Jane Chung, Staff of New York Immigrant Coalition at the Immigrant Freedom March, part of a national campaign to legalize and naturalize millions of immigrants, October 4, 2003. © 2003, Corky Lee

ii. movements: youth, culture, & community
Korean Youth Cultural Center of Oakland livens up peace march, San Francisco, October 2002.
Doing *Durepae Duty*: Korean American Radical Movement After Kwangju

Miriam Ching Yoon Louie

Seventy thousand peace aspirants terrorized by the rising body count of Bush’s permanent war on terrorism flow down humid D.C. streets as lightening flashes, thunder claps, and bull horns bellow. Swirling within the whirlpools of humanity bob Korean percussionists robed in peasants’ flowing white garb or hip-hugger jeans, political t-shirts and headbands. Their drums and gongs beat out the rhythms of the homeland and fuse with the peace chants of the adopted land. Whenever the march slows and the players pause to jam, their unruly circle swells to include animated Arab and Palestinian protesters—from grizzled grandpas to aunties chanting “End the occupation! Free, free Palestine!” to teenagers unfurling gigantic red, black, green, and white flags, to wobbly toddlers bouncing to the beat of their elders. Here dancers and drummers of diverse diasporas have met their rhythmic soul mates.

The Korean percussion that punctuates peace marches, workers pickets, and community celebrations in U.S. cities blessed with large immigrant populations is but one visible expression of radical currents within the Korean American community.¹ The 1980 Kwangju People’s Uprising that South Korean government storm troopers drowned in blood with U.S. complicity both resurrected repressed *minjung*, or mass people’s, movements in South

Miriam Ching Yoon Louie’s maternal grandfather, Methodist minister and independence fighter Yoon Peong Koo, disembarked from the SS *Siberia* in Honolulu, October 5, 1903; her maternal grandmother, washerwoman and dancer, Oh Augyoung, from the SS Korea on March 30, 1904. Author of *Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take on the Global Factory* (Boston: South End Press, 2001).
Korea and reconnected the spirits of the movements in the South and North. First- and 1.5-generation radicalized youth stashed the scenes, spirits, and beats of the Korean movement into suitcases that they carried into exile and settlement in the U.S. These newcomers then grafted the hearty little seedlings they carried from Korea onto the trunks of movements they discovered sprouting on U.S. soil.

Last year Koreans celebrated the 100th anniversary of migration to the U.S. The centennial spanned from the first-wave migration of hopefuls recruited between 1903 and 1905 to toil as laborers on Hawaiian plantations. Others, mostly students and intellectuals, were drawn to the U.S. by the influence of Christian missionaries in Korea. Between 1910 and 1924, Korean women (called “picture brides”) came to marry men who had migrated earlier. In the 1950s a second wave of migration included Korean wives of U.S. servicemen and their children, war orphans, and professional workers and students. The third and largest wave of Korean immigration to the U.S. occurred after the enactment of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which removed racist quotas. In the 1970s and 1980s, Koreans were the third largest group of immigrants, after Mexicans and Filipinos. Globalization, industrialization, commercialization of agriculture, urbanization, militarization, and political repression all pushed Koreans to immigrate to the U.S. and provided the objective and subjective basis for the emergence of new generations of radical activists.

The centennial inspired Koreans to excavate our hidden history, give props to our unsung hero(ines), instigate our young bloods, and join hands to paint in yet more vivid colors the Korean stripe of the Rainbow Coalition for Peace and Justice. This essay draws from interviews with activists from just a small cross-section of *durepae*, or village mutual aid work teams, including the Young Koreans United (national), Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates (Los Angeles), Korean Youth Student Union (Los Angeles), National Korean American Service & Education Consortium, Channing and Popai Liem Education Foundation (Berkeley and Boston), Nodutol (New York), Korean Solidarity Committee (Berkeley-Oakland), and Korean American National Coordinating Council.

