

Ending the Korean War—Together

What music can do to stop us for a moment—and drop our weapons...

It was profoundly breathtaking to hear *Arirang* beautifully orchestrated by Maestro Maazel in Pyongyang. In those final moments of the NY Philharmonic's performance, 250 million worldwide viewers and I were spellbound, and emphatically bonded by our communal human emotions. And in the context of such heightened connectedness, I believe the time has never been better to finally bring the Forgotten War to an end—this time, together, and without weapons.

Of-course, the replacement of the Armistice with a peace treaty is undoubtedly a highly-complicated subject matter, provided that the nuclear issue must be resolved. It intricately entails a successful Six Party Talks between US, ROK, DPRK, Russia, Japan, and China. Let us, however, building on the momentum of the currently promising progress, coalesce at a grassroots level to provide auxiliary support and encourage the governments for further development.

Given that it took more than fifty long, arduous years for the governments to cross the DMZ and initiate an amicable dialogue, we cannot wait around for another fifty naively and passively hoping time will make progress. Judging from history, the current momentum can phase out unexpectedly; we should not be overly complacent. Numbers reveal more than 1000 Korean War veterans worldwide are leaving us each day. I fear this number will only increase exponentially with time. Before it is too late, we—the children and grandchildren of the Korean War veterans, Friends of Korea, and promoters of peace—must first start peacebuilding on the Korean Peninsula to formally end this War that is now entering its 55th year since the Armistice.

Before I lay out my ambitious plan, allow me to introduce myself as a young Korean American girl—or a woman, now—who feels compelled by her tears that she must do something, anything, to conclude this tragic chapter in our history. Growing up, I was highly inspired by the likes of Joan of Arc, Mother Teresa, and Yoo Kwan-soon, heroine of Korea's Independence Movement. Understanding God's grace and sacrifice for mankind, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the Korean War veterans, to whom I owe my freedom. It pains me to realize how many of us often take our freedom for granted. And we owe it to you—the brave men who bore our cross. And as President Eisenhower had justly underscored in 1954, we must "re-consecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain"

In this regard, I am mobilizing support for an independent, non-governmental, global coalition comprised of concerned citizens and organizations dedicated to fostering reconciliation of the Korean War through remembrance and recognition of the sacrifices made by all veterans of the war. Our

Mission is to facilitate transnational peacebuilding on the Korean Peninsula to bring about an eventual replacement of the Korean War Armistice with a peace treaty.

Peacebuilding will require tremendous efforts to buttress the current acts of Remembrance, Recognition and Reconciliation of the War. First, the public must **Remember** that the Forgotten War has yet to end and confront the status. I hope to encourage an observance of The Korean War Armistice Day, July 27, this year and on, until the Armistice is replaced with a peace treaty. The Coalition will maintain a website (www.kw-reconciliation.org) which will collect at least 1 MILLION signatures from friends worldwide who will pledge to display a flag in Remembrance of the Korean War, in Recognition of the sacrifices made by the Veterans, and in support for the Coalition's effort to foster Reconciliation for Peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Both the 1million signatures and display of the flag are symbolically and perceptibly important. In order to officialize our act of Remembrance, we need the support of Congress. To my astonishment, a bill to designate June 25, 1990, as "Korean War Remembrance Day" (H.J.RES.575) was sponsored by former Rep. Sangmeister (D-IL) almost two decades ago. And with the help of 232 cosponsors, it became Public Law (No: 101-315). Wouldn't it be honorable to revive the bill to designate *every* June 25 as Korean War Remembrance Day? In 1994, former Rep. Montgomery (D-MS) introduced a similar bill (H.J.RES.332) designating July 27 of each year as the "National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day" with 219 cosponsors. The same bill (S.J.RES.169) was introduced in the Senate by Rep. Warner (R-VA) and 53 other cosponsors. This gives us hope for a potential bill that may encourage a replacement of the Korean War armistice with a peace treaty. In fact, a bill was introduced in 1991 (H.CON.RES.244) by former Rep. Foglietta (D-PA) with 12 cosponsors that read "To encourage peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula."

The amazing news is that there already exists a bill in the current 110th Congress, *to add National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day to the list of days on which the flag should especially be displayed*, known as the Korean War Veterans Recognition Act of 2007. Introduced by Senator Clinton [D-NY] and cosponsored by Senator Cochran [R-MS] this bill (S.1888) was also introduced in the House (H.R.4922) by former Rep. Kelly [R-NY] with 27 other cosponsors.

Taking these previous records into consideration, it seems viable to pass S.1888 in the Senate; both offices of Senators Clinton and Cochran have expressed their support to me. Therefore, please—I entreat you to **contact your Senators to sponsor S.1888**. Senator Clinton has been determinedly reintroducing this legislation since she assumed office in 2001, with or without a cosponsor. She has been a staunch advocate of "recognizing the service of those who served in the Korean War", and co-sponsored a legislation to grant a Federal Charter to the Korean War Veterans Association. Let us help

her and ourselves to pass this legislation.

After increasing public awareness, the next step remains to **Recognize** the sacrifices of the Veterans and their families. One way will be documenting your stories of how you were impacted by the War, so we can commiserate with your painful memories, and be inspired to prevent future wars. Storytelling can be a powerful tool to build peace and understanding. Elie Wiesel, the preeminent survivor of the Holocaust, notably said “I decided to devote my life to telling the story because I felt that having survived I owe something to the dead. And anyone who does not remember betrays them again.” By sharing the stories of your lives with a much broader and younger audience, and being assured they will be archived in our own memories and available for the progeny at the Library of Congress, you will be honored for your sacrifices while we revisit our history, hopes, and humanity.

Finally, we must discharge the mistrust that has been long harbored in the hearts of many. Three generations later in a globalized setting, antagonism does nothing but breed social discord and misunderstanding. Though it is important that we do not forget, it is imperative we **Reconcile** with the past and forgive our foes. Thus, on Armistice Day July 27, we hope to convene a gathering inviting Korean War Veterans representing *all* 24 countries (21 UN forces and 3 Communist) and their (grand)children to build understanding and cooperation among all those affected by the War. As much as this may sound like a preposterous proposition, integration must take place until all 24 seats are filled up. Following the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, “We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of enmity.” I pray we can replace any lingering animosity with reconciliation, first among the people, so the governments can follow suit.

Let me remind you—after our country was torn apart from the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, in his Second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865, proclaimed these immortal words: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.” Reconciliation was possible then; it is feasible now.

A word of caution—a century later, an equally incisive president, John F. Kennedy reiterated in his Speech to the UN General Assembly on Sept. 25, 1961, “Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind.” Yes, it is time to put an end to the Korean War that cost 55 years (since the Armistice) of enmity and sacrifices of 5 million veterans (1950-2008)—Together, we can. So let us.

If you have any questions, and/or would like to offer help, suggestions or comments, please feel free to contact Hannah Kim: hannahkim115@yahoo.com; 323-823-1555, www.kw-reconciliation.org