Lesson Series 37

Kwangju: People’s Perseverance in Seeking Justice

Summary

This lesson follows the painful but determined struggle of the Kwangju uprising victims’ family members and Kwangju citizens to reveal the truth about the 1980 uprising, commemorate the victims and fight for democracy.

From 1980 to the present day the people of Kwangju have been fighting to achieve their goals. Their fight and success has inspired others, both within Korea and outside, to fight their own battles against human rights violations. This testifies to the universality of the Kwangju uprising.
THEME: Kwangju: People's Perseverance in Seeking Justice

THE LESSONS

This is the second lesson series on the Kwangju uprising of May 1980. While the first series (Lesson series 36) focused on the specific events of the uprising, this second series examines the impact of the uprising on Kwangju and South Korea until the present day.


Lesson 2 discusses the implications of Kwangju.

LESSON 1

A. Struggle of the victims' families and Kwangju citizens between 1980-1995

The young leaders of the Kwangju uprising, who decided to defend the city of Kwangju and to fight to the death, did so knowingly. They foresaw the potential effects of their acts in terms of bringing democracy to Korea and told foreign correspondents present in the city that sacrificing their lives for the future democracy of Korea was necessary, as at that time there was no other alternative. However, they also urged high school students to leave the Provincial Hall and be witnesses for what happened during the last hours before the city was taken.

Throughout the uprising and even the last hours before the city was taken, there was a high sense of morality among the citizens and the youth. This morality, conscience and deep belief in the ideal of democracy, led the youth to commit the ultimate act of sacrifice. When their city was retaken, military brutality met with human morality. At that moment military might overpowered the physical strength of the Kwangju citizens. However, the moral convictions of the people remained untouched, showing that strong moral conviction could
not be undermined through military power or state violence. This morality continued to sustain the spirit of the uprising in the years to come. Military brutality won the battle, but citizen morality won the war.

The city of Kwangju was retaken by the military in the early morning of May 27 amidst the massacre of hundreds of young people (the actual number killed is still not known). This was the final and most terrible blow to the citizens of Kwangju by the military administration of Korea. Unfortunately, the effects of the blow did not end with the recapture of Kwangju. Rather, it gave birth to one of the most difficult times for its citizens, particularly for those who were directly involved in or supported the uprising, and for the family members of those who had been killed (hereafter ‘family members’).

It is reported that General Chun Doo-hwan toured Kwangju after the city was taken and told the people of Kwangju not to make an issue of what had happened, but to learn from it. In other words, he was suggesting that they leave the past behind and ensure that such acts do not recur. In fact, not only did the citizens of Kwangju not put the uprising behind them, but they relived it in many ways, such as through the commemorations of the dead, through publications, cultural performances, mass rallies, demonstrations, petitions and so on. In short, the people of Kwangju were adamant in seeking truth and justice for the Kwangju massacre, achieving democracy in Korea and bringing an end to military domination in Korean politics.

**Commemoration of the victims and the uprising**

In the immediate aftermath of Kwangju, commemoration of the victims was the only thing family members and others seeking justice could think of doing, and even this was a very difficult task:

- The authorities kept family members under surveillance and used house arrest as a means of keeping family members away from the cemetery, as well as outright blocking access to the cemetery.
- They also tried to influence family members’ associations in various ways, attempting to disunite them. This resulted in twenty-six bodies being exhumed from the Mangwoldong cemetery and buried elsewhere. However, such acts were strongly resisted by the May 18 Bereaved Family Members Association and family members managed to maintain their unity.
- Many family members who continued to carry on commemorative activities and campaigns to seek truth and justice were arrested.
- Furthermore, victims’ families were initially stigmatised as family members of the ‘rioters’. (The official stance taken against the Kwangju uprising was that it was merely a riot caused by mobs, and this is what was reported in media throughout South Korea, which was mainly state controlled.)
- In cases where the head of the family was killed or injured, the family suffered economic hardship and struggled to survive from day to day.
In fact, not just commemoration but merely speaking out about the uprising was initially an almost impossible task, particularly from 1980-1985. However, for the family members of the Kwangju victims, commemoration at least was essential, and so they struggled to hold commemorative events in spite of the difficulties caused by the government. Eventually they were supported in their attempts by civil society groups in and outside of Kwangju. They even managed to bring the bodies of their loved ones to one place to bury - the Mangwoldong cemetery. This was a very important act of unification among the family members, as it provided them with a venue to commemorate and grieve collectively.

