

Contemporary Issues

The Korea Society engages American and Korean policy makers, business leaders, scholars, journalists, authors and the interested public in timely, informative and stimulating discussions of contemporary issues which open paths of inquiry, identify areas of common interest and promote more enlightened relations between the United States and Korea.

Contemporary Issues

Inside Outsiders: Japan's Minority Groups—Not Quite Racial, Hardly Cultural—What Makes Koreans in Japan Korean?

January 8 • New York, NY

In an evening forum cosponsored with the Japan Society, Dr. Sonia Ryang, an associate professor of anthropology at Johns Hopkins University, argued that Koreans in Japan are a people in diaspora because they are compelled to recognize their alienation and oppression. Due to this consciousness of exile, they are incapable of assimilating to the host society. The fact that Koreans lost Japanese nationali-

ty structured their condition in Japan through a sense of loss—the loss of home, homeland and human rights.

Today, however, it is the Japan-born generations who are the decision-makers in the Korean Japanese community. With this shift, an awareness of their future located in Japan has become the norm. However, a separate Korean identity remains. So, what makes Koreans in Japan Korean without a distinctive sub-culture of their own? In fact, the "homelessness" of Koreans in Japan is very inflexible and inescapable. Their stateless, culture-less, limbo-

like existence provides them with no homeland to fight for and no "home culture" to embrace.

After describing this dilemma, Ryang suggested that solutions would not come from the continuing social and political forms of racism against Koreans or the failure of both the state and society to deal with its colonial history defined by oppression. In conclusion, Ryang asserted, it is the disconnection both from their homeland and the host society that makes Koreans in Japan members of a diaspora.

Joanna Catherine Scott Reads from *The Lucky Gourd Shop*

January 25 • New York, NY

In a VOICES program, Joanna Catherine Scott read selections from her groundbreaking novel *The Lucky Gourd Shop* and discussed her work and family. Based on actual events, *The Lucky Gourd Shop* is the first published novel about birth parents and their children before adoption. The novel is primarily the story of a birth mother told by the adoptive mother to her adopted children, so that they will remember that their birth mother was not a bad mother. Set in Korea in the 1980s, it tells the story of an independent birth mother who was an orphan herself, and an ambitious, stubborn birth father. Under the weight of poverty and miscommunication, the birth parents are unable to create a harmonious relationship, and their family disintegrates, leaving three orphans who end up in an orphanage and are eventually adopted by Scott.



Joanna Catherine Scott



Hahn Hwa-Kap

The North Korean Policy of the Kim Dae-jung Administration

March 29 • New York, NY

ROK National Assemblyman
Hahn Hwa-Kap of the Millennium

Democratic Party offered an eloquent and impassioned argument for the continuation of an engagement policy toward North Korea in an address delivered at a chairman's special events luncheon. Hahn's formal presentation was followed by a Q&A session in which he shared impressions gleaned from his discussions with influential members of both the congressional and executive branches of the U.S. government, in an effort to explore the policy coordination issues that have emerged following the summit meeting between President Kim and President Bush.

Hahn reminded his audience that the engagement policy with North Korea must remain in place as it is the only feasible way to build a foundation for peace and unifica-

tion on the Korean peninsula. With this background, Hahn turned to an assessment of the current state of U.S. policy toward North Korea by noting "...the Bush administration has not yet taken appropriate measures to initiate the process of dialogue with North Korea."

Hahn also affirmed his government's view that North Korea remains committed to a dialogue with the United States and understands that the United States is the only nation that can take responsibility for its security and economic development. Hahn noted that this stance on the part of North Korea clearly reflects a "change of mentality" which is the result of President Kim Dae-jung's resolute implementation of his Sunshine policy.



(l-r) Yi Munyol, Ty Pak, Heinz Insu Fenkl, Bruce Fulton and Helen Hyung-In Koh



Our Twisted Hero: A Film Screening and Panel Discussion

April 18 • New York, NY

The Korea Society and The New School Diversity Committee copresented a screening of *Our Twisted Hero* at The New School's Tishman Auditorium. Directed by Park Chong-won and originally released in 1992, the film is based on the novel of the same title by Yi Munyol

that originally was published in 1987. To mark the publication earlier this year of an English translation of *Our Twisted Hero* by Hyperion East, which is the first publication of a Korean novel in English translation by a major U.S. publisher, the program included a panel discussion of the novel with the author and three leading experts on Korean literature: Heinz Insu Fenkl, Bruce Fulton and Helen Hyung-In Koh.

