GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY

January 2016

Monthly news on the struggle against the Jeju Naval base project

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Jeju and Okinawa Must Become Demilitarized Islands

Image by Haku
Article by Nanch'o

January 27th has long been an important anniversary for Jeju Island, but it has a particularly urgent meaning now for the anti-militarization movement as it responds to the completion of the new naval base. This year, a community forum was held at Gangjeong's Peace Center to mark two key commemorations: 11 years since the official declaration recognizing Jeju as an "Island of World Peace"; and 3 years since the declaration of determination for realizing the demilitarization of the island. A new development was the exchange of solidarity messages between community gatherings in Jeju and Okinawa via videoconference link-up, as Okinawan peace activists joined in embracing the call for the demilitarization of both islands. As signs of a new Cold War between the US and China, the recent military build-up on Jeju and Okinawa is contributing toward a dangerous rise of regional tensions, given that Korea and Japan are both allied with the US.

Recognizing the necessity for Jeju's demilitarization has a long history. On April 18, 1991, at the summit meeting on Jeju Island between Mikhail Gorbachev and Roh Tae-woo, the Soviet leader and South Korean president acknowledged Jeju's place as central to realizing peace on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. That May a proposal for making Jeju "an island of peace" was presented by Korean scholars at an international forum in New York and further developed the following month at an academic conference on Jeju. That October the proposal was actively debated at the Jeju Forum.

Those discussions yielded five key principles, which stated that Jeju Island (1) must be demilitarized; (2) must be recognized as the geopolitical center of peace and order in Northeast Asia; (3) must become a place for peace research and training, and the regional center for regulating and resolving international conflicts and disputes; (4) must involve the active and voluntary participation of Jeju residents in the development of regional efforts for realizing Jeju as an Island of World Peace; and (5) must advance a concept of peace based on balanced and decentralized self-generated development.

After further continuous efforts in subsequent years, Jeju's designation as "Island of World Peace" was announced by former South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun, who also gave a formal apology for April 3rd, the name given to the massacre of more than 30,000 island residents following a democratic uprising in 1948.

Let's stop the THAAD deployment for the peace of Jeju

By Park Seok-Boon,
Solidarity for Peace And Reunification of Korea

While the domination contest between the United States and China is being intensified, the South Korea and the United States authorities are making explicit the THAAD deployment in Korea upon the risk of North Korea's 4th nuclear test. The THAAD deployment in Korea will be a loop that would more forcefully push the establishment of the South Korea-United States-Japan trilateral alliance with the missile defense as its vehicle. Furthermore, the Japanese Abe government that has arranged the war bill is rapidly building up its military power, possibly aiming at the invasion again into the Korean peninsula. The naval power of Japan is being built up while powerful advanced weapons are introduced one by one into the Sasebo navy base located in the same latitude as the Jeju navy base.

The collusion on the 'comfort women' issue between the South Korean and Japanese governments at the end of last year can be interpreted as a process of removing an obstacle for such trilateral alliance. How horrible it is to imagine Japanese military being enabled for the invasion of Korea, along with the United States military! Already among South Korea, United States, and Japan, military information sharing is being realized. With the deployment of THAAD radar (AN/TPY-2) to detect the missile information of China, Korea would be the victim of domination contest between the United States and China. How dumbfounded especially when the United States and Japan would use the Jeju navy base, targeting China! As a result, if we cannot stop the trilateral alliance, the Jeju navy base will be a military strategic spot, along with bases of Japan, and a big threat to peace in North East Asia. For the Jeju navy base not to be used as a tool for war, we need to stop the deployment of THAAD first.

Image by Pang Eunmi/ Since the Dec. 28 collusion on 'comfort women' between the two governments of Japan and South Korea, at the mass and human chain in Gangjeong, our girl statue masks represent our solidarity with the women victimized by wars in the world to remind us about the horrors of militarism which, if forgotten, can play out again in the future.