The Korean American movement has grappled with several contradictions. First, like counterpart movements in other racially and nationally oppressed communities with high propor-
tions of new immigrants, Korean diaspora radical organizations have shouldered special solidarity responsibilities both to minjung movements in the homeland and in the U.S., among the most oppressed sectors of the community, often in concert with other sister/brother racial and national minority movements. Korean diaspora solidarity responsibilities have proven doubly challenging since 1945 when big power Cold War rivalries sliced the nation into two antagonistic halves. Similar to other people of color movements, striking a workable, complementary balance between the dual homeland and adopted land responsibilities has provoked much struggle within the Korean American movement.7

Second, two watershed historical moments shaped the Korean movement: the upsurge in the mass movements in Korea precipitated by the 1980 Kwangju Massacre described below and the 1992 Rodney King Civil Unrest. In the L.A. conflagration Koreans suffered the greatest loss of property in what had been seen as a DWB, or “Driving While Black,” racist police brutality case. The riots torched the American Dream for many Koreans, delivering body blow lessons about the tenuousness of Koreans’ status within a society deeply polarized by race, nationality, class, gender, homophobia, and religion. Steeled in the flames of L.A., Korean radical organizations strengthened their working-class and anti-racist mass organizing work, demonstrating gutsy leadership in confronting race and class fissures inside and outside the community.

Third, the Korean American movement is also shaped by generational diversity, both in terms of the distinct political expressions of first-, 1.5-, second-, third- (and now even fourth-) generation Koreans, as well as the different age cohorts of the organizations. Side-by-side with the processes of migration, settlement, and acculturation of generations of Koreans into the fabric of polarized U.S. society, globalization has ironically provided Korean Americans with greater access to developments on the Korean peninsula, including for linkages to South Korea’s strong independent workers’, students’, women’s, and peoples’ movements via travel, media, and communication networks, especially via the Internet.

Kwangju-Inspired Youth Movement

The Kwangju Uprising and its subsequent bloody massacre by government storm troopers opened up a qualitatively new chapter in the development of the minjung movements in South Korea.
Kwangju ultimately rekindled labor, student, peasant, and human rights movements that U.S.-supported regimes had all but eliminated by the end of the Korean War (1950-1953). In May 1980 South Korean paratroopers murdered hundreds of civilians in Kwangju, Cholla Province, after President Park Chung Hee was assassinated by his own head of the Korean CIA, and the country exploded. Inspired by pent-up student and human rights demonstrations engulfing the country, Kwangju residents had spoken out that spring in hopes of winning democracy after decades of authoritarian military rule. The massacre exposed U.S. government complicity since the troops were dispatched with U.S. Military Command Approval and Carter Administration officials’ prior knowledge.8

Marking the Chun Do Hwan and Roh Tae Woo regimes with the stain of illegitimacy, the Kwangju Massacre created cracks in the anti-communist education system and propelled youth to embark on a deep re-examination of Korean history, politics, economics, and culture through the vantage point of the *minjung*. Kwangju’s ripple effect, especially the new upsurge in labor, student and women’s organizing, reverberated across the Pacific, where these politics found fertile ground among first- and 1.5-generation Korean American youth and students.

Danny Park, the Director of Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates (KIWA) in Los Angeles, immigrated to the U.S. with his family at age fourteen. Park is the first son of a Salvation Army minister father and a mother who has worked as a seamstress, hotel maid, liquor store cashier, and street vendor at San Francisco’s Fishermen’s Wharf. Park began his activism in high school, translating for Korean airport janitors unionized by SEIU, Local 87. He also volunteered in support of Chol Su Lee, a youth wrongfully imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. An early member of Young Koreans United (YKU) and a national network of *pungmul* groups, Park recalls:

I used to be a narrow, narrow nationalist who identified with the South Korean government. When the May 1980 Kwangju People’s Uprising, then the government massacre hit, leaflets were scattered all over my [San Francisco State University] campus. Kwangju was the way we realized that nationalism is not loyalty to your government, but to the common people who sacrifice their blood to uphold democracy. But you couldn’t see anything in the Korean language news about what the government was doing in Kwangju. That really gave me the kick
in the butt to jump the hurdle over all the anti-Communist brainwashing I got growing up. . . I have to say that our current movement owes such a deep debt to those who struggled, who sacrificed, who lost their lives in Kwangju.\textsuperscript{9}

Inbo Sim, former president of Young Koreans United (YKU) and now director of Korean Resource Center (KRC) in Los Angeles is another 1.5er swept up in Kwangju’s tidal wave. Like many who immigrated during the 1970s and 1980s, Sim’s parents came in hopes of better educational opportunities for their children, economic advancement, and to escape the politically repressive environment of the period. The Park government had jailed Sim’s uncle for his political activism in the 1960s, making it difficult for him to get work as a public school teacher. Sim’s mother’s work as a typist at U.S. military base near Pusan allowed her to apply to immigrate:

We came in 1979, the year before Kwangju. I saw a lot of demos when I was in middle school. If I had gone to college in Korea, I would have seen a lot more! We learned that the military was attacking students in high schools. There were a lot of demos in L.A., too. I began college in Berkeley where some freshmen started a Korean history study group that led me to activism. I don’t know what came over me, but I wanted to do movement work for a year in LA. That one year led to eighteen more! My mother worked on a computer assembly line and father at a dry cleaner. They were very opposed to me leaving school, but after ten years finally gave up on me graduating from Berkeley.\textsuperscript{10}

Like other Asian American left-wing movements of the 1960s and 1970s,\textsuperscript{11} the Kwangju-influenced movement of Korean youth and students benefited from direct links to revolutionary movements in the homeland. Several student activists from Korea, including Yoon Han Bong, brought the organizing style and spirit of Kwangju to their counterparts on campuses in the U.S. Sim says that Yoon was drawn to the explosion of activism in the late 1970s, participated in the Kwangju uprising, and had “vivid memories of the massacres and the people’s courageous struggle.” Yoon went into hiding, then escaped to the U.S. where he “imbued young people with strong activism and ways to express their anger and frustration over what had happened.”\textsuperscript{12}

Yoon and fellow radicals launched YKU in San Francisco in 1983. The group quickly established chapters in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, San Jose, Den-
ver, Dallas, New England, Seattle and Washington, D.C. At its peak YKU grew to some 200 members, many of whom worked “24/7” as movement cadre, still unencumbered in those heady youthful days with fulltime job and parental responsibilities. In 1988 older activists founded the Korean Alliance for Peace and Democracy that focused on Korean peninsula politics. In 1992 that group transformed into the Korean Alliance for Peace and Justice and also began to organize around domestic issues.13

YKU chapters conducted ambitious campaigns, including organizing in support of justice and government accountability, gathering signatures, and raising funds for Kwangju victims; protesting Chun Do Hwan and Roh Tae Woo’s visits to the U.S.; sponsoring minjung cultural troupes and performances about Kwangju; and conducting community education and awareness about Korean peninsula issues within the Korean community and broader American public—all despite Republic of Korea (ROK) consulate and Korean CIA efforts to stigmatize the group as “reds.”14

**Links to Earlier Generations**

Paul Liem is a second-generation Korean American activist whose family history illustrates the links among different movement generations. His parents Channing and Popai Liem were two of the “young bloods” within the Korean independence movement against Japanese colonialism who had ties with both conservative factions like Syngman Rhee and radicals like An Chang-ho.15 The Liems immigrated to the U.S. during the 1930s and grew increasingly disenchanted with Rhee’s dictatorial rule (1948-1960), and together with So Chae Pil16 split away from Rhee. The Liems were intensely active within the Union of Overseas Koreans for Democracy and Methodist Church circles. Liem quips that his parents’ activism was “almost obsessive. Hah, they hardly fed and clothed their kids!” But he adds that at a New York conference of Koreans:

My father made a very pointed speech, challenging Koreans to ask themselves—if they were real Koreans—to take a stand. Kwangju was a very important turning point for my parents’ generation. Prior to that it was the same twenty-five people running around forming different organizations. All of a sudden Kwangju happened and there was this tremendous upsurge from young people who were well organized and ready to speak out against U.S. policies in ways that the older generation had been unable to do.17
Liem’s own activism was precipitated by the radical youth movements of the 1960s and 1970s and a first-generation Korean math professor, Harry Chang, who taught Marxism to San Francisco Bay Area radical youth. Chang led study groups on the three volumes of *Das Capital*, Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff’s books, and helped the youth develop study materials for the Venceremos Brigade. In addition to schooling the young bloods in serious Marxism (as opposed to the shorthand snippets the youngsters had plucked out of Mao’s little Red Book), Chang’s stellar contribution to that generation of New Left/Communist Movement radicals was using Marxist dialectical and historical materialist methodology to analyze U.S. race relations, particularly the racist underpinnings of U.S. racial categories. Chang deserves posthumous recognition as the Korean revolutionary ghostwriter behind a number of scholars who later translated these Marxist-Leninist tainted theories and action programs into the language of the academy.