Frederick F. Carriere, vice president and executive director of The Korea Society, served as the moderator, and Ty Pak, author of *Cry Korea, Cry*, served as Yi Munyol's interpreter. The program was cosponsored by Hyperion East, The Korean Cultural Service, PEN American Center Freedom-to-Write Committee and NewYorkSeoul.com.

In his engaging presentation, Fenkl

discussed how the physiognomy of names in *Our Twisted Hero* contributes to the overall political and social allegory of the novel. Breaking down the names of both the protagonist Han Pyongt'ae and the antagonist Om Sokdae, he suggested that both names symbolically illuminate the abuse of power and repercussions of dictatorship depicted in the narrative. Fulton discussed *Our Twisted Hero* in the context of contemporary Korean fiction as well as in light of its universal appeal. On the one hand, *Our Twisted Hero* follows the literary trend in Korea during the 1980s as a work of political and historical engagement. On the other hand, it also embodies the universal appeal of works illustrating that corruption and abuse of power can be allegorically represented in many parts of the world. The presentation by Koh focused primarily on *Our Twisted Hero* as a novel of formation. She noted, in particular, how nostalgia is incorporated in *Our Twisted Hero* as a longing for authoritarianism. As a novel narrated primarily in flashback, it expresses a yearning for a distinct period of stability — a condition that can only be found in the past under authoritarian rule in Korea.

Transparency through IT: Seoul's OPEN System

May 9 • New York, NY

In a breakfast forum cosponsored by New York University's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service, Goh Kun, mayor of the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), discussed the innovative administrative reform measures being implemented by his administration to eliminate the previously endemic bureaucratic corruption. Specifically, Goh described how information technology is being used to achieve his administration's reform objectives through the development of what is known as the OPEN (Online Procedures ENhancement for civil applications) system. Opening remarks were offered by Donald P. Gregg, president and chairman of The Korea Society. The program ended with a Q&A session moderated by Dennis Smith, a professor at the Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service.

Goh stated that the transformation of the SMG from a hotbed of bureaucratic corruption into a crystal-clear government has been his top priority since taking office. After launching an analysis of the sources of corruption, Goh concluded that the most effective way to eliminate corruption would be to adopt a systematic approach that involves establishing preventive and punitive measures, increasing transparency in administrative procedures and enhancing the pub-



Goh Kun and Dennis Smith

lic-private partnership in all the operations of the SMG. Through the innovative utilization of information technology (IT), citizens are able to monitor their applications as they are being processed via the Internet, making the OPEN system a key component in the SMG's efforts to root out corruption by eliminating one of its major underlying causes.

In concluding his presentation, Goh reiterated his determination to strive continuously to mobilize the city's two greatest resources — civil society and information technology. The system will keep the bureaucracy open to public surveillance and scrutiny in fulfillment of his administration's firm commitment to abolish corruption and enhance transparency.

Creating a World Peace Park in Korea's DMZ: Social, Political and Military Perspectives

May 16 • New York, NY

The prospects for a peaceful utilization of Korea's DMZ were explored in a seminar organized by The DMZ Forum, which was cosponsored by the Samuel Rubin Foundation and the Institute of Public Administration at New York University in cooperation with The Korea Society.

The program consisted of two panel sessions. The first panel discussed the DMZ as a potential monument for world peace — a World Peace Park. Presentations in this session were given by Ethel Tobach of the American Museum of Natural History; Kim Ke Chung, chairman of The DMZ Forum; and William J. Holinger of the Harvard Graduate School of Education who is also a member of the DMZ Veterans Association. William B. Shore, a senior associate at the Institute of

Public Administration, served as the moderator for this panel. The second session explored the political and military preconditions for establishing a World Peace Park in the DMZ. The presenters in this session were James Lee, a former special advisor to the commander-in-chief, United Nations Command; Selig Harrison of The Century Foundation; and Leon V. Sigal of the Social Science Research Council. Donald P. Gregg, president and chairman of The Korea Society, moderated this panel and delivered the keynote address. The seminar got underway with welcoming remarks by David Mammen, president of the Institute of Public Administration.



