GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY

Monthly news on the struggle against Jeju Naval Base

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GANGJEONG IS 4·3

PEOPLE BUILD PEACE BARRICADE

The 1948 Jeju April 3rd uprising and the subsequent massacre of up to more than thirty thousand innocent lives throughout its successive years until the end of the Korean war, exists not only in the form of living memories and collective trauma that are remembered through award-winning films such as 'Jiseul,' but also in the haunting repetition of history, in Gangjeong village and in Korea.

'Gangjeong is 4·3.' This year marks the 65th anniversary since 4·3 (April 3) with the publication of a new book titled, "You, Dear Gangjeong," a joint work by 43 writers and 7 photographers, and the opening of a new experimental documentary film called, 'Jeju Prayer'. Both projects connect the 4·3 struggle and the Gangjeong village struggle in the same historical context: the Island people's uprising against the oppression by outside power- the central puppet government and foreign power that supervises it- and the people's urgent aspiration for peace and democracy.

The accomplishment of the 4·3 projects make a profound statement on the Gangjeong struggle. And it is also a reminder of the historic tasks at hand in the struggle against the Jeju war base and the continued struggle for peace in Korea. It is that much more cucial when the crisis of war has been unnecessarily escalated with the US-ROK war exercises of Foal Eagle and Key Resolve, mobilized with US nuclear capable advanced weapons and ships while on-going for two months.

The shared accomplishments and tasks at hand were emphasized in the people's 4·3 rememberance program titled, "Yes, True Peace Now," filled with cultural events from April 1-8 while responding to the call of history in such a positive and hopeful manner. And in the people's joint statement,"We will build a peace barricade in Gangjeong", envisions 'the village to be the stronghold for the peace movement' by the efforts of 'various social fields.'

While Prof. Yang Yoon-Mo hit his 74th prison day on April 14th, another peace activist, Kim Young-Jae, received an arrest warrant on the same day. Two others were arrested in April alone and there could be more. The attack of fines against the people is a form of oppression. The strategic oppression against the people is also the 'preliminary arrest' of the people as captured well in the words of Colonel Brown, US military commander during 4·3: "I am not interested in the cause of the uprising. My mission is to crack down only." But we also remember the powerful words of the people who rose up during 4·3: 'Where there is oppression, there is uprising.'

