UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

A Different Diaspora:
Insurgent Histories and Alternative Worldmaking in the Korean American Diaspora

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

History with Specialization in Critical Gender Studies

by

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The Dissertation of Youngoh Jung is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

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DEDICATION

To mom and my grandmother

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It takes a village, and my village that nurtured me has been immense throughout this journey. This project will always be a reflection of my upbringing and relationships I cultivated in the small Korean American community of Chula Vista. I have always tied my worth and dignity to my ability to produce work, and what I consider work could not be separated from myself and my community. This has been extremely unhealthy, but I wouldn't have it any other way. I thank my dissertation committee members who have nurtured me to be the kind of scholar I want to be, who instilled in me the courage to be myself and not falter in doing what is right over all the excuses of injustice, institutional racism, and exploitation that academia had normalized.

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Note on Romanization, Translation, and Publication Reference

This dissertation uses the McCune-Reischauer System of Korean Romanization for Korean terms. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

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Doctor of Philosophy in History with Specialization in Critical Gender Studies

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Professor Simeon Man, Co-Chair

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The dominant narrative of diasporic Korean American history has been founded upon on the narratives the Korean Independence Movement from the continental US and Hawai‘i. It centers the leaders and participants of the movement who began to mobilize diasporic Korean Americans towards a predetermined path of assimilation into US society and global cosmopolitanism – a political subjectivity that reinforces both US and Korea nationalisms. By extension, evocations of the Korean diaspora in academic discourses have also tended to reify

territorial, ethnonational, and political boundaries to standardize a singular definition of the Korean diaspora centered on migration, ethnic identification, and connection to the homeland.

By contrast, "A different Diaspora" argues that such renderings tell only a partial story by historical tracing various political struggles of diasporic Korean Americans throughout the 20th century (1903-1968) who challenged narratives of compliance and assimilation defined by diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness. Through their actions, these exiled militarists, scholars, students, and GI deserters of the US armed forces made apparent the limitation of their proximity to whiteness by imagining a different Korean American diaspora removed from the norms of subservience to white American institutions and individuals in positions of power. By placing them at the center of my story, my dissertation argues for a wider conception of the Korean diaspora that accounts for overlooked narratives such as the cultivation of cross-racial solidarities; development of critical understanding of antiblackness, Indigenous dispossession; and participation in projects of demilitarization to resist US imperialism. These enactments of an alternative worldmaking in the Korean American diaspora, practiced however fleetingly, reveal that notions of belonging are not confined by boundaries set by nation-states or the status quo of the racial-social order in the US. This dissertation thus traces what I call insurgent histories of the Korean American diaspora, focusing on how various diasporic Korean Americans at different times and places sought alternative forms of liberation and belonging. It is a genealogy of how diasporic Korean Americans came to understand and imagined beyond their proximity to whiteness to envision a different Korean American diaspora.

Introduction

Diasporic Korean American Proximity to Whiteness

Benevolence to Violence

In Runyoung Kim's novel *Clay Walls* (1987), Chun is the second of the three narrators who tells the story of a diasporic Korean American family that migrated to Los Angeles in the early 1920s. Chun escaped to the US after he was sought out by the Japanese police due to suspicions around his involvement in the March 1st Movement, a series of protests that took place across the Korean peninsula against Japanese colonization that was brutally suppressed by Japanese authorities. His getaway and settlement in Southern California were facilitated by Reverand McNeil, an American missionary in Korea who resided near Chun's family. Chun had lived in McNeil's residence and worked as his house boy, spending his days cleaning the house and receiving English lessons and western, Christian education by the Reverend. In the novel, Chun recalls his experience working in the missionary's house before he left Korea. While cleaning the library, the pictures and photographs in the numerous books caught his attention to reveal a world beyond his imagination. Chun did not recognize the reverend approaching and apologized, quickly closing the book. The Reverend replied by saying "It's all right. No sorry. It's all right."[1] And with a pat on the shoulder he said, "reading is good."[2] Chun was grateful and relieved of the reverend's kindness. Besides the images within the books, the tapestry covered wing-chair also attracted Chun's curious impulses. At a later time and with no one around, Chun sat on the chair thinking of how he would describe what he felt to his parents, and words like

[1] Ronyoung Kim, *Clay Walls* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), 151.

[2] Ibid.

'royal', and 'authority' came to his mind.[3] His fascination led to him again failing to notice the reverend who had left his dirty shoes outside. Unlike the previous encounter, Reverand McNeil's reaction was completely different.

> "Chun would never be able to describe the rage on the Reverand's face nor would he be able to repeat his words. The Reverend yanked Chun from the chair, led him to the courtyard, broke off a twig from the plum tree and, still shoeless, gave Chun a switching, the first Chun had received in his life. He never told his parents of the incident."[4]

The two opposing responses to Chun's curiosity reveal the two-faced nature of Reverand McNeil. He welcomes Chun's desire for western knowledge represented in his books but severely punishes him sitting on his wing-chair that represented his authority. Chun's willingness to learn from McNeil's books and teachings, as well as his occupation as a house boy exemplifies his subservience, while the reverend's fury and the physical punishment he carried out is the drawing of the line that no Korean should cross. Benevolence turned to violence when the Reverand's authority was inadvertently tested. Chun's silence and inaction on the switching he received reveals his recognition of his role as a subservient student of Christian and western values who was dependent upon white men of stature. Chun's dependence on McNeil and his proven subservience rewarded him and influenced his life immensely. Not only did the Reverand facilitate his escape from Korea, but he also played a prominent role in arranging his marriage to Haesu, his love interest and the first narrator of the novel.

This short segment of the novel reveals how a hierarchical relationship based on racial power dynamics influenced one diasporic Korean American family's story of exile and migration. Albeit a fictional narrative, Chun's experience as well as his position of dependence is

[3] Ibid., 152.

[4] Ibid.

analogous to numerous diasporic Korean immigrants who heavily relied on white American benefactors like missionaries and others in positions of power to migrate. It exemplifies the notion of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness -- a quintessential feature of diasporic Korean American identity and community formation, especially for the first generation of migrants. The development of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness was also a critical response to Japanese colonialism formulated by Korean independence activists overseas who sought the patronage of the US to resist Japanese colonialism and fight to reclaim their sovereignty. While many made their move across the Pacific for new economic opportunities, a large group were also political exiles like Chun who sought to escape the subjugation of Japanese colonialism. And many of these political exiles became heavily involved in the Korean independence movement from beyond the peninsula. With the rising global power of the US empire during this period, "US polity emerged as a key arena for the articulation of transnational practices associated with the Korean nationalist movement."[5] According to Chris Suh, diasporic Korean American exiles and immigrants reshaped their lives in accordance to the expectation of western empires and "prove to imperial powers that they were worthy of sovereignty."[6] Diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness was sociopolitical position founded upon compliance and subservience to the US and its racial-social order that governed their choices and actions.

[5] Richard Kim, *The Quest for Statehood: Korean Immigrant Nationalism and U.S. Sovereignty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8.

[6] Chris Suh, *The Allure of Empire: American Encounters with Asians in the Age of Transpacific* (Oxford: oxford University Press, 2023), 19-20.

To mobilize and fight for independence from Japanese colonization was to identify with US religious and political institutions, along with their various forms of "civilizing mission[s]."[7] This was especially the case for the early Korean Christian converts who abided by the authority of white ministers and missionaries who taught, proselytized, and facilitated their move abroad. As Jang Wook Huh states, "missionaries in Asia rationalized whiteness and Christianity as fundamental to modern civilization."[8] Religious networks built by American missionaries since the late 1800s on the Korean peninsula heavily influenced Korean migration especially to North America as around 40% of early Korean migrants identified themselves as Christians.[9] The maintenance of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness also "reflected the development and articulation of an ethnic consciousness – a collective sense of peoplehood – among Korean immigrants in the United States" where their drive to attain independence "prompted them to establish a politico-legal presence within the US state structures and institutions."[10] Occupying this positionality meant that diasporic Korean Americans were placed within the realm of acceptance where they were given limited freedom to pursue their future and hopes for an independent Korea.

Beyond the "Pioneering Generation" and Redefining the Notion of "Diaspora"

[7] Ibid., 11.

[8] Jang Wook Huh, "The Student's Hand: Industrial Education and Racialized Labor in Early Korean Protestantism," *Journal of Korean Studies* vol. 25, no. 2 (2020): 355.

[9] David K. Yoo, *Contentious Spirits: Religion in Korean American History, 1903-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 8.

[10] R. Kim, *Quest for Statehood*, 9.

The available historical narratives of the Korean American diaspora's "pioneering generation" have been centered on the actions of political elites and their responses to Japanese colonialism.[11] While their participation in the Korean Independence Movement from beyond the peninsula have been closely studied, these scholars who trace the first generation of Korean Americans have tended to focus on the accomplishments of diasporic Koreans in becoming patriotic Koreans and pioneering immigrants assimilating as ethnic Americans while enduring discrimination.[12] Historical knowledge produced about the Korean American diaspora tend to reinforce ethnocentric discourses of mobilization against Japanese imperialism with the assistance, guidance, and most importantly the consent of US institutions and white American authorities. Diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness was a method deployed to influence their racialization process and has been embedded within the dominant narrative of the history and the historiography of the Korean American diaspora. And despite it being a crucial component of their actions and accomplishments, diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness has yet to be scrutinized historically.

"A Different Diaspora" challenges the dominant narrative of diasporic Korean Americans whose predetermined path is assimilation into U.S. society through the cultivation and maintenance of their proximity to whiteness. It examines the historical formation, application, and the limitations of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness practiced by various

[11] "Pioneering generation" was coined by scholars Lee Houchins and Chang-su Houchins who were one of the first academics to trace the history of Korean American community between 1903 and 1924. See Lee Houchins and Chang-su Houchins, "The Korean Experience in America, 1903-1924," *Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 4 (1974): 548-575.

[12] See Edward T. Chang, *Pachappa Camp: The First Koreatown in the United* States (London: Lexington Books, 2021); Edward T. Chang and Woo Sung Han, *Korean American Pioneer Aviators: The Willows Airmen* (London: Lexington Books, 2015); Edward T. Chang and Carol K. Park, *Korean Americans: A Concise History* (Riverside: The Young Oak Kim Center for Korean American Studies at the University of California Riverside, 2019).

diasporic Korean American figures throughout the twentieth century. It centers the anti-imperialist struggles of radical diasporic Korean Americans across the Pacific in the continental US and the nations occupied by the US Military Empire after World War II. These exiled militarists, scholars, students, and GI deserters of the US armed forces navigated the limitations of their proximity to whiteness that granted them partial acceptance and at times, flat out refused incorporation into narratives of compliance by reimagining and enacting alternative forms of sociality and solidarity. These alternative forms of belonging were cultivated in opposition to the status quo of subservience normalized through diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness.

The historians of the "pioneering generations" have defined the Korean diaspora solely as the geographical dispersion of ethnic Koreans. Such a singular definition reifies territorial, ethnonational, and political boundaries, and thus have contributed to the erasure of certain diasporic Korean Americans and their struggles. To place these radical subjects at the center of my story, I conceptualize the Korean diaspora as a liminal space where different ideologies, politics, cultures and people of various class and racial backgrounds converge to both accept and reject as well as learn and unlearn systematic regimes of oppression such as racialized hierarchy and white supremacy practiced through diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness. This approach situates diaspora not as static forms of identification that denotes a scattered ethnic population, but as an ongoing process of transformation that works to connect various place based liberatory struggles together. My dissertation thus argues for a wider conception of Korean diaspora that accounts for cross-racial relations and solidarities, practiced however fleetingly, where notions of belonging are not confined by the boundaries of nation-states.

Diasporic Excess and the Insurgent Histories of the Korean American Diaspora

The ways diasporic Korean Americans have negotiated and navigated their racialization have been only approached by a handful of scholars. Historians Richard Kim and Chris Suh made striding contributions to the field with their transnational approaches to diasporic Korean American history. In his book *Quest for Statehood* (2011), Richard Kim examines how Korean Americans have negotiated their racialization process with US state power by adhering to US national agenda and propelling their visions of independence and national sovereignty. In *Allure of Empire* (2023) Chris Suh expands on Kim's premise by examining how Koreans within and beyond the peninsula recognized the "progressive" imperialism of the United States as well as the motives of anti-Japanese politicians and Christian missionaries and positioned their politics to advance their visions of independence. Suh's examination of the US missionary enterprise's practice of racial uplift on various colonized subjects including Koreans and African Americans reveal how the imperial order was sustained in the Pacific through a complex process of racialization both embraced and challenged by different imperial subjects and subjugated non-white peoples.

My project builds on the works of Kim and Suh by historically tracing the development, deployment, and limitations of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness. Instead of centering the individual and organizational accomplishments of diasporic Korean Americans in their participation in the Korean Independence Movement from overseas, "A Different Diaspora" focuses on the choices and actions that made such accomplishments possible and may have fell through the cracks of that dominant narrative. The dominant narrative presented by the historiography of the Korean American diaspora have elided other narratives of encounters and relationships formed beyond diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness. These other histories have existed through what Crystal Baik calls *diasporic excess,* which she defines as

"non-normative subjectivities and spaces deemed expendable to the US and South Korean national agendas."[13] The histories of *diasporic excess* have always existed in limited context as "political, cultural, and social alterities," alongside the dominant narrative of diasporic Korean American compliance and subservience.[14] The existing historical knowledge production of the Korean American diaspora amassed through the archives function as epistemological barriers of *diasporic excess*, as they have hindered its visibility as well as the possibilities of cross-racial encounters and collective mobilization. However, the historical sources of *diasporic excess*, scattered and unobserved in the same archives of the Korean American diaspora, illuminate an insurgent history that disrupts the current existing historical narratives of compliance.

"A Different Diaspora" traces this insurgent history of the Korean American diaspora by examining how various diasporic Korean Americans at different times and places throughout the twentieth century sought out different forms of liberation and belonging beyond a demonstration of their proximity to whiteness. These include histories of anti-colonial resistance not reliant on affirming US power and narratives of cross-racial encounters that have enabled diasporic Korean American understandings and critiques of anti-Black racism, Indigenous dispossession, and US imperialism as entwined with Japanese imperialism. The insurgent history of the Korean American diaspora is also a genealogy of how diasporic Korean Americans came to understand their racialization within the US imperial project, and how some imagined and enacted various forms of solidarities to envision their liberation as a collective struggle.

Scholarly Intervention

[13] Crystal Baik, *Reencounters: On the Korean War and Diasporic Memory Critique* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020), 8.

[14] Ibid.

"A Different Diaspora" engages with the fields of Korean American History and Asian American Studies. As elaborated in the previous section, this dissertation moves beyond the Korean American historical works on the "pioneering generation" that have tended to focus on individual accomplishments to interject the diasporic Korean Americans' placement within the racialized hierarchy of the US. As important as these histories are in tracing the stories of migration and community formation, they forgo the complex processes of racialization and the critiques of assimilation. By centering the experiences and stories of diasporic Korean Americans who refused to abide by the expected norms of proximity to whiteness, this project presents how Korean American history is not a monolith dependent on the US nation-state, its institutions, and prominent white Americans. Furthermore, "A Different Diaspora" engages with historians like Kim and Suh in the field of Korean American history to illuminates the complex process of compliance and refusal as diasporic Korean Americans navigated their place within the US racial-social order.

This dissertation also engages with the field of Asian American Studies that centers the experiences of Asian migrants and the intersection of race, gender, war, and militarism.[15] It is also founded upon questions of positionality, ethics, and alternative practices of archival research that aligns with how the Asian American Studies field insists on the importance of community-based knowledge and anti-imperialist critique. At the same time, past works in Asian American Studies have tended to reproduce U.S.-centric views of race and culture that prioritize narratives

[15] See Crystal Baik, *Reencounters*; Michael Jin, *Citizens, Immigrants, and the Stateless: A Japanese Diaspora in the Pacific* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021); Khatharya Um, *From the Land of Shadows: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Cambodian Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

of "becoming American."[16] Even in narratives of refusal and resistance against racial injustice or the US military empire, Asian Americans' identity as "Americans" are constantly presented as a reminder to justify their critiques and the immorality of their systemic victimization. "A Different Diaspora" inserts ideas of race and racialization formed outside of the US that have influenced the actions and community formation of diasporic Korean Americans by examining Korean language documents that express the voices of early Korean migrants that reveal the process of understanding the politics of race. By doing so, this project reveals the complex process of diasporic racial formation and how the conception of race is understood and formulated outside of the US. It highlights how racialization in the US context is learned and unlearned in the diaspora through various encounters and historical moments that produce mutual affinity and cross-racial engagements.[17] This dissertation also explores the diaspora as a mediating space between disciplines (Asian Studies and Asian American Studies) and regions (Asia and North America), sparking difficult but necessary conversations about diasporic subjects whose histories and cultures cannot be contained by singular viewpoints, regions, or academic fields.

Structure of Dissertation

The introduction of the dissertation outlines the historiography of the first-generation diasporic Korean immigrants and the underlying issues revolving the currently existing historical

[16] Erika Lee, *At American's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Caronia Press, 2003); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian* Americans, rev. ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998); K. Scott Wong, *Americans First: Chinese Americans and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[17] For works on racial formation in the US context, see Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014); Ramon A. Gutierrez, Daniel Martinez HoSang, and Natalia Molina, eds., *Relational Formations of Race: Theory, Method, and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

narrative. It also presents the key issues and scholarly interventions by briefly introducing diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness, a broader conceptualization of the Korean diaspora, and how the tracing of an insurgent history illuminates overlooked approaches of understanding race and racialization in the Korean American diaspora. Chapter 1, "Cultivating Militancy in the Korean Diaspora," examines how a group of diasporic Korean militarists deployed their proximity to whiteness to cultivate their goals of initiating a war for independence from overseas. Led by exiled politician Pak Yong Man, this group of Korean militarists established multiple military academies throughout the continental US and Hawai‘i to train the immigrant Korean youth as soldiers and future leaders of an independent Korean nation. The chapter examines how Pak and the militarists navigated their status as Asian immigrants and exiles and how they negotiated with the white American authorities to pursue their goals. Specifically focusing on the establishment and maintenance of the Nebraska Youth Military Academy, the chapter explores the application and limitations of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness.

Chapter 2, "Cross-Racial Encounters and the Limitations of Diasporic Korean American Proximity to Whiteness," focuses on how cross-racial encounters between diasporic Korean Americans and subjugated non-white peoples led the former to develop critiques of racism that exceeded the boundaries of Korean civilizational discourses. It introduces how diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness originated from the Korean conception of race that emerged in Korea before Japanese colonization. Faced with impending colonization, Korean intellectuals deployed the language of "civilization" to claim racial superiority over those they deemed inferior, such as subjugated Black and Indigenous peoples of the world. By closely reading writings and publications by diasporic Korean Americans on first-hand encounters with non-

white peoples and the injustice they faced, this chapter examines how diasporic Korean Americans came to understand racialization within the US context and the pervasive racial violence of settler colonialism.

Chapter 3, “Beyond Archival Absence: Remapping Black-Korean Solidarities,” follows the life-story and activism of Kim Ho Ch'ŏl, a diasporic Korean American student-activist who was imprisoned then deported for protesting the death sentence of the “Scottsboro Boys,” the eight Black teenagers who were accused of raping two white women in Alabama in 1931. This chapter traces Kim’s journey to the US and how he was able to connect Japanese colonialism faced by Koreans and Anti-black racism endured by the Black working class in the South. By closely reading a poem titled “To the Eight Black Children” which Kim wrote in prison before deportation along with other writings by diasporic Korean American and African American writers, this chapter examines the possibilities of cross-racial solidarities that have been overlooked in the archives and within the historiography of diasporic Korean American history.

Chapter 4, “Towards a Demilitarized Transpacific,” fast forwards more than three decades from the inter-war period to the height of the Cold War in the Asia-Pacific region where the US military empire was entrenched in South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and elsewhere. The chapter follows the story of Kim Jin Su, a Korean War orphan adoptee who grew up in Idaho and enlisted in the US Army during the Vietnam War in order to receive citizenship. While he was stationed in Japan, Kim deserted his post and sought refuge at the Cuban embassy and later escaped to Sweden with other GI deserters assisted by Japanese anti-war activists. This chapter traces Kim Jin Su’s journey by utilizing the scattered documents in the archives and fictional narratives to examine how Kim’s complex humanity was shaped by the violences of the US military empire in the Asia-Pacific. It focuses on how Kim’s choices and actions led to him

engaging in what I call the demilitarized transpacific, a project that envisions an alternative future of a different life and a different peace without US empire.

The conclusion, "'Reencountering' the Korean American Diaspora and the Craft of Ethical History," is a personal reflection of what shaped me to rethink the work of history, its purpose and limitations. It recounts how my participation in two community facing projects, "Race and Oral History in San Diego Project" and "Heung Coalition" shaped me to look at history and its craft differently. Spurred as responses to the pandemic and the social upheavals surrounding racialized violence that followed, I began to recognize the epistemological violences engaged by the discipline of history that also works to elide alternative understandings of history based on community knowledge formations.

Chapter 1

Cultivating Militancy in the Korean Diaspora: Gendered Subservience and Racialized Proselytization in the Nebraska Youth Military Academy, 1905-1916

Introduction

During the long summer days in central Nebraska in 1911, a group of 40-50 Korean men and boys roamed the school grounds of the private Presbyterian institution named Hastings College. They were seen attending to crops on the school farm or playing baseball or some other sport. Their outdoor activities varied, but without fail, every afternoon they dressed up in military uniform and gear to practice military drills. Led by the older instructors, the students who were mostly in their teens and early twenties marched in formation and conducted live firearm training with used US Army rifles. To the small and majority white Christian farming community of Hastings, such sightings might have been strange, perhaps threatening; but by all accounts, they were at least a familiar presence. Off campus on non-school hours and weekends, they were active members of the community with many working as part-time laborers and school boys for local residents.[18] They also attended church service every Sunday alongside the locals and participated in community events such as marching in full uniform during Independence Day as well as other commemorations or holiday celebrations.[19]

The Korean men and boys were the staff and cadets of the Nebraska Youth Military Academy (NYMA), a paramilitary educational institution established by a group of diasporic

[18] Young Korean international students worked as school boys, or student-workers who were provided room and board in exchange for their manual labor and filling the role of house servants. An Hyŏng Ju, *Pak Yong Man kwa haninsonyŏnbyŏnghakkyo* [Pak Yong Man and the Korean Youth Military Academy] (Seoul: Chisiksanŏpsa, 2007), 49-71; Sŏn Ju Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi tongnibundong* [Independent activism of Korean Americans], (Ch'unch'ŏn: Hallim Taehakkyo Asia munhwa yŏn'guso, 1989): 24-44; "Sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyoŭi yŏksa" [History of Youth Military Academy], *Sinhanminbo*, April 26, 1911.

[19] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa,* 209-218.

Korean Americans led by Pak Yong Man. Pak was an educator, political activist, and an avid advocate of Korean militarism who fled Korea in 1905 in anticipation of persecution under the Japanese colonial regime and sought to militarize the diasporic Korean populous to resist Japanese colonialism. Pak and his followers sought to educate and mold young Korean immigrant students into citizen-soldiers of a new Korea, to-be established upon their return to fight and liberate Korea. He recognized militarism as the most viable path towards liberation from the Japanese empire which had fully annexed Korea by 1910 and began to mobilize diasporic Koreans through his own philosophy of militarism and martial education.

Despite the overtly militarized and anti-colonial goals of the Koreans, Hastings officials and residents understood the NYMA in a narrative of subservience by using colonial language of civilized progress and racial uplift to cast them as inferior yet redeemable. The NYMA presented itself as a professional Military Academy proudly educating and training boys and men to become future soldiers and leaders of Korea. To the residents of Hastings, however, that anti-colonial motive mattered little. They accepted the Koreans' presence so long as they were submissive and accepting of proselytization and education by white Americans. It was their "civilizing" potential that mattered, and this can be gleaned in the language used to describe them: "credible," "hard-working," "the finest of their race," "trustworthy."[20] Hastings College administrators used these words to describe the Koreans to the local residents through their newsletters and utilized their position in the small community to vouch for the visitors from the "Far East," placating racial fears of the "yellow peril." Such circumstances that presented Koreans as subservient and infantile contradicted the doctrine of militarized masculinity utilized

[20] Dorothy Weyer Creigh, *Tales from the Prairie Volume 2* (Hastings: Adams County Historical Society, 1973), 50; Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi,* 26; Tchansŭnssiŭi hŏrakhan neburasŭk'a sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyo" [Nebraska Youth Military Academy Approved by Mr. Johnson], *Sinhanminbo,* May 31, 1911.

by Pak to cultivate disciplined, courageous, and virile young men through military education. This shaky racial and gendered ground, in a small Nebraska town in the age of Jim Crow, was the foundation upon which diasporic Korean Americans prepared their war for independence.

This chapter utilizes writings and documentations published by diasporic Korean militarists mainly through transnational periodicals such as the *Sinhanminbo* that was circulated widely throughout the global Korean diaspora as well as the Korean peninsula. Pak served as the editor-in-chief from 1911 to 1912; numerous articles discuss his philosophy of militarizing the Korean populous overseas as well its implementation through the establishment of multiple diasporic Korean military academies he established. *Sinhanminbo* presented militarism as an ideological framework for independence and offered a guide for putting it into practice for readers of the global Korean diaspora and those under colonial rule within the Korean peninsula.

The promotion of militarism by diasporic Koreans in North America was a transnational undertaking that was contingent upon the unequal relationship between diasporic Korean militarists and local governance rooted in US religious institutions. Focusing on *Sinhanminbo* and other diasporic Korean publications during the first two decades of the twentieth century, this chapter traces the formation of diasporic Korean militarism in North America and the establishment of the NYMA. In addition to the afromentioned documents, I also read local newsletters and publications from Hastings residents and Hastings College. Reading these materials alongside each other reveal how the cultivation of militarism for the purpose of a war for independence and the practice of a domestic missionary project with the NYMA cadets serving as subjects of proselytization both aligned and clashed in different ways. This chapter also focuses on how Pak Yong Man and the leaders of diasporic Korean militarism in North America navigated such tensions. Given that the local officials had the authority over their

establishment and sustenance, presenting NYMA as compliant to religious and educational institutions in Hastings as well as to the local residents and community leaders was vital. For Pak Yong Man and the NYMA, their proximity to whiteness presented through their position of dependence and subservience determined the cultivation and maintenance of diasporic Korean militarism and more importantly, the approval of their political aims in the US setting that would shape the hierarchical relationship between diasporic Korean Americans and white American authorities in positions of power throughout the twentieth century.

Early Korean Migration and diasporic Korean Community Formation, 1885-1910.

As Korea reluctantly opened up to the global powers of both the East and the West, thousands immigrated to Manchuria, Vladivostok, Japan, Hawai‘i, Mexico, and San Francisco from the 1880s to 1905. Most of the early migrants who traversed across the Pacific and formed communities in Hawai‘i, Mexico, and later the continental US, were laborers sought out by plantation contractors. Many were also political exiles who either fled the political schism of the Korean royal court that struggled to deal with foreign aggression, especially the encroachment of the Japanese empire that would soon annex the peninsular nation. They joined a handful of international students who began to arrive in the US from 1885 to form the first diasporic Korean communities overseas.[21] Sent by the royal court to obtain a modern and western education, these students were projected to become the purveyors of new knowledge capable of fostering new national subjects in Korea.[22] Many of the students and the laborers whose goals were to return to Korea decided to remain in North America and became immigrants after the loss of Korean

[21] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi,* 247.

[22] Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 109-110.

sovereignty in 1905 and full annexation by Japan in 1910. The exiled scholars and political figures, who were mostly from the elite *yangban* class, utilized their education, status, and relationship with prominent white Americans- governmental officials, high ranking ministers, and missionaries - to foster Korean communities and spearhead the Korean nationalist movement in North America.

The most important of these relationships the first generation of diasporic Korean migrants relied on were American Christians, especially the missionaries in Korea who had close ties to American foreign officials and investors. Horace Allen, an American missionary, was one of them. Allen also served the Korean royal family as their physician and the official intermediary between American officials and the Korean government before annexation.[23] According to historian David K. Yoo, "the framework of protestant Christianity brought together religion, politics, and nation" and played a crucial role in early Korean migration across the Pacific.[24] Through relations with prominent protestant figures like Allen, who sponsored numerous Korean international students to study in the US, the exiled Korean elites were provided the necessary connections to pursue their education and future careers. And it was also American missionaries such as Reverend George Heber Jones who persuaded Koreans to become migrant laborers in Hawai'i on behalf of the Hawaiian Sugar Plantations Association (HSPA) that sought Korean workers to counter Japanese monopoly of the labor market. More than half of the first 102 Korean migrants in Hawai'i were part of Jones' congregation.[25]

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[23] Yoo, *Contentious Spirits,* 8.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 36.

The diasporic Korean elites quickly established themselves as the leaders of the newly formed Korean communities across North America and established political and religious organizations to create a network of support amongst diasporic Koreans. They also set up schools and newspapers to preserve their religion, customs, language, identity, and to nurture patriotic thought on foreign soil.[26] By 1905, a network of churches and mission stations, and numerous political organizations, were established in Hawai‘i and across major cities within the continental US where Korean migrants settled.[27] They include the United Korean Society, which merged multiple Korean organizations in Hawai‘i; the Federation of Mutual Assistance Society and *Taedongbogukhoe* (Society of Collective National Preservation) both of which were established in San Francisco; Society of Emerging Alliance in Seattle; and Mutual Salvation Society in New York.[28] Many of these organizations had multiple chapters and operated their own schools and newspapers/newsletters. In 1909 the two largest of these organizations, the United Korean Society and the Mutual Assistance Society, merged to become the Korean National Association (KNA). And following another merger with *Taedongbogukhoe* in 1910, the KNA became the largest diasporic Korean organization and the hub of the diasporic Korean nationalist movement in North America with over 100 chapters and 3000 members by 1914.[29]

When Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910, the KNA had practically consolidated most diasporic Korean political organizations in North America and sought to represent the spirit of

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[26] Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 244-249.