Francis Park

To Swim Across the World: A Book Reading with Authors Frances and Ginger Park

June 14 • New York, NY

In a book reading program cosponsored by the Asian American Writers' Workshop, Frances and Ginger Park read selections from their recently published novel *To Swim Across the World*. The novel weaves together the early life experiences of two young people growing up in what subsequently have become the opposite sides of the border between North and South Korea during the period spanning the Japanese occupation and World War II. Acknowledging that the novel is based broadly on the lives of their



parents, the authors explained: "The only way we could write the incredible story of our parents' lives was as fiction. We wanted to imagine what it was like to be our father and our mother; we wanted to recreate their world." During the Q&A session, the Park sisters explained that their parents told them stories about the tumultuous past when they were children, but it was not until after their father's death that they became interested in writing a novel based on their parents' experiences. Through the research they did for their novel, the sisters said, they learned not only a great deal about their parents' past but also about the history of Korea.

Ambassador Charles Kartman on KEDO

June 20 • New York, NY

In a luncheon forum held at the Metropolitan Hotel, Charles Kartman, executive director of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), highlighted some of the challenges facing KEDO and the future prospects of the project at this critical juncture in U.S.-DPRK relations.



Charles Kartman

By way of background, Kartman noted that KEDO was established to carry out two key provisions of the Agreed Framework: in exchange for the DPRK's freezing and eventual dismantling of its nuclear program, KEDO is supplying the DPRK with two light-water reactor (LWR) units and

providing heavy fuel oil as an alternate source of energy until the first LWR is completed.

Noting that the LWR project is essentially on schedule, Kartman stressed that KEDO has passed the infancy stage in this multi-billion dollar proj-

ect. Despite the progress made so far, Kartman said, there are a number of significant challenges ahead, with the issue of liability being one of the most serious. Furthermore, he mentioned the standards that must be met by the operating country of a nuclear power plant, stressing the need for more transparency in the DPRK.

On the prospects for future progress, Kartman expressed concern that it will be difficult to proceed as planned with the project since the deep mistrust shown by the North Koreans makes it necessary to negotiate every single detail of KEDO's activities in the DPRK. In concluding his presentation, Kartman stressed the need for more cooperation on the part of the DPRK in implementing the KEDO project.

The Politics of Remembering: Korean Americans and the Legacy of the Korean War

June 22 • New York, NY

In a VOICES program cosponsored by the New York Chapter of the National Association of Korean Americans, Ramsay Liem, a professor of psychology at Boston College, discussed his ongoing oral history project to examine the legacies of the Korean War for Koreans and, in particular, Korean Americans. Liem read a sampling of the interviews organized around three broad themes: 1) memories of the war; 2) silence; and 3) legacies of the war. He also commented on the readings selected for each theme to show how they "reveal the shared experience of war, family, and life in America" for many Korean Americans.

Expounding upon the first theme, Liem voiced his surprise at the "absence of a harsh ideological tone in these recollections." Anticommunist feelings or memories of fear of the North Koreans were expressed, but the "memories of benevolent or neutral feelings



Ramsay Liem

toward northerners or simply the shared human pain of all Koreans wracked by war, were more common." This led Liem to question if perhaps the Korean War is "forgotten" because remembering it might challenge the simplistic depiction of the war in official sources as "a victory of good over evil." Turning to the second theme, Liem said that, paradoxically, it may be that "silence is an audible legacy of the Korean War," reflecting the natural tendency for people to suppress memories that are painful or dangerous. In his

discussion of the third theme, Liem explored how the Korean War has infiltrated the lives of Korean Americans. One of the most significant legacies is the way "personality styles and attitudes that were shaped by the Korean War are often viewed today as simply the 'way Koreans are.'" Liem sees a linkage with the tendency toward cultural stereotyping as where "It's cultural" is an often too readily used explanation for any unfamiliar behavior by non-white people. As Liem put it: "How much of the cultural stereotype of Korean Americans is actually the result of lived history?"

In concluding his presentation, Liem reiterated the overall objective of his project, saying: "The Korean war is as much a part of the present as it is a moment in history. Reckoning with the past, therefore, also means facing its legacies in the present — breaking the silence in our families, reconciling the ideological fault lines in our communities, and testifying to the unity and sovereignty of the homeland."