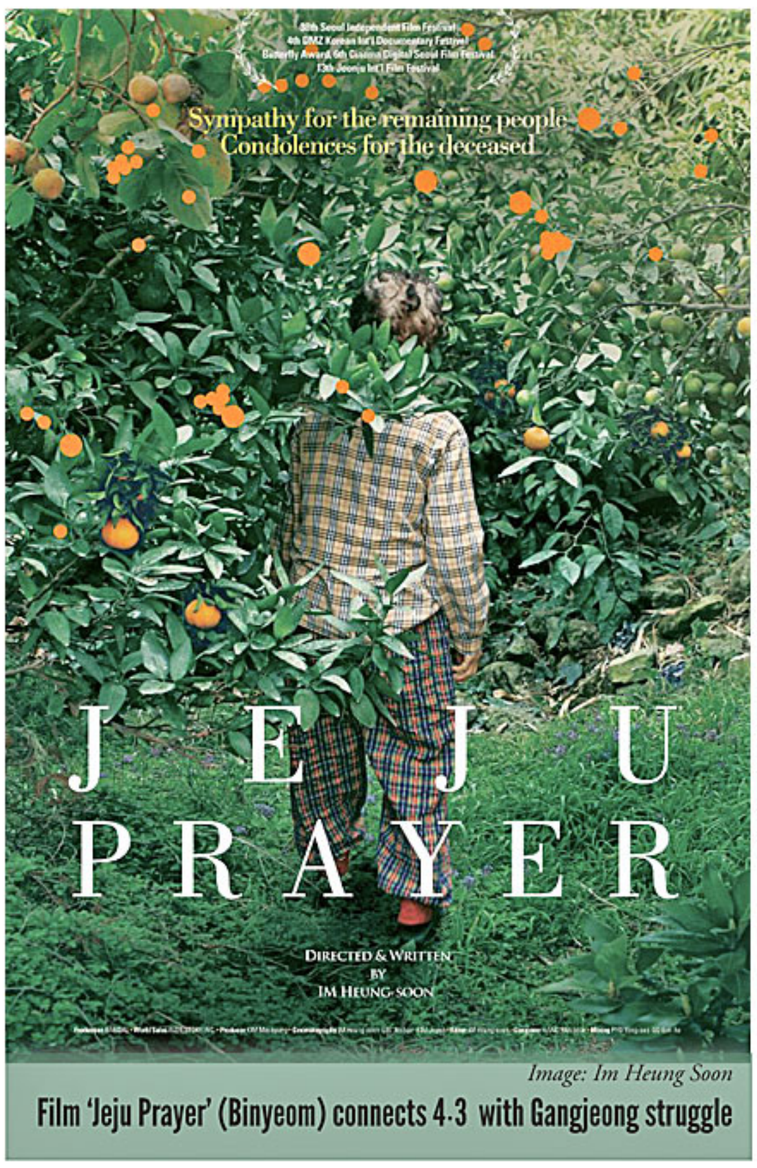

Image: Im Heung Soon

Film 'Jeju Prayer' (Binyeom) connects 4·3 with Gangjeong struggle

Villagers Refuse the Military Housing Project

"The navy is raging wind again with the matter of the military housing in Gangjeong village. The naval base project would bring lots of conflicts such as radar base, helipad, powder magazine, training facilities, military airport, and more and more military residential projects." ~Gangjeong Village Association

The navy had planned to hold a presentation on the Gangjeong village military housing project on March 26, 2013, when about 100 Gangjeong villagers and peace keepers stormed into the hall and managed to dissipate it within 10 minutes. The villagers have already protested the presentations on May 29 and June 15, 2012.

The navy plans to build 616 new households in the 99,500 square meters area between Gangjeong elementary school and the port by 2015. To achieve this, it first plans to erect 384 new households on 594,000 square meters area. This area is composed of more than 60% dry and paddy tfields, the best farming fields in the village.

The villagers denounced the navy, saying: "We did not receive an official letter from you." "If you rob us of our farming lands, we will die, for there is nothing left." "Does it make sense that the navy talked about co-existance with the local residents, then turns around to trample on the people by uni-laterally holding a presentation?"

In the villagers' general meeting on April 10, villagers voted 'No' to the project of the military residence in the village. The result was 114 people voted 'no,' 3 people voted 'yes', 1 abstention, a total of 118 seated electorates.

The Gangjeong Village Association stated on April 11 that the vote was based on the official procedures, "therefore is effective." They also stated that, "The general meeting on that day was a planned meeting with the prior process of 7 days' public notification term, constant announcements broadcasting that encourages villagers' participation, mailing of the correspondence that explains the agenda. We declare that it is an official result that represents the villagers' collective opinions."

The village emphasized that "we strictly warn the navy that there should be no false words and actions to drive the building of military housing in Gangjeong village by saying that Gangjeong villagers hoped for the installation of housing. The navy should be responsible for all the conflicts and social ripples following such."

Interview with Mayor Kang Dong-Kyun

By KA (based in Massachusetts, recently visited Gangjeong)

KA: I understand that you didn't want to become mayor of Gangjeong village, but people had confidence in you and convinced you to do it.

MAYOR: I came back to Gangjeong when my brother-in-law decided to run for mayor of Seogwipo city and asked me to manage his campaign. Then, only 6 months after he was elected, he died in a boat accident. A year later, the naval base issue began. If he had lived, there would be no base construction in Gangjeong!

The next mayor of Seogwipo, you see, was not elected. He was appointed by the provincial governor of Jeju [Kim Tae-Hwan, a strong supporter of the naval base]. The provincial government changed the system and instead of having an elected mayor of Seogwipo we now have an appointed mayor. There have been no official elections for mayor of Seogwipo since my brother-in-law was the elected mayor.

KA: In the U.S., many young people choose to move into urban centers, cities, instead of staying and working on the land. Is that true here in Gangjeong as well?