[27] Yoo, *Contentious Spirits*, 40.

[28] Kingsley Lyu, “Korean Nationalist Activities in Hawaii and the Continental United States, 1900-1945 Part I: 1900-1919,” *Amerasia Journal* 4:1 (1977): 51-56.

[29] R. Kim, *The Quest for Statehood*, 41.

independence of all diasporic Koreans including those residing in the Russian Far-East and Northeast Asia.[30] The KNA's official newspaper, *Sinhanminbo,* represented the dissenting voices of Koreans within and beyond the peninsula, through its universal criticism of Japanese aggression and Japan's gradual takeover of the Korean peninsula. *Sinhanminbo*'s nationalistic anti-Japanese sentiment was widely popular in both the diaspora and on the Korean peninsula, where newspapers in general faced heavy censorship after 1905, and many were completely disbanded by 1910. Previously known as *Konglipsinbo* before the founding of the KNA, the newspaper was highly sought out as for every 600 copies distributed in Hawai'i and the US mainland, 3000 reached the Korean peninsula in 1908.[31] With the relaunch of the newspaper under KNA and with the distribution route to Korea blocked after annexation, *Sinhanminbo* was primarily circulated throughout the global Korean diaspora, but many copies made their way to independence activists in Korea from overseas who discreetly distributed them. After annexation, the global distribution numbers were approximately 3000 with half being circulated in North America (continental US , Hawai'i, and Mexico) and the other half reaching Korean communities in Siberia and Manchuria.[32] Before their forced closure, domestic Korean newspapers lauded *Sinhanminbo* as the "organ of our Korean independence" and overseas Koreans who possessed the "ability to express nationalist sentiment, the freedom to criticize

[30] Han Kyo Kim, "The Korean Independence Movement in the United States: Syngman Rhee, An Ch'ang-Ho and Pak Yong-Man," *International Journal of Korean Studies* 4.1 (Spring/Summer 2022): 3.

[31] Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 248.

[32] R. Kim, *The Quest for Statehood*, 42.

Japan, and participate in the new Western learning" as the "vanguard of the nation" who would form the foundation of future Korean independence.[33]

Alongside nationalistic anti-Japanese sentiment, *Sinhanminbo* actively deliberated over the national crisis and served as a platform for diasporic Koreans to express their frustration as well as conceptualize the foundational measures to reclaim Korean sovereignty. According to historian Andre Schmid, the newspaper produced and disseminated "specific modes of knowledge that enable and encourage certain types of activities."[34] *Sinhanminbo* thus played a key role in imagining possibilities of liberation and steering the diasporic Korean nationalist movement in North America.

Sinhanminbo, Global Anti-Colonial Militancy, and the Fragility of Imperial Anxiety

After their homeland was fully colonized, Koreans in the global diaspora bemoaned the loss of their national sovereignty. Ethan Sungkoo Kiehm, who was five at the time, recalled how Koreans in Hawai'i gathered to cry all day and night and burned every Japanese item they owned in a big bonfire.[35] The pages of *Sinhanminbo* were filled with similar emotional stories of loss, lament, and anger as well as news on the immediate oppression in Korea enacted by the Japanese Governor General such as the swift censorship of Korean newspapers.[36] Since the brink of colonization in early 1910, the writers of *Sinhanminbo* deliberated over the circumstances that

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[33] Schmid, *Korea Between Empires,* 244-249.

[34] Ibid., 6.

[35] Yŏng-ho Ch'oe, "The Early Korean Immigration: An Overview," in *From the Land of Hibiscus: Koreans in Hawai'i, 1903-1950,* ed. Yŏng-ho Ch'oe (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 14.

[36] "Chosŏnminjoge taehayŏ sinhanminboŭi kwan'gye" [About the People of Chosŏn, and Their Relations to *Sinhanminbo*], *Sinhanminbo*, March 8, 1911; "Kŭrŏlssubakke" [It Can't Be Helped], *Sinhanminbo*, October 12, 1910.

led to annexation, especially the Korean governments' incompetence and helplessness. One of the main rationale behind the calamity in Korea was a lack of urgency in constructing and modernizing a capable military force within the peninsula. Exactly two months before annexation, one article asked readers, "Why are the abilities of the nation so poor that it is at the mercy of its neighboring countries… [Korea is] 10,000 steps behind in this 20th century struggle for national survival, labelled as a slave nation or a ruined nation, and at the brink of annihilation where 20 million souls may vanish in an instant?"[37] The article laid much of the blame on the governmental failure in pursuing a policy of militarization and developing a culture of militarism. It further claimed that "anyone who wishes for a complete national independence and freedom from violent countries, must train soldiers and become militarized citizens."[38] For the editors of *Sinhanminbo*, the proposed course of action was militarization and a subsequent undertaking of an armed struggle against the Japanese empire.

This sentiment echoed through numerous front-page articles after 1910 especially in 1911 when Pak Yong Man became their new editor-in-chief. Pak and other writers began to mobilize the diasporic Korean readership to prepare for a war for independence against the Japanese empire. *Sinhanminbo* affirmed that it was a lack of preparation that caused Korea's downfall, and for a war of independence to take place, diasporic Koreans needed time to develop a culture of militarism. Pak wrote in an editorial, "There is no one more willing than I, who wants to smash my fist on the table and scream at the top of my lungs, 'let's go fight our war of independence right now!' However, a war of independence is not a simple undertaking that can be completed

[37]Sa Yong Hwang, "Kwihada mugirŭl sungsang hamiyŏ" [Priceless is Glorifying of Arms], *Sinhanminbo,* June 22, 1910.

[38] Ibid.

from dawn to dusk."[39] Another article concurred with Pak, stating, "One cannot learn the XYZs of the alphabet without knowing the ABCs first."[40] This particular article written by Chŏng Hŭi Wŏn, also used examples from European military history such as the battle of Thermopylae and a battle between 600 Bohemian troops and 3000 Russia cavalry, where a much smaller contingent was heavily outnumbered and faced insurmountable odds. Chŏng states that the abilities displayed by the Spartans and Bohemians were due to their training in combat and tactics as well as the mastering of leadership, discipline, strategies, military science, surveying and scouting. All of this demanded immense preparation as they could not be successful in carrying out a war of independence with bravery and nationalism alone.

Pak also utilized his position as editor of *Sinhanminbo* to publish and distribute, *Universal Conscription Theory* (1911), a full-length book detailing his goals of constructing a new Korean nation based on militaristic culture and a strong military that can thwart foreign intrusion. The book covers how a new Korea should be modeled after militarized states like Sparta, and how society must be molded like the military with all citizens fulfilling the role of a soldier who can be ready for war instantly.[41] Pak especially focuses on how military education must take place within all aspects of an individual's livelihood including family, school, society, and the nation and every citizen must develop four essential qualities of a soldier: sense of public

[39] Yong Man Pak, "Chosŏn tongnipŭl hoebokhagi wihayŏ muhyŏng han kukkarŭl mŏnjŏ sŏlliphal il [Establishing a Formless Nation, for the Recovery of Chosŏn], *Sinhanminbo*, April 5, 1911.

[40] Hŭi Wŏn Chŏng, "Siserŭl t'ansikhayŏ ch'ŏngnyŏn tongp'ŏege muyuk ŭl kwŏn'go" [Lamenting Over the Current Times and Urging Military Education to Young Compatriots], *Sinhanminbo*, April 5, 1911.

[41] Yong Man Pak, *Kungmin'gaebyŏngsŏl* [Universal Conscription Theory] (San Francisco, *Sinhanminbosa*, 1911), 4-12.

duty, strong qualification, honor, and perseverance.[42] Pak's teachings through *Universal Conscription Theory* reached independence activists across the Korean diaspora. For example, multiple copies of the book were requested by a representative of Sin Hŭng Military Academy from Ussuriysk, a city close to Vladivastok, when they visited the San Francisco KNA office in August 1912.[43] Sin Hŭng Military Academy was founded in Manchuria by diasporic Korean independent activists in 1911 and is known for training famous independence fighters such as Kim Chwa Jin, Hong Pŏm To, and numerous members of the militant independence organization *Ŭiyŏltan* throughout the 1910s.

As Pak and others produced and disseminated anti-colonial militancy out of the KNA headquarters on Hill Street in San Francisco, another revolutionary diasporic newspaper with their own call for anti-colonial militancy was published and globally disseminated only three miles away on Perry Street. This newspaper was *Ghadar*, the official periodical of the Ghadar Party, a radical diasporic anti-colonial organization that sought to mobilize Indians in the diaspora to overthrow British colonial rule through militant action. Published from their party headquarters, *Ghadar* was also distributed widely across diasporic communities in North America and globally throughout the British Empire in Asia and Africa. *Ghadar*'s global reach was a staggering feat. As Seema Sohi states, by 1915 the newspaper reached China, Japan, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Sumatra, Fiji, Java, Singapore, Egypt, Paris, British East Africa, South

[42] Ibid., 3-7.

[43] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 248.

Africa, South America, Panama, Trinidad, Sudan, Aden, Morocco, Madagascar, Australia, and Jamaica.[44]

Sinhanminbo and *Ghadar* joined numerous revolutionary newspapers that galvanized the colonized diaspora through their global dissemination of militant ideals and calls for arms against imperial occupation of their respective homelands during the early 1900s. Alongside *Ghadar*, *Bande Mataram* and *Free Hindustan* were also published in the Indian diaspora from Paris and Vancouver and spread news about the Indian independence movement from overseas. For these revolutionaries, the diaspora became an important space of resistance as they were unconstrained by censorship, forced closure, and violent repercussions that independence activists faced at home. For example, evolutionary newspapers in the Philippines faced these barriers as *El Renacimiento* was shut down after critiquing the colonial government and the US military empire in 1910, the same fate domestic Korean newspapers faced after annexation the same year.[45]

For diasporic press such as *Sinhanminbo* and *Ghadar*, the core of the US empire became the staging ground for anti-colonial militants to prepare their respective armed struggles. These revolutionaries utilized their fluid and interchangeable subjectivity as migrants (students, workers, exiles, missionaries, ministers) to first establish themselves legitimately in the US then proceeded to mobilize both their diasporic communities and those in their homelands for independence. It is not a coincidence that similar forms of dissent arose three miles away from

[44] Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny:Race, Surveillance, and Indian Anticolonialism in North America,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 59-60.

[45]Moon-Ho Jung, *Menace to Empire: Anticolonial Solidarities and the Transpacific Origins of the US Security State,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022), 92.

each other. Despite their close proximity and similarities in undertaking anti-colonial resistance, the language needed to mobilize collaborative anti-colonial movements has not yet developed. Revolutionary presses were rather preoccupied by their fervent attempts to invigorate their respective compatriots in their homelands and the diasporas. While militancy was a pathway towards independence that various anti-colonial movements in the diaspora engaged in, cultivating possible solidarities between various movements was a difficult task given their priority in galvanizing their own people and negotiating allegiances with powerful nations and empires.

The Korean independence movement was also seperated from other anti-colonial movements that sought liberation from western empires and white supremacy especially after Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Revolutionary newspapers of the Indian and Filipino independence movements joined black intellectuals critical of white supremacy such as W.E.B Du Bois, to praise Japan's triumph. Those colonized by western empires were invigorated by Japan's growing status as a powerful Asiatic empire whose military might challenge white imperial supremacy. Har Dayal, Ghadar Party leader and publisher of *Ghadar*, spoke to a crowd in San Francisco on how Japanese victory "opened a new era for the Asiatic races" and broke down the centuries old color barrier.[46] *El Renacimiento* also claimed that Filipinos want Japan as their leader and guide as it praised Japan as "breath to the existence of the nations of the Orient and of a people gathered under the same name and united by ties of fraternity and of blood more or less strong."[47] Such claims were affirmed by a Japanese speaker who reportedly stated to

[46] M. Jung, *Menace to Empire*, 108.

[47] Ibid., 86

Filipino political activists in a clandestine meeting that Filipinos closely resembled the Japanese and explained that Japan annexed territories like Korea to prevent western empires from doing so.[48] This speaker also claimed that "Filipinos are not in the state of savagery in which the Koreans are."[49] The speaker's positioning of Filipinos over Koreans to promote Pan-Asian solidarity and anti-western imperialism excluded colonial subjects of Japan. As Filipinos gravitated towards the Japanese empire, Koreans did so to the US empire, building on the subservient relationship cultivated by American missionaries and capitalizing on the transpacific imperial rivalry between Japan and the US. Building solidarities amongst various independence movements that sprung globally during this period to combat colonialism and imperialism were extremely challenging as each group naturally positioned themselves alongside and/or under opposing empires.

The Japanese empire's rise as a global power and the possibility of pan-Asian solidarity to thwart white supremacy was a grave threat to both the US and British empires that began to work together to surveillance and police transnational Filipino and Indian revolutionaries within their territorial jurisdiction.[50] While the US and Japanese empire recognized and legitimized each other's territorial claims, the US nonetheless, saw Japan as a "civilized threat to white supremacy."[51] As historian Moon-Ho Jung states, US officials associated "struggles for national liberation (sedition), social revolution (anarchism and socialism), and Japanese imperialism (pan-

[48] Ibid., 93

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 103; Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 82-107.

[51] M. Jung, *Menace to Empire*, 75, 103.

Asian solidarity)" as a singular threat to US security and a "symptom of 'Oriental' depravity and duplicity."[52] As much as the triumph of the Japanese empire and the possibilities of Pan-Asian resistance against western imperial powers and white supremacy was a major interest of Indian and Filipino revolutionaries, the imperial tensions between Japan and the U.S. also opened up spaces of resistance for Korean independence activists in the North American diaspora. As the KNA became the nerve center of Korean independence in North America, the relationship of patronage KNA leaders established with US missionaries, settler colonists, and white American officials, shaped the direction of liberation under the stewardship of the US empire. Their focus on assimilation through western education, religion, and civilization as well as being staunchly anti-Japanese made the diasporic Korean independence movement possible in North America. However, diasporic Korean militarists had to tread carefully not to agitate the imperial anxieties of the US and demonstrated their conformity, gratitude, loyalty, and non-threatening disposition of their militancy that could be perceived as "sedition".

It is extremely difficult to locate interactions that may have led to the germination of anti-colonial solidarities against multiple empires in the historical archives of diasporic independence movements. Observing written documentations alone reveals that cross-racial solidarities against all forms of imperialism seem impossible especially from the diasporic Korean perspective. However, possible avenues of anti-colonial solidarities through unaccounted encounters have likely existed on the streets of San Francisco between Hill and Perry Street, on the ships that carried *Ghadar* and *Sinhanminbo* and their messages of liberation across oceans, and on sugar plantations in Hawai‘i where migrant workers and various colonial subjects converged to work

[52] Ibid., 104.

and fight for better wages. What they do reveal is that the notion of liberation from various imperialisms was multifaceted, fluid, and often contradictory in nature as each group was content with the colonial oppression of others they sought as inferior. Anti-imperial independence movements during this period mostly gravitated towards imagined alliances enticed by the "promises of freedom" of opposing empires.[53] However, such imaginations were volatile and temporary as it was one of the empires' numerous anxious attempts to maintain the legitimacy of their colonial occupation across the globe by contesting an opposing, rivaling empire. At any moment, the revolutionaries and the empire they were inclined to follow may challenge each other as the attempts to maintain these imagined alliances were founded upon shaky grounds.

The next section will explore such volatile development through the dissemination of militant ideals and the practice of militarism in *Sinhanminbo,* and the establishment and operation of NYMA, all of which were directed under the leadership of Pak Yong Man. Pak and the diasporic Korean militarists navigated the cultivation of radical militancy under the patronage of Christian leaders, officials, and locals who solely viewed them as passive students and targets of proselytization.

Forming the Foundation of Diasporic Korean Militarism

Ever since Pak Yong Man arrived in the US in 1905, he used his close ties to other exiled political activists and missionaries to organize Koreans towards his militaristic goals by first building relationships with various Korean and US organizations. Pak Yong Man was one of many exiled political figures who was imprisoned in Korea for mobilizing an opposing political faction against the royal court. He was released within months with the help from his uncle and

[53] Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 175.

American missionaries with connections to the Korean government, but was dismayed by the dysfunction of the political atmosphere in Korea and concluded that its sovereignty was quickly fleeting.[54] Supported by missionaries and church organizations, Pak arrived in California in February 1905 and spent the first six months planning to organize Koreans with *Taedongbogukhoe* and worked briefly as an assistant minister for the United Methodist Church.[55] From 1906 to 1907, Pak and his uncle Pak Jang Hyŏn operated employment and study abroad agencies exclusively for Koreans in Colorado (Denver) and Nebraska (Kearney and Lincoln).[56] Pak and his uncle negotiated the contracts of Korean workers with various railroad companies in Omaha and Kearney and persuaded community leaders to take in young Korean students as school boys who provided domestic services while attending school in exchange for rent, food, living expenses, and/or tuition.[57] They also relied heavily on their close ties to American missionaries as they attempted to convince white American employers and families to hire Korean workers and students. American missionaries' advocacy of the uncle-nephew duo reassured companies and locals that the Korean workers and students would be as they were recommended: diligent, obedient, faithful, and honest. Due to the Pak duo's efforts, 80% of Korean international students obtained schooling and resided in Nebraska and its surrounding area in 1911.[58]

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[54] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa,* 25-26.

[55] Ibid., 24, 51.

[56] To Hun Kim, "1910nyŏndae Pak Yong Man ŭi chŏngch'isasang" [Pak Yong Man's Political Philosophy in the 1910s], *Han'gukminjokhakyŏn'gu* 4 (October 1999): 4.

[57] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa,* 51-53.

[58] T.H. Kim, "1910nyŏndae," 34.

The early 1910s was a crucial period for diasporic Korean militarists. With Pak Yong Man at the helm as editor of *Sinhanminbo,* militaristic ideals centered on how they should prepare for a war for independence were shared and openly discussed throughout the Korean diaspora. During this period Pak established the NYMA and with his supporters, consulted and assisted in establishing youth military initiatives across the US and Hawai‘i. Their main goal was to practice what they had exhorted in writing by cultivating young Korean men as proper citizen-soldiers who would retake their homeland by force and establish a new, modern Korea. Beyond NYMA, the multiple initiatives led to the founding of a military training class at the Los Angeles Claremont student training center, Kansas Youth Military Institute, Superior Youth Military Institute in Wyoming, the military exercise division of the Hawai‘i KNA, and the Great Chosŏn Citizens Army.[59]

The Nebraska Youth Military Academy

Establishing NYMA at Hastings College in 1910 was the culmination of a multi-year project that included Pak’s efforts to bring young Korean students to Nebraska. Pak himself also settled to attend the University of Nebraska from 1908 to 1912 to study military science and enrolled in their ROTC program. NYMA was originally founded in Cho Jin Ch’an’s farm in Kearney, Nebraska after Pak and his supporters received permission from the regional government office to operate a small military academy. Part of his staff was also two former soldiers of the disbanded Korean Army, Kim Jang Ho and Lee Jong Ch'ŏl, who were able to enroll at local military high schools as older students with Pak’s assistance.[60] The staff developed

[59] Ibid., 37-38.

[60] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 132.

a training regime utilizing their military experience and the first group of 13 students began training in 1909.[61] NYMA's relocation to Hastings College in 1910 was a crucial moment for Pak and the Korean militarists. Pak was introduced to P.L. Johnson, the secretary of the board of directors and the treasurer of Hastings College, by Syngman Rhee who had a close relationship with Johnson. Rhee, who would go on to become the first president of the Republic of Korea, was a 'sworn brother' of Pak after they were imprisoned together in Korea for protesting the corruption of the ruling Korean government in 1894.[62] After their initial meeting and interview, Johnson became very fond of Pak and decided to support his ambitious project. With approval from the Hastings College board of directors, the NYMA was granted- free of charge- a whole furnished dormitory, cafeteria, classrooms, a field to farm, and access to fields in the school grounds to utilize for their military training. NYMA would operate during the long summer breaks (May to September) as well as during winter breaks when the facilities would be mostly empty of students and staff.[63]

Sinhanminbo praised Johnson in an article titled "With Johnson's Permission, Nebraska Youth Military Academy," emphasizing his decisive role in establishing NYMA as well as Hastings College's hospitality by remarking "our students did not have to buy a single spoon and

[61] "Sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyoŭi yŏksa."

[62] Rhee had established connections with politicians and Christian elites during his studies at Harvard and sought to lobby for Korean independence through the influential relationships he developed. He also was connected to numerous ministers and missionaries as he served as the YMCA coordinator and missionary to Korea and participated in an array of Christian conferences and revival gatherings in the United States. It is from this context that his relationship with Johnson most likely developed. Henry Cu Kim, "Usŏng, Pak Yong-man: A Short Biography," in *The Writings of Henry Cu Kim: Autobiography with Commentaries on Syngman Rhee, Pak Yong-man, and Ch*ŏng Sun-man, ed. and trans. Dae-Sook Suh (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), 255; Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 25.

[63] "Sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyoŭi yŏksa."

were able to focus on their studies and training with abundance."[64] *Sinhanminbo* often spoke glowingly about white Americans who helped NYMA during its operation in Hastings College. An article titled "The Necessity for Military Education" published in 1914 stated, "even westerners of different race and skin color are helping us with all of their heart and sincerity…Is this not a sign of opportunity given by the heavens?"[65] For diasporic Korean militarists and *Sinhanminbo* writers, the approval and support of their efforts to establish and operate a military academy justified the legitimacy of their militancy.

26 students enrolled for NYMA's inaugural school year at Hastings College. The day-to-day schedule resembled the barracks life of basic training in the military. The students would wake up to the morning bugle at six for inspection and breakfast, then either work for 20-25 cents an hour in Hastings residents' homes doing manual labor and chores, or work at the school farm until noon.[66] According to Johnson, the students "live off of physical labor, are reliable and suitable workers for miscellaneous work, and will be welcomed by our community."[67] Many of the students were accustomed to working for white American households. For example, three cadets, Chŏng Yang P'il, I Kwan Su, and Yu Il Han; were school boys introduced to prominent white American families in Nebraska by Pak. Working as school boys was common among Korean students in the United States as they lived and worked as servants in their employers'

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[64] "Tchansŭnssiŭi hŏrakhan neburasŭk'a sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyo."

[65] "Muyugŭi p'ilyo" [The Necessity for Military Education], *Sinhanminbo,* March 21, 1914.

[66] Yong Man Pak, "Sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyo haksaengŭi saeng hwal" [Youth Military Academy Students' Lives], *Sinhanminbo,* May 10, 1911.

[67] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi,* 26.

homes or in school dormitories while working as janitors.[68] It is also likely that Johnson provided the necessary connections so that many of the students were able to find part-time work in Hastings. After lunch and break time, the students would study for two hours, change into military uniform and train in military tactics, drills, marching in columns, and rifle handling until evening at six.[69] Physical education such as ball games, running, wrestling, and shooting followed and after another study session a bugle played lights out. The NYMA also formed different clubs and sports teams such as the NYMA baseball team and relay running team, the English literacy society, the debate club, and the drama club.[70] During the six years NYMA was in operation from 1909 to 1914, a total of 167 cadets attended the summer and winter sessions with over 40 graduates and 1911 was the most successful year with 44 registered cadets and 13 graduates.[71]

[68] Yong Man Pak, "Sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyo haksaengŭi saeng hwal."

[69] Ibid.

[70] Creigh, *Tales from the Prairie Volume 2*, 50; Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi,* 31; "Sonyŏnbyŏnghakkyo Kyŏngjugun" [Relay Racing Team Members of the Youth Military Academy], *Sinhanminbo*, May 3, 1911.

[71] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 159.

Figure 1.1: NYMA cadets in front of Ringland Hall in Hastings College.

Test Subjects of Proselytization and Domestic Missionary Training

At the NYMA graduation ceremony in 1912, 50 prominent Korean immigrants, community leaders, and independence activists from across the US and Hawai‘i joined around 100 white guests, mostly Hastings College officials and residents who have been accustomed to the cadets in their community.[72] During the graduation banquet, a Hastings resident who became very fond of the NYMA cadets stated:

[72] “Sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyo cholŏp yesik” [Youth Military Academy Graduation Ceremony], *Sinhanminbo,* November 4, 1912.

> "For the duration of the time the Korean students have been with us, I have never seen nor heard of any ungentlemanly or disrespectful acts of impudence concerning these boys. We make an effort to teach our children, the brave and upright temperament as well as the earnest manner in which one should follow his life goals, something we have seen firsthand from these foreigners. Unfortunately, our children, even with our proud Christian education, have failed many times to serve as an exemplary model."[73]

Such warm reception of the NYMA from the Hastings community presents a narrative of reciprocal relationship and cultivation of multi-racial co-existence. However, despite the seemingly glowing remarks, the statement clearly differentiates the Koreans as *foreigners* from the white Christian majority that has full ownership and control over "*our* proud Christian education." Through his contribution to the Hastings College newspaper *Outlook* on July 15th, 1910, Johnson had introduced the Korean visitors as unsophisticated individuals who longed for western knowledge and culture after their initial contact with missionaries in Korea.[74] He claimed that hundreds of students crossed the Pacific after their contact with American missionaries and "earnestly sought the light," which included their conversion to Christianity and longing for a "superior Western education."[75] Such description of the Korean visitors was also echoed by local Hastings historian Dorthy Weyer Creigh who claimed that "Christian missionaries, some of them graduates of Hastings College, told young [Korean] people about democratic government and created in them a desire for liberty."[76] According to Creigh, it was the missionaries who planted their longing for freedom from Japanese colonization and an establishment of a liberated nation under a western-style governance.

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[73] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 35-36.

[74] Ibid., 25.

[75] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 26.

[76] Creigh, *Tales from the Prairie Volume 2*, 50.

The community member's experience with the NYMA staff and students also affirmed Johnson's presentation of the Koreans' temperament as "trustworthy" and "hardworking," a disposition that the Koreans had to justify through their engagement with the Hastings community. Their progress was constantly witnessed and surveilled by locals in Churches they attended together, their property where the students worked as school boys and part time laborers, and Hastings College where local Christian ministers visited to teach bible study and officials like Johnson frequented to observe the students. After one of these visits Johnson identified the NYMA cadets and staff as "the finest of that race" who took great care of the space rented out to them and claimed "the dormitory was as clean and neat as the ones in West Point."[77] "Cleanliness" became an essential component of American identity at the turn of the twentieth century as racializing discourses of hygiene and health defined the identities of citizens and non-citizens as well as their relationship to the nation.[78] What all of these interactions also reveal are that the Koreans were placed in a position of tutelage to be taught, proselytized, surveilled, and judged in their civilizing progress, as well as in a servile position as their part-time employees.

More importantly, for Johnson and officials in power who approved the establishment of NYMA on the school grounds of Hastings College, their primary reason for inviting a group of Koreans to be a part of their community was the opportunity to practice domestic missionary training. According to historian Ahn Hyŏng Ju, the settlement of Koreans in Hastings and the establishment of NYMA is directly connected to the history of missionary practices in the

[77] Creigh, *Tales from the Prairie Volume 2*, 51; Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 26.

[78] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 12.

Midwest and the formation of small, farming communities like Hastings.[79] For 300 years domestic missionaries had failed to convert Native Americans as they disregarded Native cultures, forced English literacy, and "attempted to make them white."[80] These attempts resulted in the forced displacement of Native Americans to reservations to make room for white settlers. When US missionaries shifted their interest to Asia, Christian communities in Hastings and throughout the Midwest were keenly interested in their successful methods of proselytization as missionaries and ministers shared their experiences through testimonies during their visits.[81] The Korean students and workers who settled in towns like Kearney, Hastings, and Omaha with Pak's help were the perfect subjects to practice domestic missionary work. The Korean students and workers were also semi to fully literate, highly receptive to assimilation, and subservient to their white teachers, ministers, and bosses. The Christian leaders in Hastings thus believed that proselytizing the Korean visitors and training educated converts to conduct missionary work of their own in their own communities and nations when they return would be the most effective.

Like most of the early Korean exiles and migrants, the students and staff of NYMA led by Pak fit the criteria of having the highest probability of successful proselytization. And with many already having been introduced to Christianity by missionaries in Korea who helped them immigrate, Johnson and the Hastings College officials saw the Koreans as model subjects for the Hastings community to engage in missionary practices. In his contribution to the Hastings College newspaper *Outlook*, Johnson stated:

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[79] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 289-290.

[80] Ibid., 290.

[81] Ibid., 289-291.

> "…from my experience in meeting them [staff and students of NYMA], they work hard, study hard, were credible during our dealings, and trustworthy as I was highly satisfied after forming a fellowship with them…This is a step for us that would call attention to the craft of missionary work in the domestic arena and here lies an opportunity to build fellowship with these individuals who will certainly conduct themselves credibly…These are people who will return to their home country to participate in their national development."[82]

For Johnson, proselytizing the visiting foreigners who will return to their country to spread the gospel and for local white residents to practice missionary work in the "domestic arena" were the two main reasons to house NYMA in Hastings College. His missionary fervor was also echoed by his wife who was an experienced missionary to Northeastern Asia and a member of the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union. Many in the Hastings community concurred with Johnson, such as local church pastor Dr. Weyer (Dorothy Weyer Creigh's father) and Reverend Brown, a missionary to Syria and Hastings College faculty member, who volunteered to lead bible study as part of the NYMA curriculum.[83]

To the delight of Hastings officials, by the end of the first summer session, all of the cadets had converted to Christianity after a revival rally presided by Syngman Rhee during his first visit to the NYMA.[84] The Koreans were also successful in building "fellowship" with the locals as Hastings officials had hoped, as they were invited to community events to demonstrate military drills in the pre-flight festivities before an airplane took off in Hastings for the first time in 1911, and during the Independence Day celebrations in 1913.[85] They also invited the locals to NYMA events and ceremonies such as their graduation as well as the presentation of the NYMA

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[82] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 26.

