

GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY

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Monthly news on the struggle against
the Jeju Naval base project

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Step Down Park Geun Hye! Mass Anti-Government Rallies

Article and images by Grace Kim

Since the scandals surrounding South Korean President Park Geun Hye and her relationship with shadowy figure Choi Sun Sil surfaced in the major news outlets late in October, there have been mass protests all over the nation as well as candlelight vigils every Saturday to call for Park's resignation from presidency.

Choi, along with numerous former aides of Park, was arrested in November on charges of fraud and coercion, and more corruption allegations against the president herself have been revealed causing the increase in numbers of the protestors. The 1st mass rally took place in Seoul on Oct. 29 with 20,000 protestors demanding clarification for the allegations such as her mysterious 7 missing hours on the day of the Sewol Ferry disaster. In a week the number of protestors became 200,000 and finally

a million people poured into the streets of Seoul on the 3rd mass rally on Nov.12. The nation's biggest yet candle-lit protest in decades took place two days before the 1-year anniversary since Farmer Baek Nam Gi was struck by a police water canon during an anti-government rally. Baek's funeral services were held on Nov. 4 in Myungdong Catholic Church and Gwanghwamun, 37 days after he passed away following 10 months in coma.

Gangjeong villagers and activists as well as a thousand others traveled from Jeju Island and joined the anti-government rally in Seoul on the 12th. The large area in Gwanghwamun Square was so packed with the endlessly streaming crowd that it was almost impossible for us to march to the direction of the presidential Blue House. As some of us barely managed to arrive in the entering streets to the

presidential residency, we found ourselves blocked by an army of police. Even though the court allowed the protestors to march nearer to the residency, the police had installed their 'illegal' bus walls on our way. Angry protestors tried to climb up on the walls clashing with the police but were stopped by not only the police but also a large number of other protestors. This incident generated heated debates regarding 'peaceful' ways of protesting. Some argue that violent actions could diminish the number of protestors, as many participated in a political rally for the first time and they expect the square to be a safe place where they attend with their families. Others argue that Koreans are obsessed with the idea of being good and orderly citizenry, which are remaining traits from the times of dictatorship and militaristic government.

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INVALID!

It was Dec. 28 last year that the ROK-Japan governments made a totally reactionary agreement on 'comfort women,' the sexual slaves of the Japanese military during WWII. People realized it was a rude step preparing the way for the ROK, Japan, and US governments to realize a trilateral military alliance centered on the US-led missile defense system. Then in early July this year, the ROK and US government agreed on the deployment of THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) in South Korea, followed by a Nov. 14 land swap agreement for the deployment of THAAD in Seongju, on the main land of Korea. On Nov. 4, the USFK (United States Forces of Korea) commander stated that THAAD would be deployed in Korea within next eight to ten months! But the people in Seongju and Gimcheon hit their 100th day candlelight vigils in opposition to THAAD respectively on Oct. 20 and Nov. 28.

Meanwhile a US-backed bilateral signing of General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) between ROK and Japan was made in a closed room (even to the photograph reporters' protest) on Nov. 23 despite the opposition of more than 60% of Koreans. The US has been hurrying to complete those tasks before the end of current Park Geun-hye presidency, facing a huge impeachment crisis. Additionally, Trump was elected as the new US President on Nov. 8 and the future of Northeast Asia is unclear. What is clear for the people of Korea is that they have no choice other than to throwing down the Park dictatorship and to stand on their feet of sovereignty! Koreans say the agreements of GSOMIA, THAAD, and Comfort Women under the Park dictatorship backed by US imperialism are all INVALID!



