

THE KWANGJU UPRISING

GRADES: 11-12

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SUBJECT: Asian History, World History, Twentieth-Century Studies, Social Studies

TIME REQUIRED: Two class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. Learn about the causes, consequences, and significance of the Kwangju Uprising
2. Contextualize the expansion of democracy as a gradual and often painful process
3. Understand how democracy in East Asia developed, using South Korea as a point of comparison with China
4. Practice analyzing primary and secondary sources, identifying the similarities/weakness of multiple sources, and evaluating the strengths/weaknesses of multiple sources
5. Understand the importance of consulting multiple sources when studying the past
6. Collaborate effectively to expand the knowledge of every student in the class by participating in a jigsaw exercise and class discussion

STANDARDS:

Common Core

RH 1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

RH 2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source

RH 3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events

RH 6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue

RH 8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information

RH 9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event

SL 1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

SL 3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric

MATERIALS REQUIRED: (all attached)

- Handout 1: Summary of the Kwangju Uprising
- Handout 2: Account of Kim Chung Keun, Korean journalist
- Handout 3: Account of Chang Jae Yol, Korean journalist
- Handout 4: Account of Lee Jai Eui, student participant
- Handout 5: Memorandum of paratrooper
- Handout 6: Report from Yoon Sung-min, Minister of Defense

- Handout 7: Excerpt from scholarly work by Linda Lewis
- Handout 8: Accounts of foreign journalists
- Handout 9: Statistics on arrests, injuries, deaths
- Handout 10: Class discussion questions
- Handout 11: Student project assignments
- Handout 12: Work by Kim Dae Jung (for student project)
- Handout 13: Poem by Kim Nam-Ju (for student project)

BACKGROUND:

How might this lesson be incorporated into your classroom teaching? For teachers of World History and Twentieth-Century Studies, the lesson is especially relevant to the study of what some have termed the “third wave” of democracy that accompanied the end of the Cold War, when democratic states emerged in Brazil, Argentina, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Eastern Europe. Teachers of Asian History can use this lesson to compare developments in South Korea and China during the twentieth century, while social studies teachers will find a useful case study for identifying the successes as well as failures of protest movements and civic action.

The 1980s, marked so prominently by the end of the Cold War, witnessed a stunning growth of economic prosperity in both South Korea and China. But why has the former evolved into a stable democratic state, while the latter has not? While they remain neighboring East Asian states with a very long history of shared “Confucian values,” they have clearly diverged.

One way to track the difference in the recent history of South Korea and China is to consider two key events that accompanied the end of the Cold War: the Kwangju Uprising (May 1980) and the Tiananmen Square massacre (June 1989). Both are considered key moments in the political development of East Asia during the twentieth century. Yet the Kwangju Uprising, often referred to as “Korea’s Tiananmen,” marked a turning point toward a successful and rapid development of representative government, while a similar protest and violent suppression in China failed to bring the same kind of dramatic change.

Scholars have presented a number of theories to explain why Kwangju’s aftermath led to a democratic state. At the very least, South Korea’s democracy overturns traditional assumptions among some Asian and non-Asian commentators during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that “Confucian values” of collectivity, harmony, and hierarchy worked against “Western democratic values” of individualism, liberty, and equality. South Korea’s history can help students reexamine the notion that Confucian culture hindered democracy instead of promoting it.

One example of traditional “Confucian values” working in favor of democratic change is the prominence of students and teachers in Korean society. Scholars have long recognized the importance of education in Korean culture and, consequently, the customary role of students and teachers as moral authorities in society. As Michael Seth explains:

The scholar-teacher held an exalted position. Since organized religion was peripheral to Chosŏn society, it was the school and the teacher, rather than the temple and the priest, that served as a principal source of ethical counsel. Consequently, the scholar obtained an almost sacred status. The learned man was

more than a scholar or teacher: he was the moral arbiter of society and source of guidance at the village as well as the state level....This was the basis for the tradition of remonstrance, the right to issue formal protests based on ethical principles. It was the duty of the scholar to criticize the actions of the government, including the king; since Confucianism perceived the universe as a moral order, improper behavior on the part of officials and rulers threatened that order. Scholars and lower-ranked officials wrote memorials, and students at the *Sōnggyun'gwan* [National Confucian Academy] held protest demonstrations when they felt that those in positions of authority were not adhering to ethical standards or were improperly performing rituals....This tradition of equating education and scholarship with moral authority, hence giving students and scholars the right and duty to criticize officialdom, has been one of the most persistent features of Korean education. It is a tradition still felt in Korea today (1:134).

Given the importance of education in Confucian culture, one explanation for South Korea's move toward democracy was the legacy of student protest that characterized South Korean politics throughout the twentieth century, beginning with the March First Movement (1919) and continuing through the 1980s.

Korea's twentieth century was a painful departure from its previous centuries of unity and autonomy. In sharp contrast to the long-lasting dynasties of Koryŏ and Chosŏn, Korea endured Japanese colonization from 1910 to 1945, a division between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (ROK/South Korea) in 1948, and the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 that devastated not just human lives and family relationships, but also the peninsula's housing stock and industrial infrastructure. In the wake of the war's destruction, South Korea endured a series of authoritarian regimes under Syngman Rhee (1948–1960), Park Chung Hee (1961–1979), and Chun Doo Hwan (1980–1987). Park and Chun were army generals who gained power through illegal coups. The Kwangju Uprising in May 1980 was a popular attempt to end this pattern of authoritarian rule. It failed in the short-term but paved the way for more substantial, long-term change. The presidential election of 1987, which saw Chun's retirement and a resumption of freedom of the press, was followed by the election of civilians, Kim Young Sam in 1992 and the opposition candidate Kim Dae Jung in 1997, which signaled the final stages of South Korea's transition into a stable democracy.

The Kwangju Uprising was an important but by no means the only protest against South Korea's dictatorial regimes. In fact, student protests had been pivotal in toppling Rhee in 1960. Kwangju was, however, among the bloodiest and most politically fraught, with the number of deaths estimated to be anywhere from 200 to 2,000. It is memorialized in South Korea today as "5.18," or May 18, the date on which the Kwangju protests began. Kwangju has been repeatedly characterized as, in the words of Linda Lewis, "a powerful symbol of popular opposition to thirty years of repressive military rule and a milestone in South Korea's long journey to democratic reform" (xvi). How did Kwangju become such a milestone?

The basic chronology is relatively straightforward. President Park Chung Hee was assassinated on October 26, 1979 by the director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), apparently the result of a disagreement over how to quell the social unrest that Park's

increasingly unpopular policies had caused. Just a few months later, on December 12, 1979, Major General Chun Doo Hwan seized military control, which he then expanded in a series of power grabs. Students and workers in various cities vigorously protested these moves, because in the months immediately following Park's assassination there had been widespread hope among students and citizens alike that South Korea would emerge as a functioning democracy. Chun dashed those hopes on May 17, 1980 with an extension of what had previously been a limited version of martial law. This action, which effectively outlawed political activity, shut down universities, and silenced the National Assembly, sparked a student protest in Kwangju on May 18. When Special Forces paratroopers were called in to assist the Martial Law troops, the consequences were devastating. Paratroopers attacked anyone who looked like a university student, whether they were or not, and whether they were actively demonstrating or not. The shocking display of brutality angered the citizens of Kwangju, who joined students in increasingly larger protests that, in turn, resulted in even more attacks from the paratroopers. On May 21, facing a populace that had begun to arm itself and commandeer vehicles, the paratroopers withdrew from Kwangju and surrounded the city. Citizens and students formed several committees to maintain civic order and negotiate with the military. On May 27, however, the regular army moved into Kwangju, meeting with very little resistance, except from the students making a final stand in the Provincial Hall, the provincial capital building. The soldiers reestablished martial law and conducted house-to-house searches for demonstrators, with thousands of people subsequently detained. Chun, it was clear, would not hesitate to use excessive force to maintain his control.

Why did this astonishing degree of violence occur? After all, paratrooper and regular army units stationed at the same time in Seoul acted with far greater restraint. One reason may be that in Kwangju the soldiers had been unable to restrict the student protests to the university campuses. As the soldiers saw it, when demonstrations moved into the streets, events had begun to spiral out of control. Another explanation stems from Korea's long history of regionalism. Kwangju, the capital of South Chōlla province in the far southwest of the Korean peninsula, had for centuries been isolated from, and viewed with suspicion by, its neighboring provinces, especially the southwestern province of Kyōngsang. Geographically separated from each other by a mountain range, these regions developed along divergent tracks. The friction between Chōlla and Kyōngsang was also rooted in the repeated clashes between the ancient kingdoms of Paekche in the southwest and Silla in the southeast. When the Korean peninsula was united during the Koryō Dynasty (918–1392), the Koryō kings integrated Silla aristocrats into the power structure, but bound the more rebellious Paekche with severe legal restrictions. Much more recently, political leaders like Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan, both natives of Kyōngsang, offered far more government posts and development funds to their home region. The people of Chōlla identified a familiar discriminatory pattern and felt deliberately cut off from the fruits of modern industrial development. The fact that the nation's most prominent opposition politician, Kim Dae Jung, hailed from South Chōlla only aggravated the long simmering tension between government officials and Kwangju residents. Not surprisingly, then, during the Kwangju Uprising some eyewitnesses claimed that rampaging soldiers spoke with a Kyōngsang accent. While this may or may not have been true in particular cases, the fact remains that Korea's regional loyalties could have deepened suspicions on both sides, whether civilian or military, which then slid more easily into eruptions of violence.

Though strict censorship meant that little could be discussed publicly at the time, Kwangju was not forgotten. It became a rallying cry when people filled the streets again in 1987 to protest the lack of a promised discussion on the constitutional revision needed for direct presidential elections. This time the students, workers, and citizens prevailed. Chun kept his pledge to leave office and a presidential election went forward. In a telling shift, Kim Dae Jung, who had been arrested in May 1980 and charged with sedition and instigating the Kwangju Uprising, campaigned as one of three main presidential candidates.