[83] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 25; An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 137.

[84] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 36.

[85] Creigh, *Tales from the Prairie Volume 2*, 50.

drama club's four-act play.[86] These communal engagements all validate the community member's praise of the NYMA students and how the NYMA successfully presented their proximity to whiteness.

From the perspective of Hastings officials, their purpose of allowing NYMA to flourish in Hastings through the goals they set were fully met. The Koreans also met the criteria of acceptable foreignness and civilizing potential in the manner which they had been introduced to the locals. Their diligence, work-ethic, trustworthiness, cleanliness, and most importantly their receptive and servile attitude towards Christianity as well as their white teachers, ministers, and employers justified how they were received. Responding to the praise from the Hastings community member during the graduation ceremony was Syngman Rhee, who presided as the keynote speaker. Rhee stated, "Our young men have been taught and trained to be mirrors of their home country. It is through us that outsiders understand Korea. We represent all of Korea."[87] Rhee was fully content with how the Korean students were received as this earlier diasporic Korean representation of the model minority. Such perception was fully compatible with his goals and philosophy regarding the role of the Korean diaspora in the US -- to be perceived as civilized and educated. Rhee sought to mobilize these sophisticated Koreans to gain popular sentiment from prominent white Americans and to lobby for their independence.

The NYMA cadets were represented as the antithesis of "the yellow peril." In the early twentieth century, Asians in the United States were depicted as either a foreign menace or as subservient others who could be taught western knowledge and Christianity. Whether they were

[86] Ibid.

[87] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 36.

represented as racial threats or as domesticable beings, the racialization of Asians served to validate white American cultural, educational and spiritual supremacy. As Lisa Lowe points out, Asian immigrants derive from fundamentally "foreign" origins and it is the US nation-state that "discovers," "welcomes," and "domesticates" them.[88] While the Hastings community member in the graduation ceremony modestly pointed out their shortcomings and acknowledged the NYMA students' earnestness and hard work, this also reinforced white American superiority as it was their education and culture. What the foreigners were striving to achieve was already the hallmark of white Americans. The successful project of proselytizing and civilizing the NYMA students enabled Hastings residents to reaffirm their white American national identity.[89]

Conflicting Identities: Feminized Domestic Laborer or Masculine Soldier

Much of how the Koreans were perceived by Hastings College officials and community members contradicted how the NYMA staff, especially Pak Yong Man, presented its students -- hypermasculine soldiers and future leaders of Korea, not passive and servile student-workers. The representation of the NYMA students by the Hastings College officials and by extension the Hastings community was denigrating for Pak as it was antithetical to his vision of cultivating proud citizen soldiers. He stated that leading a difficult life as a school boy is filled with "…numerous humiliating circumstances such as working for 2-3 dollars a week to pay for school supplies and clothing, but that life qualifies the student as a future commander of a war for independence. Even yellow faced Han Xin lived in destitution and begged for food in Hoeŭm

[88] Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 5.

[89] Ibid., 4.

castle."[90] How the cadets were perceived was nonetheless a necessity for the maintenance of their proximity to whiteness and more importantly, for the continuation of diasporic Korean militancy through NYMA as its core apparatus. Thus, Pak had to reluctantly integrate his militarizing project as a subsidiary to the domestic missionary training project of the Hastings officials. Pak further stated that living through difficulties and humiliation is part of a NYMA student's training: "A NYMA cadet is a student who endures hardship while he studies…his ability to endure is his strength, and living with perseverance is the custom of NYMA cadets."[91]

Beyond the subservient conditions shaped by the racialized relationship with Hastings residents, NYMA cadets also had to endure habitual racism and discrimination they experienced as Korean students in all-white schools. For example, cadet You Il Hang changed his Korean first name to 'Il Han' and how his last name was written to 'Neu' after classmates consistently called him 'I will hang you' with similar threats which can be assumed as calls for lynching.[92] Two cadets, Kim Ch'ang Ho and Koo Yŏng Suk, who attended Blees Military Academy in Macon, Missouri with financial sponsorship from Pak also faced various forms of discrimination at the historically elite military academy. Koo was forced to relinquish his valedictorian status to the salutatorian student after he couldn't pay the registration fees in time and both Korean students' pictures were omitted from the school directory where all the white students' pictures

[90] Han Xin was a general during the Chu-Han Contention who served and assisted Liu Bang in founding the Han dynasty. This analogy points to the fact that Han Xin was destitute and suffered humiliation before he became a great military commander. Yong Man Pak, "Sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyo haksaengŭi saeng hwal."

[91] Yong Man Pak, "Sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyo haksaengŭi saeng hwal."

[92] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 66-67.

were present.[93] Teaching students to practice perseverance to overcome humiliation was one way Pak was able to align his teachings in cultivating proud soldiers with the reality of the racialized condition in which the cadets had to navigate every day at NYMA. Pak believed such chagrin was sufferable enough for the young NYMA students to build their character as perseverance was one of the four essential qualities of a soldier outlined in *Universal Conscription Theory*. Confronting the issue was out of the question as it would challenge the proselytization and domestication project of white Americans in Hastings. The acceptance of casual racism and the acknowledgement of their subservient positionality exemplifies how the Korean militarists and the NYMA cadets maintained their proximity to whiteness.

For NYMA school boys in Hastings, the feminized domestic role they played was reinforced by their subservient position under white tutelage as subjects of proselytization and recipients of western civilization. School boys served the same purpose as Asian male domestic workers who were called house boys.[94] As Joo Ok Kim states, "the very name links engrained understandings of domesticity in 'house' to a presumably undeveloped masculinity in 'boy,' a designation stripped of an ostensibly threatening masculinity."[95] However, the very 'threatening' masculinity that the role of school boy supposedly diminished, was exactly the masculinity that NYMA required the cadets to cultivate through martial education. In a *Sinhanminbo* article titled "The Worth of Martial Education," T.L. Sang states that "the youth military academy (referring

[93] Ibid., 189.

[94] House boys became prominent in World War Two and the Korean War where local boys and men served occupying US soldiers and fulfilled domestic duties for their livelihoods and were called 'boys' no matter their age. Joo Ok Kim, *Warring Genealogies: Race, Kinship, and the Korean War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2022), 89.

[95] Ibid.

to NYMA) is a call for real men (*sanai*), it is not an invitation for little girls (*kyejipai*)."[96] A *sanai* connotes a virile young man at the peak of his manhood while *kyejipai* is a derogatory term for unmarried young women and adolescent girls. Sang further comments on the article that NYMA calls for "fully grown men (*jangbu)* with the loyal, brave, noble, and heroic qualities of a Korean *sanai*, not the weak, foolish, inferior, and cowardly child."[97] This sort of militarized masculinity was at the center of NYMA's curriculum and training regime.

At NYMA, the cadets sang military and marching songs while they trained to reinforce their masculinity, bravery, and commitment to Korean liberation. The military songs were also modified as a cheer song titled "A Song of the Male Youth" for the NYMA baseball team which begins with "A young man with cast iron physique and stone muscles, press on the patriotic spirit…" as the first verse.[98] With their classmates cheering and singing aloud, the NYMA baseball team amassed a remarkable record of 12 wins, 1 loss and 2 ties playing other schools and locally organized teams in 1912.[99] The baseball team's success reveals much about the culture of militarized masculinity cultivated in the NYMA. The cadets demonstrated their physical and masculine prowess competing (and mostly winning) against all white local boys their age as the Hastings community watched. Dorothy Weyer Creigh, who witnessed one of these games, remarked that the Korean boys were becoming quite skilled in "American

[96] T.L. Sang, "Muyeŭi kach'i" [The Worth of Martial Education], *Sinhanminbo*, May 31, 1911.

[97] A *jangbu* connotes a mature young man with leadership capabilities, a similar term to *sanai*. Ibid.

[98] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 194-196.

[99] "Sonyŏnbyŏnghakkyo kyŏkkudae" [Youth Military Academy Baseball Team], *Sinhanminbo*, July 29, 1912.

athletics."[100] The far-reaching potential of proper martial education and militarized masculinity is also outlined by T.L. Sang, who laments, "if we had revered martial education earlier, we would not have lost our country, and we would have had the power to oppress other nations…"[101] Such desire for power, especially imagining Korea as a militarized nation capable of defending itself and oppressing other nations stemmed from the very 'threatening' masculinity that was supposed to be stymied through their gendered and racialized positionality. Pak rather turned the cadets' perceived inferiority and humiliation as a lesson in perseverance to continue to further instill militarized masculinity and martial education as foundational components of diasporic Korean militarism.

In addition to the interchangeable gendered roles played by NYMA cadets, how the Hastings College officials and local community members viewed the NYMA fundamentally differed from Pak Yong Man and the diasporic Korean militarists in that cultivating radical militancy, a core component of Pak's militarizing project, mattered very little. For example, Dorothy Weyer Creigh stated that the purpose of the NYMA was to train "young Korean intellectuals to take over Korean governmental functions upon the eventual overthrow of the Japanese occupation."[102] While this is somewhat an accurate depiction, emphasis on an approaching armed struggle and an independence war was diminished through assessing the students as "intellectuals," not "soldiers." The Hastings community viewed the NYMA as a hub of western education and civilization that taught American and Christian values and culture, not

[100] Creigh, *Tales from the Prairie Volume 2,* 50.

[101] T.L. Sang, "Muyeŭi kach'i."

[102] Creigh, *Tales from the Prairie Volume 2,* 50.

a training facility for a rebel army. This was also a sentiment shared by Syngman Rhee who was impressed by the NYMA's integration into the Hastings community but was nonetheless displeased by Pak's focus on militarization. During his first visit to NYMA, he reprimanded Pak by stating that preparing for an armed struggle was a mere fantasy; training for war as guests was disloyal to their hosts; and mobilizing the Korean diaspora should be conducted passively through churches, not militant movements with a political agenda.[103]

While Pak disagreed vehemently with Rhee, he was well aware of the fact that he had to carefully navigate the notion of radical militancy and his goal of militarizing the diasporic Korean populous by presenting NYMA in a non-threatening manner. NYMA was thus introduced to Johnson and the Hastings officials as a place of learning rather than a military training center. Pak was also cognizant of the power of public sentiment from the white American majority when it came to their perception of Asians as a threatening foreign horde especially from the demise of the *Kanseong* School, a diasporic Chinese military academy formed in California in the early 1900s. As one of the organizers of *Taedongbogukhoe*, Pak had established ties with the *Baohuanghui* or the Chinese Empire Reform Association in the United States established by Kang Youwei in 1899. *Baohuanghui* sought to mobilize the Chinese diaspora in North America to support the Guangxu Emperor's return to the throne, which had been taken through a coup by Empress Dowager Cixi. Pak was keenly interested in the *Kanseong* School in Los Angeles, a military academy that mobilized and trained diasporic Chinese students and workers as the *Baohuanghui* Army who would return to China to overthrow the government and restore the previous emperor. At its peak, the *Kanseong* School bolstered 2100 cadets across

[103] H.C. Kim, "Usŏng Pak Yong Man," 269.

California and received permits from the California state government.[104] However, due to public concerns and fears of a Chinese rebel army training with military grade rifles and the issues regarding storage of ammunition in public space, the school was closed permanently in 1905.[105]

After the dissolution of the *Kanseong* School, Pak needed to be keenly aware of how a military academy for Koreans would be received and devise his training curriculum in ways that would not pose a threat to nearby locals. The curriculum of NYMA was formulated by Pak to focus on education as much as military drills and drastically reduced the use of firearms by limiting their usage to shooting drills. An Hyŏng Ju assesses that training and participating in community events with mock wooden rifles was to temper the fears of local residents at Hastings.[106] The shooting drills with military grade rifles and live ammunition only took place in open fields away from the public eye.[107] The discrepancy of how militarism was perceived by diasporic Korean militarists and the Hastings locals can be understood through the words of Dorothy Weyer Creigh and *Sinhanminbo* regarding military training at NYMA. Creigh claimed that "the students had no guns but used wooden sticks for their rifle and bayonet practice."[108] However, multiple *Sinhanminbo* articles from 1911 showed images of NYMA staff and students handling rifles and one article from 1914 revealed the top two marksmanship scores from a

[104] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 39.

[105] Ibid., 42.

[106] Ibid., 170.

[107] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 175-176.

[108] Creigh, *Tales from the Prairie Volume 2,* 50.

shooting competition that took place in NYMA.[109] Pak was mostly successful in tempering public fears regarding military training and firearm use as the Hastings residents rarely witnessed the NYMA cadets use live firearms, instead they were cheered on during parades and community events as they marched with wooden mock rifles.

Despite the outlook of the Hastings community and diasporic Korean activists like Rhee who found military education to be trivial, militarizing the Korean diaspora and by extension all Koreans in the future to establish a militarized nation-state after liberation was Pak's main purpose. Utilizing wooden guns and having the cadets fulfill a gendered role as school boys alleviated white fears of a dangerous Asian conclave even though the NYMA was able to fully implement militarized masculinity and martial education to cultivate their militancy. Pak was thus able to strive for his militaristic goals while both presenting NYMA's proximity to whiteness and fulfilling the Hastings' officials wishes in being used as subjects of domestic missionary training. All of this was instrumental in maintaining NYMA in Hastings College from 1910 to 1914.

Unexpected Demise of Diasporic Korean Militarism

After a run of six years that started with a handful of students at Kearney in 1909, The NYMA closed its doors after the summer session of 1914 due to lack of funding and inconsistent enrollment numbers. Because NYMA operated during summer and winter breaks with cadets who prioritized education at their own schools away from Hastings, it was extremely difficult to promote diasporic Korean militarism to the extent that Pak had conceived. Realizing this earlier

[109] "Chojinch'anssi nongjangesŏ pyŏng sagyŏk yŏnsŭp" [Military Shooting Practice at Cho Jin Chan's Farm], *Sinhanminbo*, May 17, 1911; "Pyŏnghaktoŭi sagyŏkyŏnsŭp" [Military Academy Students' Shooting Practice], *Sinhanminbo*, July 23, 1914; "Sonyŏnbyŏng hakkyoŭi yŏksa".

on, Pak left Hastings and relocated to Hawai‘i in 1912, leaving NYMA in charge of the existing staff members. Pak had a grander plan to practice what he had been writing and preaching through *Sinhanminbo* and *Universal Conscription Theory*: to militarize the Korean populous to prepare for war with Japan and to establish a modern nation with a capable military force.[110] The same summer of 1914 when NYMA closed down, Pak established the Great Chosŏn Citizens Army (GCCA), targeting the 7500 Korean immigrants residing in Hawai‘i as the subjects of militarization through martial education. The stakes were high as the GGCA became the only physical embodiment of Pak's militant philosophy. The GCCA commenced on a positive note with support from the KNA branch of Hawai‘i and the U.S territorial government. Around 240 students attended the first year GCCA was in full operation, which was more than the 167 NYMA students who had enrolled during its six-year run in Nebraska.[111] The GCCA operated out of their 1500-acre training compound, which was a pineapple plantation leased for five years by the Libby Company located in Kahaluu.[112]

The GCCA abruptly closed in October of 1916 after being in operation for only two years. The unexpected closure was fundamentally connected to the complex relationship between the Japanese and US empires. Correspondence between the Hawai‘i Governor Lucius E. Pinkham and Secretary of State Robert Lansing reported that the Japanese ambassador in Washington unofficially filed a complaint on the radical activities of Korean immigrants,

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[110] An, *Pak Yong Man kwa*, 236.

[111] There are discrepancies between the numbers of enrolled students from the works of Ch'oe, Pang and Kim. The total number of enrolled students at GCCA varies between 150~240. Kim To Hun, "1910nyŏndae Pak Yong Man," 151; Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi,* 80; Yŏng-ho Ch'oe, "Pak Yong Man," *Han'guksa simin'gangjwa* 47 (2010): 113.

[112] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 80; Ch'oe, "Pak Yong Man," 113. Ch'oe states 1360 acres while Pang states 1660 acres.

especially the KNA and GCCA in Hawai‘i, which claimed that they were attempting to overthrow Japanese control through a “revolution in Korea.”[113] The Japanese ambassador protested the inaction of the U.S. government and stated that if these anti-Japanese activities were permitted, the Japanese empire has no choice but to conclude that hostilities will arise between the United States and Japan. Even though Pinkham dismissed the revolutionary activities of the KNA and GCCA as trivial, the Libby Company abruptly canceled the lease of the pineapple farm that served as the GCCA training compound.[114] FBI agent John Sterling Adams stated in a report of Korean activities that “the plantation authorities asked them to leave believing that their motives were inimical to local government and interests” after interacting with one of the former students of the GCCA.[115] It is most likely the case that Pinkham contacted the Libby Company to cancel the contract outright after his correspondence with Lansing, or after subsequent pressure from Washington to do so.

In Hastings, Pak was able to balance martial education with the religious purposes of Hastings College officials by navigating NYMA’s teachings of military doctrine and masculine culture with their subservient position as students of western civilization and subjects of proselytization. This sort of arrangement was unattainable in Hawai‘i because the ruling administration’s prioritization of their relationship with the Japanese government that was much more pressing and relevant. Besides acquiring the loyalty of diasporic Koreans, the US territorial government in Hawai‘i did not have a reciprocal relationship with diasporic Korean militarists in which they directly benefited from the established racialized hierarchy as Hastings officials had

[113] Ch’oe, “Pak Yong Man”, 116-117.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi,* 88.

through their domestic missionary project. When international diplomacy between US and Japan was jeopardized by the diasporic Korean militarists' presence in Hawai‘i where the two empires interacted economically, American interests, without a doubt, leaned towards diplomacy. In Hawai'i, the diasporic Koreans' proximity to whiteness mattered little. The failure in Hawai‘i was also based on Pak's exclusive focus on developing a positive relationship with the ruling administration. He never took into account the significant presence of competing ethnic factions surrounding the Koreans who all negotiated and dealt with the US territorial government in Hawai‘i and by extension the US empire. Pak's inability to map out the potential points of conflict exposed a glaring blind spot that contributed to the downfall of diasporic Korean militarism.

After the closure of both the NYMA and GCCA, Pak and the diasporic Korean militarists gradually lost their impact especially due to Syngman Rhee's influence within the KNA. Pak Yong Man relocated to Northeast Asia to collaborate with diasporic Korean nationalists in Moscow, Beijing, Shanghai, and Vladivostok to further advocate for militarism in diasporic Korean communities in the far East.[116] However, without the political connections he possessed in the United States and Hawai‘i, he drew the ire of experienced independence activists in Asia and his constant movement across different borders drew suspicion, with some accusing him of collaborating with Japanese officials after his visit to Korea in 1923.[117] On 16 October 1928, Pak

[116] Ch'oe, "Pak Yong Man," 121-122.

[117] Ibid., 123.

was assassinated by *ŭiyŏldan* member I Hae Myŏng in Beijing under orders from the militant independence organization leadership that implicated him as a spy and collaborator.[118]

Pak's relocation and death after his return to Asia officially terminated any hopes for the cultivation of a war for independence from North America before World War II when many diasporic Korean Americans enlisted to validate their allegiance to the US and to fight against a common enemy in Japan.[119] What remained a constant was that any political action taken by diasporic Korean Americans, necessitated the validation of white American authorities, which was granted through the presentation of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness.

Conclusion

The maintenance of diasporic Korean proximity to whiteness was at the core of how diasporic Korean militarism was cultivated amongst the first generation of Korean migrants in North America. The establishment and sustenance of NYMA was contingent upon the Koreans abiding by their roles set by Hastings college officials to be subservient students of civilization and subjects of proselytization. They were crucial in the initiation of a domestic missionary project, and the Koreans aspirations for liberation through armed struggle was considered a non-factor to white American officials and local Hastings residents. Nonetheless, such perceptions of the NYMA cadets as willing students and submissive workers were crucial in maintaining the academy and the cultivation of diasporic Korean militarism. Under Pak Yong Man's leadership

[118] *Ŭiyŏldan* was a militant Korean independence organization based in Southern Korea. Ibid., 132.

[119] Numerous diasporic Korean Americans served in the armed forces and government agencies with their duties ranging from interpreters (mainly for Japanese speaking Koreans) to intelligence officers and propaganda broadcasters. Some renown units and individuals were: Colonel Young Oak Kim, the commanding officer of the Japanese American 442nd regiment; military aviator Fred Ohr; and the all-Korean California National Guard unit known as the tiger brigade. Bong-youn Choy, *Koreans in America,* (Chicago, Nelson-Hall Inc., 1979), 174.

the NYMA flourished as a space where diasporic Korean militarists deployed their proximity to whiteness to strive for their goals of militancy and liberation, despite the restrictions they faced. The maintenance of NYMA partially fulfilled what Pak and the diasporic Korean militarists sought to achieve.

The demise of diasporic Korean militarism that occurred in Hawai‘i through the Japanese ambassador’s complaints also revealed the limitations of proximity to whiteness. Even though Pak established similar relations with local and territorial officials, US government’s foreign relations with Japan was prioritized over what Pak was able to offer. The history of NYMA and diasporic Korean militarism in North America is thus an example of the limitations that diasporic Korean Americans faced through their racialized status in the US and how they navigated access provided by US institutions.

Chapter 2

Cross-Racial Encounters and the Limitation of Diasporic Korean American Proximity to Whiteness

For the Korean American diaspora after the colonization of the Korean peninsula by Japan, their proximity to whiteness proved to be foundational to their efforts to regain their sovereignty and to mobilize support from overseas. For example from April 14-16, 1919, in Philadelphia, diasporic Korean American leaders and around 200 delegates from Korean communities throughout North America and Europe convened the "First Korean Congress" to mobilize support for the Korean Independence Movement and to sway US public support.[120] The delegates marched with Korean and American flags and Syngman Rhee read aloud the Korean Declaration of Independence at the building where the US Declaration of Independence was signed, followed by three loud cheers for both Korea and the United States.[121] Rhee stated that the "aims and aspirations" of the Korean people were identical to Americans, revealing how a "zealous commitment to American political ideals and values" outlined the diasporic Korean American nationalist movement in the United States. According to historian Richard Kim, the Congress "ushered in a period of extensive lobbying activities in the US for Korean Independence," which successfully garnered support from American Christians and political leaders who were enamored by the Koreans' civility, intellect, and most importantly their reverence for US culture, politics, and global influence.[122]

[120] R. Kim, *Quest for Statehood,* 53.

[121] Ibid., 54-55.

[122] Ibid., 60.

The positive reception and support from mostly white American Christian allies reveal that the Korean Congress was a political exertion of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness. Such displays, almost always accompanied by the presence of US and Korean national flags being flown side by side, became one of the most visible and popular forms of diasporic Korean American mobilization for Korean independence. Diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness is exemplified in the previous chapter by the subservient relationship the NYMA had with Hastings College and its surrounding community to pursue liberation from Japanese imperialism with their militarized approach. While the Hastings community was ambivalent about having a group of Asian men and boys conduct military training and drills amongst them, their subservience, dependence, and most importantly acceptance of Christianity was appealing for the local populus; fulfilling their goal of locally practicing a missionary project within their community.

Diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness has also been ingrained within the dominant narrative of diasporic Korean American history. However, histories of other narratives that sought out various forms of sociality and relationships beyond diasporic Korean proximity to whiteness have also existed. This chapter traces the understudied histories of cross-racial encounters between diasporic Korean Americans and Black and Native peoples across the continental US. I first trace the origins of Korean and diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness to examine how the discourse of civilization emerged out of knowledge production of race among Korean intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century. It was during this time when the conception of race in Korea was formulated by Korean scholars as an attempt to justify the placement of Koreans within the global racial hierarchy: below white people but above other non-white peoples who were subjugated, colonized, and enslaved.

Secondly, this chapter examines the histories of direct encounters between Korean and non-white peoples as well as the development of diasporic Korean American understanding and critiques of the very racial-social order they were a part of through their proximity to whiteness. Through readings of articles, poetry, and editorials published in diasporic Korean American newspapers such as *Sinhanminbo* and *Konglinsinbo* from 1905 to 1930, I argue that diasporic Korean Americans' condition as racialized migrants and their status as colonized diasporic exiles opened up possibilities to envision cross-racial relations beyond the proximity to whiteness. The purpose of tracing these histories is to provide context for different historical possibilities of world making in the Korean American diaspora that have always existed alongside and exceeded the dominant narrative. It shows that proximity to whiteness did not limit some people from pursuing other forms of identification and resistance against Japanese colonialism by placing their struggles alongside other subjugated peoples against white supremacy and racism.

The Korean Conception of Race

The conception of race in Korea was formulated at the turn of the twentieth century by Korean thinkers who sought to imagine their place in the modern world. These thinkers were strong proponents of western modernization, who were mostly educated in Japan and western nations such as the United States.[123] Once they returned to Korea, they recognized the increasing infringements and direct threats of both western and Japanese empires and began to contemplate on the survival of their nation and its people. Led by prominent political figures like Yu Kil Ch'un and the pro-reform *Gaehwa* party members, the group of scholars and politicians applied

[123] By 1909, there were 739 Korean international students in Japan being educated at the government's expenses and many who were in Japan sought further education in the United States, this was the case of Yu Kil Ch'un, one of the reform leaders and strong advocate of *Munmyung gaehwa.* Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, 33, 109.

the education they received overseas to argue that Korea's survival depended on the universal acceptance of *munmyung gaehwa,* or "civilization and enlightenment"[124] *Munmyung gaehwa* was the Korean adaptation of civilizing initiatives of Japan and the western empires that "justified colonization as a necessary measure to 'uplift' and 'develop' various 'uncivilized', 'backwards' people."[125] As historian Paul Kramer elaborates, civilization was what "sublimated the competition of European powers, the United States, and Japan into a single, outward-moving frontier," as well as an invented commonality utilized by empires to colonize and subjugate.[126] It was also a makeshift solution "oriented toward resolving crises and securing independence" where Koreans will have the agency to advance themselves rather than under the auspices of a foreign power.[127] Its success also depended on the placement of Koreans along the racial lines formulated through centuries of western imperialism and colonialism of non-white people.

For the Korean intellectuals, the possibilities of Korean progress in the modern world have been measured against their racial superiors (white Europeans and Americans) and counterparts/inferiors (other Asians and non-white people) which resulted in the construction of the Korean conception of race. Korean intellectuals sought this middle position of partial denial and acceptance where they "could aspire to fuller acceptance" to justify their placement in the racialized hierarchy as suitable beneficiaries of civilization."[128] With the ability to maneuver up

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[124] Ibid., 33-38.

[125] Suh, *The Allure of Empire*, 11.

[126] Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) 13.

[127] Moon-Kie Jung and Jae Kyun Kim, "'Not to Be Slaves of Others': Antiblackness in Precolonial Korea," in *Antiblackness*, ed. Moon-Kie Jung and João H. Costa Vargas (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 153.

[128] Ibid., 149.

the civilized racial order, what remained constant for Koreans was the inherited belief that they held a superior civilized position over those deemed inferior and outright excluded, i.e. Black and Indigenous peoples. These assumptions served as the foundational condition for Korean placement in the imperial world order as scholars Moon-Kie Jung and Jae Kyun Kim states:

> "…[Korean's] abiding belief in the racial inferiority of Black people and American Indians, the imagined fates of whom Koreans loathed, feared, and had to avert, and as the impending doom of colonialism neared, the specter of Black enslavement, above all, haunted their imagination…anti-blackness has been the fundament, the bottommost bedrock, of Korean identity formation, one that lives on…"[129]

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Korean newspapers such as *Dongnipsinmun* and *Hwangsŏngsinmun* justified Korean superiority through eugenicist and social Darwinist logic and the perceived racial inferiority of the conquered and colonized. One of these articles titled "Mollayossiui Uigyeon" in 1898 criticized Black and Indigenous peoples for squandering their wealth and land while European and American colonizers made use of them towards advancement of their civilization. Regarding African colonization, "African natives never knew how to use these treasures and died with gold in their hand…as God punishes their vice, people from many European nations have shared the continent of Africa and made many useful goods in the world with the treasure."[130] The article also expounds on Native Americans by stating, "…the natives known as Indians have lived there for thousands of years and made all the riches useless with their savagery. After it became the land of England's race, the country finally became the strongest and richest country in the world."[131]

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid., 155.

[131] Ibid.

Conversely, Korean backwardness could be remedied through *munmyung gaehwa* and by clearly denoting their place over other colonized and subjugated people. Many articles explored how Koreans, as part of the "yellow" race, were not as advanced as whites but capable of civilized advancement by 1) denigrating Black and Indigenous peoples as incapable of self-preservation, enlightenment, and progress; and 2) citing the long-civilized history of Asians and the capacity to educate and advance themselves.[132] Categorizing Koreans as part of the intermediate category of the "yellow" race, *Dongnipsinmun* implored Koreans to maintain racial pride by blatantly dehumanizing Black and Indigenous peoples. One article from 1899 stated, "…blacks and reds are no less than human beings…However, since Koreans are yellows in the East, thus not a bad race at all, let's become an upper nation among the East and West."[133]

The narrative of Korean racial superiority over Black and Indigenous peoples was also gradually fueled by paranoia and fear that they also may be subjugated to similar fates of enslavement and extinction, a predicament faced by Koreans from what Jung and Kim call the *colonially vulnerable* position. As subjugation loomed over the Korean peninsula during the first decade of the 20th century, the *colonially vulnerable* Koreans became "susceptible to loss of sovereignty to foreign states…consciously aware of their precarious condition and strove to make sense of and make their way in the perilous world."[134] One example that Jung and Kim uses to explore Koreans' *colonially vulnerable* position was through their reading of aforementioned newspaper articles and the counting of how the term "slave" have been used in

[132] Ibid., 155-59.