MAYOR: Yes, young people here move to the cities. We need people to continue farming to keep our values intact. An old Korean saying, "Farmers are the best under the sky." Everyone eats when farmers grow food. Young people have lost these values, they think it's enough to have nice clothes, but the most essential is food.

Image: 'This Moment' from special edition of the Hangyoreh newspaper on April 1 by senior staff reporter Kang Jae-hoon

Dreaming of a Peace Ecological Park, plum tree planting ceremony was held on March 30 at Maehyang-Ri, formal US Air force bombng range. Residents have stacked the shells of the bombs in front of the residents' committe office that were collected from the sea and residential area. Residents suffered extreme hardships for 54 years until it was finally closed in 2005, thanks to the people's persistent and dedicated struggle.

Image: Grace

'Mr. Moetppuri Park' monitoring the destruction of the coastline

Moetppuri *By Grace (based in Berlin, recently spent a month in Gangjeong)*

With the overwhelming impressions of police clashing with peace activists at the naval base construction gate, visitors might easily miss a narrow trail between Gangjeong bridge and the gate. Known as Moetppuri, the strolling path along the river takes one to the foot of volcanic rocks that spread to the ocean, which should have continued to Gureombi rocks. You would not be able to stop marvelling at its beauty and might regret to be a fellow human being, to comprehend how anyone could even commit the grotesque sin of trying to destroy this. The contrast is ever so blunt. The hideous metal fences creep up onto the west side of the rocks creating a transparent border between the beauty and the destruction of it.

When I first visited Moetppuri, I was somewhat intimated by its wild nature and a mysterious man living in the middle of it. I began visiting Moetppuri quite often and slept in 1 of the 3 tents that 'Mr. Moetppuri Park' built for visitors. I wanted to understand what motivated him to live like a hermit among the rocks; to continue the daily routine of monitoring the destruction through binoculars; to keep reporting the illegal actions of the construction companies to the marine police knowing they are on their side. Sometimes, I wanted to ask, 'why don't you give up, when, at this point, it seems nearly impossible to stop the construction of the base?' The explanations were not found in words. I saw between the spectacles of destruction and resistance, this small path to Moetppuri. Despite extreme loneliness and harsh winds, Moetppuri Park acts as a mediator between Moetppuri and the outside, constantly reminding us of what we fight for, the absolute beauty that humans could never create. I saw resemblance between the people in Gangjeong and Moetppuri, which is the strength to embrace the sadness of the reality and persevere regardlessly. If anyone visits Gangjeong with similiar doubts, I strongly recommend an overnight stay in Moetppuri. By the time the sun rises, as you sit in serenity, its warm greetings will console you. Then, you will know, without being able to rationalize, why it's meaningless to validate the struggle in Gangjeong.

Images: Archival photo

Photo taken during the Korean War

WHY WOMEN MUST END THE KOREAN WAR *read the full article @ WWW.FPIF.ORG

By Christine Ahn (excerpts from an article published on March 8, 2013, Foreign Policy In Focus)

We are facing, once again, perilous times as tensions escalate in the Asia-Pacific. Most western governments and the mainstream media point to North Korea's third nuclear test and perceived belligerence as the cause of the escalation when in fact there are 2 major initiatives fueling this militarized response. 1- The so-called "pivot." In 2011, the Obama administration announced a plan to transfer significant military resources to Asia and the Pacific, including expanding bases, surveillance, and equipment. The Pentagon has committed to deploying 60 % of its air and naval forces to the region. 2- The perennial U.S-ROK joint military exercises against North Korea. North Korea justifiably views these war games as acts of provocation. The annual U.S.-ROK "Key Resolve/Foal Eagle" war games, usually staged in March, and "Ulchi Freedom Guardian" in August typically last for months and involve tens of thousands of U.S. troops and hundreds of thousands of South Korean troops. In the exercises, U.S. forces simulate overthrowing North Korea's leadership, occupying Pyongyang, and reunifying the peninsula under U.S. and South Korean control.

When I think about the impact of all this militarization, I think about the elderly rice farmers in Pyongtaek who used their bodies to defend their village from the expansion of a U.S. military base. I think about the tangerine farmers and women sea divers of Gangjeong village on Jeju island struggling day and night to stop the construction of a U.S.-backed Korean naval base. This is what the militarization of the Korean peninsula looks like, and the only road to peace runs through Washington.

