

What's Next?: A Joint United States and South Korea Jeju 4.3 Tragedy Task Force to Further Implement Recommendations and Foster Comprehensive and Enduring "Social Healing Through Justice"

Eric K. Yamamoto¹ and Miyoko Pettit²

This essay is based on our presentation at the 2013 Jeju April 3rd Peace Education Forum entitled "Towards Island Civilization Model of Social Healing of Mass Killing of Jeju Islanders of South Korea During and After U.S. Peacetime Occupation (1947-1954)" at Jeju National University.

Abstract

The Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Task Force on Social Healing Through Justice, proposed here, focuses on potential next steps in view of the strong sense of many that 4.3 reconciliation is "unfinished business." It proposes a creative yet practical way for the United States, South Korea and Jeju people to engage in collaborative 4.3 social healing. Together, as part of the proposed Joint Task Force, they might more fully implement past recommendations and chart and oversee next steps toward comprehensive and enduring social healing "by doing justice."

This proposal is based on the National Committee's now-translated Report and the insights of scholars and the work of many of you here, along with others deeply interested in social justice. Those of us not from Jeju, or South Korea, who appreciate your invitation to participate, humbly and respectfully offer this proposal for your consideration with justice in mind.

Keywords : Joint, South Korea, United States, Jeju 4.3 Task Force, Social Healing, Justice, 4.3 reconciliation, unfinished business.

1). Fred T. Korematsu Professor of Law and Social Justice, William S. Richardson School of Law, University of Hawai'i. Copyright Eric K. Yamamoto 2013. The authors would like to thank Sara Lee, Yea Jin Lee and Joy Neely for their valuable contributions and insights.

2). Fred T. Korematsu Scholar Advocate; Juris Doctor (expected 2015), William S. Richardson School of Law, University of Hawai'i.

I. INTRODUCTION

Summer 2013 marked the publication of the English translation of the National Committee's 2003 Investigative Report on the Jeju 4.3 Tragedy.¹ The translated version is momentous. For the Korean populace, it exposes to vast new audiences a startling and horrific "peacetime" chapter of South Korean history. For English readers, it reveals fresh insights into notable aspects of 4.3 and its consequences. Most stunning, the Translated Report as a whole illuminates the extent of United States responsibility both for past individual and community harms and for present-day social healing.

In light of the new English translation and a strong sense among many that Jeju 4.3 social healing is "unfinished business," our presentation responds to the pressing question, "What's next?" Our proposal for a *Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Task Force on Social Healing Through Justice* is grounded in three related ways.

First, the proposal is grounded in my exposure (as a reviewer of the Translated Report) to numerous details about 4.3. The proposal is also supported by updated research, some of which was conducted in Korean by a member of my research team, Yea Jin Lee (a former Seoul resident and now American law graduate), and in English by Sara Lee (researcher and University of California at Santa Cruz graduate) and Miyoko Pettit here (research collaborator and graduate of Harvard University).

Second, the responses are grounded in research on Jeju Island at the invitation of Jeju residents. Third, the proposal for a Joint Task Force is grounded in collaborations with Jeju 4.3 scholars and interactions with government officials and justice advocates, including many here.² The interactions with the people and

places of Jeju made real some of the human suffering. It also underscored the importance of South Korean reconciliation efforts in the past decade – both helpful and unfinished – and the significance of continuing justice advocacy by Jeju people. And it highlighted that we in the United States know almost nothing about Jeju 4.3. Nor do we know much about the apparently substantial role of the United States as the post-World War II "peacetime" military force in South Korea with control over the Korean military and national police. Most important, our research and these interactions point to potential "next steps" for genuine reconciliation.

Joint participation by the United States, South Korea and the Jeju government and people is crucial. Full participation would likely occur only in response to concerted encouragement, or even demands, by grassroots organizations, scholars, national and local government officials and the