Image by the ROK navy/ On Nov. 7 and 8, the Jeju navy base held an event that was open to the public. Shockingly, lots of children from about 30 daycare centers across Jeju Island were organized to visit the base and to experience military culture. The Gangjeong Village Association and civic groups strongly criticized the navy for acting in violation of international regulations such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON JEJU NAVAL BASE by International Tribunal on Forced Eviction

Forced eviction by Jeju's militarization" was one of the 7 cases examined by the 5th International Tribunal on Evictions (ITE) held in Quito, Ecuador on Oct 17th of this year. Joan, Emily, and Dongwon travelled to Ecuador to represent Gangjeong's case in this international people's forum. While the recommendations of the court have no binding legal authority, they have the moral authority of international society to appeal to the Korean government, the Ministry of National Defense, Navy, police officials and the governor of Jeju to respect the rights of the Gangjeong villagers and to take action to protect the environment. For more information about Gangjeong's case in the International Tribunal on Evictions, please see the Oct. 2016 issue of the Gangjeong Village Story.

To the Republic of Korea, Ministry of National Defense, Navy, police officials and the governor of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province.

1. The government must respect the rights of Gangjeong villagers to freedom of expression, assembly and association as protected in the international covenant on civil and political rights.

2. The government, Navy should end prosecutions and lawsuits against community members who are resisting the naval base.

3. The government should take immediate action to ensure that those farmers who lost their land are given affordable alternative land which they can buy with the compensation which they received.

4. The government should take necessary steps to ensure that the culture of the Gangjeong villagers is preserved.

5. The government is urged to consult and involve the community in any project that affects them.

6. The government should take measures to ensure that the economic activities of the community are not affected by the naval base.

7. The Ministry of Defense should take action to ensure that warships cleaning and painting within the base does not pollute the environment.

8. The government should take immediate action to ensure that the security of villagers is not threatened due to transportation of unidentified weapons and warships.

9. The government is urged to put in place a commission of inquiry to establish the manner in which the base was constructed without following the necessary procedures and establishing the effects of the base on the community.

Step Down Park Geun Hye! Mass Anti-Government Rallies (Continued)

On Nov. 29 after long silence President Park made a statement that she would let the congress to decide when and how she should step down. This move was suspected as a shady gesture to throw the congress into total confusion and prolong her time in the office. Never admitting her wrongdoings she said she'd only done what would make the country a better place. Outraged by her shameless speech 2 million people came out to the streets on Dec. 3 including 11,000 Jeju Islanders. It was the biggest protesting crowd in Jeju's history since the April 3rd Uprising in 1948, which further signifies the graveness of the current political situations in South Korea.

Tent Theater Introduced In Gangjeong

By Oum Mun-hee

Sakurai Daizo, a Japanese actor of Tent Theater, visited Gangjeong with his friends on Nov. 6th for few days. They presented about what Tent Theater is two times in the village. Typically, a play is repeatedly run in the same theater. However, Mr. Daizo and his crew put up a tent at a certain place in order to perform just one play and then take it down after the play is done once or several times. They put up their tents in such places like affected areas by natural disasters and state violence.

Mr. Daizo had lost three college friends during the student movement in Japan. Since then, he has performed 'Tent Theater' beginning in the early 1970's in various sites of South Korea, Taiwan, China and Japan in the North East Asia Region. Mr. Daizo looks forward for Tent Theater to take place in Gangjeong as well, and the first preparation workshop will be done next spring!



Image by an event participant/ Choi Sung-hee, Gangjeong international team, joined the International Conference on Peace on Earth and Space for Global Security and Human Development at GITAM University, Visakhapatnam India, Nov. 18-20. The conference was co-sponsored by the Global Network against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space and she presented on Jeju in relation to the space peace issue.

After Two Wars, Standing Rock is the First Time I Served the American People By Will Griffin

The Sioux struggle against the [Dakota Access] pipeline embraces so many other struggles- struggles against climate catastrophe, a history of breaking treaties with Native Americans, attacks on the right to assemble, assaults on journalists, the militarization of police, and placing corporate profits over human rights.

Fellow veteran Matt Hoh and I agreed that after multiple deployments to two wars, this was the first time we served the American people. After going to a few nonviolent direct action protests against the Black Snake [pipeline], we realized what it actually meant to stand by the American people and fight in their interests. We suddenly had this feeling of honor, something we never had from our deployments to Iraq or Afghanistan.

