

Duke Center for Reconciliation
Northeast Asia Reconciliation Initiative

Christian Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia

April 21-25, 2014 - South Korea



CONTENTS

1-3

General Overview:

First Annual Christian Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia

4

2015 Forum

4

Country Spotlight:

South Korea

5

LA Riots/U.S.: "Seeds of Reconciliation"

6-8

Individual Highlights:

Syngman Rhee

Hwa-Kyong Namkung

Terumi Kataoka

General Overview

The first Christian Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia (CFRNA), convened by the Center for Reconciliation (CFR) at Duke Divinity School and funded by the Ruth Lilly Philanthropic Foundation and the Josiah Charles Trent Memorial Endowment Fund, was held April 21-26, 2014 outside of Seoul, South Korea. Attending the Forum were 45 people representing the United States, South Korea, Japan, China, Hong Kong, and Finland. The participants were also diverse in their denominational affiliations as members of Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, United Church of Christ, and Evangelical churches attended. The attendees included pastors, professors, university administrators, denominational leaders, and nonprofit workers.

[continued on page 2](#)

General Overview (continued from page 1)

Participants spent two afternoons in issue groups where they discussed important regional topics including:

- Peace, Reconciliation, Christian Witness, and the Korean People
- Developing the Next Generation of Christian Leaders for Peace and Reconciliation
- Creation Care and Human Technology: A Christian Approach (focus on Fukushima disaster)
- Christian Response to Territorial Disputes
- Developing a Theology of Reconciliation and Peace for the Northeast Asian Context
- 21st Century Christianity and Nationalism: What is Required from Christian Theology and Witness?

Participants spent one afternoon traveling to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that has separated North and South Korea since the end of the Korean War in 1953 where they interacted with South Korean guards who work in the watchtowers on the border and viewed Punchbowl Valley, the site of several battles during the Korean War. One participant shared that she gained a deeper understanding of the ways that our histories are bound up in each other through visiting the DMZ, commenting, "This is not just a tourist attraction, but a place where family members were separated from each other."



"This is a place where we gather, dialogue, and build trusting relationships. From there we can have many different avenues for relationships among the 4 countries. I have lots of hope about this forum."

~ Atsuyoshi Fujiwara

Those in attendance believe that the Forum has the important role of bringing people who are doing similar work together across dividing lines of nationalism. One participant described the Forum as "support for the supporters," or what Chris Rice would call a "theological fueling station." The Forum is offering a space for those who have been separated by regional conflict to unite under their Christian faith.

The Forum has been a work in progress for the past several years. In December of 2012, a consultation was held at Duke Divinity School in which 28 leaders from Northeast Asia gathered to discuss the possibility of collaborating on a peace and reconciliation initiative in the Northeast Asia Region. In October of 2013, 11 leaders from South

[continued on page 3](#)



Punchbowl Valley. The site of several battles during the Korean War.

Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and the U.S. met in South Korea to plan for the April 2014 Forum.

Atsuyhoshi Fujiwara, a Japanese professor and pastor and a member of the leadership team for the Forum, believes that the Forum is important because of the relationship building that takes place: "This is a place where we gather, dialogue, and build trusting relationships. From there we can have many different avenues for relationships among the 4 countries. I have lots of hope about this forum." ■



Atsuyhoshi Fujiwara, Hwa-Kyong Namkung, Catherine Kwong, and Kenichi Shinagawa

"Northeast Asia is the most alive, difficult, dangerous, important area in the world. Of course, because I am Chinese and Christian, I want to do something that I can."

~ Paulos Hwang

2015 Forum

Spring
2015
Nagasaki,
Japan

Plans are already in place to convene the second Christian Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia. The next Forum will take place in Nagasaki, Japan in the spring of 2015. The timing of this meeting in Nagasaki is poignant as 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki by the United States, the end of World War II, and the end of Japanese colonization of Korea. In this city where such great suffering and violence has taken place, the Forum seeks to bring persons together across lines of nationalism for the purposes of peacemaking and reconciliation. Funding for the second Christian Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia is provided by the Daniel P. Amos Family Foundation. ■

Country Spotlight: South Korea

South Korea has been an important site in the movement toward reconciliation that the Forum represents. The 2014 Forum was held outside of Seoul, South Korea, and 13 of the 45 participants at the Forum were from South Korea.