Based on Korea's past century of colonization, occupation, costly warfare, military dictatorship, domestic upheaval, and a continuing split between north and south, Bruce Cumings could be right in claiming that "there may be no country more deserving of democracy in our time than the Republic of Korea" (334).

PROCEDURE:

1. To prepare for this lesson, students will need a brief overview of the Kwangju Uprising. This can be done using Handout 1 as a homework assignment the night before. Alternatively, or in addition, students can be asked to view the following online resources:
 - a) "Kwangju Uprising Newscast," YouTube, video file posted by Xchimx, February 19, 2007, accessed August 31, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTcXBGibhhM>.
 - b) "Branching Out–Kwangju Uprising: Historical Context," YouTube, video file posted by MHZ Worldview, August 12, 2010, accessed August 31, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QkiaAHnY1kk>.
2. Begin the in-class jigsaw exercise by dividing students into 4 or 8 "expert" groups:
 - a) Group A will read and analyze Handouts 2 and 3
 - b) Group B will read and analyze Handouts 4 and 5
 - c) Group C will read and analyze Handouts 6 and 7
 - d) Group D will read and analyze Handouts 8 and 9
3. After students in the "expert" groups have answered all of the analysis and comparison questions provided, rearrange the students into "home" groups, which will consist of at least one student from Groups A, B, C, and D. Each "expert" is then responsible for sharing with other students in the "home" group what was learned from the assigned sources.
4. It should be clear from the "home" group discussions that we obtain different and sometimes conflicting information from the sources. Bringing all the sources together enables us to gain a much deeper and broader understanding of what we know happened and where we still have questions.
5. Use the first two questions from Handout 10 to wrap up the jigsaw exercise in a larger class discussion.
6. Use any of the remaining questions from Handout 10 to address broader regional and interpretive issues on the second day of this lesson.
7. Use Handouts 11, 12, and 13 to assign a student project based on this lesson. Two assignments are provided. Students (or the teacher) may select which one to complete.

RESOURCES:

- Armstrong, Charles K., ed. *Korean Society: Civil Society, Democracy and the State*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Ch'oe, Yŏng-ho, Peter H. Lee, and Wm. Theodore de Bary, eds. *Sources of Korean Tradition*. Vol. 2. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Chung, Sangyong, and Rhyu Simin et al. *Memories of May 1980: A Documentary History of the Kwangju Uprising in Korea*. Translated by Park Hye-Jin. Seoul, Korea: Korea Democracy Foundation, 2003.
- Clark, Donald N., ed. *The Kwangju Uprising: Shadows over the Regime in South Korea*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988.
- Cumings, Bruce. *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*. Updated ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005.
- Eckert, Carter J., Ki-baik Lee, Young Ick Lew, Michael Robinson, and Edward W. Wagner. *Korea Old and New: A History*. Seoul, Korea: Ilchokak, 1990.
- Lewis, Linda S. *Laying Claim to the Memory of May: A Look Back at the 1980 Kwangju Uprising*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.
- Scott-Stokes, Henry, and Lee Jai Eui, eds. *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea's Tiananmen*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000.
- Seth, Michael J. *A Concise History of Korea*. Vols. 1-2. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006.
- Shin, Gi-Wook, and Kyung Moon Hwang, eds. *Contentious Kwangju: The May 18 Uprising in Korea's Past and Present*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.
- Warnberg, Tim. "The Kwangju Uprising: An Inside View." *Korean Studies* 11 (1987): 33-57.

ENRICHMENT:

One aspect of the Kwangju Uprising not fully addressed in this assignment is the role of the United States. Because of its military and diplomatic presence in South Korea, to what extent was the U. S. responsible for the actions of the Chun government? Could the U. S. have been reasonably expected to do more to avoid or stop the bloodshed? Many demonstrators at the time expected and called for the U. S. to intervene, which it did not. In addition to the resources listed above, the following online sources provide more information on this topic:

1. "Branching Out—Kwangju Uprising: Lasting Impact," YouTube, video file posted by MHz Worldview, October 14, 2010, accessed August 31, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhbN_QvdbK.
2. Mark Peterson, "The Kwangju Resistance Movement, May, 1980: Some American Perspectives," Chonnam National University 5.18 Institute, accessed August 31, 2012, <http://altair.chonnam.ac.kr/~cnu518/conf/simp33.html>.

HANDOUT 1: SUMMARY OF THE KWANGJU UPRISING

Korea's twentieth century was a painful departure from its previous centuries of unity and autonomy. In sharp contrast to the long-lasting dynasties of Koryŏ and Chosŏn, Korea endured Japanese colonization from 1910 to 1945, a division between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (ROK/South Korea) in 1948, and the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 that devastated not just human lives and family relationships, but also the peninsula's housing stock and industrial infrastructure. In the wake of the war's destruction, South Korea endured a series of authoritarian regimes under Syngman Rhee (1948–1960), Park Chung Hee (1961–1979), and Chun Doo Hwan (1980–1987). Park and Chun were army generals who gained power through illegal coups. The Kwangju Uprising in May 1980 was a popular attempt to end this pattern of authoritarian rule. It failed in the short-term but paved the way for more substantial, long-term change. The presidential election of 1987, which saw Chun's retirement and a resumption of freedom of the press, was followed by the election of civilians, Kim Young Sam in 1992 and the opposition candidate Kim Dae Jung in 1997, which signaled the final stages of South Korea's transition into a stable democracy.

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Works Cited:

Cumings, Bruce. *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*. Updated ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005.

Lewis, Linda S. *Laying Claim to the Memory of May: A Look Back at the 1980 Kwangju Uprising*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.

HANDOUT 2: ACCOUNT OF KIM CHUNG KEUN, JOURNALIST

It was a Sunday [May 18]. All the same people were gathering in groups on Kumnamno. Looking into their eyes I saw tension, resolve, and determination, and of these three, tension was the strongest. Someone shouted.

“End martial law!”

It was like a gunshot.

People poured out of shops, side streets and buildings. They had been waiting for the word, and a demonstration was forming. Leaders shouted slogans.

“Let the prisoners go. Let them go.”

“Let Kim Dae Jung go!”

“Announce the nation’s political timetable. ANNOUNCE!”

That was not all. The people demanded to know who was responsible for the violence at Chonnam University the day before (when the military had broken in on students studying for their exams and beaten them indiscriminately).

“Apologize, Apologize!”

That was how the demonstrations began in downtown Kwangju that morning. Out came the riot police, of course. They chased after the demonstrators, doing their best to catch them, but still numbers were limited. It was close on lunchtime when the whole streetview changed. People in business suits came out for lunch and mingled with the demonstrators as they came. The riot police got pushed back, lacking numbers. Steadily and then suddenly, the whole of Kumnamno was inundated with people. A sit-down demonstration commenced.

What followed is all but impossible to describe: an army attack—a pincer attack on civilians. Military trucks crammed with heavily armed paratroopers with fixed bayonets lurched into sight at both ends of Kumnamno simultaneously. The paras jumped out and waded into the crowd from both ends of the street, working toward the middle—striking out with heavy-duty clubs, left, right, left, right...with no regard to who was there, male or female, young or old. The soldiers went for headshots with their big clubs. Kumnamno—moments before the scene of a peaceful sitdown demo—was transformed in a matter of seconds into a hell on earth.

It was terribly one-sided. Some bold spirits threw stones. Others had bottles full of petrol—Molotov cocktails—prepared. But the soldiers reacted quickly. They chased after anyone young, beat them with their rifle butts and kicked them with their heavy armed boots. If they caught them...

The outcome? The Kwangju citizens' idea—to demonstrate peacefully against martial law and to protest violence—was blown away. The exorbitant violence of the troops was what did it. The reaction was: “What the hell is the military up to?” “How could a (Korean) national army do this to fellow Koreans?” Rank incomprehension was overtaken by a sense of outrage.

Covering the Kwangju uprising—and writing of it in the aftermath—I was stuck for words. A reporter is supposed to be able to write. I couldn't get down on paper, for myself even, what I had seen.

Some events, some actions resist words: they beggar description.

The original outrages by the troops, remember, took place in broad daylight, with thousands of people present. Afterward? “Massacre” is the word, the only word to begin to describe what followed.

More than that I cannot say. Here and there in the city, in different spots, I encountered situations that boggled the mind and left me numb, left me without the faculty of cognition, over on the other side of the mind.

Typically—in other places, in other situations—the authorities put down demos following a standard pattern that I was deeply familiar with. The way to quell a demo, usually, was to threaten the crowd of demonstrators or to make a limited, controlled attack on that crowd. The military used a totally different quelling model at Kwangju, not at all like the usual one I had seen at other times.

At Kwangju, once the soldiers showed up on Kumnamno, they ran headlong into the demonstrators. The boundary that had existed between the soldiers and the crowd was eliminated. It vanished in the midst of a melee, a free-for-all with no holds barred and no rules. The soldiers smashed out with their clubs at all and sundry, regardless of age, sex or anything else. Worst of all were the attacks on young women and office workers—identifiable by their regulation dark suits. If a soldier found himself facing a young male, he lit into that man, got him down and kicked the shit out of the guy. The soldiers had a trampling routine that they enjoyed. Suddenly lives were at risk. But if one of these young civilians tried to flee, the soldier chased him, hit him with everything he had, and did his utmost to trap him and reduce him to an immobile heap....

That was not all. Women and young girls were choice targets. The martial-army men stripped them, cutting up their blouses or their skirts using their bayonets, and more or less leaving them naked, whereupon they set about pounding the most delicate parts of the body, using their clubs, their booted feet, anything. All without reason. Why were they picking on these young girls?

On the street, anyone who fought back, anyone who threw stones was in for it. They became number-one targets. The soldiers chased them everywhere and anywhere. They ran into people's shops and private homes and brutalized anyone present. Words fail me in seeking to describe what I saw. “Brutality.” “Outrage.” “Indiscriminate assault.” The words fall short, way short, of the reality. I came up with this expression: “hunting humans” or “Human hunting.” I had seen

this expression written down somewhere, though it never appeared in a newspaper, given the strict censorship under the Martial Law Command....

