Gangjeong Struggle Reached 4,000 Days & Beyond

A very special but daily-like demonstration was held at the main gate of Jeju navy base on April 28 to mark the 4,000th day of Gangjeong villagers’ struggle for their peaceful livelihood. They formed a residents’ organization to stop the military project on May 18, 2007 when they heard on TV news that the Gureomt paper area in Gangjeong was chosen as the naval base construction site. Most of the villagers were shocked at the news because they didn’t know about it until it was irreversibly decided. They couldn’t accept it and wanted to take back their beloved village. When they started the struggle, they couldn’t possibly have thought that it was going to last this long.

Thousands of days passed, hundreds of people were convicted, dozens of them incarcerated, and hundreds of millions of won were paid in fines over the course of the non-violent, resilient quest for peace. At the 4000th day gathering, a village elder shared his childhood memory of hiding on Guroemt rock to escape the April 3 Massacre. Former Mayor Kang announced a newly re-formed residents’ organization to continue the fight in the long haul. Participants showed once again their strong opposition to the 2018 international Naval Review that the navy has proposed to hold on the Island of Peace in October.

Residents issued a statement and said they haven’t given up a thing. Villagers believe that we will need no more military bases, and pointed out that the two Koreas are having talks to achieve perpetual peace on the peninsula. They vowed to walk on this path until the base is closed and justice and true peace are restored.

A New Era. No THAAD Base Construction! No Naval Review!

On April 27, Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-un held an inter-Korean summit and declared that ‘there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula and thus a new era of peace has begun.’ They ‘confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.’

On May 24, as she promised, North Korea (DPRK) publicly demolished her nuclear test site in Punggye-ri. Still, on the same day the US government unilaterally cancelled the planned DPRK-US summit meeting. Otherwise, May 24 happened to be the International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament. In Seoul, 31 Women Cross DMZ delegates from 17 countries and South Korean women activists demanded a prompt Peace Treaty in support of the 4.27 declaration, and held an emergency press conference the next day in protest to the US cancellation. On May 26, US President Trump stated he would resume plans for the DPRK-US summit on June 12. Regardless of concerns, this is the time for ‘a new era.’

We should not forget that THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) base construction started in Soseong-ri, Seongju, main land of Korea on April 23. On the very day of April 27, local villagers and activists there confronted a thousand police mobilized to ensure the moving-in of construction vehicles. If THAAD is intended to confront North Korea as claimed by ROK and US governments, THAAD should be removed from Soseong-ri based on the spirit of 4.27. The US and ROK governments are rather strengthening our certainty that THAAD is a strategic weapon for US domination in the wider region. It is shameless that the Trump administration nominated Harry Harris, former head of Pacific Command, to be US ambassador to South Korea on May 18. It is also noteworthy that the US renamed Pacific Command to Indo-Pacific Command on May 30.

For the realization of true peace in Korea, not only THAAD, but also the US military and their bases such as those in Pyeongtaek and Gunsan along the west coast of Korea and the ROK Jeju navy base used by the US military in the south sea of Korea which together form a missile defense (offense) belt should be withdrawn and closed. The navy’s scheme to host an international naval review with a US nuclear aircraft carrier in Jeju this October should be repulsed. All war exercises should be stopped.
The Night for the Memories of Vietnam and Jeju

On April 23rd, ‘the Night for the Memories of Vietnam and Jeju’ was held in remembrance of the 43rd year since the end of the Vietnam War and the 70th year since the Jeju April 3rd uprising and massacre. The venue was the fruit packing house of the Peace Co-op in Gangjeong village.

Bishop Moon Chang-woo, chairman of the Special Committee for the 70th anniversary of Jeju April 3rd, Jeju Catholic diocese, remarked that “histories not remembered together tend to be repeated,” and “to stop the recurrence of horrible war, we should share, console each other’s pain and make efforts for peace together.”