Chris Rice, former director of the Center for Reconciliation, and his wife Donna will be moving to South Korea in October 2014 to serve a 5-year term with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) as MCC Country Representatives for Northeast Asia (China, South Korea, and North Korea). They will be based in Chuncheon, near Seoul, South Korea. Chris will continue to be involved with the work of the Forum as the Duke Divinity School (DDS) Senior Fellow for Northeast Asia, to focus on the emerging Duke Divinity School and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Northeast Asia Reconciliation Initiative. ■

13 of
the 45
participants
at the 2014
Forum were
from South
Korea.



LA Riots/U.S.: “Seeds of Reconciliation”

Several Asian-Americans were present at the Forum and are engaged in peace and justice work around the globe. Two participants at the Forum, Sue Park-Hur and Peter Cha, experienced the Los Angeles Riots of 1992. These riots had a profound impact on the reconciliation work each is involved in today. Park-Hur, who was born in Korea and came to LA at age 8, was a student at UCLA during the riots. Her parents owned a clothing store in Hollywood at the time and she has memories of her father standing on the roof of the store with a gun during the riots. She found that UCLA became the voice of the community and a place of mediation during this time.



Xi Lian, Sue Park-Hur and Peter Cha engaged in discussion during the CFRNA.

She and her husband are currently the co-pastors of a Mennonite church and the co-directors of the peace center ReconciliAsian. ReconciliAsian was started after she recognized that Mennonites can offer gifts to struggling immigrant churches, such as conflict transformation and restorative justice. Through ReconciliAsian she has been able to unite her Korean-American identity with her passion for reconciliation.

Peter Cha, the son of North Korean war refugees, was working with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and serving in a Korean church at the time of the LA riots. He describes Korean-American church communities as being caught unprepared for this incident, which was framed by the media as a conflict between Koreans and African-Americans. This was the beginning of his theological and pastoral journey of reconciliation as a Korean American Christian. He had seen racial tension as between blacks and whites before this, but with the LA riots he gained an understanding that “Korean Americans must engage with the issue of racial conflict and racial reconciliation.” In his current work as an associate professor of pastoral theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, he saw that African-Americans and Hispanic students were feeling marginalized at the school and wondered if the school was preparing students to enter the multiracial world. Because of this, he started Mosaic, a diverse group of students who explore a Christian vision of reconciliation together. ■

“Korean Americans must engage with the issue of racial conflict and racial reconciliation.”

~ Peter Cha

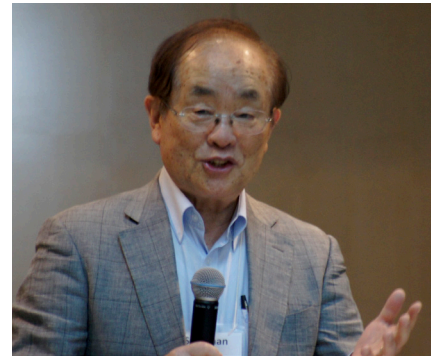
Individual Highlight

Syngman Rhee

Rhee learned from Dr. King that “the creation of the new society lies with the oppressed people because they have the choice of revenge or reconciliation.”

Syngman Rhee attended the Forum and has been involved in the work of the Center for Reconciliation in various ways since its beginning, when Chris Rice came to him and explained the vision of the Center and asked Rhee to be a part of it.

During the Korean war, Syngman Rhee escaped North Korea in 1950 after his father was killed by communist forces. At the behest of his mother and other siblings who stayed behind, Rhee walked many miles southward with his brother as a refugee. He served in the South Korean military fighting against North Korea before coming to the U.S. to study at college and seminary, eventually becoming a campus minister at the University of Louisville. During this time, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made several visits to campus. Rhee became friends with Dr. King and joined the civil rights movement in the U.S. He learned from Dr. King that “the creation of the new society lies with the oppressed people because they have the choice of revenge or reconciliation.” This outlook changed his desire to seek revenge toward North Korea. Rhee became one of the early Christians to enter North Korea in the pursuit of peace, and he returned many times since then. On his first visit he was reunited with his siblings, yet discovered that his mother had recently died. This is the tragic story shared by many Korean people.