This perseverance of the family members and the activists who supported them enabled them to eventually obtain truth and justice. It should not be forgotten that the families of the victims suffered (and are still suffering) grave psychological wounds caused by the loss of their loved ones.

In 1981, the first attempt to hold a commemorative event was prevented by the police. They barricaded the area near the Provincial Hall and about 50 students who took to the streets were either arrested or prosecuted. The family members finally decided to organise a private ceremony to commemorate their loved ones. During that commemoration, the director of the May 18 Uprising Bereaved Families Association, Chung Su-man made a speech. Soon after, he was arrested for ‘propagating anti-American sentiments’.

In 1982, the planned commemorative rally was again banned and disrupted by the government. However, a small memorial service by 30 bereaved families managed to take place. The government also launched other events to divert the attention of the Kwangju people from the commemoration activities of the uprising initiated by the family members, including a Convention for the Solidarity of Kwangju Citizens at the Kwangju Public Stadium. The government tried in many ways to split the emerging groups who wanted to keep the memory of the uprising alive, with gestures such as giving amnesty to 1,288 citizens imprisoned in connection with the Kwangju uprising, on August 15 (Independence Day).

Commemorations continued on a smaller scale in 1983. The Chun Doo-hwan government tried to influence individual family members to move the graves of their loved ones from the Mangwoldong cemetery. They put family members under house arrest, mobilising intelligence agencies and the police, and they blocked access to the Mangwoldong cemetery. The authorities even kidnapped opposition political party members who supported family members of the victims and took them to places like Pusan and Cheju island.

In 1984, students and citizens managed to hold a memorial rally at the Mangwoldong cemetery, with 3,000 persons attending. This was the biggest rally held in Kwangju since May 1980. University students started creating ad-hoc fact-finding committees to investigate into the Kwangju uprising. There were also various protests in different parts of the country regarding Kwangju, however, demonstrators were arrested nation-wide; in Kwangju alone 80 students were arrested.
On 17 May 1985, various colleges and universities in Kwangju organised a demonstration drawing 38,000 demonstrators. The National Campaign Headquarters held a collective memorial service that was attended by 150 family members, seven National Assembly members and 700 students, of whom 394 were arrested. For the first time, there was a government level response to the deaths in Kwangju: in answer to a question at the National Assembly, Defence Minister Yun Sung Min put the death toll of the massacre at 191. Although the figure was incorrect, the referral to deaths in Kwangju by a Cabinet minister illustrated the increasing pressure on the government to reveal the truth regarding the uprising.

In 1986, the fact-finding campaigns on the Kwangju uprising by citizens continued. New groups began to form such as the Youth Comrades Association of the May 18 Kwangju People’s Uprising, formed in April. Defying the police ban, a commemoration rally was held at Nam-dong Cathedral drawing 2,000 people. After the memorial mass, people clashed with the riot police, resulting in a large number of injured. A monument in honour of the victims of the uprising was built at the Hankuk Theological School. From 1980 to 1986, the memory of the Kwangju uprising fuelled the aspirations for democracy of the South Korean people.

In January 1987 Park Jong Chol, a student at Seoul National University, was killed by police water torture. This prompted much protest by university students. At the same time, there were nation-wide protests by citizens demanding constitutional reforms allowing direct elections. In June, Li Han Yol, a Kwangju citizen and a student of Yonsei University in Seoul, was killed during a student protest by a teargas canister deliberately aimed at his head by a riot policeman. His funeral was attended by one million people in Seoul.

The June 1987 protests revived the Kwangju spirit throughout South Korea. With over 3,000 strikes by labourers and many demonstrations, the pressure started mounting on the government. On July 2, Roh Tae Woo, presidential candidate of the ruling Democratic Justice Party and mastermind of the Kwangju massacre expressed his regret for the victims of the massacre. He also promised to construct a monument for the victims and introduce a special law to compensate the bereaved families. Roh Tae Woo was elected president in December.

In 1988, the government stopped calling the Kwangju uprising the ‘Kwangju Affair’, and began referring to it as a ‘movement that is part of the efforts by the Kwangju students and citizens to promote democracy.’ The government also offered compensation to the victims’ families. However, most of the families rejected the money as they felt that accepting the compensation offered by Roh, the chieftain of the massacre, would betray the spirit of the Kwangju uprising. For the first time, a commemorative rally took place in front of the Kwangju Provincial Hall at Kumnam Avenue in May, without police harassment, drawing over 100,000 citizens. Half a million people from all over the world visited Mangwoldong cemetery.
Revealing the truth about Kwangju

Another way to ensure that the events of Kwangju were not forgotten, as well as the primary way to obtain justice for the victims who died and those that survived, was to let the truth about Kwangju be known. This was difficult not only because of the military crackdown, but also because of the censorship and distorted information surrounding the uprising.