Grandmothers Hong Chun-ho from Dongwang village and Kang Young-ae from Gangjeong village shared their memories of cold-blooded killings which they or their family members witnessed during the Jeju April 3rd in which at least 30,000 islanders were killed under the US Army Military Government.

Also present in the event were two women both named Nguyễn Thi Thanh, one from Hами and the other from Phong Nhi & Phong Nhát, Quảng Nam, Việt Nam. For the audience of around 100 people, they shared their stories of the South Korean military killing people including their family members during the United States war on Vietnam from 1995 to 1975. Before they visited Gangjeong village, both Nguyễn Thị Thanh had also testified in the people’s peace tribunal organized for the settlement of the issue of South Korean soldiers’ killing of Vietnamese civilians during the war on Vietnam. During the two days’ session on April 20-21, the court ordered the defendant, the Republic of Korea government to compensate the victims, investigate the truth, and state the historical facts.

Kings Bay Plowshares

By Curry

The US Navy’s Atlantic Ocean port at Kings Bay, Georgia is home to 8 Ohio-class nuclear-armed submarines, 6 of which are each armed with up to 24 Trident submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). These Tridents are capable of striking anywhere on the planet within 15 minutes with a nuclear blast thousands of times bigger than the bomb that blasted Hiroshima.

On the night of April 4, seven Catholic Plowshares activists entered the base with an indictment against the United States government for the continued possession and threat to use nuclear weapons, which is a violation of international law. They used hammers, crime scene tape, bottles of their own blood and banners to ‘attempt to convert [the] weapons of mass destruction.’

In remembrance of his assassination on April 4, 50 years ago, the Kings Bay seven quoted Martin Luther King, Jr. in their public statement, “The greatest purveyor of violence in the world (today) is my own government.” Like King, they acted to denounce “the triple evils” of racism, militarism, and extreme materialism.

Arrested on April 5, the 7 activists were held without bond until their hearing on May 17. They pled not guilty and are awaiting trial in early August. On May 24, three members were released on bond to house arrest, including Martha Hennessy (who has visited Gangjeong and wore a Grand March t-shirt when she carried out her action). You can learn more, including how to send approved post-cards to the four members who remain in jail at kingsbayplowshares7.org.

Gangjeong Villagers Join Annual Okinawa Peace March

By Curry

Four Gangjeong residents joined representatives from Gunsan, Pyeongtaek, and Soseong-ri on a solidarity visit to Okinawa from May 9-14. They visited the memorial at the site where Rina Shimabukuro’s body was found in 2016, after she was raped and murdered by an American base worker. Tens of disappearances happen each year, but rarely are the guilty held accountable. When Shimabukuro’s body was found, the public outcry created strong political pressure and 65,000 people rallied against the US bases in Okinawa. Over 3,000 people joined the rally on May 13 this year, but the Okinawan anti-base movement faces new challenges.

Governor Onaga, a strong opponent of US base expansion, announced that he is undergoing chemotherapy for pancreatic cancer. In February, a pro-base mayor was elected in Nago City, which includes Henoko where the new US airstrip is being built. The financial power of the Abe administration is difficult to oppose, and right-wing groups are getting stronger. Even though about 200 people block the construction vehicles entering the landfill site each morning at Camp Schwab, the base construction continues in the afternoon.

Go Gwon Li commented, however, that Okinawans were encouraged by the news of the April 27 inter-Korean summit. The march participants took hope that if there is peace on the Korean Peninsula, then there will be no need for US bases in Okinawa.