[133] Ibid., 155-56.

[134] Ibid., 147.

newspapers far more often around the time Korea relinquished its sovereignty to Japan with the signing of the Eulsa Treaty in 1905. *Hwangseongsinmun* used "slave" 70 times from 1898 to 1905, but 314 times from 1905 to 1910; *Daehanmailsinbo* used it 616 times from 1904 to 1910; and *Dongnipsinmun* used it 14 times from 1896-1899.[135] Usage of the term "slave" can be contextualized by an editorial in *Hwangseongsinmun* written by its then editor-in-chief Chang Ji Yŏn titled "I Wail Bitterly Today." It states, "Alas, four-thousand-year-old territory and five hundred years of sovereignty were given over to the other, forcing twenty million souls to become slaves of others…Alas, bitter. Alas, resentful. Out twenty million brethren, enslaved brethren!"[136] Numerous articles during this period carried the emotions of loss and resentment expressed by Chang with enslavement and extinction being the primary metaphors.[137] The increase in usage of these metaphors reveals that subjugation was not a major concern for Koreans until fears of colonial subjugation became more evident in the first decade of the twentieth century through the aggressive encroachment of Japan. Thus, the *colonially vulnerable* position of Koreans reveals that the narrative of Korean racial superiority was also a critical response fueled by growing concerns that Koreans may be subjugated to similar fates of enslavement and genocide by powerful empires.

After Korea lost its diplomatic sovereignty when it was made a protectorate of Japan in 1905, the racist language utilized by Korean thinkers to formulate their conception of race was abandoned in both Korean and later diasporic Korean newspapers as Korean inferiority became

[135] Ibid., 160.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid., 161.

clearly recognizable through their colonization. Along with the language of racial superiority, nationalistic prose widely published by *Hwangsŏngsinmun* that viewed western powers as adversarial competitors also ended.[138] These sudden disappearances reveal that the discriminatory conception of race was a stopgap formulation of ideas deployed to contemplate the preservation of Korean sovereignty against the tide of foreign imperialism. Korean conception of race has thus been elided by scholars because of its sudden disappearance and the short duration in which it played a significant role in Korean identity formation at the turn of the twentieth century. More importantly, the Korean capacity for westernization, modernization, and civilization used to justify their racial superiority shifted to advocate for freedom and the restoration of their sovereignty after colonization during the first decade of the twentieth century. And because of the colonized status of Koreans within the peninsula, it was up to diasporic Koreans to demonstrate their capacity for civilization, especially through the cultivation and maintenance of their proximity to whiteness. What this reveals is that the discussion of race that reproduced anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity briefly in Korea continued to shape diasporic Korean Americans' fight for Korean sovereignty in unseen ways. It was the language of progress, civilization, racial uplift, and diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness that obscured how white supremacy and western imperialism inculcated Korean understanding of race.

The ethnonationalism practiced before and after Japanese colonization by Koreans and diasporic Korean Americans were two sides of the same coin. Before annexation, the Korean potential for civilization was used to promote its modernization initiatives and to position Korea

[138] Ibid., 157.

side by side as contemporaries with western and Japanese empires. After annexation, it was utilized to seek patronage from western powers, particularly the US empire, to aid their pursuit for liberation and the restoration of their sovereignty. Such patronage required subservience to US institutions that normalized Korean inferiority. For diasporic Korean Americans who led such efforts, it was an acceptable compromise given that the evidence of modern progress and partial validation that they received grounded the possibilities of their liberation. How the Hastings community viewed and lauded the civilizing potential of NYMA students and authorized their militarized education to fulfill their goals of preparing for a war of independence is a precise example. After colonization, *how* Koreans can achieve civilization was thus answered by such subservient narratives, which also formed the foundation for diasporic Korean Americans to envision a viable path towards independence.

While the language of racial superiority dissipated, Korean capacity for civilization was what separated them from the subjugated Black and Indigenous peoples of the world as stated by Korean thinkers before colonization. For example, the civilizing capabilities of Koreans exemplified by their willingness to submit and assimilate through religion and education was highly sought out by white American missionaries and educational officials. Such was the main purpose behind NYMA's placement within the Hastings community with it serving as the hub of domestic missionary project in Hastings due to their civilizing potential. The same project was a failure with Native Americans in Nebraska who they blamed for their unwillingness to assimilate, which was also the reasoning parroted by Korean thinkers. The same reasoning was adopted by Koreans and parroted as the cause of Native Americans' extinction in North America to dangerously normalize the perpetuation of genocide and settler colonialism. Korean conception of race thus was transferred and practiced within the Korean American diaspora to

demonstrate their capacity for civilization and to justify their proximity to whiteness. Such initiative was embraced by a large contingent of diasporic Korean Americans as a viable path towards their liberation. However, it also aligned the diasporic Korean American independence movement with the ongoing US settler colonial project.

Tracing and connecting Korean desires and justifications for civilization to the conception of race in pre-colonial Korea reveals how anti-blackness and anti-indigeneity have been fundamentally intertwined with Korean ethnonationalism within the peninsula and beyond. The constant justification of Korean capacity for civilization exemplified by diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness served as the reverberating undertones of Korean racial superiority. This revealed how Koreans "never lost their racist faith that there would and should always be a gap" between them and their perceived racial inferiors.[139] In addition, such efforts were not a Korea specific circumstance as it mirrored the actions of independent activists of various nation-states colonized by western empires. For example, Filipino and Indian anti-imperialists' praise and support of Japanese imperialist expansion for challenging the global racial order set by western empires also subsequently affirmed the inferiority of those colonized in Taiwan and Korea and their need to be civilized.[140] The rising influence and power of the Japanese empire was embraced as a possible answer to counter western imperialism and white supremacy to many non-Korean anti-imperialists. The colonized thus attempted to overcome colonialism by reproducing the very language, culture, and pedagogy of colonialism.

Early Cross-Racial Encounters before 1910

[139] Ibid., 157, 163.

[140] M. Jung, *Menace to* Empire, 93; Suh, *The Allure of Empire*, 98.

The pursuit of independence from overseas served as an impetus for diasporic Korean Americans to constantly maintain their proximity to whiteness. However, the seemingly beneficial relationship with white Americans did nothing to dull the racial status quo when they were placed in the lower rung of the racial-social order in the US along with other non-white peoples. Their positionality unexpectedly led to them making contact with others facing similar and exacerbated forms subjugation. This was the case for numerous Korean laborers who worked in the same plantation fields of Hawai‘i as well as railroad tracks through the desert and plains across the Western part of continental US with other Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and Puerto Rican laborers. These laborers' experiences vastly differed from the exiled politicians and leaders of the newly established diasporic Korean American communities and the Korean independence movement overseas who negotiated Korean migrants' placement in the racial-social order through their purported civilization and subservience. They were also separated by class structures where the exiled leaders were mostly from elite class background and part of "the (Christian) liberal-bourgeoise subjectivity that emerged in Korea at the turn of the century.[141]

The Korean laborers were caught in a bind when experiencing labor exploitation especially in Hawai‘i where they were brought in to counter the Japanese dominated labor monopoly. Koreans' disdain for Japan after annexation was also exploited by plantation owners, used to turn Koreans into strikebreakers.[142] While these forms of labor exploitation have been

[141] Henry Em, *The Great Enterprise: Sovereignty and Historiography in Modern Korea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 75.

[142] Moon-Ho Jung, "Revolutionary Currents: Interracial Solidarities, Imperial Japan, and the U.S. Empire," in *Making the Empire Work: Labor & United States Imperialism*, ed. Daniel E. Bender and Jane K. Lipman (New York: New York University Press), 62.

written by scholars of the Korean experience in Hawai‘i, the complexity of cross-racial encounters and possible forms of solidarity among Koreans and other non-white laborers have been less studied.[143] Gary Pak explores this tension and contradiction in his novel *A Ricepaper Airplane* (1998), where Sung Wha and Cho, two Korean plantation laborers in Hawai‘i who are working as strike breakers, engages in a conversation about the Japanese workers' strike. Cho states, "I hope the Japanese dogs lose whatever they are fighting for!" to which Sung Wha answers, "We should not work. Japanese, Filipino, Korean…we're all the same."[144] Cho shouts at Sung Hwa by saying, "Japanese are bastard pigs! Don't you know what they're doing to our country?" to which Sung Hwa retorts, "The white bosses are bastard pigs!"[145] Korean laborers were in proximity to fellow non-white workers, not powerful white political and religious figures who cosmopolitan diasporic Korean American elites sought to establish sociopolitical connection with. Could the Korean laborers experiencing class exploitation and witnessing cross-racial solidarities of the strikes in Hawai‘i have reacted differently, beyond their nationalistic fervor and disdain for their colonizer, and beyond striving for whiteness? Despite the ethnonational tendency to act against any Japanese entity as willed by diasporic Korean American leaders and the white American plantation owners for their own political and economic gains, the potential existence of cross-racial solidarity was viable through the recognition of mutual struggles made possible through such encounters.

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[143] See Ch'oe, *From the Land of Hibiscus*; Wayne Patterson, *The Ilse: First-Generation Korean Immigrants in Hawaii, 1903-1973* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000); Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 1896-1910* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1988).

[144] Yoo, *Contentious Spirits*, 40.

[145] Ibid.

Similar encounters between Korean laborers and Native Americans also took place.[146] One *Sinhanminbo* article titled "Ŏrisŏgŭn tongp'owa ŭiriinnŭn tongp'o [Foolish Compatriot and Loyal Compatriot]" from 1909 wrote of an experience of a Korean man named Pak Sool who was fined by the local court for buying a Native American man alcohol in Spokane, Washington.[147] With help from other Koreans he was able to have the fine reduced after claiming that he perceived the man to be white. From the article, it is difficult to fathom what the relationship between Pak and the Native American man was, what led to the encounter, and if Pak's ignorance of the man's racial background was genuine or devised by him and the other Koreans as a viable excuse to have the fine reduced. When taking this article at face value, Pak made an honest "foolish" mistake that resulted in him breaking the law.[148] And it was the ethnic fidelity of fellow "loyal" Koreans who helped Pak petition to have the fine reduced from 250 dollars to 125 dollars.[149] The other Koreans' support for their kin in petitioning for the fine reduction may have resulted in the court deducing that it was Pak's gullibility that led to him buying alcohol for the Native American man who he thought was white. The court may have ruled that it wouldn't be feasible for Koreans to have relations with Native Americans resulting in the large fine reduction taking place without much scrutiny.

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[146] While the article does not state if Pak was a Korean laborer or not, his interaction with the Native American man and his suppose ignorance of racial distinction suggest that he is a recently arrived migrant laborer in Washington. The Koreans who arrived to help him may have been from the one of the many ethnic Korean organizations formed in 1905 to support Korean laborers and students in their jurisdiction regarding issues such as the legal one facing Pak. They may have been from the *Tongmaeng Sinhunghoe* (Society of Emerging Alliance) which was the ethnic Korean organization in Seattle founded in 1907 and the only one in the state of Washington. See Lyu, "Korean Nationalist Activities," 54.

[147] "Ŏrisŏgŭn tongp'owa ŭiriinnŭn tongp'o" [Foolish Compatriot and Loyal Compatriot], *Sinhanminbo,* September 8, 1909.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid.

The publication of this article and the incident itself reveals that diasporic Korean Americans began to learn and become aware of the racial-social order and the legal system that defends it. Pak was "foolish" for making contact with an Indigenous person and unknowingly breaking a law while the Koreans who aided him were "loyal" for supporting their kin. Both how the article was written and how the proclamation of mistaken racial identity served as a sure reason for the fine reduction highlight diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness through their obedience to the legal system and the Koreans' distancing themselves from Native Americans despite the possibilities of community and comradery expressed through the exchange between Pak and the Native American man. These encounters and interactions between diasporic Korean Americans and subjugated non-white peoples raise questions about race and racialization in the US and their placement within the entrenched racial-social order.

Such was the case two years earlier on May 31, 1907, when diasporic Korean newspaper *Konglipsinbo* published an article titled "Amjŭngdŭngmyŏng" [Receiving the Light during Darkness] which recounts the firsthand experience of Kim Sung Sam, a Korean laborer in Nevada who witnesses a case of racial violence and possible murder of a Native American man. In a restaurant Kim witnesses a white man violently assaulting then throwing out a Native American man for attempting to eat at a table. When Kim asked why the man was beaten and removed, the white man responded, "even though he might look like a person, he is not a person at all." Confused, Kim asks for clarification to which the white man states, "the Indian has no King or country, how could he be called a person?" Kim was disheartened and shed tears for "stateless beings" as he is overcome with fear and indignity. The article concludes with how Koreans should strive for independence by comparing their situation with what has happened to the Native American man.

> "It is shameful and frightening to know that we are in no position to mock the Native Americans. We, the 20 million Korean people must wake up from our deep sleep and defend our freedom and independence granted by Heaven, so as not to shame ourselves by winding up like the Native Americans."[150]

The article's conclusion reveals that the Korean conception of race was transmitted to the Korean American diaspora especially for the first wave of migrants. Kim's fears are directly correlated with how Koreans before annexation felt about subjugation by foreign powers may result in enslavement or possible "extinction". The fact that Kim was also not removed and able to have a conversation with the white man also reveals his position within the racial-social order. As Kim reflected on the colonized condition of exiled diasporic Koreans and the visceral violence he had just witnessed, reclaiming their independence and sovereignty was the only viable path for their survival.

As part of the first generation of diasporic Korean Americans, both Kim and Pak's actions and reasoning were grounded on both the Korean conception of race and the prioritization of their proximity to whiteness. Maintaining the latter was also crucial in that they had just begun to establish their communities and organize the Korean independence movement in North America. As the first wave of diasporic Korean Americans migrants and exiles, they also began to learn through experience, the inner workings of race and racialization in US society. They firsthand witnessed how the colonized and subjugated peoples were treated with malice in the US (Kim) and recognized the legal precedence of institutional racism (Pak). What these encounters reveal is that diasporic Korean Americans started to become aware of various forms of injustice and racial violence inflicted on other subjugated non-white peoples, such as the normalized disposability of Native American lives and the justifications for genocide that

[150] "Amjŭngdŭngmyŏng" [Receiving the Light During Darkness], *Sinhanminbo,* May 31, 1907.

Kim had witnessed firsthand. Such experiences induced much fear as "the antiseptic face of colonial authority is only maintained through a constant escalation of violence, an overtly aggressive and nervous stance."[151] Not only was maintaining their proximity to whiteness key to their liberation, but also the possible reality of intense discrimination and even violence that awaited them if they deviated from their subservient positionality in relation to white people. The fear of US colonial violence through subservience thus maintained the entrenched racial-social order. As Manu Karuka states, "the figures of Native and Alien were enfolded into a process that enabled the maintenance of communities and cultures through invasion, occupation, and importation, underscoring unresolved tensions of conquest and slavery that fueled the expansion of industrial capitalism."[152]

However, Asian laborers like Pak and Kim who were subjected to "labor importation, racist violence, and surveillance" co-existed with Native Americans facing the "full brunt of a virulent, violent process of colonization" in the American West where similar encounters between Asian laborers and Native Americans took place.[153] Manu Karuka historically investigates the encounters and interactions between Chinese railroad workers and the Paiute that occurred in the mid-1800s in Nevada where their will to live in seeking nourishment and rest as well as preserving their culture and customs intersected despite the violent colonial process of US imperialism that sought to systematically isolate, exploit and ravage their lives. Stories of Chinese railroad workers sharing food with Paiutes living near their work camp in Humboldt

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[151] Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 4.

[152] Ibid., 18.

[153] Ibid., 11.

Lake and Chinese medicine vials archeologists excavated in a Paiute campsite in the Mono Basin have been told.[154] These stories and items seem out of place, but when pieced together, they present an unobstructed view of exchange, interaction, and possible relationships between Chinese and Paiutes. For example, there are stories of trade between Chinese merchants and Paiutes of alcohol, medicine, and opium that was purchased by the Paiutes as relief for their grueling labor; and stories of the growing trade of gunpowder between them that alarmed white authorities reveal much about Paiutes willingness fight against the destruction of their livelihoods and the land that nourish them.[155] These stories also exist in Chinese cemeteries where workers would prepare food and leave them on the graves for the spirit to, but it was the Paiutes who feasted on the strange food, sometimes spitting out the rice in disgust.[156] Such instances reveal much about the cultivation of community amongst the Chinese workers where burial practices may be practiced but also their "alienness to the landscape."[157] At the same time, the foreignness of their customs provide nourishment (besides the rice) for the Paiute whose food sources have been ravaged by imperialist expansion and settler colonialism.

Would it have been possible that Pak knew that the man was Native American, and his "foolish" mistake was an intentional act of intimacy and kinship? And could it have been his loyal "Koreans", most likely sent by the local Korean organization led by diasporic Korean elites in Washington, who persuaded him to claim a mistaken racial identity to avoid punishment? Lisa

[154] Ibid., 3, 11.

[155] Ibid., 3, 11~17.

[156] Ibid., 13.

[157] Ibid.

Lowe defines intimacy as "the circuits, connections, associations, and mixings of differentially laboring peoples, eclipsed by the operations that universalize the Anglo-American liberal individual."[158] And these possible encounters represented by "the volatile contacts of colonized peoples- is never explicitly named in the documents, it is, paradoxically, everywhere implicit in the archives in the presence of such ellipses."[159] I learn from Manu Karuka that the colonial archives, filled with the logics of empire, are constantly anxious. The amassing of documentations on rules and regulations that have justified the US empire's deployment of colonial violence and fear reveals the extent of the US empire's own angst in that they may lose their dominion over those who they have oppressed and subjugated. Such frantic attempt to maintain the status quo further exposes the unnaturalness of the settler colonial project of the US empire. These anxieties obscures alternatives to fear induced reactions that maintain the racial-social order, such as possibilities of cross-racial relationships that may have arisen from these unforeseen encounters. The tears shed by Kim Sung Sam for "stateless beings" can be interpreted to illustrate the dismal condition Koreans may face, but could it have been for the colonized and subjugated masses as a collective? These questions point to the unaddressed possibilities of diasporic Korean American experience beyond ethnonationalism, homeland politics, and proximity to whiteness. Affirming these encounters from the position of affinity, kinship, and solidarity reveals the possibilities of a different world building that diasporic Korean Americans may have engaged in.

Learning and Contemplating Racial Prejudice and Violence (1920s-1930s)

[158] Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents,* 21.

[159] Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History,* ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 203.

Diasporic Korean Americans grew more aware of their position in the US racial order as they learned about recurring incidents of racial violence, lynchings, and legal discrimination. Through various publications explaining such injustice In *Sinhanminbo,* diasporic Korean Americans also learned about the degrees of racial violence and discrimination enacted on non-white peoples ranging from institutional racism to mob violence and terror, especially those inflicted on African American communities. For example, *Sinhanminbo* reported on the violent lynchings and mob violence African Americans faced in Missouri in 1925 and Texas in 1930.[160] These articles provided detailed information on what led white mobs to torture and murder the accused, the exacerbated terror inflicted on nearby Black communities, as well as the inadequate reactions of law enforcements. For example, the article published in 1930 explains that a mob of white men numbering in the "thousands" proceeded to ransack and completely destroy three blocks of a nearby African American community after murdering the man in his jail cell who was accused of raping a white woman.[161] The mob violence was suppressed after a declaration of Martial law and the deployment of 400 national guardsmen.

Sinhanminbo also published two lengthy articles in 1927 titled "African Americans' Solidarity Movements" and "Issues Regarding African Americans in the US." These articles explained to its readers the complex history of race and legacies of slavery in the US that have led up to the immense discrimination and racial violence faced by African Americans. "African Americans' Solidarity Movements" published on March 17, 1927, comments on the long history

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[160] "Hŭginŭl subaengmyŏng nanjunge mogmaeŏ" [Hundreds of Black People Lynched during Upheaval], *Sinhanminbo,* August 13, 1925; "Paengnyŏ kangganjoero hŭgin saenghwajang" [Black Man Burned Alive for Rape of White Woman]. *Sinhanminbo,* May 22, 1930.

[161] "Paengnyŏ kangganjoero."

of enslavement and the middle passage from the fifteenth century to the end of the Civil War. The article explains how the end of slavery was followed by various forms of racial discrimination and mob violence. It states:

> "African Americans were liberated from their enslaved status and gained citizenship after the Civil War. From the surface, it seems like they are finally reveling in the joys of humanity, but if we examine closely, they are enduring much pain. First, African Americans who are accused of committing a crime can be lynched by white mobs without any legal proceedings, and there are hundreds every year who are victimized by such heinous acts. Not to mention, the immense amount of racist contempt and discrimination they face."[162]

The article also explains how such perpetuation of racial discrimination and violence have led to Black nationalist movements such as the New Africa movement spearheaded by Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). It states that the Allied nations that sent black troops to the front lines in World War I did not keep their promise of granting self-determination when the peace treaty (Treaty of Versailles) was signed and presumes that racial contempt and abuse that Black people faced "will not be lessened even a little bit."[163] The article further states, "as a result, Black people became conscious of such inequality and sought to construct a nation for themselves after their people spread across the world emigrate to Africa. But the fact that the world powers with colonies in Africa will oppose them wherever they go, and it is difficult to predict their success."[164]

"Issues regarding African Americans in the US" was published a month later on April 21, 1927, and gives a lengthy explanation on the history of the great migration, and the immense

[162] Hŭginŭi yŏnhap undong" [African Americans' Solidarity Movements], *Sinhanminbo,* April 21, 1927.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

forms of injustice African Americans faced through housing discrimination especially after the end of World War I. It describes city laws that prohibited the selling of white owned homes to African Americans, and the discriminatory practices of real estate developers that took place despite the Supreme Court ruling that prohibited housing restrictions by race.[165] It further explains the impact of redlining and white flight and cites the case of Ossian Sweet, a Black doctor who was arrested and tried for murder for defending his home in Detroit against a white mob where he and his associates fired on the mob, killing one and wounding two.

While these two articles do not contemplate Koreans' own colonized condition as Kim Sang Soo has done in the previous section regarding violence against Native Americans, what they do reveal is diasporic Korean Americans' interest in learning more about the racial-social order in the US. The dissemination of historical narratives about enslavement and the continued violent subjugation of African Americans provided the means for diasporic Korean Americans to learn and more importantly, to determine for themselves how they would form their own understanding of the politics of race in the US. For example, "African Americans Solidarity Movements" acknowledges that Black Americans are "enduring much pain" through the continued injustice and threat of violence along with the prejudice they face daily. It also states that all was not how it seemed with the abolition of slavery when the history of what has taken place after is examined closely. "Issues regarding African Americans in the US" also singles out the hypocrisy of liberation for Black Americans after the Civil War and concludes that "the issue

[165] "Migugŭi hŭginmunje" [Issues Regarding African Americans in the US], *Sinhanminbo*, March 17, 1927.

of race regarding to African Americans is beyond societal and political, it is simply a problem of justice and humanity."[166]

The mention of the New Africa movement in "Black Americans' Solidarity Movements" also closely mirrors how diasporic Suiheisha activists like Tahara Haruji also identified with the goals of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA.[167] Qianqing Huang states that buraku activists like Tahara "paid close attention to the social movements and minority struggles in the United States for articulation of their own struggles" and keyed in on Garvey's New Africa movement because "for buraku and African American communities alike, this idea of building a new homeland offered both a very liberation potential as well as a language to critique the racist states of the US and Japan."[168] Tahara's written piece titled *Seven Days in Harlem* strikingly mirrors "Black Americans' Solidarity Movements" that explains the history of the civil war and emancipation; the hypocrisy of liberation that followed with the practice of racial violence and discrimination through lynching and segregation; and the various African American movements that followed including the New Africa movement.[169] Tahara actively sought to connect the lived experiences of Black Americans and burakumin in both Japan and the US, travelling to Harlem to meet Amy Jacques Garvey and was hosted by UNIA members to meet with the editors of the *Negro World*, a weekly newspaper published by UNIA.[170] While written records of diasporic Korean American

[166] Ibid.

[167] The Suiheisha movement was founded in 1922 to eliminating discrimination against burakumin, who are ethnic Japanese people descended from outcast communities of the Japanese feudal era.

[168] Qianqing Huang, "Buraku Liberation in Imperial Japan: Dreams of Love-Politics and Migration from late 19th to mid-20th Century," PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles 2023, 102, 105.

[169] Ibid., 118.

[170] Ibid., 116, 130.

interaction with African American organizations are difficult to trace, Tahara's efforts in connecting buraku struggles for liberation with the New Africa movement reveal cross-racial ties between subjugated peoples in the diaspora.

Furthermore, the knowledge obtained through first-hand encounters and disseminated by diasporic Korean American newspapers regarding the treatment of Black and Indigenous peoples through legal restrictions and vigilante violence led to diasporic Korean Americans disputing the validity of white American culture they supposedly revere and seek to embrace through their proximity to whiteness. For example, some diasporic Korean Americans questioned the Christian benevolence propagated by white Americans. In 1923 diasporic Korean American writer Do Se Seng wrote a poem titled "Thankful for What?" critiquing the colonized condition celebrated during the Thanksgiving holidays. For example, the 5th stanza states "White men shout with joy 'thank God' for discovering new land. But the Red Man loses his land, dwindle away and perish!"[171] While the 9th stanza states "those with power in the world steal to enjoy, to wear beautifully, to eat deliciously. The weak are filled with grief as they can't even afford to wear tattered clothing nor eat."[172] The poem questions the meaning behind the thankfulness when the holiday celebrates genocide and correlates it to oppression and unequal power dynamics in the world. Do's questioning of the violent history behind Thanksgiving is a refusal to maintain and cultivate his proximity to whiteness by rejecting their assimilation to US culture. Do's condemnation reveals the hypocrisy behind the culture of Christian gratitude presented by the national holiday that celebrates the plentitude of food and livelihood granted by God. US culture

[171] Pang Sŏn Ju sŏnsaengnim chŏjakchipkanhaengwiwŏnhoe, *Pang Sŏn Ju chŏjakchip 3: Han'gukhyŏndaesa chaengjŏm yŏn'gu* [Pang Sŏn Ju Collection 3: Issues in Modern Korean History Research] (Seoul: tosŏch'ulp'an sŏnin, 2018), 254.

[172] Ibid.

of democracy and liberty is rejected by Do through the poem that clearly states how genocide and land dispossession produced the abundance being celebrated. And Much like the two articles about the injustice inflicted on African Americans, Do's poem is a self-determined commentary on the condition of subjugated peoples that opposed diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness.

Conclusion

This chapter recounted how the diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness is closely tied to the conception of race formulated by Korean thinkers before Japanese colonization at the turn of the twentieth century. Produced by Korean thinkers to remedy aggressive foreign encroachments in the Korean peninsula, the conception of race in Korea recognized the racial superiority of white people and the power amassed by western empires while denigrating subjugated Black and Indigenous peoples. Korean scholars and politicians such as Yu Kil Ch'un and the pro-reform *Gaehwa* party members placed themselves above Black and Indigenous peoples as they claimed to possess civilizing potential in which they can learn and adapt to western modernization. The conception of race was also produced by fear and their colonially vulnerable position.

As the newspaper articles on early cross-racial encounters reveal, the conception of race was reproduced in the Korean American diaspora through their efforts to maintain their proximity to whiteness. As diasporic Korean Americans witnessed and encountered racial injustice faced by Black and Indigenous peoples, they accepted their precarious status as racialized migrants and adhered to the US legal system so they won't be subjected to the racial violence other subjugated non-white people in the US faced. However, some diasporic Korean

Americans expressed affinity with the subjugated non-white people Korean thinkers denigrated as inferior. Diasporic Korean Americans published the complex history of US racial politics in *Sinhanminbo* and began to form their own understanding of the norms of racialization and the visibility of visceral racial injustice in the US.

Embedded in the newspaper articles discussed in this chapter are also emotional acknowledgements of what Black and Indigenous peoples were facing through institutional racism and racial violence are scattered within and through the fragmented snippets of affinity and possible intimacy. While the context behind Kim Sung Sam's tears and the reason behind Pak buying the Native American man alcohol cannot be confirmed, possibilities of kinship and emotional resonance can be imagined from a position of affective affirmation. The recognition of African Americans' deep pain, and the questioning of why Native genocide and land dispossession should be celebrated, brings forth a more focused view of how diasporic Korean Americans began to recognize and interpret through their own terms, the deeply enrooted forms of racism and entanglements of colonial domination within US society. And rather than accepting their subservient relationship with white people at face value, the recognition of the contradiction and brutality as well as their affirmation of non-white peoples' muted experiences, created space to pursue different avenues of liberation beyond the sole reliance on their proximity to whiteness. These experiences along with various forms of unexpected encounters with other subjugated peoples led to the contemplation of other liberatory possibilities founded upon cross-border and cross-racial solidarities that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Beyond Archival Absence: Remapping Black-Korean Solidarities

Introduction

Sitting in his jail cell, the prisoner observed fellow immigrant workers from Greece, Netherlands, and Yugoslavia who were "roaming around slowly like Lions in Lincoln Park (Zoo)."[173] As he lamented the dire conditions of his imprisonment, he wished for someone with 500 dollars to bail him out.[174] It had been more than a month since he was imprisoned for protesting the death sentence of eight back teenagers who were wrongfully accused of raping two white women on a train in Alabama.[175] Shaking the steel bars with all his might was of no use, and he had already gotten used to the stench of the toilet right next to the tiny rack he slept in.[176] He had endured much to get to the US in his search for liberation from his difficult upbringing induced by poverty and the political repression he witnessed and experienced in Korea under Japanese colonialism. But the reality of his circumstances was setting in as his tears dropped onto his dinner plate.[177] He would be deported back to the Korean peninsula, where he would be handed off to Japanese authorities and imprisoned again for his participation in the overseas Korean independence movement.[178]

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[173] Ho Ch'ŏl Kim, "Kŭrŏk'e tchotkyŏgandan marin'ga" [Is This How I Will be Chased Away], *Sinhanminbo,* March 31, 1931.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Details about what led to his arrest, what kind of protest or activism Kim engaged in, or alongside who is not available.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid.