Liem also worked with the Committee for Solidarity with the Korean People (CSKP) which ran educational campaigns exposing the Park Jung Hee regime’s abuses in South Korea, portrayed North Korea’s *juche*-driven economic development in a favorable light, and among radicals, projected the Korean struggle as part of the “tricontinental” of Third World movements for national liberation in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The group also published the *Korea Report* newsletter. Through this work Liem met Lutheran minister Gus Shultz, beginning what was to evolve into a lasting collaboration.

After CSKP disbanded when its members turned to other arenas of work, Liem and Reverend Shultz launched the U.S. Korean Research and Action Committee, which targeted youth, college students, and anti-war activists between 1976-1978. Liem and Shultz started working with first- and 1.5-generation Berkeley university students, including UC Berkeley students and former YKU members Bobby Kim and Susan Lee to form the Committee for Korean Studies (CKS) of first-generation students.

The Kwangju-inspired movement of the 1980s opened the potential for points of convergence in strategic vision between the rejuvenated left in South Korea and state and peoples’ organizations in North Korea. Yet the complexity of navigating this strategic shift became evident during the 1980s when two political tendencies emerged within the South Korean Left, the “ND” and “PD” trends. “ND” stood for National Democracy, which
emphasized the fight against U.S. aggression, for national independence and reunification. “PD” stood for People’s Democracy, which emphasized advancing the class struggle inside South Korea. Adherents of both tendencies organized within the massive Korean students and workers federations and other minjung formations.

Liem says that 1987, the year CKS happened to invite dissident Hanyang University Professor Lee Yeung Hui to lecture at Berkeley, was:

...a really democratic explosion, including the workers independent movement. Marcos got booted out of the Philippines. All the pent-up discussions about reunification burst out. People started studying North Korea. People felt freer to talk and not compelled to spend equal time denouncing North Korea every time they criticized the U.S. But then Roh Tae Woo took over with U.S. backing, including through sleight-of-hand liberals like Stephen Solartz. But after Kwangju more Koreans traveled to North Korea to see their families. Now thousands of people have gone.

CKS organized several North-South dialogue symposiums between 1991 and 1997, and most recently in October 2002.

**Normalization of Relations with North Korea and Family Reunification**

Liem also gives props to his parents’ organization of first-generation immigrants, the Bomminryun, or Pan-National Reunification Federation, which braved repression to work for reunification and operated as a quiet travel agency for South Korean immigrants with family members in the North. While the group was launched in hopes of being a truly pan-Korea coalition, because of ROK government repression, the groups that stepped forward to join the network were predominantly those sympathetic to North Korea. The Korean American community includes a disproportionately high number of second-stage migrants from North Korea because many war refugees from the North never fully integrated into the South, and thus were more disposed to re-migrate to the U.S. after the 1965 immigration law reforms.

Since its formation in 1986, the pan-Korea coalition has helped over 5,000 individuals reunite with family members. In 1997 the various first-generation groups sympathetic to North Korea reconstituted into the umbrella organization, Korean American National Coordinating Council (KANCC). With some 200 mem-
bers, the organization includes regional chapters in the East, Midwest, and West.\textsuperscript{23}

Like the South Korean, North Korean, and U.S. lefts, the Korean American radical movement has also weathered its share of struggles over differences in strategic emphasis, tactics, and work style. Young Koreans United, for example, underwent several internal struggles around its stance toward North Korea’s \textit{juche} line, the balance between overseas versus domestic-focused organizing, and institutionalization of the organization’s decision-making, leadership, and accountability mechanisms as the group moved beyond the charismatic leader (or what non-profit groups call the “founder syndrome”) stage of development. These development issues have confronted groups across the political spectrum, with a particular set of conundrums for those with democratic centralist and semi-clandestine roots.\textsuperscript{24} Irrespective of these line struggles, Korean American radicals agree on the demands to remove U.S. troops from Korea, normalize relations with North Korea, and respect self-determination for the Korean people.

\textbf{Immigrant Community- and Worker-Based Organizing}

By the 1990s with the end of the military dictatorship in South Korea, collapse of the socialist governments in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, transition to civilian rule in South Korea, the Rodney King Civil Unrest,\textsuperscript{25} and Clinton Administration’s anti-immigrant policies, Korean American radicals increasingly turned their attentions toward pressing domestic issues confronting their community.

