

Authentic 4.3 Jeju Tragedy Reconciliation as a symbol of Peace in Asia: A Collection of Writings

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Abstract

It was an honor to give my speech to the American public about the Jeju 4.3 Grand Tragedy as one member of the Jeju 4.3 delegation. On March 27, 2015 I supported the “Petition for a Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Incident Task Force on Social Healing through Justice.”

On August 15, 2016, I was happy to write the foreword “Jeju 4.3 Grand Tragedy becomes Human Spirit in the Asia Pacific,” for the new book about Jeju 4.3 titled, “Jeju 4.3 Grand Tragedy during ‘peacetime’ Korea : The Asia Pacific Context (1947–2016).

On September 8, 2016, we proceeded with “Authentic 4.3 Jeju Tragedy Reconciliation as a symbol of Peace in Asia” at the Jeju 4.3 Tragedy Reconciliation Conference 2016 in Washington D.C.

Key words :

Petition for a Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Incident Task Force on Social Healing through Justice; Human Spirit; Authentic 4.3 Jeju Tragedy Reconciliation; a symbol of Peace in Asia

Petition for a Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Incident Task Force on Social Healing through Justice (Speech given on March 27, 2015 in Washington D.C.)

In order to bring forth an authentic reconciliation, efforts through comprehensive and enduring healing for those injured and for the whole of society shall be implemented in Korea, as well as the U.S., who actively played a crucial role since the beginning of the 4.3 Tragedy. The process of healing needs to be completed through four pillars – recognition, responsibility, reconstruction and reparation according to international human rights principles of reparative justice. Truth telling in formal tribunals, reconstruction by public apologies and memorials, reparations through restitution, compensation and rehabilitation should be properly performed. For this purpose we suggest that the embarkation of the Joint Task Force is imperative. The mutual engagement in the Joint Task Force would significantly be a great benefit to the people of South Korea and the U.S.

I'd served as an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Seoul up to 2002, after which I was transferred to the diocese of Jeju where I've been serving as the Diocesan bishop for the past 13 years. Before I came over to Jeju, I knew that a certain unhappy incident happened in the past history of Jeju a long time ago, but I was absolutely ignorant of the background and concrete outcomes of the incident since the Korean government did not allow for several decades to investigate, study or to publish on this tremendously inhumane and shameful tragedy. We've lived half of the last century without having any notion of sufferings, tears, death and oppressions of our own countrymen.

Having encountered many islanders and several documents in Jeju, I felt very sorry and guilty that we lived without any knowledge and conscience about our neighbor's tragedy. I was greatly stupefied that a massacre, which I only saw in documentary films on the Holocaust committed by Nazi, had also happened in my own country by my compatriots. I guess that it is our duty to acknowledge this historical crime committed by the State and to transmit our remorse to those who do not know. And I believe it is our responsibility to declare that this kind of massacre is without a doubt, an unlawful and unforgivable inhuman crime which should never be repeated in the future in whatever situation. It is my personal experience that I am called to testify this reflection to as many people as possible. I believe God took me to the island of Jeju for the purpose of proclaiming the history of this deplorable tragedy.

In 2007, the Korean Navy announced the construction of a new military base in Ganjong, a very small sea village of Jeju. It sounded like that the troops are again marching to this Island as if they do not have

any slight remembrance about what they had done to the Islanders in the past. The construction of a huge military base in Jeju without any sincere apology for their past crimes, would mean that innumerable victims of 'April 3 Incident' sacrificed their lives for nothing. An image appeared in my mind: that the soldiers while marching, trample on the tombs of the 'April 3' victims with their combat boots. The sea around Jeju Island is the best conserved and unpolluted area in the whole Korean peninsula and Jeju has been designated as a World Natural Heritage since 2007.

Since then, the people of Gangjong have made their every effort to resist against the construction project and many others from different places who love peace joined this anti-base campaign. We continued our campaign against this military base appealing to all people of Korea that we should safeguard the value of peace and life which could not be compared with that of weapons or armaments. The people of Gangjong and Jeju are mostly exhausted by the struggle with the gigantic military force but we, Christians and those who love peace express our solidarity celebrating daily Mass at 11 o'clock every morning in front of the gate of the construction site.