[178] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi,* 334, 341.

The prisoner's name was Kim Ho Ch'ŏl, a Korean immigrant student-activist who was imprisoned in Cooks County Jail for his participation in the campaign to free the eight young Black men and boys (hereforth Scottsboro boys) in January of 1932. The protests against their wrongful arrest and death sentences that Kim joined was part of the larger campaign led by coalition of Communist, religious, and African American organizations such as the International Labor Defense, the National Association of Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and various churches that mobilized leftists and black workers together.[179] This incident was a set of landmark legal cases also known as the *Scottsboro Boys Case*, one of the countless examples of a racist judicial system that has condoned violence and terror on African Americans throughout American history.[180]

It was under these circumstances that Kim Ho Ch'ŏl wrote a poem titled "To the Eight Black Children" in his jail cell, which was published in *Sinhanminbo* on January 28, 1932. The poem was a call for solidarity connecting the racial injustice experienced by African Americans to the oppressive subjugation of Japanese imperialism in Korea. Kim's act of radical solidarity at the cost of his imprisonment and deportation as well as his engagement with the indignity and violence suffered by the Scottsboro boys and the Black working class in the Jim Crow South through his writing reveal possibilities of cross-racial solidarities between colonized diasporic Korean American exiles with Black Americans enduring racial injustice.

[179] Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 78-118.

[180] For a complete historical account of the Scottsboro Boys Case, see Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007); James Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); James E. Acker, *Scottsboro and Its Legacy: The Cases that Challenged American Legal and Social Justice* (New York: Praeger, 2008).

Through a close reading of the poem alongside Kim's life story, this chapter traces Kim's diasporic journey across the Pacific to explain how he developed his worldview. Kim correlated his experiences of colonial violence, and the subjugated condition of Koreans under Japanese imperialism with racial discrimination and violence against African Americans in the US. He was able to see the similarities of Korean and Black struggles through the lens of class, race, and imperialism. For Kim, his status as an exiled student-worker of the colonized diaspora in Chicago placed him in the proximity to other migrant workers like the European workers he was imprisoned with or other marginalized ethnic working class, especially African Americans. While it is difficult to trace physical encounters and development of interpersonal relations between Kim and other non-white peoples, his circumstances and his willingness to advocate for the struggles of others opened up possibilities to cultivate cross-racial solidarities. Cross-racial solidarities is an ongoing process of transformation that works to connect various place based liberatory struggles together where various ethnicities and identities converge. It is also a process that attempts to cultivate collective action with the recognition of each other's differences; a process where different people of various ethnic, cultural, and class backgrounds come to both accept and reject one another as they enact different visions of liberation collectively. "To the Eight Black Children" and Kim's activism reveal that forms of sociality beyond diasporic Korean proximity to whiteness was imagined and enacted to demonstrate an alternative diasporic Korean American history grounded in radical anti-imperialist struggles that center cross-racial solidarities.

This chapter engages with transnational Asian American and Black diaspora studies scholars like Lisa Lowe and Saidiya Hartman who have helped me scrutinize the racialized norms of imperial and institutional archives that tend to overlook narratives of cross-racial

interactions and the cultivation of solidarities. Lowe elaborates how the colonial archives obstruct from view the cross-racial encounters deemed dangerous by colonial bureaucrats through the covering of gaps.[181] These gaps that point to cross-racial encounters and possibilities of solidarities are covered by the "explicit descriptions and enumerations, as well as the rhetorical peculiarities of the documents, the places where particular figures, tropes or circumlocutions are repeated."[182] The extensive process that the colonial administrators undergo to avert the focus away from cross-racial encounters point to the "illogic in the archive" through the unaddressed and unnamed.[183] This chapter also deploys Sadiya Hartman's practice of critical fabulation to examine beyond the foreclosure of cross-racial solidarities.[184] Critical fabulation is a critical archival methodology that imagines what cannot be found in the archives (or what the archive refuses to name or disclose) by weaving together fictional storytelling with historical research. "It is a narrative of what might have been or could have been, it is a history written with and against the archive."[185] Engaging with critical fabulation to investigate the restrictions posed by scholars on the possibilities of Black-Korean solidarities is an attempt to seek alternatives to the set rules of the archives and to understand what Lowe calls "the politic of our lack of knowledge."[186] I apply these scholars' methods to highlight how Kim's story has been confined within the restricted spaces of state and institutional archives that has preserved, perpetuated, and normalized the diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness. Immersing

[181] Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 35.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Ibid.

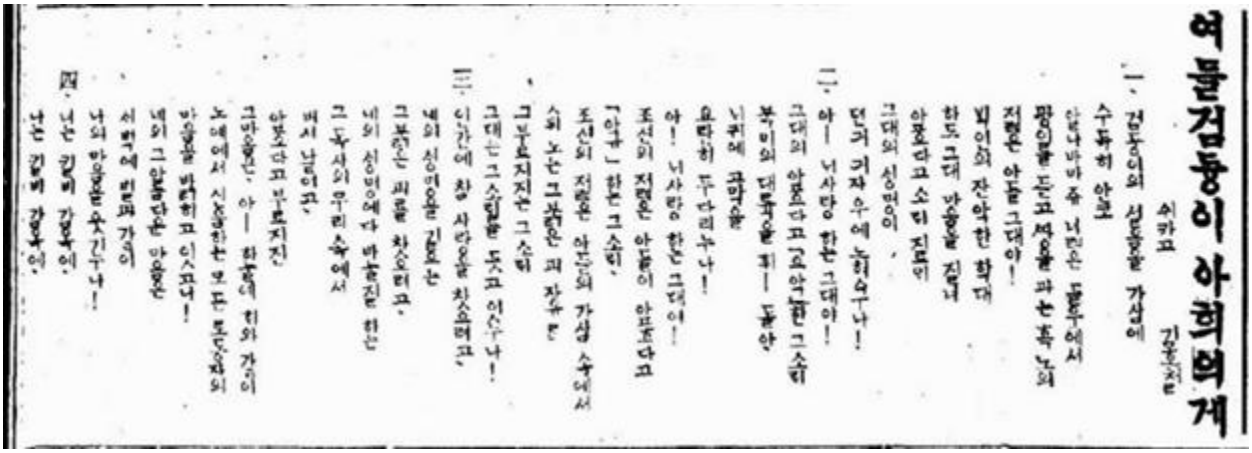
[184] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe 12,* no.2 (June 2008): 11.

[185] Ibid., 12.

[186] Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 39.

in these approaches illuminates Kim's cultivation of cross-racial solidarities as a history of "what could have been," and an instance of historical knowledge production that disrupts the perceived sanctity of archival methods and empirical evidence.[187]

"To the Eight Black Children" and Black-Korean Solidarities



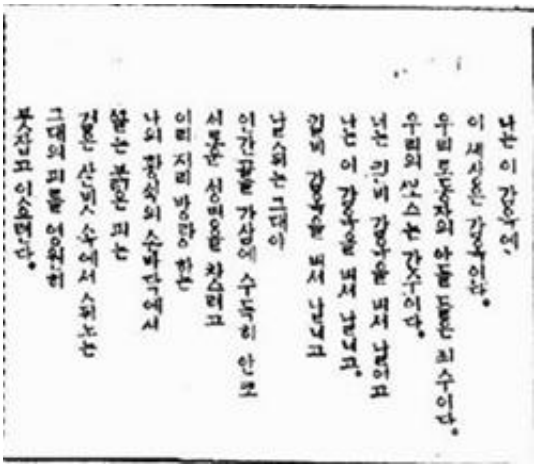


Figure 3.1: "To the Eight Black Children," from *Sinhanminbo*.

clutching the Black child's sorrow
to my chest
It is the young child
of the Black laborers grasping their hoes and digging the earth
on the wide Alabama fields!

[187] Ibid., 40.

Because you screamed in pain
from the white man's cruelty,
because it so pierced your heart
they placed your life
on the electric chair!

You, my beloved!
The sounds of your pained gasps
whirled through the continent of North America
to loudly beat against
my eardrums!
You, my beloved!
The pained groans
of Joseon's young sons,
that sound clamoring for freedom,
that crimson blood flowing
in the hearts of Joseon's young sons—
Are you listening to these cries?

Searching for a true love of humanity,
searching for that crimson blood
that cultivates your life
To escape
from the flocks of venomous snakes
that encircle your life
That heart
screaming in pain with the sky's sea
You reveal the hearts
of all laborers groaning under slavery!
Your beautiful heart
like the dawn's stars
makes my own heart smile!

You, in Kilby and I, in this jail
This world is a prison.
We, the sons of workers, are prisoners,
our boss the prison guards.
You, trying to escape the prison of Kilby
while I try to escape this one.

As you frantically struggle
trying to escape Kilby,
clutching in your heart
the suffering of humanity,
that red blood boiling
in my yellow palms.
As I wander here and there,
trying to find a new life,
I will forever cling on to your blood
that playfully and freely flows
underneath your black skin.[188]

In "To the Eight Black Children", Kim intersects the liberatory struggles of Koreans under Japanese colonialism with the struggles of the Black working class in the US South. The decades after World War I in the US South was filled with tension as economic changes and industrialization led thousands of Black migrants in rural areas to seek opportunities in the North and the urban South.[189] As Black people gathered in the segregated metropolis for work in steel and iron mills, well-funded white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan terrorized Black residents.[190] From his worldview of a collective struggle against the forces of imperialism, racial capitalism, and white supremacy, Kim identifies with the indignity and violence suffered by the Scottsboro boys throughout the poem. Kim mentions in the first and second stanza, the "sound of your pained gasps" inflicted by "white man's cruelty" echoes beyond North America towards the Korean peninsula where similar "sounds clamoring for freedom" exist as "the pained groans of Joseon's young sons." The blatant injustice induced by the "white man's cruelty" that Kim

[188] Poem was translated by Rachel Min Park. Ho Ch'ŏl Kim, "Yŏdŏl kŏmdungi aiege" [To the Eight Black Children]. *Sinhanminbo*. January 28, 1932.

[189] Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 7-8.

[190] Ibid.

writes in his poem is evident through what the eight teenagers experienced before and after their arrest. They were arrested when a fight broke out with a group of white men on a train and were subsequently accused of rape. After their arrest, they were threatened by lynch mobs, beaten, and tortured by police and prison guards to testify against each other.[191] One of the boys, Ozie Powell, was also shot after a scuffle with a police officer, resulting in permanent brain damage. Such injustice at the hands of authorities would also remind him of the March 1st Movement in 1919, which ignited more than 1500 demonstrations across Korea for Korean independence. The protests continued for over a month until they were crushed by force as thousands were gunned down, arrested, imprisoned, and later executed by Japanese military and police.[192] Kim joined the efforts at a young age, protesting in front of a Japanese police station with his classmates and shouting "*Chosun doklip mansei*! (Long Live Korean Independence!)."[193] Kim was severely beaten by policemen and reprimanded by his teachers who mocked and dismissed his actions, telling him, "Do you think merely shouting *mansei* will bring independence…"[194]

The basis of Kim's solidarity also came from his identity as part of the colonized diaspora and of the global working class. Kim states in last two stanzas that he is someone who "wander here and there, trying to find a new life" and that the Scottsboro Boys "reveal the hearts of all laborers groaning under slavery." Reading the social and economic worlds of Kim and the

[191] See James R. Acker, *Scottsboro and Its Legacy: The Cases That Challenged American Legal and Social Justice* (New York: Praeger, 2008).

[192] For a comprehensive history of the first decade of Korea's colonization in Japan and what led up to and occurred during the March 1st Movement, see Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005); and Michael E. Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

[193] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi,* 333.

[194] Ibid.

Scottsboro boys together reveal a more intimate connection between the experiences of struggling against larger forces of colonialism and racial capitalism. The teenage boys were arrested when a fight broke out with a group of white men on a train and were subsequently accused of rape. Most of the boys were on the train to look for work or traveling to and from their jobs working as farmers, loggers, busboys, and grocery baggers; similar work Kim engaged in to sustain himself and his family in Korea and his status as a student in the US.[195]

For Kim, suffering under the oppressive forces of Japanese colonialism in the Korean peninsula and white supremacy in the United States necessitated a mutual struggle for justice, a search for "a true love of humanity." Writing under the circumstances of an impending deportation, possibly to Japan or Korea, Kim was able to hold on to hope by acknowledging the boys' fight for survival and justice amidst the terror and violence inflicted upon them. Their collective suffering in Kim's view leads to a mutual struggle that serves as a powerful impetus to cultivate solidarities beyond racial divides and political allegiances. And it was their struggle that made Kim's "own heart smile."

Kim ends the poem with a proclamation of solidarities that has a historic significance through the mention of his and the Scottsboro Boys' blood. The 4th stanza states, "that red blood boiling in my yellow palms…I will forever cling on to your blood that playfully and freely flows underneath your black skin." In the U.S. context, blood has long been used as a social and legal basis of racial classification and segregation with the "one-drop-rule" that developed during the reconstruction period in the Jim Crow South. By denoting that a single drop of "black blood" makes a person black, the rule became the nation's definition of blackness that hindered African

[195] Acker, *Scottsboro and Its Legacy*, 1-100; Pang, *Chaemihaninŭii*, 332-333.

Americans' claims for civil rights. Blood also played a significant role in Korean identity formation. According to historian Inga Kim Diederich, blood worked to produce "a biological definition and political concept of Koreanness."[196] Kim Diederich further elaborates that "the ideology of blood-belonging evoked a shared, timeless lineage, the discourse of national blood unity" that was also a "defensive response to the threat of colonization" during the first half of the twentieth century, much like the conception of race and the proximity to whiteness sought out by Koreans and diasporic Korean Americans during this period.[197] Both the one-drop rule and the Korean politicization of blood were deployed to preserve the sanctity of Koreanness and whiteness, and to segregate and mark the otherness of those whose blood was deemed to be "unpure." The same discourse of blood purity used as a discourse of national survival during the colonial period in Korea was adapted during the post-colonial period to define and exclude the racial others in Korea, especially those of "mixed blood" Amerasians born in Korean camptowns near US military bases who were fathered by both Black and White US troops.[198] From both the US and Korean historical context, blood serves as a symbol of oppression and segregation. Kim Ho Ch'ŏl, however, deploys blood as a symbol of unity. He recognizes their difference by mentioning his "yellow palms" and "boiling blood" to the Scottsboro boys' "black skin" and their blood that "playfully and freely" flowing. Despite their racial difference and the different ways Kim explains their blood, stating that he will "cling" on to them nonetheless is a powerful

[196] Inga Kim Diederich, "Blood of the Nation: Medical Eugenics, Bio-Nationalism, and Identity Formation in Cold War South Korea," PhD Dissertation, University of California San Diego 2021, xiii.

[197] Ibid., 2.

[198] Ibid., 18-19.

message of solidarity and unity that is far from the normative anti-black representation of blood in both histories and cultures of US and Korea.

Upbringing, Organizing, and Enacting Solidarities

Kim's upbringing in Korea played a significant role in the development of his worldview and his activities in the US. Kim's decision to study abroad was influenced by his father, who was one of the first Korean international students in the U.S. Kim's father encouraged him to seek new experiences and education overseas despite the family's impoverished circumstances. Kim's father incurred much debt after finishing his studies abroad while working as a pollock, ginseng, and salt trader in Japan, Russia, and Hawai'i.[199] To help provide for his family, Kim worked various jobs in Korea growing up such as selling crab and lumber. It was a difficult time for Kim as he remembered the shame and hunger he and his family endured as an adolescent. For example, Kim's memories include the debt collectors beating his father and taking his rice bowl away; being "treated like a dog" by his landlord who mocked him after tossing him leftovers; and the flowing tears of his mother watching him devour the food.[200] Kim was able to immigrate to the U.S. in 1927 to pursue his studies due to fortunate circumstances.[201] Kim left for the U.S. with help from a family acquaintance and businessman, Mr. Baek, who had already sponsored Kim's brother to study abroad in Melbourne in 1921.[202] With Mr. Baek, Kim arrived at San

[199] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭii,* 332.

[200] Ibid., 332-333.

[201] While the Immigration Act of 1924 prohibited immigrants from Asia, small numbers of visitors, students, and picture brides of Korean immigrant men were able to arrive in very small numbers. Kim could have been one of the students or a visitor given that he made his trip with the businessman Mr. Baek. See Jane Hong, "The Origins and Construction of Korean America: Immigration before 1965," in *A Companion to Korean American Studies*, ed. Rachel Miyung Joo and Shelley Sang-Hee Lee (Boston: Brill, 2018), 259-275.

[202] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭii*, 333-334.

Francisco Harbor in 1927 with four dollars in his pocket and worked in various service industry jobs in hotels and restaurants.[203] While working in the "world famous" Virginia Hotel in Los Angeles before he moved to Chicago to start school, Kim stated that he experienced first-hand the "exploitation at the hands of the Americans" and sought to connect with anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist activists after enrolling at National Louis University.[204]

While studying at National Louis University Kim also belonged to various organizations such as the Anti-Colonial Alliance, American Revolutionary Writer's League (ARWL), and the Korean Association of Social Science (KASS).[205] It is difficult to trace the origins of Anti-Colonial Alliance and if it was a Korean or a broader political organization mirroring the Anti-Imperialist league that dissolved in 1920. The American Revolutionary Writer's League was an organization of cultural producers and literary writers supported by the American Communist Party that became the more well-known League of American Writers in 1935.[206] KASS was a collective of Korean international students who were influenced by the rise of proletarian consciousness after the great depression.[207] Founded by Kim Ho Ch'ŏl, Hŭkku, Kang Hae Ju, Kim Ko Ryŏ, Kim T'ae Sŏn, I T'ae Ho, I Sŭng Ch'ŏl, Pyŏn Min P'yŏng; the purpose of KASS was to "respond to the call of the world proletariat and the sorrow of the subjugated to be one in

[203] Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 144; Pang, *Chaemihaninŭii*, 334.

[204] S. Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution,*144.

[205] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭii*, 341.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Jang Wook Huh, "The Harlem Renaissance in Translation: Socialism, Nostalgia, and the Multilingual Spaces of Diaspora," *American Quarterly* vol. 73, no. 3 (2021): 600.

advancing to the frontlines."[208] The group studied and disseminated Marxist-Leninist ideology and attempted to embed the Korean anti-colonial movement within the global proletarian movement.[209] Members of KASS also included prolific writers and poets such as Hŭkku who wrote "A Study on American Negro Poets" that was the first Korean translation of African American poetry and "Letters from a Late Friend," an autobiographical short story that "describes the intimacy between African Americans and Koreans".[210] "A Study on American Negro Poets" was a product of his self-education on African American culture, history and literature through books available in libraries as he wanted to learn about African Americans and "their inner lives" as they were "yet to be emancipated from slavery in an economic sense."[211] His works described the "day-to day lives of ordinary African Americans, including factory workers, domestic workers, hotel boys, and black students" [212] Another member of KASS, Northwestern University English Student named Kim T'aesŏn, introduced Claude McKay to Korean readers by translating his poems that revealed the "racial divide, black protest, and the weary lives of black laborers in the United States."[213] These included poems like "If We Must Die," which addressed the Red Summer, a series of violent attack by white mobs on African Americans that took place during the summer of 1919, only months after the March 1st movement. McKay's poem may have spoken to the colonized conditions of Koreans, especially

[208] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭii,* 343-344.

[209] Huh, "The Harlem Renaissance in Translation," 601.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid.

[213] Ibid.

to those like Kim Ho Ch'ŏl who took the streets and was met with violence on March 1st. While the poem calls for a defiant stance against the unmitigated racial violence that took place across the US, its message resonated with the spirit of anticolonial resistance that diasporic Koreans embraced through their participation in the overseas independence movement against Japanese imperialism.

Just as Kim connected with the Scottsboro boys through their socioeconomic position as workers, KASS members also "developed a racial and class awareness" through such positionality and "shared a sense of solidarity with immigrant and black workers who were struggling for survival."[214] KASS was also influenced by the rise of proletarian intellectual culture in Chicago and its members "compared the diasporic predicament of black workers to that of Korean students in the United States."[215] KASS mirrored leftist intellectual organizations like the John Reed Club (JRC), which was sponsored by the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and appealed to Marxist and proletarian writers of different backgrounds. Through the JRC, prolific writers like Richard Wright were introduced to a community of leftist intellectuals and literary works to envision different forms of solidarities. Invited to the Chicago branch of the JRC by a fellow postal worker named Aaron Abraham, Wright spoke of his experiences there by stating, "…my attention was caught by the similarity of the experiences of workers in other lands, by the possibility of uniting scattered but kindred peoples into a whole…I began to wonder if a solution of unity was possible."[216] At the JRC, Wright came across "a passional call

[214] Ibid., 601.

[215] Ibid., 599.

[216] Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2020), 318.

for the experiences of the disinherited" that told him "If you possess enough courage to speak out what you are, you will find that you are not alone."[217] Organizations like KASS and JRC provided space for different marginalized and subjugated peoples to collectively imagine possibilities of their liberation as a project that attends to their mutual struggles.

While earlier instances of cross-racial encounters point to self-preservation and conveyance of the Korean conception of race in the Korean American diaspora, cultivating solidarity was at the center of Kim's writing and activism. And much like Do's poem as well as the two *Sinhanminbo* articles "Black Americans' Solidarity Movements" and "Issues Regarding African Americans in the US"; the members of KASS also recognizes the very hypocrisy and contradictions embedded within US society, especially regarding the socioeconomic condition of African Americans and the normalization of visceral racial violence despite the end of from slavery. Hŭkku and Kim's works, especially "Letters from a Late Friend" and "To the Eight Black Children", reveal that diasporic Korean Americans were capable of imagining their own circumstances alongside the struggles of other subjugated ethnic minorities. And more importantly, Kim's participation in the movement to free the Scottsboro Boys that resulted in his imprisonment, deportation, and the potential harm he would face after his expulsion by Japanese authorities, reveals that cross-racial solidarities in the Korean American diaspora was a historical reality that was recorded and archived.

Kim wrote another poem while incarcerated titled "Is This How I Will Be Chased Away" which was published in *Sinhanminbo* on March 31, 1931, where he laments his desperate situation. Kim expressing his emotions by stating that he had been imprisoned despite him

[217] Ibid.

enduring much hardship to quench his thirst for freedom, to arrive at what others told him was "the land of the free."[218] Nonetheless, Kim ends the poem by stating his willingness to continue to resist by stating that he recognized and will follow "the footsteps of my comrades, to the front of the sharp blades, to the gallows they hung! Whether it is my neck or my enemy's neck that hangs, let's fight!"[219]

The presence of cross-racial and cross-border solidarities and the cultivation of collective resistance help us understand and potentially map out an alternative history of the Korean American diaspora that de-centers its proximity to whiteness. These scattered writings both explore the politics of race within US society as well as recognize and question its contradictory nature, i.e. the concept of liberty and equality the US was founded upon. They also reveal acts of radical solidarity by diasporic Korean American activists like Kim who began to reposition the Korean anticolonial movement overseas alongside the struggles of subjugated non-white peoples. Kim's actions differed from the diasporic Korean Americans who sought to obtain knowledge of racialization in the US for self-preservation was far from his mind as his act of solidarity came at a cost that ultimately resulted in his deportation.

While Kim's arrest in 1932 was due to his participation in the movement to overturn the death sentence of the eight Black teenagers, it is unclear if his affiliation with the ARWL or the Anti-Colonial Alliance led to his deportation order. This is certainly a possibility given that ARWL was supported by the American Communist Party and Anti-Colonial Alliance was part of a larger socialist internationalist movement calling for anti-imperialism. Historian Pang Sŏn Ju

[218] Ho Ch'ŏl Kim, "Kŭrŏk'e tchotkyŏgandan marin'ga."

[219] Ibid.

suspects that other diasporic Korean Americans who were staunchly pro-U.S. and anticommunist, threatened by Kim's and other KASS member's radical writings, might have notified immigration officials of Kim's affiliation with communist organization.[220] Kim was imprisoned for around four months and released on May 10th, 1932, and was originally due to be extradited across the Pacific to Japanese authorities for his part in the Korean liberation movement overseas.[221] However, his associates in revolutionary organizations lobbied the courts to allow him 30 days to leave the United States and helped him relocate to Berlin.[222] This fortunate outcome allowed Kim to continue his leftist organizing and to evade Japanese authorities for the time being. Kim stayed in Berlin in July of 1932, working with the Red Aid movement before Hitler's purge of communists after the Reichstag fire.[223] He then moved to Moscow to work with the International Red Aid for six months before returning home to Hungnam where he was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison for his involvement in organizing a Red Aid group.[224]

Historical Fallacies

Historians like Suzy Kim and Pang Sŏn Ju have located Kim Ho Ch'ŏl in the archives and have written detailed accounts of his story. However, the process of cultivating Black-Korean solidarities and the complexities of cross-racial engagement that Kim was a part of with members of KASS has not been examined with the historians' focus mostly remaining with his

[220] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 341.

[221] Ibid., 334, 341.

[222] It is unclear if these comrades were from KASS, ARWL, or the Anti-Colonial Alliance. Ibid., 334.

[223] S. Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution,* 141; Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi*, 342.

[224] Ibid.

identity as a leftist Korean independent activist overseas. Kim Ho Ch'ŏl and his actions also do not fit neatly in the Americanization process of diasporic Korean Americans and the presence of his poem and his story of Black-Korean solidarities in the archives is antithetical to how the Korean American diaspora has been historically placed in a position of subservience and proximity to whiteness. Kim's action in departing from such proximity to seek out cross-racial solidarities came at a cost as diasporic Korean Americans who shared Kim's sentiment were minimal. Fear of repercussions and being further labelled as dangerous also explain Pang's assumption that compliant diasporic Korean Americans may have reported Kim to authorities to mark him as a deviant and a rogue anomaly. While Pang and Suzy Kim's intentions are not to necessarily reproduce the dominant narrative of diasporic Korean American history centered on their proximity to whiteness, they do not engage with his activism and cultivation of solidarities and focus on his transnational and political identity.

Pang examines numerous *Sinhanminbo* articles written by Kim and the activities of KASS, but they are solely identified as a small group of leftist anticolonial students and intellectuals whose impacts were minimal. Pang also dismisses Kim's act of solidarities by stating "if he had not been caught up in the Scottsboro Boys incident and finished his studies safely without any problems…he would have been one of the leaders of Korean socialism."[225] Pang further states, "In conclusion, Kim Ho Ch'ŏl and the Chicago group (referring to KASS) had no impact on the Korean socialist movement… Kim Ho Ch'ŏl will be known more for being the unique first case of personally participating in the African American human rights

[225] Pang, *Chaemihaninŭi,* 346.

movement."[226] Pang laments Kim's potential as a socialist leader in the Korean American diaspora which he squandered through his focus on racial injustice instead of his studies. Kim's civil disobedience was a "problem" he would have avoided if he focused on his education and ambitions as a Korean socialist.

The only other historian to engage with Kim Ho Ch'ŏl, Suzy Kim, interprets his life as an example of a "socialist internationalism" by historically analyzing his autobiographies as well as his resume and application to the Worker's Party of Korea, which he filled out after returning to North Korea after leaving Europe.[227] Kim Ho Ch'ŏl's activism is only mentioned in passing to state the reason behind his imprisonment and deportation. Granted, Suzy Kim's focus is on the close reading of multiple versions of Kim's autobiographies and resumes, as well as the practice of autobiographical writing. However, much like Pang, Suzy Kim also overlooks the depth of transnational entanglements of different imperialisms and subjugations that was central to Kim's worldview by stating, "it was not entirely uncommon for Koreans to have such transnational experiences."[228]

The term "transnational" has been deployed by historians to present an expansive view of national histories by engaging with various forms of transit, migration, and cross-border interactions. However, their focus and analysis have still tended to remain within the boundaries of singular nation-states.[229] Suzy Kim and Pang center Kim Ho Ch'ŏl's identity as a transnational

[226] Ibid., 347.

[227] S. Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution,* 141.

[228] Ibid.

[229] Huang, "Buraku Liberation in Imperial Japan," 108.