In the immediate aftermath of the uprising, one of the first groups who began to talk about it was a group of priests from the Kwangju Diocese through publishing The Truth of the Kwangju Affair. The first step to organise themselves by the citizens was taken by the family members. Despite the government’s attempts to repress and sabotage their efforts, the people formed the May 18 Uprising Bereaved Families Association on 6 June 1980. After that a number of organizations were formed. Forty more advocacy and campaign groups were formed between 1982 and 1985, among them the May 18 Injured Association, the Youth Association, the Uprising Veteran’s Association, the Democratic Taxi Driver’s Association, and the Women’s Association. One of their first and most important tasks was to initiate fact-finding and conduct documentation on the victims of the massacre.

In 1985 fact-finding work accelerated. The National Campaign Headquarters for Commemorative Events and the Construction of a Monument was formed in Kwangju. In late April, the former protesters published Beyond Death, Beyond the Darkness of the Age, a firsthand comprehensive account of the uprising. Considerable risk was undertaken in gathering information for the book and it was the first comprehensive publication in the Korean language on the uprising. However, the authors could not use their real names to publish it. The military regime banned and confiscated many copies of the book before it went on the market. But the publishers had foreseen such a crackdown and had already leaked copies, which were then photocopied and distributed widely. The book became essential reading amongst student activists.

Citizens’ protests in 1985 regarding the Kwangju uprising also continued with perseverance, sometimes taking extreme forms. For example, on August 15, Hong Ki Il, a 25-year-old worker, set himself on fire on Kumnam Avenue in Kwangju, demanding that what happened during the uprising be revealed. There were many such acts committed by the citizens in their struggle to seek the truth.

In August 1988, opposition legislators managed to form the Special Investigative Committee of the May 18 Kwangju Pro-democracy Campaign within the National Assembly, to conduct an inquiry into the government cover-ups. The committee found that 77 of the officers who had led the crackdown against the uprising had been decorated.

In 1989, the National Assembly investigations into the Kwangju uprising took place on a full scale when the hearings of the Special Investigative Committee opened in the spring. The victims of the military crackdown
and the army officers involved were summoned for testimony. Their testimony was televised, live. The army officers had become senior officials in the government. Chun Doo-hwan was also summoned, and he testified on December 31. Due to its limited powers, the Committee could only publicize the proceedings, not prosecute those responsible. Attempts to introduce laws to punish the perpetrators of the Kwangju massacre were unsuccessful due to the power of the ruling party in the National Assembly.

In 1990, a new liberal democratic ruling party pushed through the Act on Compensation for the May 18 Kwangju Uprising Victims. The government unilaterally gave compensation to 2,226 individuals. Still, some of them refused to take the money.

Even after the latest round of appeasement efforts, during 1991 the people continued to demand a full revelation of what had happened during the uprising and the punishment of the masterminds of the massacre. Another group of students began protesting with their lives. In May, Kang Kyung Dae, a freshman at Myongji University, was beaten and killed by the police during a campus protest against government policy towards the Kwangju uprising. Soon thereafter, Park Seung Hee, a student at Chonnam University, set herself on fire in protest at the killing of Kang. Another 10 college students died in the flames of self-immolation. They were all buried near the dead they wanted to identify with, in Mangwoldong cemetery. Such self-sacrifices were mainly aimed at the revelation of truth of the Kwangju uprising. After 1980, there have been a total of 37 activists who lost their lives or self-immolated as the ultimate protest, and who have been buried in the Mangwoldong cemetery.

In 1992, the demand to reveal the truth of the Kwangju uprising continued through protests, despite a general decline in the pro-democracy movement. The commemoration activities continued on a larger scale in Kwangju and Kwangju citizens established the ‘Five Principles to Resolve the Kwangju Issue’. They were:

1. A full investigation into the uprising;
2. The punishment of the guilty;
3. Compensation;
4. The restoration of the victims’ honour; and
5. Commemoration and succession.

In May 1993, President Kim Young-sam angered and disappointed the citizens of Kwangju when, in order to avoid political conflict, he asked for people to put the past behind them. The campaigns were re-organized with their key demand being the introduction of a special law and a special prosecutor to punish the leaders behind the massacre. Students barricaded the Mangwoldong cemetery in protest, causing President Kim to cancel his visit.