Women's organizing to end the Korean War is strategic for 3 key reasons. 1- War has a disproportionate impact on the lives of women. As feminists, we know that nationalism, patriarchy, and militarism intersect. The militarization of the peninsula naturally leads to greater masculinization of society, which increases violence against women, including sexual violence by U.S. servicemen and the reallocation of resources from social welfare towards the military. 2- Given our relationships with our families, children, and community, women have a reality check that is seldom there for men. Not only can women can bring into greater focus the experience of women and girls in militarized societies and armed conflict, we can provide crucial insights into the daily consequences of the ongoing war on peoples' lives. 3- The deadlocked situation calls for game changers. As a group of people outside the structures of power, we have to use our ingenuity to go beyond conventional paths outlined and dominated by patriarchal institutions. Women are not cowed by limited notions of solutions; our imagination and creativity break through repressive structures.

Central to all of this is ending the Korean War, with the US signing a peace treaty with North Korea. But it will take more than signing a document to end over half a century of enmity and mistrust—it will take a new approach to achieving security. This is why it will take women's leadership, because women realize that genuine security means having health, education, and freedom to live without fear and want. From Ireland to Liberia, brave women have stood up to end violence and conflict. We can and must do the same for Korea.

KCTU Laborers Gather in Gangjeong

It has been more than a decade since the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions visited the Island for the remembrance of 4•3. This year, they held its annual event in Gangjeong village again to express their support and solidarity with the struggle against the Jeju naval base construction.

KCTU stated: "[..]Since the armed group of the Jeju branch of the Workers Party of South Korea rose up on April 3rd, 1948, numerous people were sacrificed on Jeju Island during the process of armed conflicts and [US-backed] subjugated army's oppression on the people, until [..] Sept. 21, 1954."

"This year marking the 60th anniversary of the Cease Fire Agreement of the cold war with on-going confrontations until now as the crisis of war is higher than ever on the Korean peninsula, we uphold the workers' resolute commitment to succeed the spirit of the Jeju 4•3 people's uprising and to fully realize peace and unification of the homeland."

Image: Lee Wooki

Many writers who helped realize this dream to build a Peace book cafe gather on opening day

Peace Book Cafe Opening

On April 6th, despite the cold and strong winds that day, over 200 people came out to support the opening of the book café sharing food and drinks. This cozy space maximized its small size with a very smart flexible design. About 300 writers collaborated to bring this dream into reality; to build a book cafe in the name of peace, to reunite the community despite its previous divisions and bring together everyone in Gangjeong village regardless of their position on the struggle. They organized and raised funds to build this "Peace Book Cafe". During the opening night, farmer and poet Kim Sangue gave a poetry reading and indie band, 'Namgida', played lively music in celebration.

Image: Rev. Kim Hee-Yong

On the left, two Protestant reverands, Kim Hee-Yong and Kim Hong-Sul, held a fast and prayer in solidarity with the suffering of Prof. Yang Yoon-Mo and Gureombi rock, March 26 to March 29 infront of Jeju prison

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Please write letters of support to

No. 435 Since Apr. 12 — **Mr. Kim Young-Jae**

No. 301 Since Feb. 1 — **Mr. Yang Yoon-Mo**

Jeju Prison, 161, Ora-2 dong, Jeju City, Jeju, Korea

Image: Lee Wooki

Mayor Kang thanks Oh Young-Ae, mother of a peace activist, who toured throughout South Korea with a food vendor truck and raised 48,000,000 KRW (about $48,000 USD) for activists fines and legal fee's.

HEALING HANDS WITH ACHIEVEMENT

It was at the end of January that Oh Young-Ae, mother of young activist, Kim Gami, started her fund-raising efforts when she heard the news that about a dozen young activists were suffering from enoromous fines for their protest activities to stop the naval base construction and therefore were willing to go to prison.

Beginning in Seoul on Jan. 28th, Gami's mother traveled nation-wide with a 'healing' snack vendor truck. Since then she restlessly traveled throughout the main cities of all the provincesin South Korea, until its final arrival in Jeju on April 6.