The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War with Charles J. Hanley

August 30 • New York, NY

In a VOICES program cosponsored by the New York Chapter of the National Association of Korean Americans (NAKA), Associated Press (AP) Special Correspondent Charles J. Hanley talked about the newly issued book, *The Bridge at No Gun Ri*, which he coauthored with two AP colleagues, Sang-Hun Choe and Martha Mendoza. Hanley and his colleagues were awarded the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for their 1999 investigation of the tragic events that took place around that bridge in the early days of the Korean war. The AP report had sparked a Pentagon investigation of the same events that culminated in an Army Inspector General report issued in January 2001. Amb. Donald P. Gregg, president and chairman of The Korea Society, introduced Hanley and participated as a discussant. Gregg was one of eight outside



Charles J. Hanley

advisors appointed by the Pentagon to give disinterested commentary and guidance to its investigation.

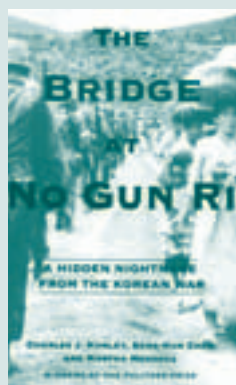
What's Next for the Two Koreas?

October 18 • New York, NY

In an on-going collaboration with the Center for Korean Research at Columbia University, The Korea Society cosponsored a session of the Seminar on Contemporary Korean Affairs. Amb. Donald P. Gregg, president and chairman of The Korea Society, presented his views on the current relationship between the two Koreas as well as the challenges that lie ahead for both nations. Gregg was introduced by Professor Samuel S. Kim of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Gregg cited his contacts with North Korean officials in New York as evidence that P'yongyang wants to resume a dialogue with Washington. Gregg noted that North Korean statements strongly criticizing the September 11 attacks showed that P'yongyang wants to completely disassociate itself from today's outbreak of radical terrorism. He hoped that Washington would take advantage of this situation by quickly resuming talks with P'yongyang but admitted that restarting the dialogue might take some time.

Gregg regretted P'yongyang's cancellation of a scheduled reunion of separated families, saying that this unfortunate and uncalled for gesture would play into the hands of those in the Bush administration who are suspicious of North Korea and in no hurry to resume talks with it. He regretfully predicted that Washington and P'yongyang might "talk past each other" for some time, until one side or the other decides to make a conciliatory gesture. He expressed the hope that the Seoul-P'yongyang dialogue could be restored despite the hiatus in talks between Washington and P'yongyang.



As a member of the advisory group, I traveled to No Gun Ri, met the active survivors and heard firsthand their version of what had happened. It became evident to me that the American army unit operating around the bridge had been poorly led, and that it had virtually fallen apart due to panic and lack of discipline. Within that chaotic situation, fire had been directed upon civilians huddled under the bridge. The AP alleged that hundreds of civilians had

been killed, and that American soldiers had been ordered by superior officers to fire upon them. The pentagon came up with a much smaller number of probable casualties and found no direct evidence that orders to shoot had been given to troops around the No Gun Ri Bridge. Hanley's main objective in his talk seemed to be to discredit the pentagon report. In attempting to do so, Hanley referred to other instances, not No Gun Ri, where the order to fire on civilian groups had been issued. When it was pointed out that the pentagon investigation had been focused on No Gun Ri exclusively, Hanley kept citing evidence of other "atrocities" involving U.S. troops, and referred to Korean War veterans he had interviewed who were still haunted by memories of their actions and were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Hanley also averred that there had been a long-standing, deliberate effort to ignore the tragic events at No Gun Ri, and that if only "the truth had been known" about No Gun Ri, the My Lai Massacre in the Vietnam War might have been averted. (Hanley served in Vietnam during the war as an army journalist.) Hanley's book may have many virtues, but they were not made evident by his talk. I was left with a strong impression that Hanley's Vietnam service still remains a very dark prism through which he has looked back at Korea. *Comment by Donald P. Gregg*



Yan Sogil

Literary Forum Japan: Yan Sogil

October 23 • New York, NY

In a literary forum cosponsored by The Korea Society, the Japan Society, Kodansha, Ltd. and the New York Chapter of the National Association of Korean-Americans (NAKA), Mr. Yan Sogil, a former taxi driver turned one of Japan's bestselling authors, read from *Sakashima*, one of his collections of short

stories exploring Korean-Japanese themes that is also his first work to be translated into English. His translator, Ms. Linda Hoaglund, also participated. Dr. Melissa Wender, assistant professor of German, Russian and East Asian Languages and Literatures at Bates College, moderated the program. Yan, who has written widely based on his personal experiences as a second generation Korean-Japanese, discussed the significant changes in the relationship between Japan and its many Korean residents during the 20th century. Many inroads towards greater unity and acceptance have been made in recent years, following nearly a century of suspicion and tension. This experience has provided inspiration for Yan's extensive, highly successful writings.