Once, talking on the phone to Lee, my director, I suddenly hit upon this way of summing up what was happening by making a comparison with other violent events I covered: "Suppose the original Masan uprising of October 1979—I am from Masan myself—corresponded to 40 degrees of a maximum 100 degrees on a seismograph. Then the Sabuk coalmine strike of March–April this year hit 45 degrees. The turmoil at Pusan and Masan in October 1979, just before President Park got killed, hit 60 degrees. But here in Kwangju the needle on the seismograph hit 100 and broke"....

Let us be clear. The uprising, such as it was, was not based on any one political group or party or political faction—that is important—or on ideology of a leftist or crypto-communist variety. No, the uprising sprang to life in response to grassroots-type, basic, simple questions such as what is the nation, and what should the national army be to us?

Source: Kim Chung Keun, "Days and Nights on the Street," in *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea's Tiananmen*, ed. Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jai Eui (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 7-11. Kim worked for *Dong-A Ilbo*, a prominent South Korean newspaper. He arrived in Kwangju from Seoul on the night of May 17.

Analysis Questions for Handout 2:

1. How does Kim distinguish between different Kwangju inhabitants and how they participated in the uprising? What terms does he use to describe them?
2. What does Kim say motivated—and failed to motivate—the protestors?
3. Where does Kim locate the violence that occurred in Kwangju? Who was responsible for it? What kind of violence did Kim witness?
4. What is Kim's personal reaction to the events he observed?
5. Are Kim's comparisons to other events helpful? Why?

HANDOUT 3: MEETING NOTES OF CHANG JAE YOL, JOURNALIST

During the uprising our reporting team got together to compare notes. This is what my record of that meeting shows:

May 18

Reporter A: At around 11 that morning paratroopers entered the reading room in front of Chonnam National University and beat high school students there who were studying for their college entrance exams. Those students who were beaten for no reason reacted by weeping.

Reporter B: Around 3:30 that afternoon I saw a paratrooper throw his bayonet at a demonstrator who was running away. Fortunately, he missed.

Reporter C: Paratroopers went into a coffee shop and dragged out a young man whose head was bleeding. They tied him with ropes, and threw him into an army truck. A woman who seemed to his girlfriend screamed that he was not a student, but she was thrown to the ground.

May 19

Reporter A: The hunt seemed to get going from the morning on. The paratroopers went into a lecture hall at an institute and clubbed the students who were working there.

Reporter B: At around 11:05 in the morning an armored vehicle appeared. While citizens watched, they stripped a student and beat him.

Reporter C: From the night of May 19 onward, the attacks on the police stations began. The Im-dong police station was burned to the ground.

Reporter D: Around 4:30 that afternoon, in front of the Kyerim police station, a first bullet was fired. Someone shot from a broken-down armored vehicle. This was when the first casualty was caused by gunfire.

May 20

Reporter A: All journalists covering the provincial police gathered and reported on casualties. A first list of casualties—the whole task proved impossible—prepared.

Reporter B: About 7:10 p.m. the citizens started using vehicles. Some were riding in a bus and were trying to get through the blockade line that way. They were arrested and taken away by the soldiers.

Reporter C: Casualties are rising. I was told that four police and two paratroopers have been killed.

May 21

Reporter A: There is a tremendous suspicion of reporters out there. Citizens throw stones at us, calling out: “What is the press for?”

Reporter B: Around 11 a. m. an armored vehicle showed up on Kumnamno. I saw demonstrators with stones in their hands.

Reporter C: I saw, right in front of me, a person who was hiding behind a wall. He was shot in the neck and died on the spot. I think it was a direct shot.

Reporter D: Yes, the paratroopers are deliberately shooting people from rooftops. At 2 in the afternoon they started shooting at anything that moved. Not even a shadow moves around Provincial Hall right now.

This (relatively tame) record of a meeting between five reporters from *Joongang Ilbo* could not possibly have been published under martial-law guidelines. The reporters were torn between the people and the censorship....

Here is a statement made by Park Chung Hun, the newly appointed prime minister at the time. If you read this, you can see how the authorities chose to distort the facts:

A few impure elements in society attacked public property and set fire to it, stole weapons and fired the guns at the army. However, the military is not permitted to fire back. Such are government orders. The problem mainly lay with those minority impure elements and rioters with weapons in their hands.

Most casualties occurred on May 21 after the soldiers opened fire. Yet the most powerful man in the cabinet made an announcement consisting of a pack of lies. Such distortions and cover-ups triggered rage and tears in Kwangju.

Source: Chang Jae Yol, "Maybe I Was Too Young," in *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea's Tiananmen*, ed. Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jai Eui (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 179-81.

Analysis Questions for Handout 3:

1. How do the reporters distinguish between different Kwangju inhabitants and how they participated in the uprising? What terms are used to describe them?
2. Why was it so difficult to prepare a casualty list of dead and injured?
3. Where do these reporters locate the violence that occurred in Kwangju? Who was responsible? What kind of violence did the reporters witness?
4. In what ways does the prime minister's statement differ from the reporters' notes?
5. Judging by the information in this source, why did people in Kwangju remain deeply suspicious of Korean reporters?

Comparison Questions for Handouts 2 and 3:

1. Where do these sources agree? Does one source confirm the other?
2. Where do these sources disagree, conflict, or contradict? Does one source introduce information that the other does not?
3. Though both authors were Korean journalists who witnessed the events they described, how can we explain *why* the sources agree in some ways and differ in others?
4. What else would you like to know about the authors to better understand what they wrote and why they wrote?
5. Despite all the information that they convey, what do these sources fail to tell us?

HANDOUT 4: ACCOUNT OF LEE JAI EUI, STUDENT PARTICIPANT

I arrived at the main gate of Chonnam University at about 9 a.m. on Sunday, May 18. I immediately saw what martial law meant in practice. Six or eight paratroopers were there, armed for combat in war. They carried M-16 rifles and grenades and had fixed their bayonets. Students began to gather, as we had agreed in advance. My body shook with anger. I picked up a stone and then stopped myself. How could I influence the course of events with one small stone? I clutched the stone pathetically. What a lousy situation....

We began a sit-down demo downtown on Kumnamno, near the Catholic Center, a well-known rendezvous point. The group swelled and grew in size. Finally, we were about 500. Traffic ground to a halt. We shouted out loudly and urged people to join us. Mostly, the onlookers hesitated. It was still only the afternoon of May 18. They had seen nothing.

Ten minutes later, the police moved. They came firing tear gas grenades. I was damned nigh suffocated by that gas. I ran off into a narrow alley to one side, as fast and as far as I could. I thus escaped the jaws of death. Some of the others were caught and beaten. The police were suddenly brutal and swift. Their behavior had totally changed, compared with that of the previous day. The students scattered at first, then tried to reform into a group again. So it went on. I tried to join up again. This went on for three or four hours—our group was scattered, and then built up again. We tried to persuade others to join in—the citizens and onlookers around. They didn't do so yet. Meanwhile, the number of students swelled dramatically. The demo was getting better organized and more aggressive. Many who saw us—shopkeepers and stallkeepers—gave us food and drinks. At the same time some choppers showed up. There were two or three of them, circling over our heads, making a tremendous racket....

By around 4:30 p.m. I had moved back a bit toward my brother's shop again. I found myself in a spot where I could watch the paratroopers from a safe distance. This was near the bus station. I saw a squad stop all the buses and check the passengers. Any young person they found got pulled off. When some kids who did not look like students, by their dress, made a fuss, half a dozen soldiers shout back: "We'll kill every bastard in Kwangju!"

One guy I was watching escaped. He ran into an old woman's house. A group of soldiers entered. I watched them, to see what would happen. They demanded that the old lady hand over the boy. She hesitated. In a flash one of the paratroopers landed a tremendous blow on her temple....

She fell to the ground, unconscious.

The men entered the house, wrenched open a cabinet and pulled out the boy, dragging him with them and beating them. It looked as if they were killing him.

Close by stood an old man. "How did this happen?" he cried. "I saw many brutal Japanese cops during the colonial period [from 1910 to 1945]. I saw communists during the Korean War. I have never seen cruelty like this before!"

A middle-aged man ground his teeth. "I am a veteran of the Vietnam War. I killed Vietcong. But we were never this brutal. These kids were beaten to death. It would have been kinder to shoot them. We should kill all those bastards!"

A terrible silence fell over the city. The roads and sidewalks were soaked with blood. To resist seemed to me inconceivable. Frankly, I could hardly move my legs. I could see nothing anymore. Of course, I was crying.

Whenever I think of that scene, it comes to mind as clearly as a nightmare movie. It won't go away. This was "Fascinating Vacations," to use the military code name for the operation....

As dawn [on May 19] broke I rode my bicycle to my brother's shop. I laid a package of cloth on my bike, to make it look as if I was working. I needed some kind of disguise, not to appear as a student.

By 10 a.m. about 4,000 people, I estimated, had gathered at Kumnamno. The numbers kept going up. Most people watched silently while the soldiers set up cordons and checkpoints. Some part of Kumnamno had already been sealed off at dawn. The soldiers stopped the buses and checked people's IDs, always the young kids. Most stores around there stayed shut.

But around the usual street markets it was different. The hawkers were there. They exchanged stories of what they had seen before. The brutality had made its mark on these people.

The heart of the city pounded. Anger grew. Sorrow bubbled from beneath the surface. More and more people gathered. About 10:40 a.m. people's anger was ready to burst. They swore and shook their fists at the helicopters overhead.

Suddenly the police attacked, again using tear gas. They went for the crowds in Kumnamno once more. But it was not a day like the previous day. Most of those on the street were not students. They were street vendors, store clerks, and housewives. The populace had turned out for the first time. They grew violent. They threw bits of broken flowerpots and bricks. They barricaded the streets, using rails they tore off and broken telephone booths that they had torn down with their hands.

I was astounded. I'd never expected anything like this. It was unbelievable. The day before no one had joined in, no ordinary citizens. All of a sudden there were acting in unison with the students....