"PEACE FOR THE SEA"

Statement* by Participants of the Okinawa Peace Camp, 2015

We are an international group of activists working for peace at a critical moment in Northeast Asia. Last fall, we gathered in solidarity from around the world for a five-day peace camp in Okinawa called "Peace for the Sea." Its goal was to promote inter-island solidarity among our communities in Jeju Island of South Korea; the islands of Taiwan; and Okinawa and other Ryukyu Islands, including Miyakojima, Ishigaki, Yonaguni and Amami-Oshima. Ichariba chōde is an Okinawan proverb that carries a special resonance for our group, meaning "Once we meet, we become brothers and sisters." We already share a kinship of historical memory as survivors, witnesses, descendants, and advocates. Indeed, the Ryukyu Islands, the islands of Taiwan, and Jeju Island all bear legacies of suffering, given our parallel experiences of Japanese colonial occupation and postwar authoritarian rule in the shadow of the Cold War under US hegemony. As we mark 70 years since the end of World War II in the Asia-Pacific, we are still struggling against the unresolved contradictions of both that conflict and the Cold War, while also contending with the emerging reconfiguration of bipolar rivalries into a New Cold War. Truly, it is more pressing than ever to strengthen our solidarity as a transnational community of peace. In the spirit of Ichariba chōde, we have sought to strengthen our solidarity as a sisterhood and brotherhood of peace.

The Urgent Necessity of "Peace for the Sea"

On the day that we arrived for our Peace Camp in late September, the railroaded passage of war bills by the Japanese Parliament ended that country's longstanding pacifism, despite massive protests throughout Japan. Shortly thereafter Okinawa's Governor Onaga Takeshi addressed the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, calling the new base in Henoko "a violation of the right to self-determination of the Okinawan people." During that same period in Korea, an Aegis destroyer entered the Gangjeong Sea for the first time, foreshadowing the end of Jeju's identity as an Island of World Peace. These alarming developments are all related to the "Asia pivot," the policy of redirecting US foreign policy and military strategy away from the Middle East and toward countries in the Asia-Pacific. But what it really means is the escalating confrontation of two hegemons, the US and China, competing for control over the last resources on earth amid an unprecedented expansion of militarization in the Asia-Pacific region. This shift will not bring about greater human security but will instead yield the conditions for a far greater risk of war and tremendous environmental destruction. These changes have been fueled by the global weapons industry, which reaps enormous profits from increased military conflict, while ordinary people and the wider ecosystem suffer the inevitable consequences. In the globalization of the weapons industry, Taiwan is also implicated as a consumer through its obligation to purchase millions of dollars in US arms through the secondary market, as stipulated by Taiwan's treaty of mutual cooperation with the US.

A Resilient Community Affirming All Living Creatures

Our hosts in Okinawa have taught us the saying, "Nuchi du takara", meaning "Life is a treasure." What at first sounds like a simple life-affirming phrase is in fact shadowed by the harrowing experience of mass death during the Battle of Okinawa. In this way, "Nuchi du takara" is also a message of profound resilience: Bearing the memory of devastating tragedy and hardship, the response of Okinawan people has been to embrace life unequivocally. So we, too, are today facing mortal threats to the collective peace in our region, and similarly our response must be to affirm the coexistence of all living creatures and to build a strong transnational community of friendship and solidarity. We are all part of nature and have the responsibility to protect the water, land, and air upon which we depend to survive. We condemn the degradation of the natural environment and the structural violence committed against island residents and other marginalized peoples, whose interests have too often been sacrificed for the sake of exclusive and destructive forms of nationalism, or global capitalism in the guise of nationalism.

Our Shared Conviction for Peace

We invite more people – both in East Asia and throughout the world – to join us in taking the initiative to promote peace. Toward this vision, we will continue to work closely together, and we look forward to our next international peace camp this summer in Taiwan. We cannot leave this work to political leaders and governments, which largely answer to corporate interests and the military-industrial complex. We will instead create another kind of geography. Through our peace camp and similar projects, we are already creating alternative political communities based on a sustainable economy, the ethics of coexistence, and our shared responsibility to preserve peace.