Third-wave Korean immigrants settled into the highly polarized U.S. race, national, class, and gender structure in ways that were distinct from previous immigration waves. Before South Korea’s return to civilian rule, Koreans made up one of the largest groups immigrating to the U.S., along with Mexicans, Central Americans, Filipinos, Chinese, South, and Southeast Asians.\textsuperscript{26} The rapid industrialization and globalization of the South Korean economy, combined with immigration law preferences, especially in the categories encouraging migration of professional and skilled immigrants and family reunification, spurred Korean middle- and working-class migration, both documented and undocumented, to Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, San Jose, San Francisco/Oakland and elsewhere.
The highly visible professional and business segment of the community gave Korean Americans membership in the racially loaded Asian “model minority” and “middleman minority” clubs. American-style racism skillfully utilizes the model minority construct to promote Asian identification and allegiance to white racist and elite class rule, while obscuring the deep class fissures within the Korean community and race and national discrimination aimed against Koreans from without. The construct also multi-tasks as a cudgel to beat down African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans who stand accused under the dialectically opposite constructs of “social pathology” and “underclass.”

Koreans paid an extremely steep price for this position on the U.S. racist totem pole on April 29, 1992, or “Sa-I-Gu” for 4.29 in Korean, the day the Simi Valley jury announced the not-guilty verdict for the police officers whose vicious beating Rodney King had been videotaped. The verdict followed extensive media coverage of Korean American grocer Soon Ja Du’s fight with and shooting to death of Latasha Harlins, a fifteen-year-old African American teenager after a fight over a shoplifting charge for a $1.79 bottle of orange juice. In what some have dubbed the “first multi-racial riot,” over 2,000 Korean-owned stores were looted, burned, or both. One Korean was killed and forty-six were injured. Korean merchants suffered almost half of the damages incurred, even though Koreans constituted less than 2 percent of Los Angeles County’s population at the time.27 Sa-I-Ku politicized Korean Americans across the spectrum, throwing radicals into a flow period of organizing displaced low-income workers and community people to express their distinct interests, demand accountability from the city and community’s elite institutions, and form coalitions with other aggrieved communities, especially with Latino, African American, and Asian low-income workers and community groups.

KIWA estimates that low-waged workers make up some 30 percent of the Korean community, many of whom work side-by-side with Latinos. Park says that many of the newer immigrants were influenced by the Kwangju generation and powerful independent labor movement. Danny Park recalls:

In the beginning the youth were strongly influenced by the political consciousness of the Kwangju movement, where we saw a lot of people getting killed just for uttering one word. Korean Youth Student Union [in LA] was launched out of a cultural group so people could work more actively for reunifica-
tation. But at a certain point in carrying out support work, you become just a cheerleader for what is going on in Korea—unless you are doing something here about the conditions that affect our parents and other immigrants. 28

Launched one month before the Rodney King verdict, KIWA first organized displaced low-waged Koreatown workers who had lost their jobs but were shut out of relief moneys by the business owners. The campaign won $109,000 for forty-five workers. KIWA also co-organized a campaign in defense of Thai and Latino workers from the El Monte “slave shop,” which garnered a $4 million settlement from retailers. KIWA then kicked off an industry-wide organizing drive among restaurant workers and helped Korean and Latino workers develop the Restaurant Workers Association of Koreatown. 29 Together with the Coalition for Humane Immigration Rights of LA (CHIRLA) and Sweatshop Watch, KIWA helped launch the Garment Workers Justice Center and the Multiethnic Immigrant Workers Organizing Network (MIWON). In 2001 KIWA began organizing Korean and Latina/o workers at the Korean-owned Assi supermarket to bargain collectively via the Immigrant Workers Union. Workers are fighting management’s discrimination, harassment, and firings of union supporters under the pretext of post-September 11, Social Security no match letters. Park says:

Given the conservative political atmosphere it would have been easy for KIWA to be stigmatized. In the beginning we had to start out by doing a lot of service- and case-oriented work in order to attract workers, start raising awareness of their rights, and help them get organized. We’ve been here for ten [now twelve] years and whether people like it or not KIWA is a force, a player in the Korean community that openly organizes around labor issues and brings these issues into the community and mainstream.