We all began to find ways to engage ourselves more fully. I issued orders to those with me to gather bottles and petrol for firebombs. One or two hours later we brought back two or three boxes full of these Molotov cocktails. The battle was picking up.

But how the paratroopers counterattacked. They didn't duck the stones we threw at them. They simply ignored the firebombs. They tore through the crowd, swinging their bayonets, rifle butts, and heavy sticks.

Just near me, a soldier had grabbed a young man. He kept beating his chest as though trying to cave it in. Then he drew back his rifle, with bayonet fixed, and made two, three hits into the boy's back. The youth twisted his whole body, screaming and writhing with pain. In a moment the soldier's camouflage uniform was splashed with blood. It was all over in a flash. Nobody, I included, had been able to prevent this.

I was horrified by this display. Surely, that soldier did it for show. He wanted to terrify us. People scattered, leaving the injured on the streets.

Elsewhere, not far away, I saw that in an alley at the back of Suchang Elementary School two soldiers had caught a young woman.

The paratroopers stripped her, then they kicked her in the stomach, and they kicked her breasts. Finally, they slammed her up against the wall, beating her head against the wall, time and again. Their hands grew slick with blood. They wiped them on their uniforms and grinned. This done, they hauled the unconscious woman over to a truck and threw her into the back, like an old piece of sacking.

The paratroopers, I saw, really enjoyed their "Fascinating Vacation."

Source: Lee Jai Eui, "Operation 'Fascinating Vacations,'" in *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea's Tiananmen*, ed. Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jai Eui (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 28-33. At the time of Kwangju Uprising, Lee was twenty-five years old and a student at Chonnam National University.

Analysis Questions for Handout 4:

1. How does Lee distinguish between different Kwangju inhabitants and how they participated in the uprising? What terms does he use to describe them?
2. What does Lee say motivated—and failed to motivate—the protestors?
3. Where does Lee locate the violence that occurred in Kwangju? Who was responsible for it? What kind of violence did Lee witness?
4. What is Lee's personal reaction to the events he observed?
5. What do the references to the Japanese colonial period, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War tell us?

HANDOUT 5: MEMORANDUM OF NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER, 11th AIRBORNE DIVISION PARATROOPERS

After some [two to four minutes], an order was passed down to 'get off.' We heard these instructions as 'Beat up all young men.' The tragedy on Kumnamno had already begun at around 10:30 am [on May 19, 1980]. When we got down off the vehicle all of the demonstrators had already fled in different directions, and since we had to unleash our hatred on somebody, all of us began to search the buildings nearby, such as the Tourist Hotel, the coffee shop, and the barbershop. In a group of seven or eight I went to search a motel called Midojang, as I recall, behind the Tourist Hotel, but the iron door was closed. Nobody would open the door even when we banged on it, but when the other soldiers went over the wall and opened the door, a few employees rushed out, saying that there was nobody in their motel.

They should have escaped through the back door. Some of us kicked them with a double jump *Taekwondo* [a Korean martial art] kick and others of us began to strike them with riot batons, saying: "This son of a bitch is not scared." As I explained in the beginning, this baton was so hard and heavy that, with just a little bit of force, if they blocked it with their wrists, their arms would break. Within only two or three minutes, four or five employees rolled on the cement floor with their white shirts and bow ties gone. We made all of them stand backwards against the wall when the Major in charge of the region came along. There was no distinction between officer and soldier when beating people up. He made them kneel down, then with all his might he kicked their faces one at a time with the military boots he was wearing.

A person's life is tough. Their faces were mashed and spilling blood, and the back of their heads had hit the cement wall hard due to the impact of the military boots, but none of them collapsed. Only their faces turned so gruesome that it was painful to look at. Two or three soldiers who were searching with me rummaged each guest room, assembling all young people outside. At least ten young people in their 20s and 30s lined up in a double file with terrified expressions on their faces. Among them, a man in his mid-30s pleaded that he was on his honeymoon. No conversation was necessary. It was all about merciless beating, and no method was acceptable aside from arresting them. The bride continued to plead. We were stonehearted. Citizens who were captured were first beaten up. It was in order to prevent them from escaping, and to dishearten them. Next, we took their clothes off and left them only in their underpants. Then we tied their hands behind them with their belts, made them hold their clothes with their hands tied, walked them to our truck, assembled them in groups of 30-40 in the middle of Kumnamno with the other captives, brought down their spirit by making them lie backward, lie forward, roll left and roll right, then lined them up in a double file behind the truck. Later, with their hands tied in the back, they had to step onto the vehicle, which was very high even for normal adults. The other captives shoved them up from behind with their heads, and they stepped onto the truck for dear life. It was a matter of life or death, and because of the beating, it was eerie to know how far man's limits can stretch. When they got into the truck, two or three signal soldiers, who were waiting, instructed them: "Lower your head, "Lower your head." Because if they raised their heads and saw each other's faces they could gain courage, and if they realized that there were only two or three soldiers, they could resist collectively and run away. If they lifted their heads even slightly, or looked at the person next to them, the soldiers struck them unconditionally on the back. Then we transferred them by truck to the Chosun University sports complex. The

suffering did not end there. When the vehicle arrived and honked, the residing administration soldiers, cook soldiers or guard soldiers, gathered around with riot batons. Then they were taken off the vehicle and made to stand in lines and the disciplinary punishment and beating started over again. I can't write in words how much they were beaten. Then they were herded into the gymnasium building. A sentinel of four or five soldiers was set up at the front and back doors, and four or five soldiers beat them again inside. Then, after waiting a while, they were sent to the 31st Division at Sangmudae. Regardless of whether they had demonstrated or not they were taken away for being young. When they were captured they were severely beaten three or four times and punished, suffering pain beyond the human capacity to bear.

Source: "My Splendid Holiday," *Operations Order – Splendid Holiday*, ed. Yun Chae-gol (Silcheon Munhaksa, 1988), 35-37 as quoted in Chung Sangyong, Rhyu Simin et al., *Memories of May 1980: A Documentary History of the Kwangju Uprising in Korea*, trans. Park Hye-Jin (Seoul, Korea: Korea Democracy Foundation, 2003), 132-35.

Analysis Questions for Handout 5:

1. Does the soldier distinguish between different Kwangju inhabitants and how they participated in the uprising? What terms does he use to describe them?
2. What does the soldier say motivated his actions and those of other soldiers?
3. What does the soldier say motivated—and failed to motivate—the protestors?
4. Where does the soldier locate the violence that occurred in Kwangju? Who was responsible for it? What kind of violence did he witness?
5. What is the soldier's personal reaction to the events he observed?

Comparison Questions for Handouts 4 and 5:

1. Where do these sources agree? Does one source confirm the other?
2. Where do these sources disagree, conflict, or contradict? Does one source introduce information that the other does not?
3. Though both authors participated in the events they described, how can we explain *why* the sources agree in some ways and differ in others?
4. What else would you like to know about the authors to better understand what they wrote and why they wrote?
5. Despite all the information that they convey, what do these sources fail to tell us?

HANDOUT 6: REPORT ON THE KWANGJU INCIDENT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEFENSE COMMITTEE

**Delivered by Yoon Sung-min, Minister of Defense, Republic of Korea
June 7, 1985**

My report on the background of the Kwangju incident and the motives behind it is based on announcements by the Martial Law Command in 1980 and the materials collected at the time.

[After] the October 26 incident (the assassination of President Park Chung Hee in 1979), the government...promised amnesty and the restoration of civil rights (for politicians and student activists) and curtailed the Martial Law schedule to ensure democratic progress.

Impatient demands by some political forces and instigation by some students fueled campus disturbances to the extent that it was difficult to maintain security nationwide.

Economically, many business firms suffered sit-in demonstrations and sabotage as employer-employee conflicts flared up.

The Sabuk incident (a prolonged radical strike of coal miners) caused a sudden decline in exports and production. It also added to political, economic and social chaos and pushed up commodity prices, threatening the people's livelihood.

North Korea, which was looking for an opportunity to invade the south, was encouraged to move armored forces closer to the Demilitarized Zone on a large scale.

[O Chin-u], the people's armed forces minister of North Korea, was standing by in the minister's situation room, watching developments in the South. [O Kung-yol], chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was stationed in southernmost Kaesong. As the military tension increased, our national security and survival was threatened both from within and without.

To make a bad matter worse, the world political situation was rapidly changing as a result of the Iranian and Afghan incidents and conflicts in the Middle East, and intelligence said North Korea would soon attack the South.

As a great majority of people, faced with the greatest crisis since the foundation of the nation, demanded that social well-being and order be restored, the government was forced to take the emergency measure of May 17 (military crackdown on politicians) to face the national difficulties.

Thanks to these measures, peace was restored in most areas, including Seoul. But in Kwangju, student demonstrations took to the street [May 18], one day after Martial Law was declared.

Although it was Sunday, about 200 Chonnam National University students, influenced by some political forces, attempted to enter the library with bags filled with stones. When stopped by Martial Law Command troops, the students threw stones at the soldiers in ripple attacks. The

Martial Law troops were hit by the stones. Afterwards, the students infiltrated downtown areas for demonstrations in the streets.

The police did their best to restore order, but 27 policemen sustained injuries from demonstrators.

As it was impossible for [the] police to bring the situation under control under the circumstances, troops had to be called in to maintain order.

Clashes between demonstrators and Martial Law troops led to misunderstandings. Groundless rumors fabricated by impure elements deepened regional acrimony, set apart civilians and troops and led to arson, destruction, killings and injuries.

At last, demonstrators seized weapons and armed themselves with the weapons, turning Kwangju to a state of lawlessness and anarchy as the city's administrative functions were paralyzed.

The Supreme Court made it clear that some political forces pulled a string for the flare-up of the Kwangju incident.

Now I will report on day-by-day developments....

More rumors spread on May 19, and a mob psychology lacking reason and composure prevailed in Kwangju.