*For the longer original version, please see: savejejunow.org

Saving dolphins is defending the sea

By Joyakgol

As the Lunar New Year is coming, the Jeju Navy invited Gangjeong villagers to the warship celebrations on the sea. In the navy flyer distributed to each household, the word 'Let's defend the sea' caught my attention. What is defending the sea really about? Building more Aegis destroyers? Bringing more missiles to the navy base. What does it mean to defend the sea when the nearby marine environment is dying from polluted materials emitted from the still on-going military base construction? Can a destroyer defend the highly sophisticated ecosystem made of soft corals, dolphins and the fish? This year, Hotpinkdolphins is organizing citizen-participatory Jeju dolphin habitat monitoring programs where ordinary people with no expertise in marine biology can see and learn the importance of wild dolphins, an index species that indicates the health of the sea. And thus, one can tell if the dolphins are deteriorating then the sea is not getting properly defended. Jeju dolphins are coastal, but it is not easy to spot them from the shore. There are only about 100 total individuals left and they usually swim in 3 or 4 small pods consisting of 20 dolphins or less. Campaigning to free captive dolphins for 5 years, Hotpinkdolphins has become naturally aware of several major spots where wild and freed dolphins often hang together. Gureombi rock of Gangjeong used to be one of them before the navy base came in. Kimnyeong and Hamdeok on the northern coast of Jeju is another location where 5 dolphins were returned, so we started this year's first monitoring there on January 15. And there are 5 more monitoring activities scheduled to happen until December. We will see that dolphins coexist peacefully in the sea because that is truly defending out planet.

Image by: Licky Rooney. Citizens participated in the first Hamdeok-Kimnyeong area dolphin monitoring on Jan 16.

International Solidarity

Image by Andrew/ On Jan. 27, the Justice For Comfort Women UK Support Group held a solidarity protest in front of the Japanese embassy in London, to protest to the South Korea-Japanese governments' betraying agreement on the issue of 'comfort women' signed on Dec. 28, 2015. The solidarity protests for the surviving comfort women which have been held every Wednesday in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul since 1992 have spread all over the world, especially since the date of the problematic agreement.

Reflections from the 17th Gangjeong Peace School

Translated by Curry

It was a good experience for me. I learned more about the struggle against the Gangjeong naval base. The party was really cool, I think it was a unique kind of demonstration.

-Jeju-do

This was an unfamiliar, original camp for me. My thoughts about peace changed a lot because of what I heard in the lectures, and it was good to spend this vacation learning good things with good people. If I have the chance I want to participate again.

-Buri

I always got to know about Gangjeong just a little bit at a time, so it was good to learn more details. Many stories from Alddreu Airfield and the 4.3 Peace Park have remained in my heart. I learned painful memories of Jeju that I didn't know before. I heard about peace from many different people and I enjoyed learning many new things from them. People who come to see the beauty of this place see that it isn't all beauty, but there is a lot of blood and pain hidden inside, and I think that is a good thing to remember. Listening to many people and having conversations together, it seems like there were four key words: peace, demilitarized, nonviolent, and cultural art. I was happy that I could join with the other participants of the 17th Gangjeong Peace School on this journey towards peace. I hope that more people can come and have this kind of Peace School experience in the future.

-Cosmos

Image by the 17th Gangjeong Peace School visiting the Netgiriso, the water source of Gangjeong stream.

Buddha is Not for War

It is distressing that one of the biggest Buddhist orders in South Korea, the Jogye order, has established a Buddhist temple called 'Haegwansa (meaning 'a temple looking over the Sea') inside the navy base of which the construction completion is told to be completed early this year. The temple is managed by the military religious affairs division of the Jogye order. Hearing the news that the temple has its ceremony on Jan. 9, people had picketing and 100 bows in protest to such senseless ceremony. The temple stands on the upper area of the coast at the cost of villagers' sacrifice and Gureombi Rock where numerous creatures were 'killed' to the blasphemy of Buddha's words. We carried the signs that read: "Military= Killers' group," "No killing," "Haegwansa doing Buddhist prayer for the navy base that stifles villagers?"and 'Buddha is Not for War."

Trial Updates

› On January 28, the Supreme Court dismissed an appeal by three Jeju Pan-Island activists, Kim Guk-Nam, Hong Young-Chul, and Bae Ki-Chul. Each activist must now pay a total of 2,400 USD each. It was back in 2013 when the 1st court handed down the decision to fine each of these activists approximately 2,500 USD for the charge of obstruction of business. This was followed by a High Court decision of not-guilty, for the charge of trespassing onto the construction site of the navel base, but guilty of the charge of obstruction of business. The charge of not guilty was appealed against by prosecutors to the Supreme Court where it was overturned to guilty, resulting in the fines of 2,400 USD.