From 1994 to 1995, the movement for the Kwangju uprising began to concentrate on the legal battle. Because of the statute of limitations, those responsible for the Kwangju massacre had to be prosecuted within 15
years, that is, by May 1995. The victims of the uprising pressed charges against the 78 organizers of the massacre. On 29 October 1994, however, the local prosecutors suspended prosecution against 38 of them. Advocacy groups and human rights lawyers began to pressure the national prosecution office, however, to little avail.

In July 1995, the bizarre and ridiculed decision of the prosecution that it had no power to prosecute members of a successful coup intensified public anger. College students walked out of classes and took to the streets. Religious leaders and even some members of the opposition party went on a hunger strike after shaving their heads in a sign of protest. A total of 6,549 professors from 89 universities and colleges signed a petition for the punishment of the coup leaders. Finally on December 21 the National Assembly passed a special law allowing for the prosecution of the two ex-presidents.

The decade long struggle of Kwangju citizens and family members culminated in the prosecution of those responsible in 1996, which is discussed in more detail in the next lesson. Before that though, the campaign of Kwangju as carried out by civil society must be studied in more depth.

B. Civil society

The chronological view of the actions and events undertaken by Kwangju citizens and family members above highlights the perseverance and consistency of the Kwangju movement. Both of these factors are essential to the success of any movement. The success of the Kwangju movement to seek truth and justice also stems from the significant role played by the family members of victims.

I. Perseverance

Kwangju citizens, from the beginning, wanted to achieve a specific goal: to restore honour to the victims of the Kwangju uprising. This could only be done by revealing the truth surrounding their death, by commemorating their actions and by establishing democracy in South Korea (which was the ideal the victims so willingly sacrificed their lives for).

Thus, Kwangju citizens fought to accomplish these three things. Year after year, they persevered in their commemoration activities regardless of government actions. They established groups and organizations to document and research the event of the uprising, to support family members and to advocate for democracy, such as: the May 18 Uprising Bereaved Families Association, the Youth Association, the Uprising Veteran’s Association, the Democratic Taxi Driver’s Association, and the Women’s Association.

The documentation of the uprising together with more established forms also took the form of cultural media such as poetry, music and engravings, as well as novels, paintings, plays and even television dramas. This
contributed to the making of history and also comprised an alternative culture. This alternative culture “that went beyond the capitalist consumer culture ... provided the opportunity for concepts of human rights, peace and justice to enter ... everyday [life] as a reality rather than as ideals” (Jung Keun-sik, 428).

II. Role of family members and citizens

As activist Kim Yang-rae said succinctly, without the voice and participation of the family members, there would not have been any progress in restoring honour to the Kwangju victims. It was the family members who initially began the fight to seek truth and justice, and who continued the struggle when others were ready to give up. It is necessary to appreciate here that the family members were not organized at the beginning, they did not know how to campaign effectively, and yet they learnt as they went along. For instance, they did not even have a place to meet when they first decided to group together. Similarly, they initially did not know how to go about printing their material regarding the uprising, so certain church organizations helped them by using their own hand presses to print the material.

This leads us to the important point that the family members were joined in their fight by numerous groups, students and even individuals, whether through printing their material, holding rallies or giving legal advice. Without this support from civil society, the family members may well have remained an isolated group with little influence. However, the group’s resonance with students, professionals and workers made up a powerful movement that spread outside of Kwangju to various parts of Korea.

It must be remembered also that the initial period after the uprising, 1980-1985 was a very dark and repressive one in South Korean history, particularly for the people of Kwangju. No one dared to speak out about the atrocities recently witnessed. And yet, even at this time, family members were active. Their persistence and courage are to be admired and emulated.

C. Questions For Discussion

1. Discuss the significance of these actions as undertaken by family members and Kwangju citizens:
   a. burying all victims in one place (Mangwoldong cemetery)
   b. comprehensively documenting the events of the uprising
   c. using cultural media such as poetry, plays and dramas to relive Kwangju
   d. establishing the ‘Five Principles’ to resolve the Kwangju issue

2. Due to the difficult circumstances they were facing and because they believed there was no other alternative, several students and activists took their own lives as the ultimate form of protest. In different circumstances, what are other ways of protest that do not cause harm to anyone’s life?
3. Choose one particular action that was undertaken by citizens of Kwangju and see how it could be carried out regarding an issue in your own country, keeping in mind the factors of perseverance and consistency.