moto helped organize addressed "Social Healing Through Justice: The Mass Killing of Korea Jeju Islanders During U.S. Peacetime Occupation" and included participation by international human rights scholar Tae-Ung Baik, reparations scholar Kunihiro Yoshida, along with Professor Ko, Yong-Beom Kim (Chair of the Autonomous Administration Committee of the Jeju Provincial Council), Jihee Kim (researcher for the World Association for Island Studies), Dong-Yun Yang (Chair of the Jeju April 3rd Citizens' Solidarity) and Ho-Chun Kim (Jeju journalist and Chair of the Tamna Photo Association), and with support from the World Environment and Island Institute of Jeju National University. A major conference at Jeju National University in 2013 addressed "Towards Island Civilization Model of Social Healing of Mass Killing of Jeju Islanders of South Korea During and After U.S. Peacetime Occupation (1947-1954)" and included interactions with Professor Ko, Ho Sung Koh (Dean of Jeju National University Law School), Kunihiro Yoshida (reparations scholar), Moon Hyun Chung (4.3 Victims Survivors Family Association), Eun-Jeong Kang (PhD. candidate focusing on "dark tourism"), Kenneth McLeod (President of Scholar's Choice International), Hey-Gyeong Ahn (Director of Art Space projects), Dong-Yun Kim (Professor at Jeju National University), Du-Yun Kim (4.3 Victims Survivors Family Association), Yong-Beom Kim (Chair of the Autonomous Administration Committee of the Jeju Provincial Council), Lim-Hwa Han (Novelist), Gyeonog-Sik Kang (Representative of the local Jeju government) and Hyeok-Jin Ko (Jeju 4.3 Documentary Filmmaker and President of the Association of Jeju Independent Film and Video).

1). See generally The National Committee for Investigation of the Truth About the Jeju April 3 Incident, The Jeju April 3 Incident Investigation Report (translated from Korean into English by the Jeju April 3 Peace Foundation), April 30, 2013 [hereinafter Translated Report].

2). For instance, a 2012 colloquium Professor Yama-

international community, including other governments and human rights organizations. It is even more important now because of the construction of a naval base on Jeju (partially for United States use) in the face of visible resident and global opposition (as well as some support) and because of the call of many to uplift Jeju as an island of environmental sustainability and peace. Potential U.S. participation in further Jeju 4.3 social healing is an issue that is live, real and uncertain.

If there is to be joint participation, how would mutual engagement occur? There are many possibilities. The proposal we advance is a *Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Task Force on Social Healing Through Justice*. That proposal emerges from the analytical framework of *social healing through justice* I have been developing for guiding and assessing practical reconciliation initiatives. (Yamamoto & Obrey, 2009). That framework covers the 4Rs: recognition, responsibility, reconstruction and reparations.

II. MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT: UNITED STATES, KOREA AND JEJU RESIDENTS

A. United States Engagement In Jeju 4.3 Social Healing Through Justice

Many, although not all, in Jeju know the story of Jeju 4.3. The newly Translated Report is educating both broader Korean and English-reading audiences about responsibility for the 4.3 Tragedy. So the question is "what's next?" Healing for Jeju 4.3 survivors and families progressed after the work of the 2000 National Committee and 2005 Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The South Korea government began a healing process that included a presidential apology, a government-sponsored museum and a public memorial and gravesite for known victims. The government also provided modest individual funding to a few survivors.

Why, then, the strong perception that there is much more to be done? In recent years, particularly since the 2007 presidential election, social healing (or reconciliation)

efforts seemingly stalled and in some ways regressed. High officials began to broadly and wrongly re-characterize the Jeju people of 1948 as communist insurgents. (Bae, 2008). Those residents, and their children, improperly tainted by that label, were largely excluded from the reconciliation process. A number of Jeju residents, as well as scholars and human rights observers, now view the government's overall reparative efforts to be incomplete - a stalled work in progress. Unfinished business.

Perhaps most significant, the United States has been fully absent from the reparative justice process - missing at all stages. Jeju residents, Korean and American scholars, and even a knowledgeable former U.S. army colonel, express the strong belief that the United States played a key role in the injustice and has some responsibility for healing past and persisting wounds.

III. A JOINT SOUTH KOREA AND UNITED STATES JEJU 4.3 TASK FORCE TO FURTHER IMPLEMENT PAST RECOMMENDATIONS AND TO FOSTER COMPREHENSIVE AND ENDURING SOCIAL HEALING THROUGH JUSTICE

A. Convening a Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Task Force on Social Healing Through Justice

The *Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Task Force* we propose would serve as a crucial next step toward genuine reconciliation. As the International Center for Transitional Justice observes, truth commission investigations and recommendations are only a first step toward reconciliation. Reconciliation is a long-term complex social and political process with potential for great benefits but also for incompleteness and even backsliding. The 2000 National Committee's and 2005 Commission's work, although significant, has not led to widespread and sustained Jeju 4.3 social healing. The proposed Joint Task Force, then, would help implement unfinished

recommendations, assess the effectiveness of actions to date and recommend further concrete actions aimed at *comprehensive*, *systemic* and *enduring* social healing.