We agreed that the only "people" we served fighting overseas were the likes of Halliburton, KBR, AECOM, DynCorp, Raytheon, Environmental Chemical... We know that the world is not a safer place than it was before the United States illegally occupied Iraq and Afghanistan; we understand that militaries don't bring peace.

We also know now that not only is water life, as the Standing Rock Sioux continue to cry out, but water is also peace. None of us can have any peace without the basic necessities of life such as clean air and water, arable land, clothing, shelter and justice.

The Sioux and hundreds of other tribes and supporters are joining forces to fight for their right to exist. This struggle is their life, and has been for too many generations to count. At one time I thought the government, the military and police knew what they are doing and that they existed to protect us all. That's why I joined the military; to provide a selfless service to my country. That myth has been shattered. After two wars, PTSD and moral injury, I've come to realize I've been on the wrong side of history.

Will Griffin is a member of Veterans for Peace and has visited Gangjeong twice, in 2015 and 2016. This article is excerpted from the original at commondreams.org

International Solidarity



Image by Kuri/ Ishigaki is an island in Okinawa prefecture where the Japanese 'self-defense forces' are planning to build a missile base; among the local opposition to the base are a group called "I love Ishigaki." Curry and Mel visited to learn about their struggle and to share about Gangjeong.

Choi Soon-sil gate with Lockheed Martin and Samsung

"As far as I know, Choi Soon-sil met with Lockheed Martin's president in June." An opposition lawmaker An Min-seok of the Democratic Party of Korea raised the suspicion in a radio interview. If this is true, the whole influence-peddling scandal by Choi, a corrupt confidante who wielded government power from the shadows under President Park's collusion is even bigger than we thought. Until now, the scandal is known to be about coercion by Park and her close friend Choi who put pressure on major large companies to contribute money to Choi's foundations.

It was reported that conglomerates such as Samsung and Hyundai paid \$70 million. Rep. An also said that "Lockheed was awarded some 80 billion won (\$68 million) in contracts from 2010 to 2015, but contracts the company secured for 2015 to 2021 are worth more than 12 trillion won, with the political decision to select the F-35 over Boeing's F15 Silent Eagle." Many media reports are saying that Choi was behind Park's hasty decision to deploy THAAD, Lockheed's expensive missile defense system to be used by the US military in Korea. Rep. An said other

alleged wealth Choi might have accumulated would be nothing compared with the "commission" she may have received from THAAD. Samsung gained huge profit from the controversial \$8 billion merger with Cheil Industries. The merger was protested by a lot of foreign and minority shareholders but was backed by the government-sponsored National Pension Service, the largest shareholder of Samsung. It is alleged Choi influenced the decision to support the deal. Now we can clearly see the stinking connection between conglomerates, arms sales and the 1% ruling class.

Navy chief of staff gets jail term for bribery, again

By Joyakgol

The former Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Chairman Choi Yoon-hee was sentenced to one year in jail on charges of bribery and imprisoned at a Seoul Court on Nov. 18. Choi served as the Navy chief of staff from Oct. 2011 to Sept. 2013 before he was promoted by President Park Geun-hye to become the first JCS Chairman from the navy. He held the top military commanding position for 2 years and ended up in jail. Choi is known to be a hardliner and a strong supporter of the so-called 'Blue Water Navy' theory that South Korea should possess an aircraft carrier to be able to project its naval power into the open sea far from the peninsula. He is regarded as the mastermind of the Jeju naval base project, as he laid out the theory when he took the post of Naval Academy principal from 2008 to 2010. Then, after he became the top navy commander in 2011, he was at the forefront of imposing the controversial construction of the Jeju base against the will of people. Pres. Park liked him very much for that and put him at the highest pedestal of military power. But now his imprisonment only highlights the corruption in the country's defense industry. Choi is the third jailed navy chief after Jeong Ok-geun and Hwang Ki-cheol. A special prosecution team conducted a 1-year investigation to probe widespread defense industry corruption until the end of 2015. The findings were shocking, including that procurement projects totaling about 1 billion USD were corrupt and the navy accounted for 80% of illegality, including submarines and navy helicopters. This is the true face of the Jeju naval base.