KIWA and Korean Resource Center [YKU] play important roles, not only in bringing up workers rights and homeland issues, but also other minority communities’ issues, like of gays and lesbians and women, supporting affirmative action, and fighting racism and attacks on immigrants’ rights. We challenge prejudices against Latinos and African Americans within the Korean community. Koreans must patch up relations with African Americans and Latinos that we live next door to and work with everyday. 30

During the 1990s, especially after the 1992 L.A. riots and wave
of anti-immigrant attacks under the Clinton Administration, YKU also shifted gears to develop campaigns in defense of low-income immigrants’ rights. In 1994 YKU launched a national organization of community centers, the NAKASEC (National Korean American Service and Education Consortium) and sought to build a broader movement, especially in response to Prop 187 and the anti-immigrant provisions of the 1996 welfare and immigration reform bills. The main programmatic thrust of NAKASEC’s work is defense of the human rights of thousands of immigrants in coalition with other racial minority communities. Chung-Hwa Hong, who served as NAKASEC’s first paid staff member in 1994, recalled: “That critical year the Republicans took over Congress, and Prop 187 passed in California. The vision for NAKASEC was to enable Korean Americans, especially immigrants, to have a national voice and impact, based in local affiliates with ties to the grassroots.”

Post-Kwangju Initiatives

During the 1990s, Kwangju-generation organizations intersected with still younger activists radicalized by Sa-I-Ku, the two Gulf wars and immigrant workers’, women’s anti-violence, and youth empowerment organizing campaigns.

Founded by 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans in 1995, the Korean Education and Exposure Program (KEEP) played a seminal role in incubating radical consciousness and solidarity activism among young activists. KEEP’s annual summer program enabled Korean Americans to meet student, farmer, worker, women’s, and cultural organizations in South Korea.

Jihye Chun of Berkeley and John Choe of New York, both former KEEP participants, are two examples of this generation. Chun, a founding member of the Korea Solidarity Committee, recalled her undergraduate years at Dartmouth College during Sa-I-Ku:

We had studied the 1965 rebellion in a sociology of education class, but 4.29 crushed all of my ideals. African American and Latino students convened vigils and protests in the middle of campus. But when people shouted, “Burn Baby Burn!” I realized they meant Koreatown. 4.29 was both traumatic and transformative. . .I couldn’t stop crying for two weeks straight. After that I searched for everything I could get my hands on about Korean Americans.32

Chun belongs to the minjung-oriented feminist sector that
organizes Korean battered women and low-waged immigrant women workers. Women radicals founded the Korean Women’s Hotline in Chicago, now called Korean American Women in Need (KAN-WIN), the Korean component of Asian Women’s Shelter in San Francisco, and Shimtuh at Korean Community Center of the East Bay in Oakland. Long-time feminists like Inhye Choi, Mimi Kim, and Isabel Kang, some of whom worked to broaden the Korean stripe of former Mayor Harold Washington’s rainbow coalition, were among the founding members of INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, an organization which takes on state, street and domestic violence against women. Other leaders, like Young Shin Helen Kim, organized Korean electronics assemblers through Asian Immigrant Women Advocates in San Jose and like Jung Hee Lee, cindy cho, Liz Sunwoo, and Julia Song, restaurant, grocery, and custodial workers through KIWA in Los Angeles.

A founding member of New York’s Nodutol, John Choe had joined KEEP’s first contingent in the summer of 1995:

KEEP is really an amazing experience! . . . One of the first days we went to visit the DMZ and got to see the absurdity of the war museum theme park that foreign tourists could visit, while Koreans were not even free to visit their own divided family members. We heard talks about the multinational forces and U.S. Marines supposedly defending the country from the evil North Korea. But then we saw a mass street demo outside one of the military bases in Seoul and experienced the transcendentalism of being among masses and masses of people. We saw the kind of dissent going on with calls of “Yankee go home!” and a culture of protest that we really miss out on here. Then we went to visit a group that works with women abused by U.S. GI’s and got to talk to the women and see the GI’s going in and out of the area. The working and living with a farming family, nong hwal [farming life] experience of students going to help out was good, too. . . . When you live in the U.S. you see people in power and privilege, whose credentials are recognized. It was strange to meet Korean farmers who spoke so knowledgeably about how the GATT and world trade affect their communities and families. They did not have to go to a university to know; they could see how to fight for justice at the local and global level. The whole purpose of KEEP is to expose Korean Americans to the struggle on the peninsula in order to generate a stronger movement in the U.S.

