Gangjeong peace activist, led a walking performance from Metburi, east, to the navy outdoor concert area, west, where she and others put yellow flowers in the shape of the Sewol tragedy remembrance ribbon. She had a long cloth tied to her hair that reads: 'Let's disclose the truth!'

From Scenario to Showing: Gangjeong Peace Film School

By Curry

During the 1st annual International Peace Film Festival in Gangjeong, Gangjeong Peace School worked with director Kim Heechul to host the first semester of the Gangjeong Peace Film School. The five students who joined this first weeklong program will continue to work with mentors throughout the year to produce their own films which, if successfully completed, will be shown in next year's film festival.

The aspiring film-makers first visited the 4-3 Massacre Peace Park and the Alddeureu Airfield and then joined lectures and workshops with film directors who shared their motivations and techniques of film making. In the remaining time, they could attend film showings, peace forums, and a special open discussion with Park Dong Un.

Park Dong Un, subject of Director Kim Heechul's documentary Not Guilty (2007), answered questions about how he and his family were persecuted by the state after being falsely accused of being spies in 1981. Park Dong Un was imprisoned on false charges for 18 years. Others who were wrongly imprisoned joined the discussion and Park Dong Un was given special recognition at the film festival's closing ceremony.

All the Peace Film School students proposed scenarios for the films that they will work on throughout the year. Their topics are: unmet desire, the world between life and death, our world in the eyes of a cat, recycling in Jeju, and Oum Mun-Hee received a prize from the film festival to be used for making her film on the daily lives of Gangjeong women activists.



Image by Oum Mun-hee/ On April 19, another Gangjeong candle cultural gathering was held in front of the Jeju City Hall. The event was under two themes: 1. The navy should drop the wrongful lawsuit and 2. Remembering Gureombi Rock and April 3rd incident.