Living with a military base

By Sungku

At the Jesuit Center in Seoul, Civilian Military Watch organized a series of talks about 'Living with a military base' from Oct. 25 to Nov. 15. On the last day, Pyeongtaek Peace Center former vice chairman Kang Sang-Won, Gangjeong Village vice mayor Ko Kwon-il, and Gangjeong peace activist Choi Hye-Young joined as panel participants. Kim Duck-Jin from the Catholic Human Rights Association was the host. Choi Hye-young said "It was my decision to move on Gangjeong village 4 years ago but living with a military base is much harder than I expected." She also said, "However, the power of creativity of my friends, or some energy has made me wish for continuing struggle." Vice chairman Ko Kwon-il said, "People worried for me how hard it would be to live since the completion of the navy base construction, but I feel strong with solidarity from many good people." One of his words was about the need of villagers to solve internal trauma caused from long years' struggle, which were very resonated by Mr. Kang Sang-Won who said that he was very sorry that the villagers of Daechuri, Pyeongtaek could not have such chance. Pyeongtaek villagers have struggled since 2002 because of the expansion of the US military base at Pyeongtaek. Just like in Gangjeong, the government authorities used compulsory execution to build the base. Host Kim Duck-Jin finished with the words, "I also think that we need to develop more awareness about peace and human rights. It seems that this forum has brought out many precious stories even in the current state of affairs."

Trial Updates



▶ On Nov. 2, the first criminal case department of the Gwangju higher court ruled not guilty on five villagers including Mr. Cho Kyung-chul, the Gangjeong village mayor, and Ms. Kim Mi-ryang who were charged with Special Obstruction of Justice. The original court had ruled them not guilty for the same case on Oct. 29 last year, as well.

▶ On Feb. 26, 2012 these five went along with others to the port to be with people who were to take kayaks to monitor environmental damage on the Gureombi Rock coast due to base construction and to deliver food and medicine to some peace activists who were already at the coast. But they were stopped by the police who took the unusual measure of blockading the port, which was illegal given the situation. During the protest, one person even lost consciousness because of police's forceful and violent measures against the defenseless people. However, the police arrested and wrongfully accused the five, asserting that they used violence against the police. (On March 7, 10 days after the incident, the navy/construction companies exploded part of the Gureombi Rock coast for base construction). The higher court stated that there was no proof that it was an urgent situation for the police to execute such measures and that the police had not gone through any legal procedures such as prior notice for such execution. It also judged that the accused's response against the police during the process of arrest was caused by the police's improper execution, so the charge of obstruction of justice against the five should be dropped. Two weeks later, one more accused also got a court decision of not-guilty.

Why I object to my fourth year of military reserves training

By Lee Sang

Like other guys my age I didn't want to be in the military, but the military was 'the ROK's' 'healthy' 'men's' 'appropriate' 'necessary' 'course of life.' I thought that if I didn't thoroughly adapt to the structure of the military, it would be difficult to survive. Snow, cold, slang, shouting, corporal punishment, orders, obedience, hierarchy, the hatred for women and minorities, 'act like a soldier,' the sound of guns, 'be a man'... these are the topics that I had to pay attention to. This kind of military service continued until on June 9, 2012 it was finished. A new world opened to me. I was able to meet people who know how to ask questions and how to say no, activists in Gangjeong opposing the military base and struggling for peace, the Sewol ferry families, artists, people who practice peace and equality in the place where they are each day. I read about conscientious objection to the reserves training, and I was frustrated with how it is different from conscious objection to the original military service period. You get fined but the training is just continuously postponed. It makes ordinary life impossible. If I do the training I can't respect myself, but if I don't do the training, everyone will see me as pathetic and I will be shackled with heavy fines. Why? Because I am Korean. And because the people I love live in Korea. In order to respect myself, in order to take care of myself, and in order not to reproduce the system and culture that encourages inequality, I object to my fourth year of military reserves training.