It seems that they have completed 70% of the whole process and in reality there was little we could do to prevent this military project. However, we believe that precisely because of this military base we have our reason to work for the cause of peace and lives of all creatures. We are inviting all peace-lovers and co-workers for peace to come to Jeju, the Island of innumerable martyrs who offered their lives for the expulsion of unjust violence from the earth. On this Island they could learn and reflect upon the value of peace, visiting several sites of the Japanese Armed Forces during the World War II as well as many locations of massacre from the 'April 3 Incident'. We hope that we will eventually be able to promote a new movement for peace-building in East Asia where several States are moving backwards accelerating the political tensions and the armament race.

Jeju 4.3 Grand Tragedy becomes Human Spirit in the Asia Pacific Forward to the book, "Jeju 4.3 Grand Tragedy during 'peacetime' Korea: Asia Pacific Context (1947–2016)." (August 15, 2016).

The aim of this book is to witness and verify some aspects of Truth and Reconciliation of the 2013 English edition of the Jeju 4.3 Incident Investigation Report by the Jeju 4.3 Peace Foundation (from the Korean edition: 2003). The English translation was prepared by our dedicated Jeju National University scholars. The English edition of this report provides the opportunity for victims to share the story of the Jeju 4.3 tragedy to the international community, and enables us to plead our appeal for reparations and social healing for the

victims or 'lost families' of the Tragedy; both in Korea and the USA.

We defined the Tragedy as "a grand massacre of some 30,000 Jeju Islanders which took place during the period between the end of World War II and the onset of the Korean War in 1950. That massacre, known as the Jeju 4.3 Incident, though carried out largely by Korean armed forces, took place while the Island was under the control of the US military. The Tragedy has left behind enduring suffering for the victims and their families that persists to this day. In 2003, the President of the Korean government, Mr. Roh Moo-Hyun apologized officially for the massacre, making significant efforts to mend the crime committed by the State. The Korean government built the 'Peace Park' and a museum to commemorate the tragedy. Despite these efforts, many people are still suffering from the nightmare of the Jeju 4.3 Incident. In particular, many of those who lost homes and wage-earning family members have long lived in miserable conditions. Significant numbers are now elderly and require expensive medical care and assistance. Many suffer from ongoing psychological trauma coming from the events of the tragedy."

In Jeju, there is a strong desire and aspiration for the reconciliation with regard to the tragedy.

On March 27, 2015 a delegation from Jeju Island visited the offices of American Senator Mazie Hirono and Congressman Mark Takai at the U.S. Capitol. This Jeju delegation presented the "Jeju April 3 Petition Group for a Joint South Korea and United States Jeju 4.3 Task Force to Further Systematic, Comprehensive and Enduring Social Healing Through Justice: the Petition" (www.peaceisland.asia). It is very meaningful that communication with USA has been initiated, and we are hopeful that more discussions could lead to engagement at the official state level between the two respective nations.

In Korea, it has been crucial that we attempt to make Jeju 4.3 victims' voices heard. Their story of pain and suffering has not been exhausted. A testimony of 11 people on May 30, 2015 in Seoul bore witness to the truth of the Tragedy from their own experiences. Part 2, Chapter 2 goes into the details of their accounts: The Testimonies of Survivors and the Concept of "Han" and "Arirang."

These people were wrongfully arrested, imprisoned (and in some cases tortured) by armed police, military and security forces as a part of the 4.3 Incident, without legitimate procedure and without proper hearings or trial. It is a recurring theme that so many spent their time in jail without doing any crime during the Tragedy. It is our second theme that these people have suffered pains, trauma and sorrows from the Tragedy; that persist into the here and now. These 11 cases expose barely the truth of desperate situations where violations of human rights occurred during the 4.3 Tragedy. The Victims are now elderly and