4. What seems to be the relationship between democracy and justice for the Kwangju victims? How has this relationship enhanced the movement in Kwangju?

LESSON 2

This lesson looks at the time period from 1996 to the present day, examining the prosecution of the masterminds of the Kwangju uprising and the subsequent events of the Kwangju struggle.

A. Prosecution of coup leaders, 1996-7

Roh Tae Woo and Chun Doo-hwan, ex-presidents and masterminds of the massacre were arrested on corruption charges in November 1996. Shortly after their arrest, President Kim Young Sam abruptly commanded his party to enact the special law passed in 1995 to punish the coup masterminds, naming it ‘Right the Wrongs of History Campaign’. However, the law was incomplete: it did not have provisions for reparations, many of the decorations the army officers of the Kwangju massacre had received were not stripped, those who took up arms in self-defence during the uprising remained ex-convicts and state-produced history textbooks did not refer to the Kwangju uprising as a proud moment in the tradition of democracy.

The trial for the Kwangju massacre finally began on 11 March 1996. Although neither Chun nor Roh admitted to giving the orders for the killing of so many civilians, the court sentenced them on the basis of their responsibility as military and state leaders; in November, Chun was sentenced to death, while Roh was sentenced to lifetime imprisonment.

On 16 April 1997 however, the Supreme Court revised the penalties, sentencing Chun to life imprisonment and Roh to 17 years. This was a painful blow to the citizens of Kwangju, which was felt more strongly when the two ex-leaders were pardoned in 1998 by Kim Dae-jung, the leader of the democratic movement who was elected president in 1997. Kim was a ‘son of Cholla’ (the province of which Kwangju was the capital) who had been sentenced to death through a military tribunal during the regime of Chun Doo-hwan in 1980.

During the trial of Chun and Roh and even after their sentencing, the commemorations activities in Kwangju continued. In 1996, for the first time, a group of youth from different parts of the world visited Kwangju and participated in the International Youth Camp on Peace and Democracy organised by Kwangju Citizens’ Solidarity.
They took part in the memorial ceremony held by the family members and citizens at the Mangwoldong cemetery on May 17 as well as the official ceremony on May 18. The evening gathering to commemorate the uprising in front of the Provincial Hall along Kumnam Avenue drew over 100,000 people on May 17.

In May 1997, a new national cemetery was built and inaugurated adjacent to the Mangwoldong cemetery. Most of the Kwangju uprising victims were moved from Mangwoldong cemetery to the new cemetery. A symbolic monument was built in the new cemetery to honour the victims. The commemoration activities took place in both cemeteries. Foreign correspondents that had covered the Kwangju uprising in 1980 revisited Kwangju and joined the commemorations. They shared their experiences during a conference organised by the KCS. May 18 was declared a national commemorative day in Korea. In 1997, a ten-member citizens’ committee formed by the Kwangju City Administration consisting of prominent academics and social figures published ten volumes of comprehensive documentation entitled 5.18 Kwangju Democratic Movement Material. Each volume consisted of about 700 pages and the material included stories, witness testimonies, proceedings of the National Assembly’s special committee investigation into the uprising, newspaper articles and so forth.

B. Implications of Kwangju

One of the remarkable factors of the Kwangju uprising was the ‘Kwangju spirit’ that was consistently referred to throughout the struggle for truth and justice by victims’ family members and other citizens. This spirit not only let the uprising of 1980 encompass the entire city, but it also ensured that future generations would remember the fight of Kwangju and continue it. The fight was continued and eventually led to the establishment of democracy in South Korea, the prosecution of those behind the massacre of Kwangju and the acknowledgement of the Kwangju uprising as a fight for democracy. However, the spirit of Kwangju does not end here. According to those who have been fighting since 1980, South Korea still has some way to go. And thus, the spirit of Kwangju is continued, both within and outside Korea. Not only does this help South Korea and Kwangju in their own understanding and actualization of human rights and democracy, but it also helps others in Asia and elsewhere to learn from the lessons and sacrifices of Kwangju and apply them to their own situations.

For instance, in May 1998, a large group of prominent human rights activists from Asia visited Kwangju and participated in the ‘International Conference to Commemorate the Kwangju Uprising and to Declare the Asian Human Rights Charter – A People’s Charter’, which was co-organised by the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRCL) and the KCS. This marked a new era of inspiration, whereby the Kwangju spirit gave hope to those struggling to restore genuine democracy and rule of law throughout Asia. The commemoration events took place with the participation of Kwangju victims’ families, local and regional human rights activists and South Korean government leaders.
In May 1999, for the first time, family members of the victims of democratic movements and enforced disappearances from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines and East Timor visited Kwangju and met the family members of the victims of the Kwangju uprising. They took part in commemorative activities with the Kwangju mothers and fathers who had lost their children, forging a new link between the victims of the Kwangju uprising and the victims of other tragedies in Asia.