An executive order like a presidential decree or a legislative resolution is likely the best method for legally creating the Joint Task Force. The Task Force's membership would include all significant participants in Jeju 4.3, particularly representatives of the United States and South Korea national governments and the Jeju local government, Jeju survivors or descendants (for instance, the Jeju 4.3 Victims' Family Association) and Korean and American researchers and scholars (for example, the Jeju 4.3 Institute). It could also be administered by an existing institute or organization and observed by selected international human rights groups. The Joint Task Force, which would be jointly funded and staffed, would not be a backward-looking investigative body. Rather it would be what reconciliation supporters in many places around the world are increasingly calling for: an expertly staffed vehicle for implementing practical existing commission recommendations and for charting forward-looking next steps toward social healing in light of evolving social, political and economic conditions.

The Joint Task Force would not repeat the work of the 2000 National Committee or the 2005 Commission. Rather the Joint Task Force's five main goals would be:

- 1) to build upon these two past investigations (which were completed several years ago and without United States participation) by updating and by filling any gaps;
- 2) to assess the completeness of the National Committee's recommendations particularly in light of new and updated information (and a full assessment of U.S. responsibility);
- 3) to assess the effectiveness of actions already taken and what more

is needed to heal the persisting wounds;

- 4) in light of one, two and three, to recommend further concrete next steps for implementing the National Committee's recommendations and to suggest follow-up steps as part of a larger integrated justice plan to foster genuine social healing for the Jeju people and for Korean society and, to an extent, the United States;
- 5) and to do these things to generate reparative justice in ways that assure government accountability and enhance the legitimacy of both South Korea and the United States as democracies.

The *social healing through justice* framework also identifies the larger stakes for both South Korea and the United States: until both governments take affirmative steps to further redress the Jeju 4.3 injustice, neither country can claim "justice done," nor can either country claim legitimacy globally as a democracy actually and fully committed to human rights. (Yamamoto & Lee, 2012).

In working with government groups and private organizations, the Joint Task Force might recommend, guide and oversee an array of specific reparative actions. Today, we offer possible suggested subjects and actions for Task Force consideration. These suggestions are not meant to pre-empt, or direct, the Joint Task Force's work. Rather the suggestions are to initiate discussion about a range of significant possibilities.

1. Bringing International Actors to the Reconciliation Table

All responsible in some fashion for Jeju 4.3 – whether through direct action, complicity or receipt of benefits – need to engage in social healing. (Yamamoto & Obrey, 2009). The Joint Task Force might therefore urge that the South Korea government request, even demand, direct United States engagement. South Korea's recent-past President Lee did something similar in 2012. He demanded

Japan's engagement in the reparative justice process for World War II Military Sex Slaves. (McCury, 2012).

B. Recognition of the Harms and the Long-Term Consequences - Responsibility for Disabling Constraints and for Social Healing Through Justice

1. Recognizing the Collective Trauma

The South Korea government partially recognized the damage to Jeju people and its role in 4.3. The government also made some admirable efforts, mentioned earlier. Yet, it appears, neither the national government nor the general populace (nor the United States) has fully gained an appreciation for the struggles and hopes of the Jeju people. The 2013 Translated Report paints a compelling picture of the collective trauma to Jeju communities.

The Joint Task Force might therefore redefine the scope of Jeju 4.3 harms to encompass past and persisting injuries and to embrace all people harmed and villages destroyed. The Joint Task Force's acknowledgement of harms to Jeju women would also be crucial. In nearly every regime of violent suppression sexual violence is a tool of oppression. Indeed, 4.3 sexual violence apparently was extensive. According to research for the 4.3 museum - a museum created and funded by the national government as part of 4.3 reconciliation measures - "[w]omen suffered severe sexual abuse. In December 1948, soldiers stormed into Tosan-ri, taking away its young women. They never returned home alive." (Jeju April 3 Peace Park, 2008). In another instance, "[p]olice stripped a pregnant woman naked and bayoneted her after hanging her from a tree." (Ibid). Overall, "33 percent [of 15,000 reported deaths] were the elderly, women and children." (Ibid).