Korean striving for Korean independence but sideline the realities and possibilities of cross-racial solidarities cultivated and practiced by diasporic Korean Americans. As Qianqing Huang states, transcontinental and trans-imperial scholarships "allow us to see the manifestations of these connections and entanglements, entailing overlapping and shared imperial histories of settler colonialism and racial capitalism between different empires."[230] Transnational historical readings of "To the Eight Black Children" along with Kim's upbringing, experiences of Japanese imperialism and US racial capitalism, and his self-education (with members of KASS) of racial injustice and violence against African Americans reveal a linkage forged through similar experiences that were "hammered out while looking for a shared liberating future."[231]

Even Moon-Kie Jung and Jae Kyun Kim, who make a crucial historical intervention to present an opening for historians to recognize the global reaches of antiblackness and its intrinsic transnational link to diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness, concludes that solidarities were implausible. Their findings and analysis of anti-black newspaper articles in the late 1800s and early 1900s leads them to conclude that "feelings of solidarity with Black people were out of bounds."[232] Their reliance on the existing archival materials to formulate narratives of global white supremacy and the influence of antiblackness in Korea overlooks histories of cross-racial solidarities which exists through sources like "To the Eight Black Children." While the historical narrative Jung and Kim have constructed help us understand where diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness may have originated from, it inadvertently buttresses the dominant narrative of diasporic Korean American history by foreclosing possibilities of

[230] Ibid.

[231] Ibid.

[232] M. Jung and J.K. Kim, "'Not to be Slaves of Others,'" 156.

liberation through their denial of solidarities. By solely taking archival materials as face value, these scholars concede to the coloniality of the archives by reproducing narratives of oppression in written form as intended, and to parrot the impossibilities of alternative histories.

Re-mapping Black-Korean Solidarities

I came across "To the Eight Black Children" in the archives during the first year of my doctorate program, while working on a research project that is now chapter 1 of this dissertation. I was amazed by the engagement of Black-Korean solidarities given the lack of evidence and data presented on the formation of such solidarities during this period let alone throughout US history as available histories of Black-Korean encounters have tended to focus on tension and conflict around the time of the LA uprising in 1992.[233] I sat on it for a very long time, mostly because I had no idea how to tell Kim's story from the training I received in graduate school as a historian. History led me to read, write, and teach more about division than solidarities because of what was available as "evidence" as if documents solely defined the history and roots of the Korean American diaspora and its communities to which I also belonged. Empirical data and sources could never fully capture the intimate histories of solidarities and the history of cross-racial solidarities in the Korean American diaspora are limited when measured against the dominant narrative of compliance and subservience to US power structures. The non-linearity and scarcity of sources serve as justification for historians of Korea and the Korean American diaspora to overlook cross-racial encounters and the subsequent development of possible solidarities. Such justifications are utilized to fortify the dominant narratives through the

[233] See Nancy Abelmann and John Lie, *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Claire Jean Kim, *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

production of analogous histories based on diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness entrenched through quantity in the archives. What fills the gaps of history, especially the history of the Korean American diaspora during the first half the 20th century, have ultimately been predetermined to exclude histories of cross-racial solidarities.

For the historian, proclaiming that nothing can be done with what is absent from the archives serve as justification to continue to search for sources that can fill the gaps of a conventional narrative. If I told the story of Kim the way I was trained as a historian, I knew I would be limited by the rules of the discipline that would coerce me to obsess over distinguishing between "facts" and "objectivity" with "speculations" and "guesstimations." The historians' unwillingness to engage with such discourse speaks volumes to how the historiographical process of the Korean American diaspora has always been limited by diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness. The disciplinary practice of diasporic Korean American history has remained a product of US imperialism and white supremacy that camouflages itself through the condemnation of Japanese colonialism and support for the civilized and subservient Koreans' call for independence. Such historical processes cannot fully engage with all the complexities of race, resistance and solidarities that renders the project of diasporic Korean American history incomplete.

Locating diasporic Korean American solidarities has been a process of rethinking and reimagining the archives to seek an alternative history the departs from the dominant narrative of diasporic Korean American history centered on its proximity to whiteness. The presence of cross-racial solidarities and collective resistance against Japanese imperialism and white supremacy represented throughout Kim's poem and his activism affirm the complex multiplicity of diasporic Korean American history that dared to imagine the possibilities and hopes of

alternative futures. According to Lowe, this practice also create "space(s) of a different kind of thinking, a space of productive attention to the scene of loss, a thinking with twofold attention that seeks to encompass at once the positive objects and methods of history and social science and the matters absent, entangled, and unavailable by its methods."[234] It is from these spaces where we can imagine histories of the diasporic Korean American solidarities beyond its current labelling as mere anomalies that have not been acknowledged historically to expose the singular and entrenched history of the Korean American diaspora. It gives us impetus to seek beyond the archives to imagine the "what could have been" to further investigate the intimate histories of solidarities.[235] This approach disrupts the sanctity of Korean American diaspora's historical knowledge formation and centers alternative historical practices that refuses to simply accept the normalized acceptance of the archives. As Stuart Hall states, "The unspoken silence in between that which can be spoken is the only way to reach for the whole history. There is no other history except to take the absences and the silences along with what can be spoken."[236]

How do we approach histories of the unspoken when the profession and scholarship of history and Korean studies as well as the archives as the source of historical knowledge only serves to perpetuate the silence over Black-Korean solidarities? What are the possibilities of the "what could have been" when we start piecing together stories of individuals like Kim Ho Ch'ŏl? Thinking of these questions I turn to the works of Saidiya Hartman and the practice of critical

[234] Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 40-41.

[235] Lowe, 40.

[236] Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," in *Essential Essays Volume 2: Identity and Diaspora*, ed. David Morley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 69.

fabulation which attempts to navigate the constitutive limits of the archive. Hartman describes this practice in this way.

> "By playing with and rearranging the basic elements of the story, by re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested point of view, I have attempted to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done."[237]

The practice of critical fabulation and the writing process of 'what could have been' does not seek to replace the disciplinary norms of archival excavation for the purpose of filling the gaps of a linear history. According to Hartman, the intent of this practice imagines what cannot be verified; "it is a narrative of what might have been or could have been, it is a history written with and against the archive."[238] Critical fabulation purposefully marks the fissures of a historical narrative through its narrative restraint, or "refusal to fill the gaps of history to provide closure."[239] Refusing to fill the gaps compels us to "reckon with the coeval violence of affirmation and forgetting, in order to recognize that this particular violence continues to be reproduced in liberal humanist institutions, discourses, and practices."[240]

I apply critical fabulation not as an attempt to create applicable stories of solidarities and radical actors like Kim, but to present possibilities of Black-Korean solidarities that exist beyond the silences and limitations normalized in the archives and the dominant narrative of diasporic Korean American history. Critical fabulation can be utilized to rethink the possibilities of Black-

[237] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11.

[238] Ibid., 12.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," 208.

Korean solidarities by examining the two critical limitations that exist to justify that Black-Korean solidarities were implausible and Kim Ho Ch'ŏl's act of solidarities was a mere anomaly.

One of these limitations is regarding Kim Ho Ch'ŏl's problematic usage of the term *kŏmdungi* to refer to the Black children in the poem's title. *Kŏmdungi* is a derogatory epithet that according to Jang Wook Huh, "renders degradation and shame essential to blackness."[241] It being utilized within the context of solidarities jeopardizes what Kim hoped to achieve and the possibilities of mutual liberation he sacrificed much for. It's usage is also perplexing given that other Koreans and Kim himself have used the direct translation of Black people (*heugin)* or the transliteration of "negro" (*nigeuro*) that has been utilized in diasporic Korean American press to denote Black people at the time.[242] Kim's usage of *kŏmdungi* is a stark contradiction that repels scholarly engagement because it is antithetical to the written accounts that currently exist to historically justify that Black-Korean solidarities. It also may be logical to abide by Jung and Kim's conclusion that Black-Korean solidarities were "out of bounds" and that the anti-blackness embedded in Koreans through the conception of race in Korea forecloses any possibilities of solidarities.[243]

However, when observing the broader history of cross-racial engagements between Koreans and African Americans, the role of western empires and the culture of white supremacy transmitted by white intermediaries such as missionaries played a crucial factor in how Koreans embraced anti-blackness. Thus, the language of anti-blackness was a direct representation of the normalized acceptance of whiteness that many Koreans and diasporic Korean Americans abided

[241] Huh, "The Student's Hand," 369.

[242] Jang Wook Huh, "'Our Temples for Tomorrow': Langston Hughes and the Making of a Democratic Korea," *The Langston Hughes Review* vol. 27, no. 2 (2021): 127-128.

by. Perhaps the usage of the term reveals how the verbiage that Koreans grasped to write about Black people's experiences were inadequate to fully comprehend injustice; as it remained bounded within the language and culture of anti-blackness and their innate consumption of anti-blackness was an inherent part of their assimilation. This dilemma parallels how Black writers such as W.E.B. DuBois ignored the violences of Japanese imperialism in their view of Japan as champion of colored races. And at a time when both linguistic and cultural translation utilized to comprehend race and racialization was murky and in process, one possibility is that Kim failed to understand the contradictory message that the usage of *kŏmdungi* would express. As diasporic Korean Americans were learning about racialization and injustice within the historical and cultural parameters where dominant narratives of anti-blackness needed to be unlearned, the contradictory usage of the term unveils a difficult transnational dilemma that occurs when attempts to cultivate solidarities between two groups with much historical and cultural differences. The usage of the term thus reveals that difference has yet to be recognized. As Stuart Hall states, the acknowledgement of difference is "the politics of recognizing that all of us are composed of multiple social identities, not of one. That we are all complexly constructed through different categories, of different antagonisms, and these may have the effect of locating us socially in multiple positions of marginality and subordination, but positions which do not yet operate on us in exactly the same way."[244] When we contend that Black-Korean solidarities as a process of understanding both the imagining of mutual struggle towards liberation as well as the presence of differences and contradictions, we can both reject Kim's usage of *kŏmdungi* and

[244] Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," 78.

understand it as part of the messy process of how cross-racial encounters can develop into solidarities.

Secondly, Black-Korean solidarities may be considered implausible due to the proclamations of solidarities with African Americans by diasporic Korean Americans like Kim Ho Ch'ŏl and Hŭkku being written in Korean to a Korean and diasporic Korean audience whose understanding of the US racial order and culture of anti-blackness were underdeveloped. The one-dimensional display of solidarities may also explain how diasporic Korean American writers were devoid of direct contact with Black writers as the problematic use of *kŏmdungi* was left unchallenged. However, as Jang Wook Huh states, "although Korean writers' engagements with the African diaspora are unidirectional, their transmission of African American texts illuminates the limited possibilities for creating an interpolitical network among subjugated populations."[245] While evidence of reciprocity and responses to the Korean writers' views by African Americans are not present in the archives, the intersection between colonial subjugation in Asia and racial discrimination in the US have also been explored by prominent Black writers. Solidarities cannot be ruled out when we observe the multiple instances overlapping Afro-Korean connection where Black and Korean writers have shared a mutual affinity in understanding each other's struggles.

For example, Jang Wook Huh examines how Langston Hughes' autobiography and poetry have explored the racist portrayal of colonized Koreans by the Japanese empire closely mirrored the characterization of Black Americans in the US. In his autobiography *I Wonder as I Wander*, Hughes writes partly about his understanding of race and racialization in Japan during his travels around the world in the 1930s. When reading Japanese newspapers, Hughes found the

[245] Huh, "The Harlem Renaissance in Translation," 600.

headlines of petty crimes being focused on ethnicity such as "KOREAN STEAL WATCH" and "KOREAN CAPTURED WITH BIKE" closely mirror how the stigma of criminality was embedded on African Americans through similar headlines in US newspapers.[246] Writing about this experience, Hughes states "I saw quite clearly that color made no difference in the use of race as a technique of hurting and humiliating a group not one's own. In Japan, Asiatics did so to Koreans. In America, whites did so to Negros."[247] Exploration of Black-Korean connection have also been portrayed by Hughes in his poem "Wait" written only five months after his trip to Asia in 1933 to reflect global solidarity, where he "compares the conditions of Koreans to those of black and Asian workers, as well as to those of other exploited groups of the African diaspora."[248] Hughes' works were not a response to the Korean writers nor there is solid evidence that he and others had direct encounters with colonized Koreans. However, Jang Wook Huh states that "Wait" captures an overlapping Afro-Asian history through the medium of poetry that "instantiates the way that Hughes overcomes the lack of face-to-face encounters and produces an imaginative commensurability."[249] The same can be said of "To the Eight Black Children", but for Kim the commensurability presented in his poem was materialized through his act of solidarities and the consequences he paid through his deportation.

While these works by African American and Korean writers may indeed have been one-directional, the mutual sentiment in imagining liberation and struggling against larger forces of

[246] Jang Wook Huh, "Beyond Afro-Orientalism: Langston Hughes, Koreans, and the Poetics of Overlapping Dispossessions," *Comparative Literature* 69:2 (2017): 201.

[247] Ibid., 206.

[248] Ibid., 209-210.

[249] Ibid., 208.

imperialism and racism have been thoroughly expressed in their writings. Also, given that "To the Eight Black Children" was published in *Sinhanminbo,* his proclamation of solidarities with Black Americans have been disseminated to the global Korean diaspora where many may have shared similar sentiments as Kim given their experiences with Japanese imperialism and their exiled status. Lack of solid evidence and recordings of direct contact does not foreclose Black-Korean solidarities as it was mutually imagined and practiced by both diasporic Koreans and African Americans in limited ways. What they established were fertile grounds in which solidarities can be cultivated through both the acknowledgement of their mutual struggles as well as their differences and contradictions. Cross-racial solidarities is an ongoing process of transformation that works to connect various place based liberatory struggles together where various ethnicities and identities converge to both accept and reject one another. Much like how Stuart Hall defines identities, solidarities are also "never completed, never finished" and are always "in process."[250]

Conclusion: Sprouts of Solidarity

22 years after Kim Ho Ch'ŏl was imprisoned, during the Korean War, when virtually all cities in North Korea had been leveled by US bombs; the radical Korean American newspaper *Korean Independence* published an editorial that sought out Black-Korean solidarities.[251] It specifically pointed out how atrocities committed by US troops was deeply connect to histories of racial violence as well as systematic racism against African Americans. The article states:

[250] Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," 69.

[251] *The Korean Independence* circulated from 1943-1956 where it published numerous articles to critique US militarism and imperialism in the Asia Pacific after WWII, such as the actions and occupational policies of the US Military Government in Korea and US involvement in the Korean War.

> "The whipping, torturing, imprisoning, burning of Korean civilians by American troops has its parallel in the Klan terrorism inflicted on the Negro people throughout the South and in every major city in the United States…The debasing of the Korean people, in South as well as North Korea, by American troops… is directly paralleled by the debasing of the Negro people, who are forced into ghettos, deprived of jobs, decent living conditions, the right to vote, the right to enter public places, to intermingle freely with white Americans- or even walk public throughfares without police brutality and intimidation…"[252]

The editor was very knowledgeable of the history of racism and that Black Americans faced daily, and the global reaches of white supremacy spread through US imperialism and militarism is highlighted through the comparison of atrocities committed by US troops to the racial violence of the Ku Klux Klan. The editor also mentions imperial subjugation and anti-colonial resistance in numerous places across the globe to point to how white supremacy works beyond the US nation-state. White supremacy and western imperialism are inseparable and so is their mutual struggle for liberation as it states:

> "As surely as their common oppression gives the Korean and Black folks a close bond, so surely does their militant resistance, their will to live in freedom and human dignity give them still another cause for unity…Their cause and their oppression spring from the same source…as does the oppression of all the colonial peoples of India, Africa, the Malay Peninsula, Asia, Polynesia, and all the others who struggle against the imperialist powers have all been enchained by the myth of white supremacy."

The editorial ends by stating how Koreans and African Americans can learn from each other's experiences. It states "Their demands for equality, self-determination, and their right to pursue their own culture, as nations and as human beings are alike. And as surely as they learn to know and understand each other, and unite in a common need for freedom, so surely will their mutual cause be won." This shows that there is an affirmation of solidarities as a process of building and cultivating relationships through their mutual histories of oppression and struggle for liberation.

[252] "Editorial," *Korean* Independence, December 26, 1951.

Throughout the 1950s, the editors and associates of *Korean Independence* were surveilled and investigated by the FBI, and many members were tried and deported to North Korea after the Korean War through the McCarthyism purge.[253] From the persecution the editors of *Korean Independence* and Kim Ho Ch'ŏl faced, we can ascertain that various forms of state sanctioned violences and legal restrictions work hand in hand to prevent the type of solidarities that may diasporic Korean Americans attempted to foster and directly engage in. It also served as a warning for diasporic Koreans that any attempt to mobilize alternative forms of relationships beyond their subservience to white supremacy would result in their expulsion. Such was the cost of proclaiming and imagining solidarities amongst the oppressed and the colonized, but these radical diasporic Korean Americans understood, their proximity to whiteness and those in power will never save them.

Solidarities manifested through radical actions of diasporic Korean Americans such as Kim Ho Ch'ŏl who began to reposition the Korean Independence Movement overseas alongside the struggles of the Black working class in the South. The writings by Kim and other members of KASS also reveal the limited presence of cross-racial solidarities and the cultivation of collective resistance. They help us understand and potentially map out an alternative history of the Korean American diaspora that de-centers its proximity to whiteness. These scattered writings reveal acts of radical solidarity and imagining of an alternative sociality formed through the development of racial consciousness.

[253] Local immigration officials raided the newspaper headquarters multiple times and by 1955, 1955 all five staff members received deportation orders including the editor-in-chief Diamond Kimm, English section editor Sang Ryup Park, David Hyun, Kwak Chungsoon, and Choon Cha Lee. Jane Hong, "Wŏsingt'ŏnesŏŭi chomang: migugŭi chŏngch'ijŏk kugoech'ubanggwa hanin tiasŭp'ora" [A View from Washington: Political Deportation & the Korean Diaspora in the U.S.], *Yŏksamunjeyŏn'gu* 26 (2011): 265.

Despite direct acts of solidarity engaged by individuals like Kim, scholars dismissed and overlooked the possibilities of a different history and a different Korean diaspora that was both imagined and enacted. Diasporic Korean Americans who appear in this chapter, in particular, their refusal to abide by the norms of racialization and the rules set by the US racial-social order, exist in the archives unobserved as it remains illegible to the norms of whiteness. This speaks volumes to how proximity to whiteness is entrenched within the dominant narrative of diasporic Korean American history that have overlooked its existence and the possibilities of a different Korean American diaspora it represents.

Chapter 4

Towards a Demilitarized Transpacific:
Diasporic Entanglements and Enacting Alternative Futures

Introduction

On April 3, 1967, US Army Private First-Class Kenneth Griggs walked into the Cuban embassy in Tokyo as a deserter seeking political asylum. Just a couple weeks before, Griggs was roaming the streets of Ginza while on leave after his deployment to Saigon. He was handed a four-page flyer written in English titled "Japan's Letter to US Army Soldiers" which stated, "Vietnam must be left in the hands of the Vietnamese, its people should no longer be murdered, GIs should desert their posts."[254] Deeply moved by the letter, Griggs decided to become a deserter. Before his dog-tags read Kenneth Charles Griggs, he was born Kim Jin Su (hereforth J.S. Kim) in Seoul, Korea before the Korean War.[255] J.S. Kim grew up as an orphan after his parents were killed during the war and was adopted by an American soldier and was given his new name after moving to the US. After living in Idaho for 10 years, J.S. Kim enlisted in the Army out of his desire to become a U.S. citizen as his naturalization requests were denied. J.S. Kim was first stationed in South Korea and Japan before his deployment to Vietnam, then returned to Japan for R&R (Rest and Recuperation). It was during this time he sought political asylum at the Cuban embassy in Tokyo where he spent eight months while trying to find his way out of Japan. After a failed attempt to flee to North Korea via China, J.S. Kim joined a group of

[254] Kyŏng T'ae Ko, "Mangmyŏnggaek ttonŭn 'homrisŭ' Kim Jin Su" [Kim Jin Su, An Exile or 'Homeless'], *Hankyoreh 21*, May 9, 2014, http://h21.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/37006.html.

[255] I use J.S. Kim to remove any confusion between him and Kim Ho Ch'ŏl from the previous chapter. Hyŏk T'ae Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan migun t'alyŏngbyŏng Kim Jin Su" [Kim Jin Su, U.S. Military Deserter on Exile to Europe], *Hwanghaemunhwa* 84 (2014): 329.

GI deserters and was smuggled out of the country by Japanese anti-war activists to Sweden, a neutral country that granted Vietnam War deserters political asylum.

J.S. Kim's firsthand experiences of US imperialism and military violence across the Asia-Pacific throughout his life shaped his understanding of his own complex diasporic identity and his decision to become a deserter. This chapter explores J.S. Kim's story to demonstrate how a different life, and indeed a different peace is possible beyond diasporic Korean American association with and participation in the normalized violences of the US imperial project. It examines how J.S. Kim's complex diasporic identity formations shaped by the militarized and colonized circuits of the U.S. military empire materialized his actions-to envision and enact what I call a demilitarized transpacific. I consider a demilitarized transpacific as a project of resistance that stands antithetical to the enterprise of the US military empire in the Asia-Pacific. A project that is an ongoing struggle that reimagines an alternative future in the Asia-Pacific region removed from the violent subjugation wrought by US militarism and imperialism. While such a project has been minimized by the vast influence of US domination in the militarized transpacific, the actions of the few committed to the project of a demilitarized transpacific expose the fragility of the US military empire and the glaring ruptures of its imperial dominance. The struggle for a demilitarized transpacific is an ongoing multi-sited project that has been engaged by different people, taking different forms to oppose the US military empire in the region. Those who partake in the project of a demilitarized transpacific may not know each other nor work collectively as they come from different backgrounds with different visions of liberation. However, these resisters and their endeavors have always been connected through their resolve and the ultimate goal of demilitarizing the region through the removal of US military presence.

There are only scraps of documents and written accounts on J.S. Kim's life and desertion. These include declassified South Korean governmental documents, a handful of newspaper articles in Japan, an autobiography of an African American GI named Terry Whitmore who fled with J.S. Kim to Sweden, as well as newsletters from *Beheiren*.[256] *Beheiren* was a coalition of Japanese anti-war activists that assisted deserting GIs of the Vietnam War by providing safe passageway to neutral nations.[257] The flyer that moved J.S. Kim to desert was likely handed to him by *Beheiren* activists. The available historical materials only partly reveal the complexities behind the entangled stories of war, loss, diaspora and resistance that traversed across the world: Korea-Idaho-South Korea-Japan-Vietnam-Japan-USSR-Sweden.

Scholar Hyŏk T'ae Kwŏn's work have clarified J.S. Kim's actions in Japan from the diplomatic relations, conversations, and frictions that took place after his desertion. Kwŏn used the scattered documents and other historical sources to trace J.S. Kim's escape to Sweden from Japan, focusing on his relationships with *Beheiren* activists and the diplomatic correspondence between South Korea, Japan, Cuba and the US. Journalist Kyŏng T'ae Ko outlines J.S. Kim's journey similarly to Kwŏn but uses the available information to extensively search for and locate J.S. Kim, presumably to speak to him and report on what the documents do not and cannot say. Given such limitations, two literary writers have turned to fiction to imagine what the documents do not and cannot reveal. These writers are Yoshie Hotta and Dae-Hwan Lee, who have retraced J.S. Kim's Journey through their fictional biographical short story and novel titled "A Young

[256] Beheiren in an abbreviation of ***Be****tonamu ni* ***Hei****wa o! Shimin* ***Ren****go* or "The Citizen's League for Peace in Vietnam."

[257] Thomas R.H. Havens, *Fire Across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan*, 1965-1975 (*Princeton: Princeton University Press*, 1987); Noriko Shiratori, "Peace in Vietnam! Beheiren: Transnational Activism and GI Movement in Postwar Japan 1965-1974," PhD diss, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2008.

Man with a Whittling Name" (1970) and *Flower Bloom from a Gun Barrel* (2019). Hotta and Lee both recreate J.S. Kim with multiple different names (Korean, English, Swedish) as the protagonist of their works by utilizing the existing fragmented history. Parts of Hotta and Lee's narratives, even though they are works of fiction, delve deep into the psyche of Kim, and their storytelling help us imagine the otherwise rethink different possibilities of liberation that J.S. Kim sought out. These narratives help us understand the deep complexity of Kim's personhood and provide depth to reimagine "what could have been," through documents and literary imagination.[258] They resonate with Saidiya Hartman's method of critical fabulation that blurs the boundaries between storytelling and archival research to imagine what cannot be verified.

A clear and complete linear history is not compatible with J.S. Kim's journey and cannot fully engage with his complex personhood represented by the Korean diaspora's entanglements with the U.S. military empire. My intention of this chapter is not to fill the gaps of history with logic and evidence, but to be attuned to what cannot be discovered and located in the archives and the fictional possibilities that have been written to imagine the "what could have been."[259] Thus, I examine the fragmented history in conjunction with the two fictional narratives, to piece together what I can to shed light to an alternative future and a different world without US imperial dominance in the militarized transpacific that J.S. Kim envisioned and struggled for. This chapter also focuses less on what the documented facts reveal about J.S. Kim's life than their various motivations for writing them. Thus, I examine the motivations of some of these writings that have attempted to interpret his complex identity and find out the purpose of his desertion. These include Ko's reporting that led him to extensively search for J.S. Kim in Europe

[258] Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 175.

[259] Ibid.

and Lee's full-length novel that recreates a fictional world surrounding J.S. Kim's counterpart in the novel, Son Jin Ho/William Daniel McGovern/Jonas Jonasson. I scrutinize the writers' motivations to examine if they work to uplift J.S. Kim's struggles against the violences of the US empire or fulfil their own prerogatives that may de-center J.S. Kim's agency.

This chapter deploys *soldiering* and *complex personhood* as the two key frameworks to understand J.S. Kim's story as crucial components of his multifaceted identity formations. I deploy these concepts throughout the chapter to explore J.S. Kim's transnational journey with the available historical materials and what Lee's novel and Hotta's short story imagined could have happened within the numerous historical gaps that exist in his story.

Soldiering is defined by Simeon Man as a broad form of militarized labor that encompasses both the conventional armed forces and opportunities taken by individuals "whose labor and lives became entwined with the military" in the post-WWII Pacific. [260] *Soldiering* is also a form of labor that develops alongside U.S. militarism to reveal "the violence undergirding the project of U.S. liberation and the discursive complexities of U.S. imperial violence, all while allowing us to map the scale of the U.S. empire amidst the terrain of individual life."[261] Man's definition of *soldiering* is compatible with how J.S. Kim's life was intertwined with US wars in the Asia-Pacific that produced multiple identities -- a Korean War orphan who lost his family in the Korean War; a transnational adoptee of an American GI; an immigrant soldier who enlisted to gain citizenship and participate in another violent proxy war in the Asia-Pacific during the Cold War; and a political exile and a deserter protesting both the Vietnam War and U.S.

[260] Simeon Man, *Soldiering through Empire*: *Race and the Making of the Decolonizing Pacific*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 10.

[261] Ibid., 12.

occupation of the Asia-Pacific. Interpreting J.S. Kim's life and desertion through the notion of *soldiering* recognizes how his diasporic Korean identity is intertwined and mediated by the military institution across the transpacific world dominated by US hegemony. Nonetheless, J.S. Kim's act of refusal and his subsequent life in exile reveal the diasporic Korean American possibilities of dissociation from US imperialism even when one's life has been entangled by its violences at every turn.

I apply *complex personhood* to closely examine both J.S. Kim's own words that were recorded and remembered as well as the fictional narratives that address the complexity of J.S. Kim's dueling identities as a victim and a perpetrator, as well as his actions and choices. According to Avery Gordon, *complex personhood* is a profound theoretical statement that "life is complicated" and carries a multitude of meanings.[262] It means that "all people (albeit in specific forms whose specificity is sometimes everything) remember and forget, are beset by contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize themselves and others."[263] It also is a recognition of people's complex humanity in which "people's lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning."[264] I use multiple meanings of *complex personhood* to examine excerpts from the aforementioned fictional narratives, the words he spoke to and among other GI deserters during their journey to Sweden, and personal letters that he left behind for *Beheiren* members before leaving Japan. J.S. Kim's words indicate the transformation of his conscience as he recognized his complicity participating in the US imperial project in the Asia-

[262] Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3-4.

[263] Ibid.

[264] Ibid., 5.

Pacific. At the same time, they also conjure up more difficult questions that are often random, erratic, adversarial, and contradictory. For example, J.S Kim's disdain for other GI deserters and his confession later in his life to *Beheiren* activists about lying about his upbringing as a Korean War orphan are some of the enigmas within the existing narratives of his life-story that I examine in this chapter. They invite us to use our imagination as the fictional narratives have done to think beyond the existing historical narratives and conventional understanding of J.S. Kim's complex humanity.

Born of War and Finding Refuge

Kim Jin Su was born on December 25, 1946 in Seoul, Korea.[265] In J.S. Kim's own words, he was orphaned by the War and spent 10 years in the U.S. before enlisting in the Army out of his desire to become a U.S. citizen.[266] J.S. Kim was adopted by a soldier in the 38th Infantry Regiment on November 23, 1956, and relocated to the US with his adopted father after being given his English name, Kenneth Charles Griggs, and settled in Idaho.[267] Records show that an application for US citizenship was filed in 1957 but was rejected as he was not eligible for naturalization in 1961.[268] There were no attempts at naturalization after 1961 as he enlisted in the Army in 1963. The reason behind his enlistment instead of filing for naturalization may be because Kim had police records marked with "juvenile delinquency."[269]

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[265] Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ROKMOFA), *Kim Jin Su han'gukkyemigun chuilk'ubadaesagwan mangmyŏngsagŏn, 1967-68* [Korean American Soldier Kim Jin Su Cuban Embassy in Japan Exile Incident, 1967-1968], K-0006/2795/743.73JA/US, Seoul: ROKMOFA Northeast Asia Division, 1968, 224.

[266] Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan," 344.

[267] Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Kim Jin Su*, 230.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid.