Some agitated demonstrators threw Molotov cocktails at police boxes and set press vans and other vehicles afire. In the turmoil, some demonstrators seized weapons from Martial Law troops for the first time.

Rumors, fabricated from time to time, spread orally or in printed materials in a systematic manner. They said the airborne troops would "kill every young man," and that they intended to "kill 70 percent of Kwangju citizens."

Amid shouts and smoke, demonstrators wielded sticks and iron pipes against police and Martial Law troops, resulting in the first two killings....

Meanwhile some violent demonstrators set fire to the Kwangju MBC [Munhwa Broadcasting Company] building and destroyed City Hall and several police substations in downtown areas. Some others roamed the city aboard taxis and buses. Four policemen were killed by the cars in front of the provincial government office building. The reckless drivers also attempted to break through police and military cordons.

Amid such reckless activities, Kwangju turned into a city of terror as arson and other crimes were committed everywhere. An estimated 100,000 citizens participated in various demonstrations and rallied during the day....

The rebels also convinced innocent citizens to join them. They published an underground paper in which they incited the citizens to collaborate for the repulsion of the troops.

The rioters attacked not only public buildings but private businesses. At around noon, some of them broke an electric shop, destroyed the goods and set fire to the store. Many service stations were also attacked.

A mob attacked an armory of a police substation in Naju and took 770 rifles, including 510 carbines, and some 110,000 rounds of ammunition. Thus, the rioters became a large-scale rebellious armed group....

Rioters displayed dead bodies on the plaza in front of the provincial government office and mobilized innocent citizens on the pretext of holding a funeral.

Then they instigated the citizens to join in the fight against the Martial Law troops. Some of the rioters committed murders and robberies out of personal grudges. Witnessing such cruel behavior of the rioters, many citizens began to feel threatened and started to return to their senses....

In reviewing the process and developments of the nine-day incident, one sees the problem was touched off by a fierce street demonstration which started first off by the throwing of stones by some students of Chonnam National University at the Martial Law Command troops, and by a clash (between the troops and demonstrators).

The situation became extremely worse as the impure elements which were manipulated by well-organized outside forces stimulated the Kwangju citizens by rousing regional sentiments while circulating rumors.

In the face of the anarchy created by armed rioters, the military refrained from exercising the right of self-defense for fear that citizens might be hurt. Even when soldiers were taken and killed by mobs, the military devoted itself to preventing a worse situation....

The government could not expect the citizens to save the situation and restore order for themselves.

As a result of the protracted anarchy, there was an increasing possibility that impure elements or armed North Korean commandos might infiltrate Kwangju.

On the sixth day of the commotion, good citizens began to show signs of calming down, and it became possible to distinguish armed rioters from good citizens.

The military concluded that conditions were ripe for quenching the disturbance with the least possible sacrifice. Military operations were launched at 1 a.m. May 27, 1980 to save the citizens from anarchy.

Source: *The Korea Herald* (Seoul), 9 June 1985 as quoted in Donald N. Clark, ed., *The Kwangju Uprising: Shadows over the Regime in South Korea* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 83-92.

Analysis Questions for Handout 6:

1. How does the Minister of Defense's report distinguish between different Kwangju inhabitants and how they participated in the uprising? What terms does the report use to describe different people—or groups of people?
2. How does the report explain and justify the military's actions? Which of those justifications relate to domestic issues and which relate to foreign issues?
3. What does the report say motivated the protestors?
4. Where does the report locate the violence that occurred in Kwangju? Who was responsible for it? What kind of violence does the report describe?
5. Though presented by the Minister of Defense, this government report was most likely a collaborative project. Who else might have been involved in preparing it?

**HANDOUT 7: BOOK ON KWANGJU UPRISING BY LINDA S. LEWIS, ASSOCIATE
PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY, 2002**

During the Fifth Republic—that is, the Presidency of Chun Doo Hwan (1981-1988)—it was difficult even to speak of the Kwangju Uprising, let alone do research or attempt to write about what had happened. Lee Jae-eui tells of his apprehensions and fears as he and a few friends in 1985 began work on their definitive account, *Beyond Death, Beyond the Darkness of the Age*; they covered the windows at night so no one could see in and arranged secret signals with their families should the authorities be watching.

...Indeed, in May 1985 the publishing house where Lee's volume was being printed was raided, copies of the unbound book were seized, and both the publisher and the "cover author" (Hwang Sök Yöng) were arrested; it was not until 1987 that the book could be openly sold.

Information about the Kwangju Uprising circulated underground but harassment of publishers and print shops; raids on bookstores; and confiscation of videos, books, and other "subversive" materials found at such places as churches and offices of student and activist groups were commonplace through much of the 1980s. In fact, restrictions on the press and the suppression of free speech were (remarkably) even more severe under Chun Doo Hwan than under his predecessor....

The 1985 official report [Handout 6], far from acknowledging the violence and brutality of the martial law troops (as those in Kwangju would have hoped), instead praised the restraint of the soldiers. According to the government's account, troops were called in only when on Sunday, May 18, local police were unable to maintain order....

The 1985 report goes on to detail the "reckless activities" of "wayward rioters" and "mobsters" in the early stages of the uprising but makes no mention of the troops firing on crowds of unarmed civilians....

Given this official reckoning of events, alternative scholarly accounts at the time necessarily started from a defensive position as attempts to refute government narratives of 5.18 and to offer different "truth claims" for the Kwangju Uprising. For me—someone whose daily ethnographic field notes from May 1980 recorded a very different reality from the image of a city full of terror-stricken citizens haplessly caught in a state of extended mob rule—it was important to bear witness to 5.18. People in Kwangju were not innocent "dupes," the uprising was not a planned act instigated by "impure elements," and the soldiers surely did not act with restraint. Yet in the early 1980s, in the absence of open discussion and the possibility of research, moving beyond personal accounts of "what I saw at the revolution," to the construction of an authoritative victim-centered narrative was problematic. Information was fragmentary, and corroboration difficult.

In writing about Kwangju, I was particularly concerned with asserting the "popular" nature of the event and with presenting alternative explanations of citizens' motivations and behavior....I began with my own analysis of the meaning of 5.18 with the question posed in my field notes for May 19, 1980, about the tragedy unfolding on the city streets:

“It is really horrible, and people can’t believe it is happening and can’t imagine why.”

Why indeed? Seven years later the question remains unanswered. What sense can be made of the Kwangju uprising? What meaning, or meanings, can be found in it? With the benefit now of some years’ hindsight, what is the event’s significance, and what implications does it hold?...

One of the most important points to be made about the Kwangju uprising is its “popular nature.” It was my observation that the participation in the event was citywide and involved a majority of the citizenry....

There were some groups who were mobilized on the basis of preexisting ties, and in accord with previously established (and socially recognized) channels of action and modes of public protest. These groups were by and large also involved in active opposition to government policy, particularly the imposition of martial law prior to May 18, 1980. The most obvious of these were the university students. Students in Korea have a long tradition of demonstrating against the government and are recognized as legitimate and proper leaders of public expressions of political protest. Other groups in this category were members and leaders of church and other civic organizations (e.g. the YWCA and the YMCA) active in regular and continuing political opposition. It was these groups that provided the leadership for the rebellion.

However, the majority of the demonstrators—by far the largest category numerically and most of the reportedly tens of thousands who demonstrated in the streets during the uprising’s first days, and most of whom were not armed and would not have wanted to get hurt—were recruited individually and were not participating through channels of previously experienced collective action. Many of these people were initially engaged in the uprising in the context of neighborhood street fighting, through either witnessing some violent incident themselves or hearing a firsthand account of it....

Finally, there were those initially constrained from acting on the basis of a common vested interest in not being labeled as participants. In this category are those, primarily government employees (judges, civil servants, school administrators—mostly men in positions of public trust) who were afraid of losing their jobs. It was not that these people disagreed with the grievances and goals of the rebellion or that they hoped the rebellion would collapse, or even that they feared for their lives. Rather...when the inevitable end to the uprising came and the government regained control, if they were known to have demonstrated, their positions would be in jeopardy. These people were the last to show their support publicly for the uprising.

These categories of participants were engaged in the rebellion in successive stages. The event began as a student demonstration against the imposition of martial law and developed into a series of street demonstrations (in Kwangju, relatively peaceful ones) that were part of an ongoing national pattern of student demonstrations begun in early May. There had been massive demonstrations in Seoul the previous week, and it does not seem that the students in Kwangju were in general doing anything distinctive, compared with students in other cities—except that they agreed to continue demonstrating on May 18.

The situation became an uprising in a second stage, with the subsequent engagement of the largest category, the general citizenry, on May 19, 20, and 21. Initially, and as an explanation of what provoked most of the street fighting in the first days, ordinary people took to the streets as an expression of popular outrage at the brutality of government troops in suppressing the student demonstrations. It was difficult in fact to totally avoid involvement in those early days because so much street fighting went on. People went out to look, and got caught up in it, or went out to join in. There was also a significant number of people who were aware of the brutality and were outraged, but who did not venture far into the streets for fear of getting hurt. These people, however, participated in other ways (giving food, money) and demonstrated to the extent that it was not, or as soon as it ceased to be, physically dangerous.

This second stage, of mass participation, was followed on May 23 by a third stage...And this third stage was distinguished by the emergence of a new grievance, that served to involve the rest of the demonstrators (the category of initially reluctant participants), and which explains what kept people in the streets and strengthened the sense of resistance within the city, prolonging the rebellion. Without this second grievance, the uprising might have collapsed after a couple of days of street fighting. And that grievance was (and still is) that the government refused to apologize or in any way to accept responsibility for provoking the initial violence....

The collapse of the rebellion in the face of the government's armed reentry into the city on May 27 should be viewed not as a sign of failure of leadership or weakness of popular support so much as a realistic assessment of the lengths to which the government was willing to go in using force to suppress the rebellion. I think we have to see the Kwangju uprising as more than an example of collective violence gone out of control....