› Mr. Kim Guk Nam, one of the three activists mentioned above, chose to enter prison on January 27, for refusal to pay the combined fines of 5 million KRW (about 5,000 USD) for the alleged charge of insult. It is a seperate case from what is mentioned above. He must remain in prison for 50 days to fulfill the total amount of time for the fines, (1 day is counted 100,000 KRW). So far, the total numbers of people who have been in jail either for arrests or fines from the anti-Jeju navy base protests reaches close to 60, and the total amount of fines from those protests is roughly counted to be around 250,000 USD. If the cost of compensation for damage that has been demanded by the construction companies is included then total amount is roughly counted to be approximately 400,000 USD. Some cases are still pending trial so the exact number is currently not available. (The currency here is conveniently counted as $1 = 1,000 KRW)

Yongsan tragedy unsettled 7 years

It was January 20, 2009 when six people including five evicted and one policeman died in a fire on the rooftop of a building in Yongsan, Seoul during the clash between tenants and the police. The tragic incident proved how people in South Korea are forced to be on the cliff edge of life under ruthless corporate-led redevelopment projects. The government should fully investigate the cause of such tragedy and punish those responsible of the death. People are annoyed by the fact that Kim Seok-Ki who directed the crackdown on that day as Seoul Metropolitan Police Commissioner, at the time of the tragedy, has been promoted to the CEO of the Korea Airports Corporations, and is now being promoted for the National Assembly election this April. On Jan. 23, 2016 when the rally took place to remember the 7th year of the tragedy, Ko Kwon-Il, vice mayor of Gangjeong village was one of those who attended the rally in solidarity with the bereaved families of Yongsan.

Hong Sehwa

By Curry

Thought's Coordinates: How Did My Thoughts Become My Thoughts? Discussing his book with the same title, Hong Sehwa came to Gangjeong as the guest speaker for a special open lecture at the closing of Peace School. Sharing from his experience as an opposition party leader, political exile, journalist and author, Hong Sehwa challenged peace school participants and Gangjeong activists to question whether they think for themselves or just accept the norms of society. It was his first time in Gangjeong, but many people were familiar with his books and were excited to meet him in person. Following his lecture, there was a lively discussion.

By Lia Ohm

Critiquing Neoliberal Development Plans for Jeju

The implications of the Jeju Free International City was the topic of a presentation and discussion led by Dr. Cho Seong-chan, a researcher at the Seoul-based Land + Liberty Institute (Toji+Jayu Yeon'guso). Dr. Cho gave an invited talk on January 9th at a forum hosted by the organization of Jeju Islanders now living on the mainland (Yukji Saneun Jeju Saram). The presentation analyzed the background and structural limitations of the development strategy behind the Jeju Free International City, and the discussion stressed the need to find alternative development models, which must serve the needs of island residents rather than the interests of outside investors.

Images by Emily Wang, Park Youn-Ae, and Gangjeong Village Story. Amid ongoing anti-base struggle, children of a new generation for life & peace are born and grow.
We wish readers a blessed and peaceful New Year. Thanks so much for all your support!

Gangjeong Peace School

By Curry

Peace School has started up again in Gangjeong. From January 19 to 26, six participants and five staff and volunteers with a wide range of age and experience crossed back and forth across Gangjeong and Jeju Island learning from history, from nature, from Gangjeong villagers and activists and from one another. From the 100 bows in the morning to evening sessions all around town, participants learned through both listening and action.

The peace school coincided with the coldest weather that Jeju has had in over 30 years. The cold winds, snowy roads, and frozen pipes meant that many plans had to change, but participants enjoyed snowball fights and the special opportunity to see Gangjeong covered in snow. Everyone worked together to share warm clothes, collect firewood and take drinking water to Samgeori kitchen from the Peace Center.

Peace school visited sites related to the Japanese occupation, the 4·3 massacre and the current anti-base struggle. Participants had sessions about art, meditation, direct action, international activism, peace education, and theater activities. They hiked on the snowy slopes of Halla mountain and volunteered to pick tangerines. Peace School ended with a special lecture by journalist Hong Sehwa.

Peace school planned a "Goodbye Navy, Welcome Peace" barbecue and dance party at the navy base gates. Caught off guard by the creative technique, even one of the most unfriendly security guards accepted a sausage from a persistent Peace School participant. The club music created a lively atmosphere and everyone who joined felt refreshed from the dancing. There is power in celebration.

The Gangjeong Peace School team is planning to host monthly peace school programs this year. They hope that the program will continue to foster opportunities for mutual learning and exchange, sharing the Gangjeong experience with newcomers and finding encouragement from their new energy.