The Task Force's recognition of harms

to Jeju children would also be important. In nearly every situation of violent suppression, damage to children persists over decades, and even generations. Some become orphans; others are left with single parents and heavy responsibility for tending to younger siblings. All suffer post-traumatic distress. The 4.3 museum provides an apt illustration. Government "forces killed a woman as her husband and son escaped. Her remaining children were orphaned as their father and brother were later captured and killed. They struggled to survive, [and] under the [guilt-by-association] system, the future was closed to them." (Ibid). The Task Force therefore might recommend further investigation sensitive to childrens' enduring 4.3 harms.

Human rights scholar Tae-Ung Baik observes that the Jeju 4.3 atrocities were likely international human rights violations. (Baik, 2012: 59). Another principal task of the Joint Task Force, then, would be to assess the extent to which systemic damage from 4.3 prompts the application of forward-looking human rights principles that call for economic and cultural restoration.

2. Acknowledging Responsibility for Disabling Constraints

The Joint Task Force might also combine several of the Translated Report's findings into an express determination that the trigger for the military and police violence was not a broad-scale Jeju "communist insurgency." (Translated Report, 2013). According to the Translated Report and other records, few Jeju residents had real communist ties. Rather U.S. and South Korean military leaders overreacted to Jeju residents' understandable resistance to perceived unfair government practices and policies that led to widespread food shortages, police brutality and outside groups' extortion of local residents. From the records, the United States genuinely worried about the spread of communism. But, in acting to address its concerns, it appears, the United States abused

its power.

An express acknowledgment of this reality by the Task Force would open a path toward healing that benefits all. The Task Force thus might encourage that both governments reinstate and emphasize the language of the 1999 4.3 Special Act that created the 2000 National Committee – that is, the damage was caused by “armed conflicts and governmental suppression by the police, military and paramilitary groups of the US military government and Korean government.” In doing so, both governments would demonstrate a more accurate historical understanding.

3. Acknowledging the Extent of United States Responsibility for the Jeju 4.3 Tragedy

According to the main body of the Translated Report, United States military leaders gave direct orders that initiated early 4.3 events. This was followed by close U.S. oversight over the Rhee regime’s “scorched earth” operations, for which the U.S. military “supplied weapons and observation aircrafts.” (Translated Report, 2013: 654-55). More specifically, in August 1948, the U.S. military “came to continuously hold operational control over the Korean [police] following the ‘Executive Agreement on Interim Military and Security Matters during the Transitional Period’” signed between the South Korean president and the U.S. military commander. (Jeju April 3 Peace Park, 2008). Shortly thereafter in 1948, the Ninth Regiment of the Korean police, under U.S. military operational control, followed an express directive that “anyone 5km in from the coastline would be unconditionally shot to death.” (Ibid). The Report also indicates that, during the most devastating moments of the Tragedy, with the largest number of killings, “Rhee Syng-man, then president, was the Commander in chief of South Korea’s forces [and] the US Army had operational control of South Korea’s armed forces.” (Translated Report, 2013: 303). U.S. Army Reports, cited in the body of

the Translated Report, show that “US Army executives agreed either with carrying out a massacre on Jeju or at least [in] overlooking it.” (Ibid.: 394).

The United States, thus far, however, has failed to recognize the extent of its role as trainer, initiator, initial director and later overseer. Nor has the South Korea government called on the United States to do so. Although the “Conclusion” section of the National Committee’s report broadly mentions the United States’ 4.3 responsibility as the “peacetime” military force, the conclusion does not detail its reasons or call for U.S. accountability. The 2005 Commission report entirely omits any U.S. linkage to Jeju 4.3.

In light of the main body of the Translated Report’s extensive findings, a principal role of the Task Force could be to carefully summarize and accurately portray the U.S. role in 4.3.

C. **Reconstruction and Reparation**

1. Rebuilding Through Detailed Sincere Apologies

An important way to productively continue to reconstruct relationships is to demonstrate the sincerity and completeness of formal apologies. The 2003 presidential apology was significant because the government’s highest leader expressed deep regret. At the same time, the apology was incomplete. It only vaguely acknowledged undefined harm to Jeju islanders and accepted only some unclear government role in causing that harm. It also did not reflect meaningful change in the government’s original “communist insurgency” account of 4.3.