Women of the Philippines & Jeju Talk Militarization

By Sung-hee

Self-support Promotion Center, Jeju Association for Women’s Rights and Bok-hee (Gangjeong peace activist, Seogwipo Women Farmers’ Association), the topics were ‘Our Continuing Struggle for a Nuclear-free, Bases-free Philippines’ (Valdez Fabros); ‘Filipina Women’s Strategies for Peace Building in Mindanao’ (Angeles); ‘Wholistic Healing of Women Survivors of Abuse’ (Tulipat); ‘The Herstory and Present of Jeju Women-Their Life and Resistance’ (Koh); and ‘Peace I Learn from the Women whom I Meet in Gangjeong’ (Bok-hee). According to Corazon, even though the people of the Philippines closed the U.S. military bases in 1992, their government signed new agreements like the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) 3 years ago, which brought a ‘new form of basing in the Philippines...a model of US military presence in many parts of SE Asia and the Pacific today.’ In a moving moment, they recited together a poem by Merci titled, ‘The Peace Women Partners Vision,’ telling how women from the margins are ‘united by experiences of violence in our homelands’ and have ‘a mission to build a peaceful world free from all forms of violence against women.’
Sewol Ferry Tragedy Remembrance

April 16th marked the 4th year since the Sewol ferry tragedy. On April 16, 2014, about 400 tons of iron bars heading to the Jeju navy base construction site were loaded on the Sewol. 304 people including many school youths were not rescued due to the sinking ferry. The truth is not yet thoroughly investigated. In Gangeong, Choi Min-kyung led a mirror performance in front of the Jeju navy base in remembrance of the tragedy, while Gallery Moon hosted an exhibition by peace activist Joan, who made an exhibition at Artspace C/Artspace Ia.

After decades of dictatorship and fearful silence, Korea's democracy movement in the 80s-90s led to public discussion of Jeju April 3rd and a presidential apology in 2003. However, state violence and repression has not ended and this is evidenced in places like Gangjeong. When we declare that "Gangjeong is 4.3," we draw attention to the forced sacrifice and destruction of our community as we resist against state violence. We made banners to raise awareness about how the US military is still sacrificing Jeju for its strategic interests (for example, a group of US Army Rangers entered the Jeju Navy Base on March 28). We took our message to events around Jeju, including the memorial at the 4.3 Peace Park attended by President Moon and a special concert at the weekly Gangjeong tabling in downtown Seogwipo city. Multiple art exhibits (including "Post Trauma" at the Jeju Museum of Art and "Forged into Collective Memory" at Artspace C/Artspace Ia), connected Jeju's 4.3 to other tragedies of state violence around the world.

No SMA! No Money for USFK!

On April 11-12, the 2nd meeting of the 10th ROK (South Korea)-US Special Measures Agreement (SMA) on defense-cost sharing for the USFK (United States Forces Korea) was held in the Jeju International Peace Center. Only two countries in the world are reported to have such a humiliating SMA with the United States: Japan and South Korea. And the latter's case is much worse. The SMA already violates article 5 of the ROK-US Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) which says that the US bears all the maintenance cost of USFK while South Korea provides only facilities and areas.

Why Jeju? It is the 1st time that the SMA meeting was held in Jeju. It is suspicious whether Jeju was chosen for any strategic purpose. For a long time the Jeju International Peace Center has been rather a war-study center. Is it just a coincidence that at the same time that some members of Solidarity for Peace And Reunification of Korea (SPARK) and Gangjeong activists had to protest against SMA in Jeju, other people also had to fight against the enforcement of THAAD base construction in Soseong-ri, Seongju, on the main land of Korea?

Due to constant US pressure, South Korea has already been paying 73% of the USFK defense-cost, and 1 trillion won is still left over without execution. Still, the United States government demands South Korea double their defense-cost share. She is even demanding payment for the operation of (illegally installed) THAAD and the unfolding of so-called US 'strategic assets' like nuclear warships. That is not only illegal and unfair but also regressive against the current situation of peace-building in Northeast Asia. The SMA should be abolished! No money for USFK! (reference from the SPARK and Anti-THAAD Peace Meeting).