Syngman Rhee



Syngman Rhee, Chris Rice and Sekita Hiroo

Rhee has spent 15 years as a professor at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Virginia, 25 years on the world mission staff of the PCUSA denomination, and is also a former moderator for the PCUSA. Rhee was one of the key partners in the Northeast Asia Reconciliation Initiative until his passing in January 2015. ■

Individual Highlight

Hwa-Kyong Namkung



Hwa-Kyong Namkung

Hwa-Kyong Namkung is a South Korean woman who works with InterVarsity Fellowship, otherwise known as Korean Christian Fellowship (KCF), an organization which works with Korean college students. Hwa-Kyong has been taking college students on trips to Japan in attempts to break down the walls of nationalism that divide people from each other in the region. Although Japan and Korea have a difficult history, she believes in the power of learning about the past as we work together for a better future. Hwa-Kyong's exposure to Japanese pop culture pushed her to begin to

see the Japanese people as fellow human beings and neighbors and fueled a desire to help others grow into this understanding as well. Because of the transformation that has taken place in her, she feels compelled to educate others on the history between Japan and Korea and introduce Japanese and Korean young people to each other. As a young person, Hwa-Kyong can relate to college students who see the regional conflict as being a thing of the past and nothing to worry about now and relates to students whose interest in Japan begins simply because Japan is pop-culturally "cool." In her work as part of the mission staff with KCF, Hwa-Kyong hopes to develop a deeper understanding of the role that history plays in the lives of Korean and Japanese young people today. To accomplish this, she has been involved in taking young South Korean students to Japan. These trips have been about having meaningful encounters rather than touring or sightseeing. On one of these trips, she took a group of Korean and Japanese students to visit the grave of Yun Bong Gil, a Korean man who detonated a bomb in Shanghai in 1932 at a Japanese celebration. Yun Bong Gil was praised by the Korean government for this act that killed two Japanese persons and injured several others. She brought students together in the cemetery at Yun's grave in order for both groups to know the history between the two countries.

Soon she began guiding Japanese students visiting Korea who wanted to visit historical sites of where Japan oppressed Korea. She is grateful for young people who want to know the history of the relationship between the two countries because often governments do not want to acknowledge the evils that have taken place.

continued on page 8

Although Japan and Korea have a difficult history, Hwa-Kyong believes in the power of learning about the past as we work together for a better future.



Hwa-Kyong Namkung and Lung Kwong Lo

She notes that Koreans hate Japan, but don't necessarily know the stories that fueled the hatred historically. She admits that the Japanese aren't extraordinarily evil people and that Koreans have also done evil things in their history. She states, "We should put ourselves in other people's shoes, but for a long time we just hated them and that's it." Through taking time to know and build friendships with the "other," the power of transformation becomes evident. She believes that "We talk about the past in order to make a better future." Hwa-Kyong believes that everyone should participate in the work of peacebuilding and that peacebuilding can simply start with being open to "making friends." ■

Individual Highlight

Kataoka finds hope in working with the children and families who come to the Information Center.

Terumi Kataoka

Terumi Kataoka is a Japanese woman whose life changed dramatically on March 11, 2011, the day that will forever be remembered as "3/11." On this day an earthquake and tsunami hit her country, resulting in tragic nuclear accidents whose affects are still felt today. She believes that the Japanese government is not being forthcoming in the amount of radiation exposure in certain areas and because of this has become an advocate in educating the public about the dangers of exposure to radiation.



Terumi Kataoka



Terumi Kataoka and Kate Davelaar

Kataoka started Aizu Radiation Information Center at her local United Church of Christ church in Aizuwakamatsu and also leads the Aizu Society to Protect the Lives of Children from Radiation. Although she was involved in peace work before 2011, her work has grown as a result of the dangerous radiation levels. Kataoka's work brings mothers who are worried about the effects of radiation on their children together so that they do not feel so alone in their fears and are able to unite for a greater good. The Information Center offers several services and activities including children's medical counseling, radiation monitoring of food, radiation counters on loan, a website with a map of readings of radiation levels measured by citizens at certain spots in Aizuwakamatsu, study and lecture meetings, children's recreation programs, and the sale of safe vegetables. Kataoka's work also focuses on political action, through the organization of demonstrations and rallies, as well as coordinating negotiations with government administrations. Kataoka finds hope in working with the children and families who come to the Information Center. ■