most certainly are entitled to reparation including compensation of medical care and assistance for their children. That is why both the South Korean and United States governments should be involved with Jeju 4.3 victim families now. We also sought to include a variety of representative testimonies into the book, and thus included; The Sexual Assault Horrors on Jeju's Women: Testimonies (Chapter 3), A Testimony from One Middle Student's Life Story (Chapter 4), Everyday Life for Ordinary People during Jeju 4·3 – Jeju Shinbo Newspaper(Chapter 5), Historical Sites Related to the April Third Incident, and Residential Architecture 1945–1955 (Chapter 6), Truth and Reconciliation of National Committee Report Comparing Critical Points of the Jeju April 3rd Grand Tragedy (Chapter 7). On the behalf of Jeju people, Bp. Peter U-il Kang, Bishop of Jeju and Moon-hyun Jung sent a letter to the USA Ambassador in Seoul, Mark Lippert, on July 9, 2015. In addition, Bp. Kang and Dr. Chang Hoon Ko sent a letter to USA President, Mr. Barack Obama and the Secretary of the State Department, Mr. John Kerry on the 7th of March, 2016, in which we asked them to visit Jeju and to see firsthand our Peace Park. We believe that efforts toward social healing would do much to ease the suffering of Jeju Islanders affected by the tragedy and to strengthen the relationship between the people of Korea and the USA at a time where our futures depends on bonds of mutual comity and understanding.

First of all, I want to give my thanks to Professor Chang Hoon Ko for initiating all chapters as editor-in-chief of World Environment and Island Studies and the other 21 authors, painter Yo bae Kang, wood painter Kyunghoon Park, photographer Junghyo Kang, Gi-sam Kim, Dae-saeng Kim and Ho-chun Kim who contributed to the chapters of this book.

Authentic 4.3 Jeju Tragedy Reconciliation as a symbol of Peace in Asia (Speech at the Jeju 4.3 Tragedy Reconciliation Conference 2016: Sep.8, 2016 in Washington D.C.)



〈Photo : The Jeju 4.3 Tragedy Reconciliation Conference 2016: Sep.8, 2016 in Washington D.C.〉

It's a great privilege and honor for me to talk about

April 3 Incident of Jeju again at this conference and I am happy to see some of you again on this occasion.

I wonder if anybody knows which is the busiest air route, the most frequently traveled air route in the whole world. It's the shuttle service between Seoul and Jeju.

Jeju is a volcanic island like Hawaii, located around 100 km to the southwest of the Korean peninsula and has an area of 1,845km². Up to several decades ago, it was not so much a well-known place. Before modern history, Jeju had been known for centuries as an island of exiles; where only the felons or political prisoners were sent and the islanders had not been allowed to travel freely to the mainland Korea without permission. The island of Jeju has her typical culture and vernacular which is hardly understood by Koreans of other regions. Now Jeju is a beautiful island which attracts more than 12 million tourists a year from mainland Korea and China as well as other Asian countries. But most visitors just pass by as tourists not knowing the sorrowful history of Jeju, which the people of Jeju had to undergo not long ago.

I have been assigned as the Bishop of Jeju for 14 years, since 2002. In 1974 I was ordained as a priest in Seoul where I spent 28 years of my priestly career. Before I was transferred to the Diocese of Jeju, I had very little knowledge of the local history of Jeju. The island of Jeju went through unforgettable tragedy, the so-called 4.3 Incident, which massacred more than 30,000 people. Before coming to Jeju I had known that something unhappy happened in the past but living in Jeju, I found out that so many people, mostly innocent civilians, including the elderly, women and children got slaughtered without any legitimate procedure of investigation and trial by the State Police and military forces. Another aspect which still bothers me is that this tragedy was intentionally banned by the Korean government for more than half a century, up to the year 2000; the 4.3 Incident had been officially described for many decades only as a Communist uprising in Jeju Island.

The 4.3 Massacre relates to not only the Korean government but also has something to do with the State of Japan and the US as well. The Japanese had to withdraw from Korea after they lost the Second World War. Right after the surrender of Japan, the northern half of the Korean peninsula was occupied by the Soviet Army and the southern half was occupied by the US Army. In Jeju, nearly 70,000 of Japanese troops were stationed for the purpose of consolidating the last fortress to fight against the US troops like Okinawa. While landing on the Island of Jeju, the US military officials separately demanded the surrender of the Japanese Commanding officers in Jeju and they got disarmed immediately and evacuated. The US military took administrative responsibility until President Seung-

man Lee was elected as the president of ROK on Aug.15, 1948.

The 4.3 Incident took place on April 3, 1948 when South Korea was still under the US military governance and Mr. Lee, who became the first president of South Korea 4 months later, suppressed Jeju even more rigorously by dispatching regular armed forces to the island.