Letter Excepts from Noam Chomsky

By Sunny

"As you know, I've been involved with the brave people of Gangjeong for several years. Wonderful people, struggling hard against overwhelming odds. It's happening all over. In Okinawa, the population is overwhelmingly opposed to the US-Tokyo policies on the US military bases there, but no matter what they do, the Tokyo government goes ahead.

On hope [of the future], we only have two options: abandon hope, and help ensure that the worst will happen; pursue the options that exist, and they always do, and maybe you'll help make the world a better place. And it's always worth remembering that things have looked far worse in the past, but those who have not given up have achieved a great deal, leaving a legacy to us that we can carry forward if we choose." (Letter to Sunny from Noam Chomsky, 2016)

"I was delighted to learn that Gangjeong Village was awarded the prestigious Sean Macbride prize, a very well-deserved recognition of the courageous and honorable struggle of the villagers. It is hard to find words to describe the remarkable commitment of the villagers and priests who are carrying the struggle toward against such great and unconscious obstacles. One day, I am confident, the struggle will be crowned with victory."(Letter to Koh Gil-chun from Noam Chomsky, 2015)

How You Can Help

1. Write a letter to the South Korean government to stop the Jeju base project and to the US government to stop the support for it.
2. Write letters to Gangjeong's prisoners of conscience.
3. Stay updated by joining our Facebook groups and following us on twitter.
4. Organize a solidarity event (concert, movie screening, protest, etc...)
5. Then share about it on social media.
6. Visit Gangjeong!
7. For other ways to help and more visit us on the web.

For More Information

http://www.SaveJejuNow.org
http://www.facebook.com/groups/NoNavalBase
http://www.facebook.com/SaveJeju
http://www.twitter.com/SaveJejuNow

For Gangjeong related videos, visit savejejunow.org or check these Vimeo/Youtube users :

Vimeo : cho sung bong / DH Song / Regis Tremblay
Youtube : Gang-Jeong Il-Gi / Shalomsea / 1234yz100 / Sungbong2012

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Hammer of Justice

By Frank Cordaro

Jessica "Rez" Reznicek remains in jail, 30 days and counting, after her first court appearance for her "Hammer of Justice, Act of Peace Witness" at the Northrop Grumman building in Bellevue, Nebraska last Dec 27th. She took a sledge hammer and baseball bat to front windows and door of the Northrop Grumman building. Charges were dropped on three other activists, also charged and arrested on Dec. 27th. Rez is charged with two felonies, with a combine possible jail terms of 22 years. Rez is planning to represent herself in this case and to put Northrop Grumman on trial for past and current War crimes in it's partnership with STRATCOM and its dominance in militarizing space. It can take several months for court appearances, trial and sentencing. Rez visited Gangjeong last year. Feel free to write to Rez at:
Jessica Reznicek
Sarpy County Jail, 1208 Golden Gate Dr,
Papillion, NE 68046, United States
For more info and updates contact: Frank Cordaro <frank.cordaro@gmail.com>

Image by Sunny/ Joyakgol capturing the sparkles in the audience's eyes in his own musical concert in Gangjeong on Jan. 15.

Image by Kang Han Bangwool. Following the community forum at Gangjeong's Peace Center on January 27th, which commemorated the public resolution to make Jeju a demilitarized island, several participants stayed to join Gangjeong's videoconference with fellow peace activists in Okinawa. The groups in the two locations exchanged greetings, updates, and spirited messages of encouragement.

International Peace Film Festival in Gangjeong

From April 23 to 26, the 1st International Peace Film Festival in Gangjeong will take place in Gangjeong Village and Seogwipo City. As an extension of the ongoing cultural resistance in Gangjeong, the festival takes film as the medium of witnessing the history of this struggle and further engaging the public in sharing that history. The festival will include films exploring themes such as peace, human rights, and environmental issues, which will also be explored in forums and educational activities throughout the festival. Admission will be free, and more details are to come.

Warships and Troops Get Real in Gangjeong

Since the 1st entry of the Aegis Destroyer in September last year followed by the creation of the Jeju base squadron and the introduction of the 7th task flotilla and submarine squadron last December, the visit by warships of destroyers, submarines, and other military vessels into the Gangjeong port has become routine. This routine has been established even before the base construction completion ceremony, to be held on Feb. 26. The village has recently made a resolution that it would not allow soldiers to pass by the village in military uniforms. While people maintaining the struggle to stop the base, the task to stop militarism attacking the village and Island is already an urgent task.