It is especially significant that:

(1) it was not limited to a specific segment of society, (e. g., urban laborers), but involved a broad cross-section of the citizenry;

(2) it did not involve the destruction of private property, and the violence on the part of the rebels to both person and property was limited to specific government-related targets;

(3) it possessed a leadership that was, certainly in terms of the students, part of a national movement recognized as a force capable of transforming society; and—while the uprising itself was sparked by two specific and immediate grievances: the brutality of the government in suppressing the demonstrations and the subsequent failure of the government to accept responsibility for its actions—the abstract political goal of the establishment of a democratic government was already in place.

Source: Linda S. Lewis, *Laying Claim to the Memory of May: A Look Back at the 1980 Kwangju Uprising* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 75-82. Lewis was in South Korea as Peace Corps Volunteer in 1970 and then again as a doctoral student in 1979-80, when she conducted research in Kwangju and lived with a local family. She was therefore an eyewitness to many of the events that she describes.

Analysis Questions for Handout 7:

1. How does Lewis distinguish between different Kwangju inhabitants and how they participated in the uprising? What terms does she use to describe different people—or groups of people?
2. What does Lewis say motivated the protestors? What hindered them?
3. Where does Lewis locate the violence that occurred in Kwangju? Who was responsible for it? What kind of violence does she describe?
4. Are Lewis's comparisons between the Kwangju and Seoul demonstrations helpful? Why?
5. What is Lewis's personal reaction to the events she observed?

Comparison Questions for Handouts 6 and 7:

1. Where do these sources agree? Does one source confirm the other?
2. Where do these sources disagree, conflict, or contradict? Does one source introduce information that the other does not?
3. How can we explain *why* the sources agree in some ways and differ in others? Consider when the sources were written, including Lewis's description of the 1980s, and the reasons why they were written.
4. What else would you like to know about the authors to better understand what they wrote and why they wrote?
5. Despite all the information that they convey, what do these sources fail to tell us?

HANDOUT 8: ACCOUNTS OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS

Covering the Kwangju rebellion in 1980 was one of the most difficult, exhausting, and emotionally demanding assignments I have ever had. Though a professional triumph for the Associated Press (AP) and for me personally, it left me with emotional and psychological scars that took years to heal....

I was in Seoul yet again in May...when news came of serious student riots in the southern provincial capital of Kwangju—the power base of Korea’s most prominent political dissident, Kim Dae Jung....

The paratroopers launched a virtual army riot, chasing demonstrators through the streets, clubbing, gassing, and even shooting many in front of the astonished and increasingly outraged citizens of Kwangju. Soldiers chased young men into stores and even onto city buses to catch them and drag them away. The riots spread. Clashes with police and soldiers grew more vicious. In Seoul we dispatched young Simon Kim to Kwangju. On the night of May 20 the telephoned dispatch was grim. Some 100,000 demonstrators, no longer just students, had besieged the provincial capital building, the Provincial Hall, always the great rallying point in the city, a symbolic center.

The army opened fire, killing many. The city rose in rage. By the next day the townspeople had destroyed the Korean Broadcasting Service office and many tax offices, raided local armories, and were battling the army. Chun [Doo Hwan] ordered both police and army units out of the city, hoping the situation would calm. By then, I was on my way to Kwangju...

By dawn we had identified ourselves satisfactorily to the leaders of the rebellion, located Simon Kim, and were traveling through the city trying to assess the situation. As a reporter for the AP, which provides first basic and accurate information to all the world’s media, I was most immediately concerned with gathering accounts of the previous two days and finding out exactly how many people had been killed. That proved impossible. No one could tell me how many people had been arrested and taken away by paratroopers, but many accounts were given of soldiers loading bodies onto trucks before pulling out of the city. I did my best, moving from temporary morgue to temporary morgue around Kwangju. By afternoon I had counted more than 100 bodies, some shot, some bludgeoned, some crushed by vehicles. The sight of those victims and the sickly-sweet, overpowering smell of bodies decomposing were burned into my mind....

Those days were filled with both action and a horrible suspense. We talked to the newly formed citizens’ committee that was trying to negotiate a compromise between the hard-line students and the harder-line army. We talked to students on the barricades hastily erected on major streets. We even tried to interview (without success) the soldiers on the other side. Several times we were detained for hours by the army, which strongly opposed our presence in the town. Over everyone hung the knowledge that compromise was unlikely, that sooner or later the battle would be joined, and that the rebels had no chance. Their few rifles (around 4,000 weapons taken from the local armories) were less than a snowflake against tanks and armored personnel carriers and heavy machine guns....

The people of the city were scared, but determined. Many ordinary citizens had joined the students and manned makeshift barricades on the main roads. They stared over light rifles at the tanks and armored vehicles of the army, just seventy-five yards or so away. The heaviest weapon I saw among the rebels was a Korean War–vintage antitank gun, unlikely to cause any damage to the modern tanks it was pointed at.

By now a dozen or more foreign journalists had slipped into the city. They were eagerly welcomed by the students, who wanted the world to know what was happening in Kwangju. As we drove around the city in our car bedecked with “Press” and “AP” signs, we were cheered by every crowd.

Finally, at 2 a.m. on May 27, the army issued its ultimatum. Surrender in two hours, or face attack.

At the Provincial Hall, students handed out M-1 rifles. Others drove through the center of the city, calling on the citizens to help them. But few responded to the call. We could hear the tanks grinding down the avenues toward the center square and the beginnings of rifle fire. It was obvious that anyone in the open when the final attack came risked death.

Source: Terry Anderson, “Remembering Kwangju,” in *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea’s Tiananmen*, ed. Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jai Eui (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 45-50. Anderson was a reporter at the time for Associated Press.

Monday morning, May 26, 1980...Here in Kwangju Chun [Doo Hwan] is held responsible for a bloodbath of citizens—the work of Special Forces paratroopers he despatched to the spot last week. These forces had cracked down on students and citizens when they demonstrated against an extension of martial law announced by the military.

There are four kilometers to go to the center of Kwangju. I pass a first burned-out police station. More will follow. Most stores have their iron shutters lowered. Citizens stand about in groups on the sidewalk. The streets themselves are empty, save for an occasional bicyclist.

Police are nowhere in sight. Nevertheless, one does not get the impression that chaos rules. Market vendors hawk fruit and vegetables at tiny stalls. At the offices of the *Chonnam Maeil Shinmun*, one of two local papers, the iron-bar gates are lowered. A few windows have been smashed. The local television studios—those of the Korean Broadcasting Service (KBS) and of the Munhwa Broadcasting Co. (MBC), a commercial network—are burned out.

“They didn’t report what happened here,” said an elderly man. “That’s why people got angry.”

...Just opposite the Provincial Hall is a small gymnasium. Here, dead people who have been identified already are being mourned, victims of the bloody massacre of Kwangju. Exactly sixty coffins are lined up in orderly fashion. Most are covered with white cloth, bound with thick rope, and decorated with the flag of South Korea. Photos of the dead, the frames wrapped in mourning

crape, stand on some of the coffins. Nearby is a makeshift altar where incense is burned. A cardboard box is stuffed with donations—bank notes.

A young man beats desperately on one of the box. “My younger brother is in here. How could Korean soldiers shoot Koreans!”

No one looks after coffins numbered 56 to 58. Here is a whole family. A boy of only seven—barely a first-grader in school—his mother, and his father. Someone has placed a bunch of white chrysanthemums on the little boy’s coffin. A group of young girls has gathered in the next row. They are students of Shuntae Economic High School in Kwangju. One of their classmates is lying dead before them. This, they cannot comprehend. Their voices choked with tears, the girls sing a farewell song. Then one of them turns round and, facing people on a platform there, makes a dramatic appeal. Seventeen-year-old Park Keum Hee shall not have died in vain. At the end everybody in the hall starts to sing South Korea’s national anthem.

“Love live the Republic of Korea, long live democracy.”

By making manifest their patriotism, the bereaved of Kwangju, gathered in this ceremony to mourn the dead, are rebuffing attempts by the government to defame those who died as communist agitators. They are giving voice to their rejection of the military’s suffocating omnipotence—and its brutality.

Source: Gebhard Hielscher, “A Nightmare in Broad Daylight,” in *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea’s Tiananmen*, ed. Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jai Eui (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 55-57. Hielscher was a German reporter.

...We drove next to a city hospital, entering by the back. It was a painful experience. People—relatives and friends—showed me their loved ones. They opened many, many coffins, set out in rows. Most of the bodies were those of very young people, no doubt students. They all had head wounds. They had died as a result of brutal beatings. It was hard to hold back my tears. I filmed what I could of this sad sight. Never in my life—never in Vietnam—had I seen anything like this. I was overwhelmed by mixed feelings of anger and sympathy.

Source: Jurgen Hinzpeter, “I Bow My Head,” in *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea’s Tiananmen*, ed. Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jai Eui (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 69. Hinzpeter was a cameraman for ARD-NDR German TV.

[On May 21] Kwangju was not in disorder, nor was there violence. Citizens, no matter who they were, provided food and water to the militants. The first conclusion I reached, then and there, was that this was no riot situation—as the military maintained, insisting on that expression “riot”—it was an “insurrection,” an “uprising.” My judgment was confirmed, as I looked about the downtown area for clues to explain why we were welcomed so warmly. The insurrection was taking place in complete isolation from the rest of the world, indeed the rest of Korea. The

outside world, including those in Seoul, did not know the truth of the battle the populace was fighting down here. We were to be the channel of communication.

The cooperation we received was amazing. We stuck hand-scribbled notices in Korean identifying ourselves as press on the outside of our car. This was to protect us in the event of emergency. Kwangju people showed extreme mistrust toward the domestic press. By contrast, foreign news reporters had free passes everywhere.

We hurried, first, to Chonnam National University Hospital. I nearly fainted the moment I entered the hospital. What I saw there reminded me of a scene in the movie *Gone With the Wind*: It was exactly like that field hospital during the American Civil War. The hospital was in a big mess, full of screaming people and reeking of blood. The corridor going down to the operating room was filled with patients, and the floor was sticky with blood. Pretty soon, our clothes were dyed red too.