The reasons for the existence of J.S. Kim's police records and the meaning of "juvenile delinquency" cannot be found. Dae Hwan Lee's novel *Flower Bloom from a Gun Barrel* (2019) recreates Kim through his fictional counterpart- Son Jin Ho/William Daniel McGovern/Jonas Jonasson -- and engages with the complexities of J.S. Kim's identity by imagining the gaps between Kim's story, such as the incident that led to his arrest that resulted in the denial of his naturalization process. While attending high school Son was the victim of racist bullying by three white classmates and his arrest was the result of his retaliation when he beat one of the bullies with a Japanese wooden sword he took from his adoptive father's office.[270] Despite the efforts of his adoptive father and the family lawyer, Son claimed that his arrest and his records would block his future path, especially his naturalization process.[271] In the novel, Son runs away from home and enlists in the US Army.

J.S. Kim was stationed in both Japan and South Korea before he was deployed to Saigon as a typewriter for the 191st Ordinance Battalion.[272] After his deployment, Kim returned to Japan on R&R but did not rejoin his unit when his leave ended March 18, 1967.[273] It was between March 18th and April 3rd when Kim was deeply affected by the anti-war letter and planned his intention to become a deserter. In *Flower Bloom from a Gun Barrel*, the reading of the anti-war letter came before a series of events that led up to Son's desertion. These included Son's interaction with an elderly chef in a restaurant. The chef, who has lost his son to war, gifts him a paper amulet as a lucky charm and tells him "Peace in Vietnam! Leave Vietnam to the

[270] Dae Hwan Lee, *Ch'onggue p'in kkot* [Flower Bloom from a Gun Barrel] (Paju: Asia Publishers, 2019), 29-32.

[271] Ibid., 33.

[272] Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan," 330.

[273] Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Kim Jin Su*, 224.

Vietnamese!"[274] Son also reads anti-war graffiti on the bathroom stalls before picking up "Japan's Letter to US Army Soldiers" on the ground and contemplates his role in the war and why he became a soldier. In the novel, Lee takes creative liberties to make Son a combat soldier who justifies the purpose of killing as his own survival and his future as a US citizen. However, Son decides that killing more people to live as a US citizen is not worth it after asking himself "Am I not making Vietnam War orphans as a Korean War orphan soldier who is faithful to his duties?"[275] The anti-war sentiments represented by the chef's gift, the letter, and the graffiti fused with the circumstances behind Son's upbringing in Korea deeply impacted his choice to become a deserter.

In the short story "A Man with a Whittling Name" (1970), Yoshie Hotta recreates J.S. Kim as Pak Chŏng Su/William George McGovern. Hotta was a close associate of *Beheiren* who hid J.S. Kim at his residence for 10 days after he left the Cuban embassy and while *Beheiren* members planned his escape out of Japan. Hotta bases the story on the conversations he personally had with J.S. Kim during the 10 days. The story explores Pak's complex humanity through his contradicting identities that have tormented him to suggest there was much deeper emotional turmoil that brewed within J.S. Kim than a single leaflet that spurred him to become a deserter.

In the story, Pak's return to South Korea as a GI played a large role in impacting his decision to become a deserter. In a conversation he has with Otosan (father in Japanese, what

[274] While the novel does not explain which War the elderly chef's son was killed in, it was probably in World War II given that no Japanese soldier participated in the Vietnam War. Lee, *Ch'onggue p'in kkot,* 164.

[275] Lee, *Ch'onggue p'in kkot,* 166.

Pak called the host who was the fictional recreation of Hotta), Pak recalls his memories and emotions when he returned to Seoul for the first time since he was adopted:

> "My circumstances were extremely ill-fated in Korea. The infrastructural damages caused by the war was almost recovered. Seoul streets changed to a point where I couldn't recognize it. But the American bases were surrounded by homeless children, orphans, and prostitutes. I was one of those kids who returned 11 years later as part of the U.S military, as someone on the *inside* of the barbed-wire fence, as one of the soldiers who buy women and throw things at the kids, even my name was William George McGovern….I cannot feel an ounce of joy, whether I am on the *outside* or *inside* of the barbed wire fence. But I determined then and there during my return to South Korea that I will not be someone *inside*…But that doesn't mean I'm Korean either. Even if I am permitted to live on the *outside* of the fence I cannot live as a Korean with Koreans. The 11 years of living in the US has completely changed me…"[276]

This section of the short story explores how J.S. Kim's desertion may have been tied to his personal ties to the perpetual violence of U.S. military occupation in both South Korea and Vietnam. It also points to how he may have come to understand his role as a victim and a perpetrator like how Lee imagines Son to be a "Korean War orphan making Vietnam War orphans." The idea of being on the *inside* and *outside* of the barbed-wire fence also resonates with how Pak understands his names that represent his contradicting identities. Pak feels anger towards his given English name, and sadness in never having the opportunity to be the person that his Korean name represents. At the same time, he doesn't want to go back to who Pak was. "Pak Chŏng Su's life…homeless kids gathering like flies at the American base and eating the leftover food thrown away…I never want to go back to that...I hate that me more than William George McGovern."[277] Pak also refers to the new adopted name, family, and status he was given through what he calls "the humanity of the abundant nation" while questioning why he can't

[276] I have italicized *inside* and *outside,* pointing to their significance. Yoshie Hotta, "The Young Man with a Whittling Name," in *Hyŏnje tongasia munhagŭi ihae* [Comprehending Contemporary East Asian Literature], ed. Jae Yong Kim and Min Young Shin (Seoul: Kŭldurim, 2017), 81.

[277] Ibid., 73.

remain as Chŏng Su.[278] The denial of U.S. citizenship and his wishes to be on the *inside* was motivated by his difficult upbringing and what led him to be a GI as he states, "I thought my situation would change when it came to War, but…" The silence after reflects the emotional and psychological turmoil Pak feels as a participant in the imperial project that violently forced his multiple journeys including to his homeland and other US occupied territories of Asia. There is much regret and mental torment expressed by Pak when he states, "I hate, I hate all this…," which Otosan interprets as a remorseful groan coming from deep within.[279]

Before travelling to the Cuban embassy in Tokyo from the Johnson Airbase in Saitama where he was stationed, J.S. Kim visited the headquarters of the Japanese Communist Party and the *Chōsen Sōren* (General Association of Korean Residents in Japan), a *Zainichi* (ethnic Koreans in Japan) organization with close ties to North Korea to ask for assistance.[280] It was *Chōsen Sōren* that suggested J.S. Kim to seek aid from the Cuban embassy after they relayed they could not assist deserters as they do not have extraterritoriality and their marginalized status in Japan. J.S. Kim applied for political asylum the same day he entered the Cuban Embassy and during his initial interview with embassy officials, he stated, "I witnessed the U.S. aggression in Vietnam and grew to feel hatred towards the war."[281]

After J.S. Kim entered the Cuban embassy, complex diplomatic conversation between them and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (JMOFA) took place. The JMOFA requested

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[278] Ibid., 68.

[279] Ibid., 90.

[280] Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan," 330.

[281] "Kan tsume no mama ichi kagetsu han" [One and a half months of being 'canned'], *Asahi Shimbun*, May 17, 1967; Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan," 331.

the embassy to hand Kim over based on the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) of the Japan-US Security Treaty.[282] Based on the treaty, Japan was obliged to transfer any deserters to the US military that held criminal jurisdiction. The embassy refused based on the overseas diplomatic establishments' right to protect those who seek political asylum and expressed disapproval at JMOFA's extradition requests based on both their "principles of humanity and politics."[283] With approval of the Cuban government, the embassy requested JMOFA to guarantee a secure passage out of Japan for Kim to Cuba. The Cuban government stated that it would permit J.S. Kim's request for political asylum based on their fundamental principle to fully support political exiles from Imperialist countries."[284] The JMOFA refused the Cuban embassy's request and rejected Kim's status as a political refugee by stating, "Japan will adhere to the principle of international law that no diplomatic mission abroad from any country has the right to protect those who seek asylum for political reasons."[285] The JMOFA made two more requests to release J.S. Kim to their custody, one to the embassy and one directly to the Cuban ambassador on April 8th and 10th, but both requests were again denied. Representatives of the embassy defended this decision by stating how the protection of political asylum seekers is protected through multiple treaties in Latin America.

Officials at the Cuban embassy were defiant in protecting J.S. Kim. The first secretary of the embassy Edgar D. Valeria also explicitly stated to the press:

[282] Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan," 334.

[283] Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Kim Jin Su*, 236.

[284] Ko, "Mangmyŏnggaek ttonŭn," 3.

[285] "Kan tsume no mama."

> "Asylum is acknowledged by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And since the Cuban government has granted [Kim's] asylum, we are responsible for protecting him…If the Japanese government does not allow the US soldier to leave the country, then we will let him stay in the embassy as long as it takes. 10 years or 20 years…"[286]

The director of JMOFA Treaty Department Fujisaki further defended Japan's firm stance by stating that not recognizing the asylum rights of other nations' embassies are common practice and that they were only following international law.[287] Fujisaki further stated that the Cuban government's request for J.S. Kim's safe passage out of Japan was likely based on how South American countries' practices of granting political asylum.[288] Japanese police thus carried out strict surveillance at the embassy, attempting to arrest Kim once he steps out of the building then to hand him over to the US military police. Valeria reported that Kim was doing very well, staying at the ambassador's residence in the embassy and spending his days watching TV, playing ping pong, and practicing his Spanish (Figure 1).

J.S. Kim's case was also peculiar due to his status as a non-US citizen and could have been extradited to South Korea as he still held South Korean citizenship. However, the same legal precedence applied to US military personal in South Korea as Japan, through the SOFA agreement between South Korea and the US that was only signed two years prior in 1966.[289] Nonetheless, the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SKMOFA) was alarmed at the situation given that if J.S. Kim seeks refugee in North Korea, he would be utilized as a

[286] Ibid.

[287] Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Kim Jin Su*, 244.

[288] Ibid.

[289] Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan,"335.

"significant tool for communist propaganda."[290] The SKMOFA was especially interested in J.S. Kim's whereabout between March 18 and April 3 and correctly assumed that he may have had contact with *Chōsen Sōren* and sought the possibility of fleeing to North Korea.[291]

What these state documents reveal is how J.S. Kim's desertion revealed the neocolonial relationship between the US military empire and both South Korea and Japan. Both JMOFA's actions to prevent J.S. Kim from leaving to a communist nation in Cuba and South Korea's concern regarding his connections and potential escape to North Korea are directly connected to the central goal of US military empire in the Asia-Pacific -- to thwart both the physical threat and ideological influence of communist nations such as North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union. Despite J.S. Kim being a US soldier, the SKMOFA and JMOFA were the main governmental actors and mouthpieces regarding his desertion given his citizenship and Japan's jurisdiction. Nonetheless, the underlying influence of US military loomed large through the SKMOFA and JMOFA's resistance to anticommunism and claims of compliance to international law which both reveal "the overlapping dynamics between the formation of postcolonial states in Asia and U.S. imperialism."[292] Understanding J.S. Kim's identity as a US soldier in Asia as well as the foreign governmental intervention and reaction to his desertion under the broad notion of *soldiering* reveal South Korean and Japanese adherence to the US military empire for security and stability in the region. According to Simeon Man, "these neocolonial dependencies inextricably bound their respective nation-building projects to US foreign policy objectives."[293]

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[290] Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Kim Jin Su*, 225.

[291] Ibid., 230-231

[292] Man, *Soldiering Through Empire*, 11.

[293] Ibid.

Furthermore, the multiplicity of J.S. Kim's identities, from a Korean War orphan and adoptee to a GI deployed in Vietnam who later became a deserter, reveals how the violences of the US military empire is permeated throughout his life-story. Details on his inner turmoil are not clear and have been fictionally recreated by both Hotta and Lee. Nonetheless, J.S. Kim's decision to no longer be a part of the violences perpetuated by the US imperial project reveals that his act of desertion to be a practice of "resistance and regeneration that refuse to be narrowly confined to the arena of militarized security and state-adjudicated justice."[294]

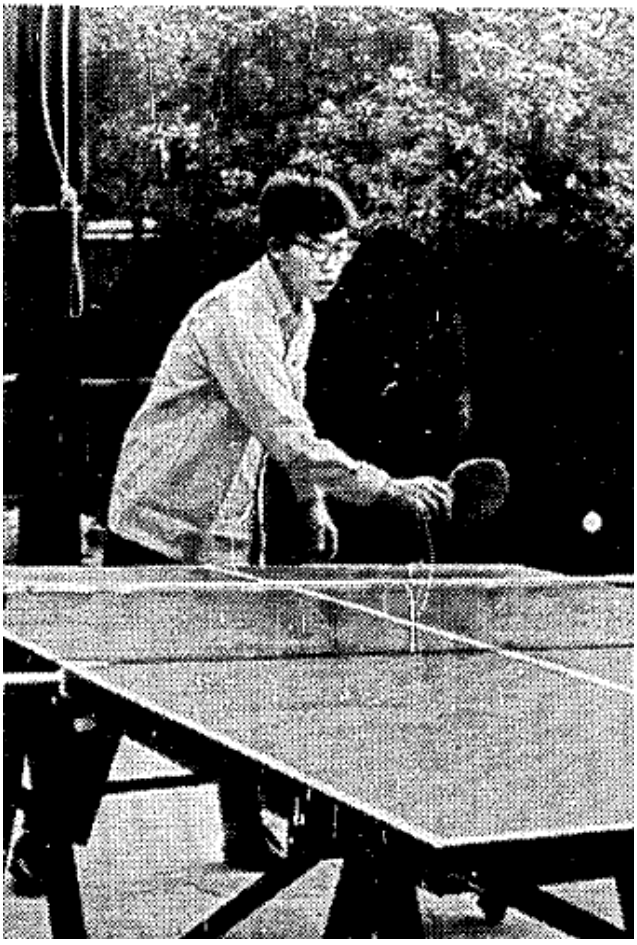

Figure 4.1: Kim playing Ping Pong at the Cuban Embassy, from *Asahi Shimbun*.

[294] Baik, *Reencounters*, 8.

Beheiren and Final Destination Europe

After living in the Cuban embassy for eight months, J.S. Kim abruptly left without notifying his hosts on December 19, 1967. Due to the diplomatic stalemate between the embassy and JMOFA, J.S. Kim determined that leaving Japan through legal means was impossible and attempted find alternative ways to escape.[295] J.S. Kim first sought help from *Sōhyō* (the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan) who introduced J.S. Kim to *Beheiren*, the producers of the leaflet that Kim read and was deeply influenced by in Ginza. J.S. Kim met with *Beheiren's* secretary general Yoshikawa Yuichi on January 3, 1967, who accepted J.S. Kim's request for assistance and persuaded him to briefly return to the Cuban embassy. Yoshikawa told him, "it is not right to end relationships in such way when you have been indebted to them for eight months" and he should seek understanding from the embassy by explaining sincerely his conviction and intention to find alternative methods to flee Japan.[296] Avoiding police surveillance, which was presumably abated due to his lengthy stay, J.S. Kim returned to the Cuban embassy with Yoshikawa to presumably speak to them then left on January 7th to hide in multiple *Beheiren* safehouse, including Hotta's residence.[297]

Beheiren was highly successful in protecting GI deserters and smuggling them out of Japan. Six months prior to J.S. Kim's desertion, *Beheiren* assisted the *Intrepid Four*, a group of Navy sailors from USS Intrepid by smuggling them to Russia then to Sweden, which was a

[295] Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan," 331.

[296] Ko, "Mangmyŏnggaek ttonŭn," 6.

[297] Ibid.

neutral country that granted asylum status to war resisters of the Vietnam War.[298] Also, no Japanese citizens have been arrested or charged for assisting deserters, which spoke to the organization's efficiency and their ability to expose the loopholes that existed between occupied post-colonial nations in Asia and the U.S. military empire.[299] Regarding deserters of US armed forces, Japan had authority to arrest them but only to hand them off to US military authorities as they did not have legal jurisdiction to punish U.S. military personnel. According to Kwŏn Hyŏk T'ae, such unequal arrangement rendered US servicemen as "ghosts" within Japan's legal system.[300] Anti-war activists and organizations located this as a loophole as they also could not be punished for assisting those who could not be domestically prosecuted.

Beheiren nonetheless faced various issues in their attempt to smuggle J.S. Kim out of Japan. The route they used to assist the *Intrepid Four* was compromised and a secondary route to China was devised and confirmed by Kim who set his final destination to North Korea if his escape to China was successful.[301] J.S. Kim left for Kobe on January 19, 1968, and boarded a Chinese vessel, but due to miscommunication he disembarked just before the boat sailed to China. The logistical errors were the result of political upheaval that arose from the Cultural Revolution.[302] *Beheiren* devised a new route to Russia through the northernmost islands of Japan

[298] Shiratori, "Peace in Vietnam," 26.

[299] Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan," 334.

[300] Ibid.

[301] Ibid., 332.

[302] Ibid.

as Kim returned to their safehouse. On a cold April night in 1968, Kim joined five other US deserters in a Japanese fishing boat at the docks of Nemuro, Hokkaido.

The five deserters that J.S. Kim joined on the creaky old fishing boat were Terry Whitmore, Mark Shapiro, Philip Calicott, Joseph Kmitz, and Edwin Annette.[303] From the coast of Nemura, the six deserters were transferred to a Soviet coast guard vessel that sailed to Russian shores. What *Beheiren* arranged for the group was almost identical to what *The Intrepid Four* went through: a month long stay in the Soviet Union to participate in a media tour highlighting their opposition against the Vietnam War before they were allowed to leave for Sweden.[304] For four weeks J.S. Kim and the others toured major cities in the Soviet Union including Moscow, Leningrad, and parts of Georgia, giving multiple press conferences as the guests of a Soviet peace group.[305]

One of the deserters, Terry Whitmore, provides a detailed account of his journey to Sweden that he shared with Kim and the other deserters through his autobiography, *Memphis Nam Sweden: The Story of a Black Deserter* (1971). Whitmore wrote, "The Russians certainly had some good propaganda reasons for dragging us all over their country, from one town hall to the next. But we were getting…a one-way ticket and a safe-conduct pass to our new home…But they sure managed to squeeze a shitload of tourist milage out of us."[306] According to Whitmore, J.S. Kim was the loner in the group and mostly kept to himself, despite the group inviting him to

[303] Ko, "Mangmyŏnggaek ttonŭn," 4.

[304] Ibid., 8.

[305] Terry Whitmore, *Memphis Nam Sweden: The Story of a Black Deserter* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997), 158.

[306] Ibid.

join them. He was also an "oddball" with a "strange bug up his ass" that the other deserters could not figure out.[307] J.S. Kim's reputation amongst the other deserters was based on the two instances during the tour he spoke to the group and publicly in a press conference. The first instance was when the group was on a large plane to Moscow that was filled with families carrying livestock, pots, and pans. Whitmore called it a "nuthouse" and it reminded Shapiro of a "third-class Spanish railroad car."[308] J.S. Kim suddenly admonished the group after keeping silent for six days: "You know that you're just a bunch of chickenshit punks…You candy asses are only cowards…You have no reason to desert. I'm the only one who has a good reason. Why did you leave? Go ahead, tell me why?"[309] Recalling what happened on the plane, Whitmore questioned in his autobiography, "tell you why? Who the hell are you to be asking why?...Who's side are you on anyway, Kim?"[310] The second time J.S. Kim spoke was toward the end of the tour's final press conference in Leningrad, shocking the crowd by stating that the Soviet Union should drop nuclear bombs on the US to solve all of the world's problems.[311]

In his novel, Dae Hwan Lee imagines Son exploding at the other deserters on the plane for looking down on the other passengers and at the same time reveling in the warm reception as "heroes" in Russia that justified their morally righteous decision to desert.[312] Throughout the novel, Son is highly critical of the other deserters and questions their motives. For example, Son

[307] Ibid., 152, 156.

[308] Ibid., 155.

[309] Ibid., 156.

[310] Ibid.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Lee, *Ch'onggue p'in kkot,* 269.

sees the *Intrepid Four*'s proclamation of peace and actions hypocritical and no different from most US soldiers who indulges in narcotics, alcohol, and prostitution.[313] Son questions their anti-war stance and their newly founded identity as advocates for peace. He believed their actions to be not based on their embraced status and anti-militarists, but either fear of returning to combat or refusal to give up the excess and decadence they partook at the expense of the local population. Lee also may have premised such re-creation based on how Whitmore's desertion was partly prompted by being ordered back to Vietnam for combat duties.

Lee recreates the statement about Soviet Union bombing the U.S. as a response to the disdain Son felt being used as a pawn of propaganda by both the Soviet Union and North Korea. In the novel, a fictionalized meeting between Son and the North Korean ambassador in Moscow takes place where the ambassador attempts to persuade Son to return to North Korea as a "hero".[314] And one of the reasons for Son's erratic comment was to portray himself as unstable so he would be left alone.[315] Both North and South Korea engaged in propaganda campaigns much like how the Soviet Union required the six deserters to go on a press tour to condemn the US before being allowed to leave for Sweden. Much like how Son/J.S. Kim would be considered a "hero" if he returned to North Korea, the South Korean government also wanted to attract defectors and "returning heroes" from the North Korean regime, especially those who can be utilized "as excellent propaganda tools to prove the superiority of the South Korean capitalist

[313] Ibid., 225-226.

[314] Ibid., 270-271.

[315] Ibid., 276.

system."[316] In 1962, the South Korean regime instituted the "Specifical Relief Act for Patriots and Heros Who Returned to the State," to reward defectors who fit their category of "hero" with special treatment and monetary rewards.[317] One notable "hero" was I Ung P'yŏng who flew his MiG-19 fighter jet to Seoul in 1983 and received 1.2 billion won, about 480 times the average annual South Korean income at the time.[318]

Lee's interpretation of J.S. Kim's outbursts and his erratic comments at the Leningrad press conference exposes the hypocrisy of the other deserting GIs. Their self-righteousness for their newly developed identity as pacifists, which they spoke of in detail in the press conferences, did not remove them from their complicity and their identity as participants in the US imperial project and their exploitation of the local population where they were stationed. In recreating J.S. Kim's outbursts, the novel has Son asking the other GIs, "All you guys need is women and booze? Do you need drugs too?" and "You think you are heroes now that you received some flowers and had your picture taken?"[319] Lee also interprets J.S Kim's outlandish proposal of a nuclear war as a refusal of being a tool for propaganda for any country (US, Soviet Union, and North Korea) and a way for him to maintain agency over the choices he has made so far and will make in the future.

Whitmore's recalling of J.S. Kim's words and his choice not to associate with the others during their journey from Japan to Sweden also partly reveals his stance and how he separated

[316] Byung-Ho Chung, "Between Defector and Migrant: Identities and Strategies of North Koreans in South Korea," *Journal of Korean Studies* 32 (2008): 8.

[317] Ibid.

[318] Andrei Lankov, "Bitter Taste of Paradise: North Korean Refugees in South Korea," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 6 (2006): 117.

[319] Lee, *Ch'onggue p'in kkot,* 269.

himself from the other GIs. Claiming that bombing the US with a nuclear warhead would "solve all of the world's problems" reveals his disdain and how he was willing to completely remove himself from the US in every way possible. This was very much different from the other GIs, whose claims for desertion are supposedly based on their pacifist beliefs, consider themselves "patriotic Americans." For example, angrily responding to J.S. Kim's condemnation of the other GIs as cowards, Joseph Kmitz retorted by speaking for the other GIs, "Kim, we're all vets from Nam. Terry's been shot up and won some medals. What the hell are you breaking balls about?"[320] Whitmore being wounded in combat and having won medals is an affirmation that their decision to desert comes from strong conscience and not of cowardice. Furthermore, in recalling his desertion, Whitmore have stated, "I did what I did because the country had gone wrong…I don't regret for a minute what I did…but it was because I was a loyal American that I deserted in the first place."[321]

The contentious back and forth between J.S. Kim and the other deserters as well as his comments in the Leningrad press conference reveal their stark differences. J.S. Kim's proposal to the Soviet Union to drop a nuclear warhead on the US reveals the severing of his ties to the US and his complicity in participating in its imperial project, and for that reason J.S. Kim claims that he is the "only one who has a good reason" to desert.[322] The other deserters on the other hand consider themselves as fully American and the US as their home given their disapproval at J.S. Kim's comments and the fact that most deserters who sought refuge in Sweden returned to the

[320] Whitmore, *Memphis, Nam, Sweden*, 156.

[321] Ibid., 201.

[322] Ibid., 156.

US when given amnesty by the US after the war.[323] Numerous deserters had difficulty adapting to their new lives in Sweden and as Carl Gustaf-Scott states, many had given up trying to assimilate and wanted to go home as early as 1968.[324] After the final withdrawal of American troops in 1973, many deserters began to return to the US and Canada, but most waited to be granted safe passage back home by the US government.[325] After the initiation of clemency programs by presidents Gerald Ford in 1974 and Jimmy Carter in 1977 that granted amnesty to Vietnam War deserters, most returned home and out of the approximately 1000 deserted who sought refuge in Sweden from 1967-1973, only around 100 remained in Sweden by the 1990s.[326]

The Leningrad press conference was the last stop of their tour as the six deserters were flown to Arlanda International Airport in Stockholm where they would be met by the Swedish-Vietnam Committee and the American Deserters Committee (Figure 2). After a final press conference at the airport the group was interrogated by the Swedish police and spent their first night in jail as they did not have their passports.[327] Kim was separated from the group and held in a different jail, presumably to be interrogated due to his unique background and the public outburst he had made in Leningrad.[328] This was the last time J.S. Kim was with the other deserters and he remained in Sweden unlike most of the others who sought refuge in Sweden.

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[323] Whitmore, *Memphis, Nam,* Vietnam, 161; Carl-Gustaf Scott, "'Sweden Might Be a Haven, But It's Not Heaven': American War Resisters in Sweden During the Vietnam War," *Immigrants & Minorities* 33:3 (2015) 1.

[324] Whitmore, *Memphis, Nam, Vietnam,* 216.

[325] Ibid., 221.

[326] Carl-Gustaff Scott, "'Sweden Might Be a Haven, But It's Not Heaven,'" 1, 221.

[327] Whitmore, *Memphis, Nam, Vietnam,* 174.

[328] Ibid., 174-175.

From the limited information is available, more questions and possibilities emerge about who J.S. Kim was and why he remained so distant from the other GIs. The disdain that J.S. Kim has for the other GIs and the US revealed by his words and its possible meanings explored by fictional recreations can be pieced together to try to understand J.S. Kim's complex humanity. Such process is one way to understand *complex personhood* as Avery Gordon states, *"complex personhood* means that groups of people will act together, that they will vehemently disagree with and sometimes harm each other, and that they will do both at the same time and expect the rest of us to figure it out for ourselves, intervening and withdrawing as the situation requires."[329] Connecting the bits and pieces of information help us recognize how difficult it was for J.S Kim to envision a different future and act upon his convictions through much adversity and turmoil. Whitmore's labelling of J.S. Kim as an "oddball" who the other deserters could not figure out speaks to how different he was as his act of desertion was not only to escape War, death, and destruction, but to remove the totality of the imperial enterprise created by the US military empire that was deeply rooted in his life. With this context, the next section closely examines the two letters he left for *Beheiren* where J.S. Kim speaks about his journey and the alternative future he sought out.

[329] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 5.

Figure 4.2: The six deserters after landing in Stockholm Airport.

Love Letters to *Beheiren*

While Kim was hiding at Hotta's residence, he wrote two letters on January 16, 1967, with both being published on the official newsletter of *Beheiren*, *Beheiren News*, on March 1, 1968.[330] The first letter, titled "A Message to the US, Japan, and the People of the World," was a lengthy statement that explained his journey and decision to desert in his own words (Figure 3). In the first half of this letter, J.S. Kim introduces himself by stating his background and how he came to understand his role as a US soldier that led to his desertion.

[330] *Beheiren* had translated both letters from J.S. Kim's handwritten English to Japanese for publication on their newsletter, and Kwŏn translated them to Korean for his article. The first letter, "A Messege to the U.S., Japan, and the People of the World," was translated back to English by Rachel Min-Hee Park and the second letter, J.S Kim's personal letter to Oda Maokto, was translated by Jaeyoung Ha. Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan," 344.

> "My name is Kim Jin Su. I was born in the city of Seoul on the Korean peninsula. I became an orphan because of the Korean War and came to America as an adoptee where I received the name "Kenneth Charles Griggs." I am currently 21 years old. I lived in America for 10 years and wanted to become an American citizen. So I joined the United States Army and became a mere soldier. I was initially dispatched to South Korea, then Japan, and finally Vietnam. First, I witnessed the horrendous reality in South Korea and at the same time, wondered why things had to be this way. Then, I saw what the war had done in South Vietnam. It was, and still is, the United States that played a decisive role in tragically driving the war to this point. I thought about what kind of future awaited for the fate of the Vietnamese people if the United States tried to achieve its goals in Vietnam in the same way it did on the Korean peninsula. To speak frankly, that future will be the result of the United States' current interference in Vietnam, and Vietnam will become like the South Korea of today. I thought about such a future. And I was also complicit and participated in making this future. I, too, became a part of a brutal and cruel military machine. I also witnessed the Vietnamese people's suffering, caused by this military system. As an accomplice, I finally realized that there is no hope nor joy in becoming a citizen of the United States of America—that is, in becoming what is in fact a criminal. I decided that I must do something to change the way that the United States is currently acting in Vietnam. Moreover, I am resolved to do something that will help eliminate the tragedy of today's Korean peninsula and bring the possibility of a definite transformation, so that the Korean people can be reunified. This is why I have chosen to desert the army — to make my heart known."[331]

As a US soldier, J.S. Kim witnessed the reality of postwar South Korea and suffering of the people in Vietnam. From his experience, J.S. Kim foresees the postwar future in Vietnam will be the same "horrendous reality" he observed when he returned to the country of his birth. The specificities of what J.S. Kim views as the dismal condition of South Korea or his personal turmoil that led him to become a deserter cannot be verified, and these gaps have been imagined by Lee and Hotta through their fictional recreations of J.S. Kim's dilemmas and complex humanity. But what the letter does reveal is that J.S Kim began to understand the US military as the main culprit of the violences that had taken place in Korea and was taking place in Vietnam at the time. The development of his conscience led to his transformation and newfound conviction- there is "no hope nor joy" in belonging to the US military empire as a citizen and

[331] Ibid., 344-345.

that being one is “criminal”. The letter thus reveals that his decision to desert was twofold. First, he no longer wished to be complicit in the violences committed in Vietnam by the US military as a GI and a potential US citizen. Secondly, he hoped for different futures in Vietnam and Korea: self-determined, (re)united and governed by its own people removed from the military occupation and neocolonial subjugation perpetuated by the US. His desertion was a commitment for a different future in the region removed from the violences of the US military empire, enacting a vision for a different future and the possibilities of a demilitarized transpacific.