Mang-gi Chose Prison in Refusal to Pay Fines

A male activist Mang-gi chose imprisonment in refusal to pay fines of 4.6 million KRW (around 4,300 USD). On Dec. 2, 2015, the day after the creation of the Jeju navy base squadron, even before the base opened in 2016, he was one of the people who protested the policemen's ignorance of human rights and unnecessary oppression during the human chain. On that day, a policeman twisted one of his fingers and he was diagnosed with a finger-bone fracture which needed many weeks to be cured. However, the policemen rather indicted him under the charge of obstruction of justice and injury. On July 20, 2017, the higher court made a guilty ruling on Mang-gi who had actually been injured by police violence. The fine imposed on him was 5 million KRW, but he spent four days in prison. Still, the United States government demands South Korea double their defense-cost share. She is even demanding payment for the operation of THAAD and the unfolding of so-called US 'strategic assets' like nuclear warships. That is not only illegal and unfair but also regressive against the current situation of peace-building in Northeast Asia. The SMA should be abolished! No money for USFK! (reference from the SPARK and Anti-THAAD Peace Meeting).

Gangjeong is April 3rd

70 years ago, Korea had been freed from Japanese colonial rule only to be divided and occupied by the Soviets and the Americans. The US military government re-hired many Japanese missionaries, and in 1947 Jeju police shot six people celebrating the March 1st Independence movement against Japan. The police continued to arrest and torture those who went on strike in protest. On April 3, 1948 an armed uprising broke out, and on May 10 large numbers of Jeju citizens boycotted the South Korea only election that perpetuated the division of Korea. The US labelled Jeju a 'Red Island' and sent Korean soldiers and paramilitary groups to punish the islanders with a reign of terror that killed at least 10% of the population and caused displacement and trauma that continues to this day.

After decades of dictatorship and fearful silence, Korea's democracy movement in the 80s-90s led to public discussion of Jeju April 3rd and a presidential apology in 2003. However, state violence and repression has not ended and this is evidenced in places like Gangjeong. When we declare that "Gangjeong is 4.3," we draw attention to the forced sacrifice and destruction of our community as we resist against state violence. We made banners to raise awareness about how the US military is still sacrificing Jeju for its strategic interests (for example, a group of US Army Rangers entered the Jeju Navy Base on March 28). We took our message to events around Jeju, including the memorial at the 4.3 Peace Park attended by President Moon and a special concert at the weekly Gangjeong tabling in downtown Seogwipo city. Multiple art exhibits (including "Post Trauma" at the Jeju Museum of Art and "Forged into Collective Memory" at Artspace C/Artspace Ia), connected Jeju's 4.3 to other tragedies of state violence around the world.
How You Can Help
1. Write a letter to the South Korean government to close the Jeju base and to the US government to stop the use of it.
2. Stay updated by joining our Facebook groups and following us on twitter.
3. Organize a solidarity event (concert, movie screening, protest, etc...) then share about it on social media.
4. Visit Gangjeong!
5. 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:
Vimeo : cho sung bong / Dhi Song / Regis Tremblay
Youtube : Gang-Jeong Il-Gi / Shalomsea / 1234yz100 / Sungbong2012

Nullify the 2nd Jeju Airport (Air Base) Project!
It was only when Kim Kyung-bae, vice-chairman of the Anti-2nd Jeju Airport Project Committee, Seongsan, threw two eggs at current Jeju governor Won Hee-ryong in a televised debate on May 14 that the main Korean broadcasting companies began to report about the Anti-2nd Jeju Airport struggle. Unfortunately, they focused more on his deed rather than the background. Even when he fasted more than 42 days last winter, most mainstream media gave little attention to the struggle. On May 14, frustrated by Won who sees no problem in driving the project without consultation to the locals, Kim attempted suicide after throwing eggs at Won. He was then hospitalized and forced to undergo police investigation. He was eventually released when the court dismissed his arrest warrant. As the June 13 regional election approaches, people are raising their voices against the 2nd Jeju airport (air force base) project. One of the actions is to hold a ‘white paper,’ in a symbolic demand for ‘nullification’ of the project. Residents in affected villages are hosting candlelight rallies against the project which should be abandoned to stop the militarism and developmentalism of Jeju.

International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament

2018 marks the 70th Anniversary of the Nakba.
Free Palestine! Stop the killing of Palestinians!