We went to the mortuary. The spectacle was even more horrible than a field hospital that I had seen in Vietnam. Seeing the patients dying in great pain, I had the feeling that I might die there too....

Source: Shim Jae Hoon, reporter for *The New York Times*, as quoted in Henry Scott-Stokes et al., "A Scream for Freedom," in *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea's Tiananmen*, ed. Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jai Eui (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 111-12.

Some of my memories of Kwangju are like photographs. One is a moving photograph—a slow-motion picture of a scene I saw. In it, a man, perhaps middle-aged, steadily pedals a bicycle down a Kwangju side street. Like most Korean bikes in those days, his bike had a strong cargo rack built over the rear tire. Strapped onto this rack and extending out behind his bike was a pine coffin.

Someone in this man's family was dead—most likely the victim was one of the many people who had been killed by the soldiers—and the man had gone by bicycle to fetch a coffin.

I had already been to the various hospitals in Kwangju and seen the stacks of unpainted pine coffins into which the victims' remains were being placed. I saw mothers publicly wailing with grief over their children's coffins, draped with Korea's national flag.

It is this bicyclist's solitary journey, however, that has stayed in my mind as one of the most poignant images. As the rider leaned forward to get leverage on his pedals, I was reminded of how each family had had great hopes for whomever had died, especially for those who had been students. I had just met some of those students in hospitals—lucky ones whom the bullets had only wounded. But here was something I hadn't thought about. Some of the families were so poor that they could bring a coffin only by bicycle. Now in a wrenching upheaval, the focus of their hope was gone....

Kwangju wasn't just an event in history. As I contemplate the bicycle rider's personal tragedy, I think of what a frightening time Kwangju was for parents. Young people feel invincible; they don't recognize danger or their own mortality. What's more, much of the soldiers' violence was indiscriminate. Many of the more than 2,000 people who were wounded or killed were simply spectators. Others weren't even that. They simply happened to pass the wrong place at the wrong time. Often, parents had no way of knowing whether or not their children might be involved....

Rebels leaders told us that they had no alternative but to fight. If they surrendered or were captured, they probably would be executed, they said. One of them said their forces numbered about 100 in the Provincial Hall, with about 200 others elsewhere around the city. Using a loudspeaker, they began to appeal for any brave citizens to come and help them, but there was no response. As four o'clock [on May 27] neared, they broke windows out of the provincial headquarters to facilitate shooting and took up positions. A few rebel trucks darted through the streets; then there were the sounds of distant sirens and dogs barking.

At 4 a.m., as Korea's traditional curfew ended, church bells began to peal. Then, mixed with the pealing bells, gunfire erupted, including the sound of automatic weapons, as the army invaded the city.

Source: Norman Thorpe, "Let's Live and Meet Again," in *The Kwangju Uprising: Eyewitness Press Accounts of Korea's Tiananmen*, ed. Henry Scott-Stokes and Lee Jai Eui (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 120-21, 124. Thorpe's reporting on Kwangju appeared at the time in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Analysis Questions for Handout 8:

1. How do the foreign journalists distinguish between different Kwangju inhabitants and how they participated in the uprising? What terms are used to describe them?
2. What do the journalists say motivated—or failed to motivate—the protestors?
3. Why was it so difficult to prepare a casualty list of dead and injured? What casualties did they report?
4. Where do these journalists locate the violence that occurred in Kwangju? Who was responsible? What kind of violence did the reporters witness?
5. Judging by the information in these sources, why did Kwangju residents welcome foreign reporters and remain deeply suspicious of Korean reporters?
6. How did the foreign journalists respond, on a personal level, to what they observed? How relevant was the experience of having covered the Vietnam War?

HANDOUT 9: STATISTICS

Class Background of Arrested Members of the Citizens' Army

CLASS	# OF PEOPLE	PERCENTAGE
Factory worker	19	63.4
Office worker	1	3.3
Service area worker	3	10.0
Student	3	10.0
Small merchant	2	6.7
Farmer	1	3.3
Soldier	1	3.3
TOTAL	30	100.0

Source: Jong-chul Ahn, "Simin'gun: The Citizens' Army during the Kwangju Uprising," in *Contesting Kwangju: The May 18 Uprising in Korea's Past and Present*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Kyung Moon Hwang (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 19.

Classification by Age of the Dead

AGE OF DEAD	# OF PEOPLE	PERCENTAGE
Under 9	1	0.6
10-19	36	21.8
20-29	75	45.5
30-39	28	17.0
40-49	9	5.5
50-59	7	4.2
60	4	2.4
Other	5	3.0
TOTAL	165	100.0

Source: Jong-chul Ahn, "Simin'gun: The Citizens' Army during the Kwangju Uprising," in *Contesting Kwangju: The May 18 Uprising in Korea's Past and Present*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Kyung Moon Hwang (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 20.

Classification by Occupation of the Dead

OCCUPATION OF THE DEAD	# OF PEOPLE	PERCENTAGE
Office worker	19	11.5
Self-employed	12	7.3
Service area worker	9	5.5
Functionary	50	30.3
Farmer/fishery/stock raising	4	2.4
Student	30	18.2
Soldier	2	1.2
Other	39	23.6
TOTAL	165	100.0

Source: Jong-chul Ahn, “Simin’gun: The Citizens’ Army during the Kwangju Uprising,” in *Contesting Kwangju: The May 18 Uprising in Korea’s Past and Present*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Kyung Moon Hwang (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 20.

Government Statements on Number of Victims

EVIDENCE	DEATHS (# of persons)	INJURIES (# of persons)
Martial Law Command, “The Kwangju Incident,” June 1980	144	127
Army Headquarters, “The Truth of the Kwangju Incident,” June 1980	153	127
Special Committee for National Security Measures, Committee for the Investigation of the Truth of the Kwangju Incident, “Report of the Investigation of the Truth of the Kwangju Incident,” June 1980	158	321
Army Headquarters, “Riot Control and its Lessons,” June 25, 1980	162	377
Reply of Minister of National Defense Yun Song-min at the 12 th National Assembly’s National Defense Committee, June 7, 1985	164	852
Ministry of National Defense, “The Reality of the Kwangju Incident,” July 30, 1985	164	
Reply of Minister of National Defense O Cha-bok at the 13 th National Assembly’s National Defense Committee, July 5, 1988	163	

Source: Chung Sangyong, Rhyu Simin et al., *Memories of May 1980: A Documentary History of the Kwangju Uprising in Korea*, trans. Park Hye-Jin (Seoul, Korea: Korea Democracy Foundation, 2003), 385-86.

Compilation of Casualties Records

Date	Place of Death	Inquest Records from Kwangju District Public Prosecutor	Army Headquarters Documents	Participant Testimonies
May 18	Express Bus Terminal	0	None	20-30
May 19	Catholic Center	0	None	Many
May 19	Bus Terminal	0	None	Many
May 20	Bus Terminal	0	None	Many
May 20	New Kwangju Station	1	2	Many
May 20-24	Prison area	13	5	Many
May 20-22	Chiwon-dong area	1	3	9 or more
May 21	In Front of Provincial Government Building	54	None	Many
May 22	Sobang three-way junction	0	None	4 or more
May 22-27	Hyodok-dong area	0	None	Many
May 22-27	Armed Forces Hospital	7	3	Many
May 23	Chiwon-dong area	8	17	28 or more
May 23	Sampo, Naju	0	None	1 or more
May 24	Songam-dong area	6	1	7
May 27	Chonnam Provincial Government Building	14	14	100 or more
May 27	YMCA	3	2	Many
May 27	Kyerim Elementary School	1	1	Many
May 27	Kwangju Park	1	2	Many
May 27	Other areas	7	2	Many

Source: Chung Sangyong, Rhyu Simin et al., *Memories of May 1980: A Documentary History of the Kwangju Uprising in Korea*, trans. Park Hye-Jin (Seoul, Korea: Korea Democracy Foundation, 2003), 386-87.

Analysis Questions for Handout 9:

1. What discrepancies and inconsistencies can we find in the statistics above?
2. How can we explain why these inconsistencies occurred? Consider who provided the information and when. Consider what conditions at the time of the Kwangju Uprising made the accurate reporting of arrests, injuries, and deaths more difficult.
3. How does the “Compilation of Casualties Records” help us to explain why so many have questioned the government’s official statistics?

4. Despite the lack of consistency and thoroughness in these statistics, what can we cautiously conclude from them?
5. These statistics do not tell us the location of the arrests, the number of trials/convictions, the years of imprisonment, the extent of injuries, or the time needed for recovery. Having that information would give us a much fuller picture of the events that occurred at Kwangju. Ideally, where could we find this information?

Comparison Questions for Handouts 8 and 9:

1. Where do these sources agree? Does one source confirm the other?
2. Where do these sources disagree, conflict, or contradict? Does one source introduce information that the other does not?
3. How can we explain *why* the sources agree in some ways and differ in others?
4. What else would you like to know about the authors to better understand what they wrote and why they wrote?

HANDOUT 10: CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1

What is the danger of relying too heavily on a single source when studying an event in history? What are the advantages of using multiple sources? What single source would most distort our view of the Kwangju Uprising? What single source would most enhance our view of it? Despite the various differences among the sources, what can we confidently conclude about the Kwangju Uprising because of their many points of agreement?

Question 2

Why is journalism often referred to as “the first draft of history”? In what ways is the news media so critical to our understanding of historical events? In what ways is the news media insufficient for understanding historical events?

Question 3

The events that took place in Kwangju in May 1980 have been referred to in various ways: the Kwangju Uprising, the Kwangju Incident, the Kwangju Massacre, the Kwangju Rebellion, the Kwangju Democratization Movement, the Kwangju People’s Uprising, or 5.18 (a reference to May 18, the start of the student demonstrations in Kwangju). How does each term convey a different understanding of the events? Which term minimizes the significance of Kwangju? Which term stresses the long-term effects of Kwangju? Which term views the Kwangju casualties as innocent victims? As heroes of democratic change? As activists with a political goal? Which term is most politically charged? Which term is least politically charged? What specific groups of people would prefer one term over another?