The Task Force might therefore recommend that the South Korea government offer a more comprehensive and detailed apology. Such an apology would further demonstrate the national government’s commitment to human rights and strengthen

its legitimacy as a democracy.

Similarly, the Joint Task Force might recommend a formal United States apology, either by the President or Congress. A sincere detailed apology by the United States would demonstrate a strong commitment to social healing. The United States has issued apologies to its own citizens for American civil and human rights violations. Indeed, the United States might use as a general model its congressionally-authorized and presidentially-delivered apologies to Japanese American World War II internment survivors and to Native Hawaiians for loss of nationhood. (Yamamoto et al., 2013: 3, 17, 223; Yamamoto & Obrey, 2009: 22).

2. Supporting Jeju as an “Island of Peace” by Institutionally Empowering Jeju Communities to Deal with Naval Base Impacts

Although the South Korea government designated Jeju an “Island of World Peace” in 2005, peace on the island is illusive. “[D]eep trauma in the minds of the people persists, says one resident. (Hilty, 2011).

A Joint Task Force might encourage that the United States and South Korea governments more directly engage Jeju islanders’ “grassroots interest in peace.” The Task Force might recommend creation and funding of a Jeju Citizens Council with a formal voice in shaping and responding to naval base impacts on the island and beyond. The United States and South Korea could also support establishing Jeju facilities for human rights education.

The current South Korea government characterizes the military base as a vehicle for preserving peace and security. It views the naval base as solidifying a “more self-reliant defense force.” (Yeo, 2013). This is consistent with understandable concerns for security of the nation and its people and with plans to modernize its military by 2020.

Nevertheless, according to a leader of several women’s groups, the national

government’s building of the naval base partly for use by the U.S. military inflames at least some Jeju islanders’ sense of 4.3 injustice. She says,

Jeju still has the memory of the massive state violence of 4.3. Despite losing their parents and siblings, every day the people had to hold their breath and hide their tears. Furthermore, through the ‘guilty-by-association’ restrictions, innocent people had to live as if guilty. Even now 60 years on, the people of Jeju Island who lost members of their families and have been living with grief for years are not able to raise their voices, and their bitterness cannot be brushed away.

... [T]he new form of massive state violence in the form of the naval base is threatening our lives and peace. (Jung, 2011).

With this in mind, the crucial question is this: Will the national government (with U.S. support) reconstruct relationships with Jeju communities and organizations to empower them in dealing with naval base authorities and national policymakers about cultural and peace-related impacts, so that residents’ interests and values are influential? This is an issue of participation and self-governance. A Task Force recommended Jeju Citizens Council with a direct formal role in shaping responses to social and economic impacts might provide many Jeju residents the opportunity for meaningful self-expression and self-governance.

3. Supporting Jeju as an Island of Environmental Sustainability

Social healing also involves rebuilding the relationship between the people of Jeju and the island’s environment. Jeju has come a long way towards a community goal of becoming an environmental hub for sustainability practices. The Joint Task

Force would be primed to make powerful recommendations that the South Korea and U.S. governments assist in the process through funding, research and education on ecological-development and stewardship.

4. Promoting Economic Justice for the Jeju People

Finally, to better demonstrate their stated commitments to civil and human rights, South Korea and the United States need to better promote economic justice. Economic justice entails redressing the financial wounds of historic wrongs. This includes the livelihoods of individuals and communities in terms of funds for daily survival and for promoting education, entrepreneurship, small business, health and spiritual well-being. (Yamamoto & MacKintosh, 2010). Studies show that financial wounds inflicted through system-wide discrimination, violence and culture suppression persist over generations. Economic justice thus encompasses empowering survivors and their families through access to basic financial resources and work and business opportunities.

To promote the kind of economic justice that fosters sustained social healing, the Joint Task Force might therefore strongly suggest that the South Korea and United States governments give reasonable individual reparations to all harmed (including survivor families), undertake and fund capacity-building training for residents and promote sustainable community economic development.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the *Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Task Force on Social Healing Through Justice*, proposed here, focuses on potential next steps in view of the strong sense of many that 4.3 reconciliation is “unfinished business.” It proposes a creative yet practical way for the United

States, South Korea and Jeju people to engage in collaborative 4.3 social healing. Together, as part of the proposed Joint Task Force, they might more fully implement past recommendations and chart and oversee next steps toward comprehensive and enduring social healing “by doing justice.”

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