Hahm Hye-Ryon

An Evening with Korean Poet Hahm Hye-Ryon

October 26 • New York, NY

A VOICES program featured Korean poet Hahm Hye-Ryon, who read and discussed selections from her collection *Body Language*. While many of her poems deal with nature as their primary theme, she focused on poems about Korean political history. In “Yet Will I Love You,” Hahm reimagines the folk song *Arirang* to metaphorically describe the division

of the Korean nation. This poem not only describes the “loving, leaving and waiting” between the woman and man in the folk song; it also describes the longing and waiting of the Korean people for the country’s reunification. During the Q&A session, Hahm tied together the themes concerning the relationship between the natural world and the world of humans. She stated that “Yet Will I Love You” speaks of the demilitarized zone as a natural paradise where plants and animals continue to grow and thrive despite the political turmoil created by humans. Because people have been expunged from the DMZ, the area has become a prime example of the earth’s ability to regenerate and restore itself after the devastation of war. Hahm advocates the preservation of this unique natural paradise once Korea is reunited, to serve as a reminder of the nation’s rich and painful history.

Kori: The Beacon Anthology of Korean American Fiction

November 7 • New York, NY

In a VOICES program, Mr. Heinz Fenkl, Ms. Susan Choi and Mr. Ty Pak participated in a panel on *Kori: The Beacon Anthology of Korean American Fiction*, a recently published collection. Fenkl, one of the coeditors of the book, spoke about the evolution of the anthology. After several developmental stages, the editors ultimately attempted to show the evolution of Korean American fiction from the 1930s to the late 20th century. Fenkl concluded his remarks by noting how he was fascinated by the way in which the book was formed by both purposeful and accidental thematic collisions.

Susan Choi linked a discussion of her novel *The Foreign Student* to Fenkl’s point about the interesting and unexpected overlaps among the selections

in *Kori*. She then provided a brief overview of her novel, stating that the main character, Chuck, carries with him an immense amount of history that he has not been able to deal with, but constantly re-experiences through a series of flashbacks. Ty Pak concluded the panel presentations with a lively discussion of his work and his relationship to Asian American literature. Strongly identifying himself as an ethnic and Korean American writer, Pak asserted that his purpose is to extol the “giant step we took” in immigrating, as well as to confront the issues that Korean Americans face in the U.S.

During the Q&A session, the panelists discussed issues related to questions of representation (“burden of representation”) and the relationships between literary portrayals of Korean and Korean American identities.

Evening Forum: So, You Want To Be An Attorney?

November 30 • New York, NY

In a career panel cosponsored by New York Seoul, four Korean American attorneys shared varying insights on their careers, their motivation for becoming lawyers and the valuable lessons they have learned as students and young professionals. They recommended other options to joining private practice, such as a year spent clerking for a judge, as worthy detours to gain exposure to diverse areas of practice and mentorship from a judge. The panel was comprised of Harry Ahn, an attorney at Reed Smith LLP; Woo Jung A. Cho, an associate at Rudolph & Beer, LLP; John Kim, vice president of law at Cendant Corporation and general counsel for Tripwire.com; Judy J. Kim, director of multimedia and information technologies in the office of industrial liaison of New York University; and Max Han, founder of New York Seoul, who served as moderator.

North Korea Survey

The Korea Society provided logistical support for a survey of the current and projected activities being undertaken by a broad range of U.S. non-governmental organizations with North Korea (DPRK). Envisioned as an initial step in identifying the components of an effective framework for coordination of NGO activities related to the DPRK, the survey had four distinct goals: 1) to identify the current landscape of U.S. NGOs that are involved or wish to become involved with the DPRK; 2) to identify the interests of these organizations that a coordinating committee might promote; 3) to seek ideas on ways to enhance greater communication and coordinated approaches in negotiating with the DPRK; and 4) to solicit ideas on the purpose and characteristics of an effective coordinating framework. The survey was made possible by a grant from the Luce Foundation, and was conducted by Amb. Harry G. Barnes Jr. and Ms. Chong-Ae Yu.