These visits by family members of the victims of disappearances from various Asian countries to Kwangju continue to this date. Inspired by the Kwangju spirit and the monument erected for the Kwangju victims, Sri Lankan activist Jayanthi Dandeniya who lost her fiancé and two brothers during state-sponsored disappearances in Sri Lanka in the late 1990s, initiated the construction of a monument for the disappeared in Sri Lanka. The inauguration ceremony of this monument in February 2000 was attended by Chung Su-man, the chairperson of the May 18 Uprising Bereaved Families Association. From then onwards persons from Kwangju annually attend the commemoration activities at the monument in Sri Lanka, in some instances even sponsoring the event.

Jayanthi Dandeniya was also a recipient of the innovative Gwangju Prize for Human Rights in 2003. This prize was established in 2000, during the 20th anniversary of the Kwangju uprising, to award those individuals or groups who had made great contributions to the values of universal human rights, democracy and peace – the values embodied in the Kwangju spirit – whether in South Korea or outside. This prize is another significant example of the sharing of the Kwangju spirit throughout the region.

Within South Korea itself there are also many things being done to ensure that future generations understand and participate in the Kwangju spirit. For instance, there are annual events targeted at teaching school children the value of human rights, peace and democracy, such as speech and art competitions as well as a peace pilgrimage (to Kwangju). There are also education programs for teachers about the Kwangju uprising. Similarly, the May 18 Academy was established to conduct trainings and workshops for human rights activists from Kwangju and other areas. Koreans living abroad have also been invited by the May 18 Memorial Foundation to visit Kwangju and participate in workshops on the Kwangju uprising and democracy in Korea. Other organizations in Kwangju including the May 18 Memorial Foundation and Kwangju Citizens’ Solidarity have been sending Kwangju youth to various Asian countries as interns to share the Kwangju spirit and to learn from the experiences of particular countries.

The sharing of the Kwangju spirit has increasingly led to victims of various violations, in and outside of Korea, drawing from the Kwangju experience to rebuild their movements. In May 2004, family members of the victims of the civilian massacres during the Korean War attended the International Peace Camp in Kwangju and attempted to do the same. Prior to this there had been increasing links between the activists of Kwangju and Cheju, Pusan and Masan. In 1948 there was a large scale massacre in Cheju. It has been officially established
that between 25,000 – 30,000 civilians were killed, while unofficial figures estimate the death of between 50,000 – 60,000 civilians. The victims were stigmatized for many years and until recently it was impossible to even speak out about the atrocity. It was only when activists began to link the Cheju massacre to the Kwangju uprising that victims were able to come forward. Today the Cheju massacre is commemorated and the campaign carries on with the inspiration of the Kwangju uprising. Similarly, there had been a popular uprising in Pusan and Masan commonly known as the Pu-Ma uprising of 1979. However, the spirit of the uprising was not sustained as it was in Kwangju. Now activists from Pusan and Masan are trying to learn from the Kwangju spirit. All this speaks to the universality of the Kwangju experience, highlighted by the five principles set out to resolve the Kwangju issue, which can be used by victims of many massacres and movements throughout Asia and elsewhere.

C. Questions For Discussion

1. How did the prosecution of the leaders of the uprising come about? How significant was this in the Kwangju struggle, as well as the struggle for democracy?
2. What is your opinion of Chun and Roh being granted pardon? Are you aware of other instances where perpetrators of human rights violations have been given amnesty? How does this reflect on society?
3. Discuss how the following actions share the Kwangju spirit:
   a. the International Youth Camp on Peace and Democracy in 1996
   b. the declaration of the Asian Charter in 1998
   c. family members of victims of various movements throughout Asia taking part in commemoration activities in 1999
   d. the establishment of the ‘Gwangju Prize for Human Rights’
   e. the construction of the monument for the disappeared in Sri Lanka
   f. the sending of Kwangju youth as interns to various Asian countries
   g. the various educational programs for children in South Korea regarding human rights
4. In your opinion, what is the most important lesson to be learnt from the Kwangju experience regarding civil society and human rights? How can this lesson be applied in your own particular context?
References