Her story moved many people nationwide, not to mention young activists who volunteered to help her with the daily physical hard labor. She finally achieved her original goal to raise 48,000,000 KRW for young activists' fines. On April 6th, her great achievement was met with deep gratitude and cheers in Gangjeong village.

She said in an interview with Catholic News that her daughter who suffered from the news of her friends, awakened her consciousness again after distancing herself from any political activities that she once participated in the past.

The village suffers from fines totaling about $450,000 USD (about $200,000 USD has been paid) as well as damage compensation fees that are being demanded by companies reaching about $290,000 USD. The average fine for young activist is about $400 USD while some of them have been fined about $800~900 USD.

Activists Suffer from Injuries

Activists suffer from intentional or non-intentional violence by police and company workers. On March 11, Mr. Kim Hak-Ku suffered from injuries when the police deliberately pulled down a chair he was walking on in protest to the base construction in front of the construction gate. On March 18, Mr. Lee Min-Joong's foot was haphazardly run over by a truck driver who could not see him during the night time construction. Mr. Lee had to be hospitalized for nearly three weeks.

Successive Arrests in April

Apart from Yang Yoon-Mo (57), who ended his 52 days' prison fast as of March 24, Mr. Kim Young-Jae (41), a peace activist and a member of Solidarity for Peace And Reunification of Korea (SPARK) was arrested on April 12 and received the court decision for imprisonment on April 14.

On the day of arrest, Mr. Kim was standing with a sign infront of a truck at the naval base construction gate. It was illegal and unreasonable for the police to arrest Mr. Kim since he left the site after the 2nd police warning.

Mr. Bae Gi-Cheol (45), co-representative of the Jeju Pan-Island Committee to Stop the Military Base and for the Realization of Peace Island was also arrested on April 8. And Ms. Lee Jin-Hee (47), Jeju branch co-representative of the Korea Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM) was arrested on April 16.

These arrests happened during everyday people's protests at the construction gates against the navy's illegal construction (destruction of the environment) that threatens the UNESCO and government-designated soft coral habitats near the construction area.

In the meantime, Mr. Park Sung-Soo, an independent video documentarian, became the first victim of the new government strategy to attack with fines against the people. On March 25, he chose to be jailed rather than pay150,000 won fine. Anonymous people paid the fine on his behalf and he was released on April 1.

When Park was jailed along with Yang, international peace activists showed their support for them, expressed in their written messages. Prof. Yang expressed his gratitude for the overflow of international support by saying that it was his honor to be one with peace activists from around the world.

Japanese Delegation Visit Gangjeong Village

By Kang Dong-Seok

Duringe 4·3-rememberance week, a peace delegation of 70 Japanese guests, who were in Jeju for the memorial service, visited Gangjeong village on April 1st and 4th respectively. They came to express their concern and support for the struggle.

On April 4th, 34 of the Japanese guests toured the naval base construction area's main gates and Gangjeong port in a group bus. In Gangjeong port, Mayor Kang Dong-Kyun, who lived in Japan for many years, explained to them in Japanese the history of the village struggle against the base project and its current situation.

Image: Regis Tremblay

Reknown film director, Oliver Stone, talks candidly about Korea's history of occupation, war and division, the Jeju 4.3 (April 3rd) massacre of civilians in 1948 under U.S. army command and the current people's non-violent struggle against the naval base in Jeju. *full video interview: http://vimeo.com/63123759

The Monthly Newsletter Needs Your Support !
HOW? Become A Member of GANGJEONG FRIENDS !

As the government oppresses the village and has attacked peace activists with exurbent fines, **GANGJEONG FRIENDS** is one of the only means to finance the struggle. Another big task is to support the regular publication of this monthly English newsletter, 'Gangjeong Village Story.' Without your help, this newsletter is unable to continue printing and mailing publications due to shortage of funds.

Gangjeong Friends also supports the peace activists in Gangjeong who suffer from many hardships by dedicating their full-time energy. To support the village and activists, is to **SUPPORT THE LIFE LINES THAT ARE VITAL TO THE STRUGGLE.**

Support the struggle and become a member of Gangjeong Friends by emailing **GANGJEONGINTL@GMAIL.COM** with your name, email address, region, and yearly donation. Thank you !