Not only victims of 4.3 and their families but all islanders of Jeju had to live under great oppression and trauma for several decades because the Korean government prohibited any activities of investigation, study or discussion of the 'Incident'. And it is my impression that most people who personally underwent the tragedy could not express or state on their experience to other people, not even to their children or close friends because the distress they got was too horrible to recall. They would rather have erased or deleted their memory of the 4.3 Incident.

Many people who were related with 4.3 victims had been watched by the authority and never allowed to be employed by Government offices or public schools. Right after 4.3 many fled to other regions or even to Japan for their survival. The population of Jeju Island always has been more or less 1% of Korea's population. But in Japan the percentage of migrants coming from Jeju covers 10% of all Korean residents in Japan. During the 1950s and 60s many migrants of Jeju origin in Japan chose to register as citizens of North Korea. They could not recognize South Korea as their motherland since in their memory they took refuge from the cruelest of oppressors. The stories about the 4.3 Incident were openly revealed by these Koreans of Jeju origin in Japan rather than in Korea. It was only two years ago that the South-Korean government decided to commemorate April 3, as a national memorial day. But on the occasion of the 68th commemoration of 4.3, this year [2016] many people wished the participation of President Park, only the Prime Minister visited as the representative of the Government. Most people of Jeju feel that the tragedy of 4.3 is not yet truly understood by the majority of Koreans.

When I came to know that so many innocent civilians including the elderly, women and children got slaughtered indiscriminately and systematically by Armed Forces of the State, I strongly recognized that it was an inhuman War Crime which should be condemned and indicted without statute of limitations. I've asked myself several times: what is the meaning of the death of these innumerable innocent people? If we just forget about the past and do not bring along something sublime from this absurd holocaust, we won't be able to escape from this evil force and may be able to repeat the horrendous malice of the past.

I am personally convinced that we, who know something about this past tragedy, are responsible to speak out to others so that they can recall this unhappy memory and to start a process of reconciliation with the past. In that sense, I admire the efforts of Jewish people who make an effort to trace back the past history of suffering of their forefathers and to search for the fruits and the meaning of their sacrifices in present and future.

Still, even a large number of ordinary Koreans do not have the correct understanding or even awareness on this Incident. So I keep telling myself that I should speak out for those innocent victims of the 4.3 Incident whenever I have the chance. The more people who become aware of the past crimes of our State, the less who will fall into those same mistakes.

I think if leaders of the US could recall back the lost memories of the 4.3 Incident in Jeju and have the courage to reconcile with the people of Jeju, that would bring another occasion for the Korean majority to realize and to repent on their past unconsciousness and irresponsibility, which may eventually raise an awareness to reject and to resist all kinds of violence and oppression in the future.

Therefore, the role of scholars in political and social science is very important and meaningful. The general public or even political leaders are not so sensitive to the truth of past history. They could be easily controlled by manipulated information or misled by incorrect memories. It is the duty and responsibility of scholars and intellectuals to regenerate and to reformulate the right memories on the truth of past histories correcting the errors and misunderstandings unjustly transmitted.

Another area which should be considered is an area of social morality. Most individuals are capable of discerning one's personal morality and know to accept one's responsibility with regard to the result of one's behavior. But many people do not have a sense of morality with regard to the social aspect of one's conduct which affects one's neighbors and the society. In reality, we often participate in many historical happenings and events with purposeful realization. Not only in big events like the presidential election but also in small business we deal with, each time we choose a certain moral value which affects the community or the society. And each conduct presupposes a certain common responsibility.

Living in a society, participating in social common decisions and activities we are naturally supposed to assume co-responsibility. I think the scholars and academics are the ones who should make people aware of the sense of co-responsibility and social morality by their academic efforts. And of course, the role of religious teaching may be essential with regard to this sense of social morality and co-

responsibility. Precisely because of this I am happy to take part in this gathering and to collaborate with you all.

I am also very happy to let you know that we have prepared an English edition of the new book on the 4.3 Incident, The 'peacetime' Korea Jeju 4.3 Grand Tragedy in the Asia Pacific Context, which contains many testimonies from witnesses of 4.3. This book was written and edited mostly by Prof. Ko. I guess we have brought sufficient copies so that each of you could be given at least one. Once again I would like to thank you for your concern on the 4.3 Incident and your participation.

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