Since 1999 KEEP has been run by Nodutol in New York and
Mindullae in Los Angeles.KEEP in Berkeley-Oakland transformed into the Korea Solidarity Committee. Nodutol has also developed programs addressing local issues of concern to the Korean community in New York, particularly in the Flushing area of Queens, home to many Asian immigrants. Nodutol’s members are 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans, primarily English-speaking. In July 2001, several members of Nodutol and one member of Mindullae piloted DPRK KEEP, nicknamed “DEEP,” traveling to North Korea. Nodutol also runs the Korean Youth Action Program (KYAP!), targeting public school students ages fourteen to eighteen, a community-based public education campaign aimed at creating a progressive charter school, the Korean Language Program, and a Community Health Program, targeting especially undocumented immigrants.

**9.11 Challenges**

The Kwangju generation, augmented by post-4.29 radicals, has cultivated a hardy crop of organizations, which serve as a sturdy phalanx of durepae work teams with strong track records in organizing the most disenfranchised sectors of the community.

Speaking to the rise in anti-immigrant attacks, xenophobia, and militarism in the wake of 9.11, Chung-Hwa Hong, of NAKASEC and the New York Coalition on Immigration, flagged how the Bush Administration’s permanent war against terrorism jeopardized the rights of the Korean and sister communities.

Especially since 9.11 we need more Korean progressive groups to speak out against the unjust detention of immigrants. NAKASEC is one of the few groups willing to speak out publicly on this issue. We are keeping track of immigrant rights because that is where there is a lot of the discrimination. Immigrant rights really includes a list of thirty-some issues, everything from public benefits to amnesty for the undocumented, detentions, deportations, and dealing with the INS backlog on people’s applications. It makes sense to focus on amnesty issues within the Korean community because Koreans have the eighth largest undocumented population in the U.S., an estimated 200,000 people. NAKASEC is trying to figure out the organizing needs post-9.11. The attack on student adjustment is a big stepping-stone to attack immigrants’ rights. NAKASEC takes up immigrant rights side-by-side with the civil rights agenda, such as hate crimes, voting rights.

After Bush’s 2002 State of the Union speech [re: Axis of Evil], we should worry about what is going to happen to Iraq and Iran,
especially because those groups do not have the same kinds of solidarity networks in place as the movements around the Philippines, Korea, and Central America.36

Korean American radical organizations have always taken on the tough battles, armed with fistfuls of passion, heart, and hope. On the centennial of Korean migration to work the rich red soil of Hawaii’s plantations, we call on all our durepae sisters and brothers to thrust our hands deeper still into the fertile earth that nourishes our dreams of peace, justice, and reunification. As we labor let U.S. dance and drum, sing and shout to the playful music of ancestral mountain spirits as they syncopate and sway to the rhythms of rainbow diasporas of this land.

Notes


10. Inbo Sim, interview by Miriam Ching Yoon Louie, Los Angeles, California, January 11, 2002.


13. Sim interview.


16. Han, 439-442.

17. Paul Liem, interview by Miriam Ching Yoon Louie, Oakland, California, January 16, 2002.

18. Racism Research Project, *Critique of the Black Nation Thesis* (Berke-

19. See, for example, Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s (New York: Routledge, 1994). Winant participated in study groups affiliated with Chang.

20. Jihye Jennifer Chun, interview by Miriam Ching Yoon Louie, Berkeley, California, January 24, 2002. While both of these tendencies continue to organize within minjung organizations in South Korea, a growing number of activists belong to neither camp.


22. Liem.


24. Elbaum; Louie, “‘Yellow, Brown, & Red’.”

25. Within the Korean community people hotly debated whether to call the April 29, 1992 or “4.2”/ “Sa-I-Gu” response to the Rodney King verdict a “riot” or “rebellion.” KIWA deliberately chose the middle-ground term, “civil unrest.”


29. Louie, Sweatshop Warriors.

30. Danny Park.
32. Chun.
35. For more information on KEEP, Nodutol, and Mindullae, see http://www.keep.org and http://www.nodutol.com.
36. Hong.