Question 4

Since 1997, May 18 has been observed as a national memorial day in South Korea. What does the commemoration of this day say about South Koreans’ current understanding of the Kwangju Uprising?

Question 5

The Kwangju Uprising has often been referred to “Korea’s Tiananmen,” even though Kwangju occurred nine years earlier. Why are events that occurred in Beijing in 1989 not referred to as “China’s Kwangju”? What does this terminology reveal about our understanding of East Asia?

Question 6

Since the events in Kwangju in 1980 and in Tiananmen Square in 1989 were similar, how do we explain the development of a stable democracy in South Korea following the Kwangju Uprising and the lack of dramatic political change in China following Tiananmen Square?

Consider the following explanations. Which do you consider the most significant? The least significant? Can you offer some additional explanations of your own?

EXPLANATION	SOUTH KOREA	CHINA
Legitimacy	<p>The Chun regime was established through military coup.</p> <p>Kwangju further undermined this new government's shaky and illegitimate start.</p>	<p>The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gained power through revolution and war.</p> <p>Tiananmen Square failed to undermine the CCP's long history and strongly established institutional base.</p>
Ideology	<p>As a strident anticommunist, Chun could not reject all aspects of democratic government. He would have to make some concessions or risk South Korea being seen as oppressive as its communist neighbors in China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union.</p>	<p>The CCP remained officially committed to communism. The party could make economic changes without adopting any political reforms that would have promoted democratic change.</p>
Foreign Relations	<p>South Korea relied on other countries to help maintain its national security. This meant that Chun's government was more vulnerable to foreign criticism and pressure.</p>	<p>China relied much less on other countries for maintaining its national security. This meant that the CCP was less vulnerable to foreign criticism and pressure.</p>
Timing of the Olympic Games	<p>The Seoul Olympics were held in 1988. Chun did not want any domestic strife to tarnish South Korea's image on the international stage less than a decade after the Kwangju Uprising.</p>	<p>The Beijing Olympics were held in 2008. With nearly twenty years having passed, the CCP did not fear that memories of Tiananmen Square would tarnish China's international image. Additionally, during those twenty years, the CCP effectively censored domestic news and Internet reports about Tiananmen Square, which continues in China today.</p>

HANDOUT 11: STUDENT PROJECTS

Project 1

From 1988 to 1989, South Korea's National Assembly held a series of congressional hearings to investigate the Kwangju Uprising. Write a letter to the National Assembly in which you recommend how it could best discover the most accurate and detailed information about Kwangju. Be sure to address the following:

- Why the public hearings should take place
- Which specific witnesses, participants, politicians, and experts to interview
- What questions to ask
- What answers to expect
- What documents to read
- Whether to hold an individual accountable for issuing the order to attack civilians
- Whether to accept or reject the views of Kim Dae Jung (Handout 12)
- What a positive outcome of the public hearings would look like

Project 2

As a member of your town's local committee to commemorate the Kwangju Uprising on May 18 of this (or next) year, you must present a detailed plan on how to memorialize the day. Write a proposal describing your ideas and explaining *why* your choices make sense. Be sure to address the following:

- Who will be invited? Young and old? Politicians, students, and ordinary citizens? Only people with personal connections to Kwangju?
- Who will speak and what topics will they address?
- What role will art—music, poetry, painting—play in the commemoration?
- Where will the commemoration take place?
- How long will the commemoration be?
- What events will occur? A religious ceremony? A concert? A parade? A school assembly?
- Which, if any, of the following themes will you choose to emphasize: a) the sacrifice and bloodshed of the past b) popular resistance to a military dictatorship c) the ultimate victory of democracy in South Korea?
- How would you use the words of Kim Dae Jung (Handout 12) and/or Kim Nam-Ju (Handout 13)?

HANDOUT 12: KIM DAE JUNG, “MY COUNTRY, MY ASPIRATION,” 1985

Beyond Bitter Resentment

The world knows all too well how much I have suffered under the brutal oppression of the present government. They have falsely accused me of being the evil director of an antistate organization, an agitator for the Kwangju uprising, and so forth, and impose on me a guilty sentence....

The fact that my indictment was without any basis whatsoever was made clear by the rebuttal of the American State Department and by the authoritative reports released by many world bodies on human rights....The important thing is that only the Carter administration but also the Reagan administration continued to support that final judgment on the truth.

How great a national wound the Kwangju incident caused is shown by ever increasing national resentment and interest as years go by and increasing debate and study of the event by interested persons around the world.

How can we handle this endless resentment? When the world changes, and those who were once powerless become powerful, should they resort to reprisal? Unquestionably, reprisal is one way to deal with the event. But can we solve the deeper problem with reprisal? Can we bring back the dead and heal painful wounds through reprisal? Does reprisal beget reprisal? As the factional strife during the Yi dynasty [1392–1910] testifies, reprisal cannot be the right road toward a genuine solution....

We Must Solve Our National Resentment Concerning “Kwangju” Through Restoration of Democracy

“If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget himself, carry his cross, and follow me.” [Matthew 6:24] This saying of Christ means that for justice, one must accept persecution even if it could threaten one’s life. It also means that one must forgive the enemy with the love of the cross, transcending one’s bitter grievance. Jesus Christ prayed, as he was dying on the cross, for his enemies who nailed him to the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” [Luke 23:34]

Never Commit Political Reprisal

At last, I realized deeply that restraint from political reprisal is most proper for our national character and especially harmonious with Christian ethics. In this way, I will be victorious over myself, and I can transcend and mature. Rejection of political reprisal is the greatest legacy that I could leave for the nation before I die....

In my last statement during my trial, I emphasized the following in the presence of some twenty codefendants and several dozen family members. I pleaded: “There shall be restoration of democracy in our country in the eighties. At this time and from this place, I ask you, as my last will before my death, not to ever resort to political reprisal when our democratic government is reestablished. We ourselves must put an end to the sordid history of brutal political reprisal committed by the dictators. After what they have done to me, let us do away with political

reprisal once and for all! You must always remember my last will, and promise not to commit political reprisal after the establishment of a democratic government.”

I still remember vividly the emotional scene in the court. All the defendants and their families stood up in unison and sang the national anthem, choking with emotion and tears streaming down their faces....

But one thing I want to emphasize is that my opposition to reprisal is not an act of unprincipled forgiveness. Although we are opposed to any physical reprisal against our tormentors, we are not to permit the continuation of their mistaken politics against our people. To put it another way, we shall not yield on our basic principle of democratic restoration, for which so many have struggled with their lives and indescribable sacrifice....

I have long insisted on nonreprisal and political dialogue as the only way to solve the present political crisis. I have insisted on this course, not because I want to ingratiate myself with the present rulers. Nor do I do this for the glory of political dialogue. I have done this because I believe this is the only way to untangle the present stalemate, prevent complete political catastrophe, and open the way toward national reconciliation and coexistence....

Source: Kim Dae Jung, “My Country, My Aspiration,” in *Sources of Korean Tradition*, ed. Yōng-ho Ch’oe, Peter H. Lee, and Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 2:443-45. Kim Dae Jung was one of South Korea’s leading dissidents and opposition politicians. Kim was arrested on May 17, 1980 on false charges of sedition and promoting the Kwangju Uprising. He was found guilty and given a death sentence that was later reduced to life imprisonment. Exiled to the United States in 1982 and then placed under house arrest on his return to Korea in 1985, Kim was eventually elected President of the Republic of Korea in 1997 and awarded the Noble Peace Prize in 2000.

Analysis Questions for Handout 12:

1. Why does Kim Dae Jung consider Kwangju a “national wound”?
2. How does he justify his plea for no political reprisals?
3. A native of South Chōlla province, Kim won over 93.4% of the Kwangju vote and 87.9% of the South Chōlla vote in the 1987 election. For residents of Kwangju, could Kim Dae Jung’s election as president ten years later, in 1997, heal the “national wound” of the Kwangju Uprising?

HANDOUT 13: POEM BY KIM NAM-JU

“Massacre”

It was a day in May.
It was a day in May 1980.
It was an evening on a day in May 1980 in Kwangju.

At midnight I saw
riot police replacing regular police.
At midnight I saw
soldiers replacing riot police.
At midnight I saw
American civilians leaving the city.
At midnight I saw
all vehicles being prevented from entering the city.

Ah, what a grim midnight that was.
Ah, what a deliberate midnight that was.

It was a day in May.
It was a day in May 1980.
It was midday on a day in May 1980 in Kwangju.

At midday I saw
bands of soldiers armed with bayonets.
At midday I
groups of soldiers ready to attack the people.
At midday I saw
groups of soldiers ready to rob the people.
At midday I saw
groups of soldiers incarnating evil.

Ah, what a fearful noon that was.
Ah, what a candid noon that was.

It was a day in May.
It was a day in May 1980.
It was evening on a day in May 1980 in Kwangju.

At midnight
the city was a heart abuzz like a beehive.
At midnight
the streets were a river of blood flowing like lava.
At midnight
the breeze was stirring the bloody hair of a murdered girl.

and at midnight
the dark was devouring a child's eyeball ejected like a bullet
and at midnight
the murderers were taking the bodies away somewhere.

Ah, what a dreadful midnight.
Ah, what an organized midnight.

It was a day in May.
It was a day in May 1980.
It was midday on a day in May 1980 in Kwangju.

At noon
the sky was a blood-red cloth.
At noon
in the streets not a house that was not weeping.
Mount Mudung put on mourning dress and veiled its face.
At noon
Yongsan River stopped breathing and held its breath.

Ah, the massacre at Guernica was not this grim, for sure,
the devilish plotting not so refined.

Source: Kim Nam-Ju, "Massacre," trans. An Son-Jae, in *Memories of May 1980: A Documentary History of Kwangju Uprising in Korea*, ed. Chung Sangyong, Rhyu Simin et al. (Seoul, Korea: Korea Democracy Foundation, 2003), 75-77. Kim Nam-Ju was a prominent activist poet who was jailed in 1979. His first book of poetry was published in 1984, and he was released from prison in 1988.