(excerpted and translated from the original blog at withoutwar.org)



(Top) Image by Yang Soo-nam/ Upon the 25th anniversary of the death of Yang Yong-chan, a Jeju citizen who self-immolated on Nov. 7, 1991 in protest to the capital-friendly special law on the development of Jeju, many Gangjeong people joined other Jeju islanders in Seongsan where the residents struggle against the 2nd airport project being enforced in their area.

(Bottom) Image by Pang Eunmi/ People in Gangjeong remembered Yang Yong-chan in front of the Jeju navy base during the daily human chain.

Nothing Twice

Gangjeong Poetry Night has taken place for over 2 years. It brings stories and memories of our life and the Gangjeong struggle in one place. Friends present songs, poems, photos and artworks with the audience.

This is one of poems that were recited during the 7th Poetry Night on Nov. 27th. Peaceberry read it to us. *Translated by Clare Cavanagh and Stanislaw Baranczak.*

Nothing Twice

By Wislawa Szymborska

Nothing can ever happen twice.
In consequence, the sorry fact is
that we arrive here improvised
and leave without the chance to practice.
Even if there is no one dumber,
if you're the planet's biggest dunce,
you can't repeat the class in summer:
this course is only offered once.
No day copies yesterday,
no two nights will teach what bliss is
in precisely the same way,
with precisely the same kisses.
One day, perhaps some idle tongue
mentions your name by accident:
I feel as if a rose were flung
into the room, all hue and scent.
The next day, though you're here with me,
I can't help looking at the clock:
A rose? A rose? What could that be?
Is it a flower or a rock?
Why do we treat the fleeting day
with so much needless fear and sorrow?
It's in its nature not to stay:
Today is always gone tomorrow.
With smiles and kisses, we prefer
to seek accord beneath our star,
although we're different (we concur)
just as two drops of water are.



Image by Joyakgol / Gangjeong peacekeepers had a gathering just for fun at the Peace Center on Nov 10.

How You Can Help

1. Write a letter to the South Korean government to close the Jeju base project and to the US government to stop the support for it.
2. Write letters to the South Korean government to drop the lawsuit of USD 3 million against the people of Gangjeong.
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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We commend the long endurance and commitment to peace of the American Indians and Water Protectors and celebrate the victory at Standing Rock against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline under Lake Oahe.

No more killings in Syria. Peace for Syria.

“Gangjeong Villagers! How have you been?” Candlelight Vigil

Gangjeong Friends organized a candlelight vigil November 1st at 7 PM at the Jeju City Hall. It was the first time for Gangjeong villagers to speak at a public event in Jeju City since the Grand March with its hot summer heat. Poet Kim Kyung-hun read his poem “This is how Gangjeong is.” Oum Mun-hee’s video showed how Gangjeong has changed since the navy base was completed. Hong Min-a and Joo Sungil sang a song. Sungmisan Friends performed a dance and sang. Jung Su-hee (from Bomulsum school) shared a solidarity message. Ko Kwon-il spoke about Gangjeong’s recent conditions and gave an update on the claim for reimbursement (filed against Gangjeong by the government). About 50 people joined, including Gangjeong villagers and other visitors even in the freezing weather. Gangjeong Friends shares Gangjeong news every Tuesday in front of Jeju City Hall because Jeju people should know what’s going on in Gangjeong Village even though the navy base was completed. All Jeju citizens have to know how the navy base affects the local people since we live with the military base in Jeju Peace Island. Gangjeong Friends won't stop sharing the Gangjeong news.



(Top) Image by Grace Kim/ For the protest especially aiming for the resignation of Park Geun-hye, some Gangjeong peace keepers created a performance group called Crow flock. (Middle and bottom) Images by Kim Suo/ 19 Jeju musicians performed at the Nov. 26 street protest demanding for Pres. Park to step down with the protestors cheering in the rain.