Image: Cho Sung-Bong

During passion week, Bishop Kang U-Il carries out Maundy washing feet ceremony at Gangjeong stream.

A Prayer for Gangjeong Village

By Pat Cunningham (based in Seoul, a Columban Father)

This Eastertide my thoughts and prayers are with Prof Yang Yoon Mo as he recovers to full health! My thought and prayers are with the villagers and brave peacemakers standing up for the life and peace of Gangjeong! They continue to stand strong despite the daily repression that has become a feature of the 6 year long nonviolent struggle against the building of the naval base!

During the Easter Triduum, we remembered the sufferings and deep humiliation that Jesus suffered at the hands of his oppressors and the subsequent humiliation of being put on trial and executed as a common criminal. Gangjeong villagers and activists are uniquely positioned to identify with the humiliation, betrayal and deep suffering of Jesus and like Jesus, question-'why me?' We dare however to celebrate the Risen Jesus who is raised from the dead and who calls us to disarm our hearts and our world amid the saber rattling and dangerous actions on the peninsula of Korea! His message-'peace be with you' is a message our world badly needs to hear at this time! The Roman Authorities placed guards at the tomb of Jesus with the Imperial seal basically declaring in as many words-we've killed you and put you in the tomb and now you're dead. So stay there! However his resurrection became the perfect non violent revolution which changes everything and provides us with a renewed sense of hope and purpose to work for the life and peace of the world. The Risen Jesus remains at large in Gangjeong forming his underground movement of nonviolent resistance amid the drum beats of war that have gripped the country. He says 'peace be with you' to those who staunchly resist the building of the base in Gangjeong. He lives on in the mighty and brave actions of people for justice and peace in our world! As people of hope and people of the resurrection we pray that justice will once again flow like a mighty stream and that the village of Gangjeong will return to its rightful custodians-the villagers and not the navy!

Peace Gangjeong ! 강정의 평화!

HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Make a donation to support our international outreach and public education efforts. Visit savejejunow.org to donate. Alternatively, join Gangjeong Friends to give regular support to activists. Contact gangjeongintl@gmail.com for details.
2. Write letters to Gangjeong's prisoners of conscience (See page 3). Address letters to: Jeju Prison, 161 Ora-2dong, Jeju City, Jeju the Peace Island, Korea
3. Stay updated on the resistance by joining the "No Naval Base on Jeju!" and "Save Jeju" Facebook pages. Follow @SaveJejuNow for the most recent developments on Twitter. Also watch #gangjeong and #gangjung - then re-tweet.
4. Call the Korean Embassy in your country and let them know that Jeju does not want a naval base! The militarization of Jeju Island runs contrary to its designation as the "Island of World Peace." 94% of village residents voted no!
5. Email Jeju Island Governor Woo Keun-Min and tell him how you feel about the military base being built on the pristine "Island of World Peace". He should ORDER the navy to halt construction (destruction) and use his official power to cancel the Navy's license for reclamation of public water and its adjacent surface along the Gureombi Rock coast! Contact him at: lmw2828@jeju.go.kr or jejumaster@jeju.go.kr
6. Organize a solidarity event (concert, movie screening, protest, talk, etc...). Publicize it, invite your friends, invite the media, and share about it with us on Facebook and other social media sites.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

http://www.savejejunow.org (English / Mandarin / Japanes
http://www.facebook.com/SaveJeju (English / Korean)
http://www.facebook.com/groups/nonavalbase (English)
http://twitter.com/SaveJejuNow (English)
http://cafe.daum.net/peacekj (Korean / English / Mandarin / Japanese)

For Gangjeong related videos, visit savejejunow.org or check these Youtube sites:

1234yz100 / Dopeheadzo / Sungbong2012 / ShealEum / Shalomsea / Regis Tremblay

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Front headline image source: Gangjeong Village story, peace activists block trucks from entry and exit to the construction site
Back image sources: Choi Hye-Yeong, Cho Sung-Bong, Licky Rooney, Park Inchun, Park Suk-Jin, Lee Wooki, Gangjeong Village Story