In the second half of his letter, J.S. Kim restates his firm stance against the war and how the fate of Vietnamese people should not be decided by US intervention, citing his understanding of national division in Korea and ends the letter by thanking those who helped him escape. It states:

> “To reiterate, the Vietnam War is wrong and its conclusion must not be the result of the path presently pursued by the United States. Based on what I have seen in South Korea thus far, I believe that a US victory in Vietnam is undesirable. The Vietnamese people are divided. They are in an intolerable situation, forced to abandon their fate to the whims of the US supplies thrown at them and a military occupation. While benefiting a small number of people, this will not bring anything other than the dissolution of their nation-state. Rather, they hope to be reunified under the North Vietnamese government, which has been acting for the good of the Vietnamese people’s nation-state. Indeed, I believe that this is the lesson from the Korean peninsula.”[332]

J.S. Kim believed what he experienced and witnessed in South Korea may provide a “lesson”. He presumes a military occupation dependent on US supplies that benefits not the majority of the populus but only a selected few would become a reality in Vietnam if US would prevail in the war. Kim further stated that the Vietnamese people should have autonomy in determining their

[332] Ibid., 345.

future, which he believed was through reunification and consolidated governance under the North Vietnamese regime.

J.S. Kim concludes the letter by thanking those who assisted him in the Cuban embassy and makes it clear that he left the embassy out of his own will when it became evident that he couldn't pursue legal means to leave Japan, not due to disagreements or frictions during his lengthy stay. Kim stated that he left the embassy because "I knew that there were those who empathized with my political decision and if they would lend me their strength, I had complete faith that they would help me escape Japan."[333] His clarifications through the public letter reveals that he publicly followed through with Yoshikawa's suggestion to make his intentions known to the Cuban embassy, which he may have done in person as well when he re-visited the embassy with Yoshikawa. J.S. Kim end the letter by thanking *Beheiren* and imploring the Japanese people to embrace and support their anti-war efforts.

J.S. Kim further reiterates his appreciation for *Beheiren* in the second letter to Oda Makoto, the spokesperson for *Beheiren*, that thanked everyone in the organization for assisting him in Japan. With the letter was 130,000 Yen (around 1110 US dollars at the time), which was all of GI pay during his deployment. The short letter states:

> "I must express my gratitude to you and to all the members of your organization, *Beheiren*. Without your limitless, prompt, and timely assistance, and kind and utmost care I received, I would not have dared to escape from Japan. I wish to express my deepest gratitude. Please share my name, my heart, and my never-fading gratitude with all members of your wonderful organization, *Beheiren*. I understand that you will need a lot of money for your activism. I would like to donate 130,000 yen to your organization as a token of my gratitude. I earned this is money in Vietnam, and I cannot and will not spend

[333] Ibid., 346.

> this money. I hope that *Beheiren* helps people in the same situation as me with this money. This is not much, but I will be grateful if you would accept it."[334]

J.S. Kim donating all his GI pay to *Beheiren* and saying that he "cannot and will not" use what he has earned through his deployment is a reiteration of his transformation and commitment for a demilitarized transpacific. J.S. Kim wished that the monetary compensation he received through his complicity in the US imperial project in Vietnam should go to *Beheiren*, an organization devoted to peace and fellow participants in the larger project of a demilitarized transpacific.

Besides the deserters of the US military during the Vietnam war, there were other GIs who joined in the efforts of anti-imperialism and built solidarities with anti-war activists in the locations they were stationed in such as Okinawa and the Philippines. These engagements introduced the GIs to approach anti-war politics similarly to how J.S. Kim developed his conscience, in that the Vietnam War was a "phase of longer histories of colonialism and US militarism in the region."[335] J.S. Kim may have rejected these other GIs like he has done with the five deserters he travelled with given his complex humanity. Or he may have embraced them, understanding that they too were attempting to transform and do what they could to no longer be complicit in what the US military empire has wrought. Nonetheless, all would have to grapple with contradictions between national belonging, personal politics and human dignity. Each would endure the symptoms of *complex personhood*, embracing that "people suffer graciously and selfishly too, get stuck in the symptoms of their troubles, and also transform themselves."[336] Through such endeavors, J.S. Kim and these GIs engaged in the project of a demilitarized

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[334] Ibid., 346-347.

[335] Man, *Soldiering Through Empire,* 163.

[336] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters,* 4.

transpacific, "to critically reimagine the possibilities for an East Asian modernity not yet arrived, an alternative future that was not predicated on militarized violence."[337]

ベ平連ニュース

金鎮洙さん、無事国外へ！

ベ平連・「インドレピッド四人」の会
記者会見で発表

アメリカ、日本そして
世界の人民へのメッセージ

Figure 4.3: "Message to the US, Japan, and the People of the World," from *Beheiren News*.

The Politics of Unknowing and the Fallacies of Knowledge Seekers

As I pieced together what materials I could find on J.S. Kim's life and journey, the line between fiction and non-fiction was constantly blurred and my attempt to formulate a coherent history became a nearly impossible undertaking. This especially happened when I later read that J.S. Kim had confessed to Oda Makoto that him being a war orphan was a lie during his return

[337] Man, *Soldiering Through Empire,* 13.

trip to Japan in the late 1970s or early 1980s. [338] The purpose of his visit was to reconnect with *Beheiren* activists who helped him and to stop by South Korea to look for family members, and possibly his birth parents. I felt a deep discomfort recognizing that what has been written by both J.S. Kim and governmental documents as facts may not even be true at all. This doubt and discomfort points to the limitations of my training in the discipline of history and the compartmentalization of territories and borders, people, truths/non-truths, that knowledge producers base their writing on.

Grappling with the condition of not knowing, I thought of journalist Ko Kyŏng Rok's motives when he sought out J.S. Kim's whereabouts in 2019. J.S Kim's acquaintances (presumably *Beheiren* members) notified Ko that he may have relocated to Switzerland.[339]After contacting the Switzerland Korean Association and Swedish Korean Society to ask about J.S. Kim, Ko could not obtain any information on someone with his background.[340] I assumed that Ko was as frustrated as myself, a historian trying to write a history where it was difficult to separate facts from fiction and know what was true or false, and that his motivation to search for J.S. Kim came from his desire to know the full truth by speaking to him.

I also thought about the motivations of Hotta and Lee and their recreations of J.S. Kim. Lee wrote about what led him to write *Flower Bloom from a Gun Barrel* in its afterword. He explains how a conversation with Oda Makoto about J.S. Kim inspired him immensely and proclaimed to Oda that "I will someday have Kim Jin Su live through a novel" as he considered

[338] Kwŏn, "Yurŏpŭro mangmyŏnghan," 329.

[339] Ibid.

[340] Ibid.

it a "Korean writer's responsibility."[341] Lee also states that by some fate of the universe, if the stars align and he can meet Kim, he will respectfully introduce Son Jin Ho to Kim Jin Su. Lee's creation and ownership of Son justifies him to feel as if it is his "duty" to have J.S. Kim survive through Son. His "duty" also as a Korean writer also decenters the complexity of the diaspora embedded within J.S. Kim's journey beyond ethnonational representations.

Lee's ethnonationalist tendencies are ingrainted throughout his novel as the story takes place through Son recalling his memories to his son, who he fathered with a Swedish woman, while on their return trip to South Korea. The father son duo is visiting Seoul together for the first time to visit the gravesite of Son's childhood friend he grew up with in the orphanage in Seoul and unexpectedly met in Vietnam as soldiers of South Korea and the US. Lee interprets J.S. Kim through the problematic trope of diasporic return to the homeland throughout the novel. This nationalistic perception of the Korean diaspora from the Korean peninsular perspective is derived from the belief that ethnic and blood ties consider being Korean as a homogenous entity.[342] And such assumptions of diasporic return to the homeland as a central component of diasporic Korean identity and belonging fills the pages of the novel as the whole story is premised on Son's return to South Korea to honor his memories of his homeland.

Hotta has not spoken publicly about "A Man with a Whittling Name," and I was more drawn to his's short story given that it stemmed from the conversations that he had with J.S. Kim during the ten days they were together at Hotta's residence. Personally, I hope that Hotta put all the care and respect into writing the short story given his relationship with him and how J.S. Kim

[341] Lee, *Ch'onggue p'in kkot*, 332.

[342] For comprehensive studies on ethnic homogeneity and representations of blood in Modern Korean History see Inga Kim Diederich, "Blood of the Nation'; Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

trusted and was fond of those who have helped him escape Japan. Perhaps Hotta also had his own motivations for helping J.S. Kim and writing the short story as presenting himself as Otosan (even if this may be what J.S. Kim actually called him) is problematic given that he sets himself up as a father figure who listens, gives advice, and attempts to figure him out. Despite such glaring issues, Pak Chŏng Su is not labelled one identity or another and the short story ends with Pak continuing with his journey with an unknown destination.

I thought of what J.S. Kim's reaction of the two fictional narratives that gave him five different names and identities as well as took creative liberties to imagine the meanings behind his actions and decisions. If he would have accepted the "respectful introduction" of Son Jin Soo if he were to ever meet Lee, and if he would have met Ko if he knew that a journalist from South Korea was searching for him across Europe. There is a normalized motive from the fictional writers and the knowledge producers that consider individuals such as J.S. Kim, and the complex stories generate, problems to be solved and answers to be sought out. At the same time, the unfulfilled desires and frustrations of the knowledge producers (including myself), and their continuing attempts to seek and possess his narrative, reveals this process to be an ongoing struggle in which J.S. Kim seeks to wrest control over his own story. It is a struggle over the agency and ownership of his story, the life he dreamt of leading, and the alternative future of a demilitarized transpacific he sought out through his actions. The still unresolved questions of his story that point to his complex humanity also reveal that there is yet to be a closure to J.S. Kim's story. The permanence of our unknowing represents his still continuing journey towards the different world and future he envisioned.

Conclusion: Genghis Khan's Chinese Restaurant in Morocco

This chapter traced J.S. Kim's journey in which he grappled with his multiple identities forced upon him by the US military empire that led him towards a path of resistance and refusal. Utilizing *soldiering* and *complex personhood* as the primary conceptual framework, it examined how J.S Kim both embraced and rejected his multiple identities throughout his journey to reveal how he envisioned and acted upon a different world and a different peace without the normalized violences of the US military empire. Throughout the chapter I also contend with the limitations posed by archival gaps by examining what the motives behind historical documents and fictional narratives on the actions and choice of J.S. Kim may be. It reveals the fallacies of knowledge seekers and the entrenched norms of academic knowledge production that seldom tend to wrestle with the contradictions and complexities of narratives like J.S. Kim's that are difficult to define and trace. However, J.S. Kim maintains full ownership of his story as the knowledge producers have no choice but to relinquish their demands for a viable history that can be analyzed and written down.

In Hotta's short story, Pak opens up to Otosan by sharing bits and pieces of his life-story and asking scattered questions about global pollution and space travel. They form a bond through these conversation and mundane activities such as eating and drinking whiskey together, Otosan drawing Pak's portrait, and going on nighttime drives around the neighborhood. As their relationship developed, Pak asks Otosan to make up a new name for him. One day Otosan asks Pak if he liked the name Genghis Khan, "Genghis Khan rode all the way to Europe from Asia, but he didn't make nations nor borders. They were just there, their homeland was the tent where they ate that day."[343] Pak immediately adds, "And just like the US Military they killed, burned,

[343] Yoshie Hotta, "The Young Man with a Whittling Name," 92.

and destroyed…But I will never kill or burn of destroy anymore, never."[344] Otosan then carefully suggests, "How about the name Genghis Khan, but a Genghis Khan who doesn't burn nor kill nor destroy?" Pak gleefully accepts and claims that he be Genghis Khan from now then asks if Otosan would have some ramen, to which he obliges.

Pak rummages through the fridge and makes ramen with chef like proficiency, and shares about his experience working at a Chinese restaurant in San Francisco before enlisting and his wishes to open up one for himself in the future. When he asks Otosan if there are Chinese restaurants in Northern Europe, Otosan replies by saying that he knows of two that exist. Park tells Otosan that he dreams of becoming an apprentice at one of the two restaurants then asks if there are a lot of trees in Northern Europe. He is dismayed when Otosan tells him that Northern Europe is filled with "trees, rocks, and lakes" because he has serious pollen allergies.[345] Pak further asks if there are any countries without any trees. Otosan tells him that there are places with less trees such as Spain, Morocco and Algeria that leads Park to proclaim, "Really? Then I will go to Morocco and open up a Chinese restaurant there."[346] And for the first time since he entered Otosan's house, Pak smiles from ear to ear showing his white teeth and laughing out loudly. Pak soon leaves Otosan's house to continue on his journey. Otosan reflects his conversations with Pak, thinking how he whittled away both his names Pak Chŏng Su and William George McGovern, to become Genghis Khan who escaped to Northern Europe, then relocated to Morocco to open up a Chinese restaurant. Otosan hopes that what Pak dreams of will become possible.

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[344] Ibid.

[345] Ibid., 93.

[346] Ibid.

I end the chapter with this excerpt, thinking about what possibilities J.S. Kim may have dreamt of during his journey and how they may have brought him some semblance of joy and laughter. Hopes and imagined possibilities reflected and conjured up while roaming the streets of Tokyo; at the Cuban embassy playing ping pong and practicing Spanish; at Yoshie's residence and other safehouses; and during the long journey to Sweden with the other five deserters. It also lives through not the money earned in blood he donated to *Beheiren*, but his willingness to support others like himself who may dream their own variations of Genghis Khan's Chinese Restaurant in Morrocco. The project of a demilitarized transpacific is made possible through such dreams of a different life and an alternative future that we may never know of. They are unrestricted by the norms of ethnonationalist prerogatives of South Korea and the US that sustains the militarized transpacific and often dictates the identity formation of the Korean American diaspora. It is the infinite variation of Genghis Khan's Chinese Restaurant in Morrocco that can fracture and perhaps one day dismantle what the U.S military empire has wrought through war, division, occupation, and the normalization of perpetual violence in the Asia-Pacific.

Conclusion

'Reencountering' the Korean American Diaspora, Practicing Ethical History

This project was shaped during the pandemic and written amid an ongoing genocide, when I began to realize how much of academia and the university institution relies on normalcy and order dependent on faux equality and complicity to power. Resources were held and preserved while the most underrepresented and vulnerable were left to fend for themselves during the pandemic, and later spent on repression and sanctioned violence against students and faculty calling for an end to a genocide that the university continues to support. It was in these institutions that I learned how to be a historian, and the tumultuous history we have lived and are living in now has dramatically transformed how I approach the practice of history. This project is an outcome of a long process of rethinking, reevaluating, and "reencountering" the practice of history.[347] Coined by Crystal Baik, "reencounters" is a conceptual framework of understanding the diaspora where diasporic memory works deploy moments of return and remembrance to "denaturalize naturalized temporalities, solidified presumptions, and historical knowledges" and "mediate epistemological openings by gesturing to radically different memories of survival, refusal, and resurgence."[348] The process of "reencountering" has reframed my project to present a different history of the Korean American diaspora as a non-linear collection of missing pieces of various stories left unaddressed and untouched. It was an opportunity for me to slow down and recognize how the work of history tends to leave behind and overlook the lives and stories of certain people marked as unwelcome anomalies who challenged and resisted the social and political power structures of the United States in different time and places. In this concluding

[347] Baik. *Reencounters,* 6.

[348] Ibid.

chapter, I trace this process of "reencountering" I was able to engage in through key moments of collective engagement that pushed me to scrutinize diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness and to approach history as a form of ethical scholarship.

As a student of history, I was taught in graduate school to begin building my archive by accumulating sources and records as if it was a bank account, and this banking of knowledge was what it took to engage in the "best" practices of historiographical writing. Such practices represent the rigorous disciplinary norms of history where in-depth archival research forms the foundation of a research paper, dissertation, a degree, a career. Much of being a historian to me has been about access. And for many of us the global pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns obstructed our ability to access the core component of our profession. Our precarious times have forced historians to face and incorporate alternative ways to approach their research, from conducting oral history interviews through zoom to recrafting their projects and prioritizing digital archives, and even travelling to physical archives outside of the US that permitted admission by visiting researchers. Practicing ethical history, I contend, entails criticality to both our past and present by tending to the precarity of 'others' in our research and those around us. How I approach the practice of history, therefore, has dramatically shifted as well, not through improvisation of research or topic, but through two community facing projects I've engaged in since the Spring of 2020. These projects were shaped as critical responses to the pandemic and the subsequent upheavals of racial violence that laid bare the unmitigated antiblackness and white supremacy surrounding our political governance, institutions, and the academic industrial complex.

One was the "Race and Oral History in San Diego Project," a collaboration of UC San Diego students, faculty, librarians and community centered grassroots organization.[349] As the teaching assistant for the class component of the project, my role was to facilitate structured engagements between the students and the partner organizations as the students learned the importance of collaborating in outreach, advocacy, and producing communal forms of knowledge. This course served as an opportunity for me to teach students to engage critically and to practice dialogic methods for building stronger bridges between local communities and institutions of higher education. The students focused on empathetic forms of listening as they engaged with community organizations and learned about the diverse challenges faced by ethnic communities in San Diego in their oral history projects. Listening was especially key in Spring 2020 when the course moved to remote learning and in-person relationship building initiatives with our community partners had to be improvised to protect one another. While the pandemic was considered a major obstacle for university teaching, for the team of instructors and graduate teaching assistants, it served as an impetus to help address pandemic-related challenges facing both our communities and students.

The second project was the Heung Coalition, which I joined around the same time in late Spring of 2020. Heung, which is the Korean word for joy, is a collective of graduate students, writers, translators, artists and activists across the global Korean diaspora committed to redefine Korea and Koreaness from the diasporic perspective centering community building and cultivation of various forms of solidarities.[350] Led by a steering committee of mostly Korean Studies graduate students, we initially formed to respond to the silences revolving antiblackness

[349] "About," Race and Oral History Project, accessed July 18, 2024, https://knit.ucsd.edu/rohp/about/.

[350] Heung Coalition, "About," Heung Coalition, accessed July 18, 2024, https://heungcoalition.com/About-1.

and white supremacy perpetuated in the larger academic community of Korean Studies in North America. But as we grew bit by bit with members of diverse background from different Korean diaspora across four continents, we shifted our focus to making space for us. We began to center community and relationship building amongst the members through our recurring community learning sessions that took place at different times to accommodate our members spread across four continents. We discussed and listened to our various experiences as diasporic Koreans of diverse backgrounds, and the sharing of our stories formed the foundation of our community knowledge. Cultivating this global diasporic Korean community mostly online during the pandemic was a process of learning and unlearning, as the steering committee unlearned the incessant need to produce knowledge normalized in academia. As a collective built on trust, we safeguarded this community knowledge we shared and learned from each other as it was valued above anything the academics in the group learned through books and theories.

Participating in these projects were critical responses to the circumstances my communities were facing. For the Oral History Project, I was very much motivated and inspired by my students who were cultivating relationships and supporting communities in my hometown. While facing their own hurdles of challenges induced by the lockdown, my students were resolute in showing up to learn and support however they can with their community partners, and shared stories of healing and hope as they conducted their oral history interviews focusing on the challenges and collective community engagement during the pandemic. What resulted from these interactions are more creative forms of learning that built understanding and empathy amongst the students as well as a more interpersonal method of engaging in their studies. For Heung Coalition, it was a direct response by a group of graduate students who wanted to reimagine where and how we want to belong in academia. It was a challenge and call

for the recognition of antiblackness in academia and our respective fields after the murder of George Floyd. The blatantly racist reactions and inaction we witnessed revealed much about the proximity to whiteness that exists in the field of Korean Studies in North America and by extension the academic industrial complex of Area Studies in Asia and its historical ties to US imperialism and militarism. While the group transitioned from a project based in academia to focus on building relationship and alternative community knowledge in the global Korean diaspora, the fact that numerous diasporic Koreans from across four continents joined and resonated with our direction, showed me there was a deep disconnection between scholarly norms, traditions, and the politics that dictate what is or is not perceived as knowledge.

Both projects worked to ethically preserve and cultivate the stories and experiences of people in my own community and the larger Korean diaspora that fell through the cracks when everything was considered "in order." I learned that there is more to history beyond the archives than what my training has taught me. When it comes to certain histories that spoke to intimacy, relationship, community, and solidarities; empirical data and sources will always be insufficient in comparison to the practice of nonacademic community-based knowledge formation, which is too often dismissed as ahistorical, compromised, and unreliable. The history discipline traditionally does not accept concurrent histories of complex personhoods filled with stories of contradicting memories and emotions, of conflict and solidarities, of community building and strife, which are nonlinear and nonconforming.

Oral history, with its ethical praxis, also taught me how much trust, relationships, and community built between the listener and the narrator are of the utmost importance. And how the setting and environment in which the narrator is speaking and who they are speaking to shape the narration. This approach reshaped how I engage with the archives and the practice of history to

recognize that the memories and stories that lie within the archives hold so much more than simply knowledge waiting to be excavated and claimed. It led me to grapple with how sometimes the very source of knowledge we rely on to produce historical work contradicts the programming of extraction and exploitation all too common in academic practices. By refusing to separate the record from memories or privilege the singular "record" above multiple memories, I grappled with questions such as "What would you do when your archives talk back?" and "If these are your records, where are your memories?"

These questions propelled me back to think about the moments and instances in my memory bank of scholarly works that point to how the archives work as institutional monoliths built on structures of violence that works to forget certain people and certain stories. Ashely Farmer recounts the story of African American historian John Hope Franklin and his visit to the State Department Archives in North Carolina. Franklin was the first Black historian to be at the facilities, his visit caused a panic as the archives was not constructed to accommodate Black people and a separate room had to be segregated and rearranged for him to access historical materials.[351] Monica Martinez, in the epilogue of *Injustice Never Leaves You* (2018), talks about her experience with an archivist who dismissed an important oral history testimony. It was regarding the unmitigated violence and murder committed by Texas Rangers which the archivist perceived as unimportant and possibly fabricated because it was labelled "anonymous," despite the fact that such anonymity may have been to protect the narrator.[352] Sunny Xiang discusses

[351] Ashley Farmer, "Archiving While Black," Black Perspective, June 18, 2018, https://www.aaihs.org/archiving-while-black/.

[352] Monica Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 293-296.

Vinh Nguyen's encounter with a photograph of his mother in the government archives in which his mother's response was disbelief, as "her memory does not hold that moment."[353] All of these moments reveal how the archives cannot (and sometimes refuses to) hold histories and stories that reveal its institutional fallacies and scrutinize the sanctity of the archive as the core repository of historical knowledge.

The questions also helped me revisit my experiences of deep discomfort in the archives. For example, at the Hoover Institute, while I was reading the editorial of *Korean Independence* from 1951 that spoke of Black-Korean solidarities that connected US military violence during the Korean War to antiblack racism in the US, an archivist stood and glared at me to make sure I was turning the pages correctly. While their intention was to make sure I wasn't damaging the half a century old physical copies of the newspaper, I remember thinking of how their purpose of preservation and remembrance was completely different from my own, which was to document hopes and aspirations of solidarities and reimagine its historical possibilities, often overlooked by scholars and tucked away in the archives due to their supposed insignificance. I also remember thinking to myself how important this history was to me as it represented so many Korean Americans whose stories were silenced and overlooked due to the dominant historical narrative of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness. The words on the pages didn't matter to the archivist whose sole was if the document was damaged or not or to those who would rather focus on conflict than solidarities in the Korean American diaspora. At the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Center for Korean Studies archives, when I asked to view and listen to the oral histories of picture brides that are stored in the archives, the archivist told me that they currently cannot locate the tapes/videos and do not have the adequate devices to

[353] Sunny Xiang, "Forgettable Wars, Forgetful Diasporas," *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* vol. 5, no. 2 (2019): 7.

play them.[354] I understood it as staff shortage and administrative difficulties faced during a pandemic. However, seeing the medals and plaques awarded by the South Korean and US government to prominent Korean American men in Hawai‘i plastered across the walls of the archives made me think of who and whose stories are worth of preservation and remembrance; and how hierarchies of power, gender, and race including hegemonic masculinity and proximity to whiteness determined the worth of preservation.

This experiences shaped through the process of centering relationships, trust, and community building necessitated a slower pace unaccustomed in the world of academic knowledge production. But such active deceleration was indeed a crucial component where emotional engagements of caring and listening cultivated a space of trust and solidarities where a different history, a different diaspora, a different world could be imagined and shared openly. The trust we had in each other developed through the intentional process of slowing down formed the foundation of how our stories will be preserved. These experiences led me to rethink, engage, and write on the possibilities of solidarities between Korean and Indian anti-imperial activists producing visions of independence only miles apart in Chapter 1; the alternatives of proximity to whiteness possibly imagined through witnessing and learning about racial violence against Black and Indigenous peoples in Chapter 2; the manifestation of Black-Korean solidarities and its cultivation within and beyond the archives in Chapter 3; and the enactment of a demilitarized transpacific that remains unclear to the knowledge seekers yet is an ongoing story still being written that J.S. Kim maintains full ownership of in Chapter 4.

[354] Around 600-1000 Korean women immigrated from Korea to Hawai‘i from 1910 to 1924 in order to marry Korean men they have not met but saw through photographs in which either the man or woman selected.

Diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness was also conceptualized through the process of "reencountering" involving the two projects. Cultivating relationships with various community organizations in San Diego through the Oral History Project and learning from my students was a process of "reencountering" my own Korean American community's proximity to whiteness. I reflected on how it has taken root within my small tight knit community to isolate itself from others and work to silence and reject any alternative forms of community or identity formation. The community learning sessions at Heung Coalition also gave me the space to learn more about and understand how the mark of Koreanness, especially in the North American Korean diaspora, is determined through our proximity to whiteness. Because Heung was a collective built on relationships and trust, we naturally started to engage with the various meanings of solidarities and the possibilities beyond our proximity to whiteness. And it was these conversations spurred me to revisit "To the Eight Black Children" with the group where I shared my dilemmas regarding the archives and the place of cross-racial solidarities in relation to the master narrative of diasporic Korean American history. Much of what I have written and discussed for Chapter 3 stemmed from these conversations within Heung.

Throughout the chapters I have argued that a different history of the Korean American diaspora exists beyond its predetermined path of assimilation and compliance by examining the historical formation, application, and the limitations of diasporic Korean American proximity to whiteness practiced by various diasporic Korean American figures throughout the twentieth century. The breadcrumbs left in the archives of a different Korean American diaspora reveal that there are more histories that have been buried and overlooked. For example, the less explored histories of diasporic Korean American anti-imperialism recorded through the radical diasporic Korean American newspaper *Korean Independence* open up avenues to understand how a group

of self-determined diasporic Korean Americans envisioned a unified Korea without foreign interference. These radical diasporic Korean Americans rejected the norms of compliance and proximity to whiteness to resist the global military domination of the US military empire after WWII. Furthermore, these histories point to how different forms of solidarities and resistance were able to manifest in the Korean American diaspora during the late 1940s and 1950s throughout the period of liberation, US military governance, and War in the Korean peninsula. Investigating how radical diasporic Korean Americans enacted their visions of liberation against the US military empire as national division became imminent will be the next phase of this project.

Circumstances of the past and the current moment, as well as the collective responses founded upon desires for something different have guided this project to find alternative ways to retrace the Korean American diaspora, the archives that hold its insurgent histories, and the practice of history itself. Such processes led to me comprehend history as a multifaceted process filled with complicated and sometimes ungraspable stories as well as unexplainable encounters; and to contextualize the messiness of the present and imagine possibilities of alternative futures.[355] And through the process of "reencountering" diasporic Korean American history, I was able to trace a Korean American diaspora beyond its proximity to whiteness; A Korean American diaspora committed to cross-racial solidarities and a demilitarized transpacific as forms of alternative worldmaking that many have engaged in despite being pushed aside to

[355] See Martin F. Manalansan IV, "The 'Stuff' of Archives: Mess, Migration, and Queer Lives," in "Queering Archives: Historical Unravelings," ed. Daniel Marshall, Kevin P. Murphy, and Zeb Tortorici, Special Issue, *Radical History Review* 120 (2014): 94-107.

obscurity by the dominant historical narrative. It is a Korean American diaspora that have endured and will continue to endure.

Excerpts from the conclusion have been submitted for publication of the material as it may appear in the edited volume, *Global Asias:Tactics & Theories* set to be published in 2025. Youngoh Jung was the primary investigator and author of the material. I have obtained permission from the editors to use my contribution for this chapter.

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