

Racial Conflict and Healing

An Asian-American Theological Perspective

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Preface

I asked my ten-year-old son, Amos, "Do you enjoy living this life?" Puzzled, he responded, "What do you mean?" I explained, "You weren't here ten years ago. Compared with the time before you were born, do you like this life?" He answered, "I don't remember that time, so I can't compare it with now." Then he asked, "Where was I before my birth, and why am I here?" I could not answer his questions.

No one volunteers for his or her present life. Amos did not choose his parents, gender, race, or nationality. Even a bird or an insect does not select its own species. This means that there is no basis upon which to claim superiority to any other person—or any other creature.

We are all here to live the lives that have been given to us. There is nothing to boast of or to feel shameful about concerning our intrinsic being. There is nothing we can despise or disrespect in the world. All the animals and all the races, all people of the two genders, must be respected as they are. Everything has a divine right to be here. The one thing that is required is that we live our life faithfully and truthfully.

So, why is there so much racism in this society? Recently the Los Angeles eruptions and the O. J. Simpson trial have divided us sharply along racial lines and have raised racial tensions. It seems almost impossible to bridge the profound gap between races.

Will racial conflict endlessly swell, or is racial healing possible? Who will bring about reconciliation and healing? What is the role of the church in a racially divided society?

I believe that the primary task of the church in the United States is to elicit racial justice and healing. All other accomplishments of the church (such as growth in church membership, increase in the church budget, construction of new church buildings, even the zeal of the church for Bible study) can be superficial and hypocritical if the church neglects the pressing issue of racial justice.

I believe it is possible to change the situation of racial conflict by changing our deep images of each other and by transforming the structure of racial discrimination. As a Christian, I dare to undertake this difficult problem from a Korean-American perspective. Korean-Americans were victims of the Los Angeles eruptions, with over twenty-five hundred Korean-American shops attacked, looted, and burned. We are the "oppressed of the oppressed," without political or social protection.

I believe that true reconciliation can take place only when an oppressed group initiates it; only the oppressed can generate a racially harmonious society. Using a Korean and Christian spiritual ethos, I attempt in this book to bring basic healing to a racially wounded society.

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Introduction

One sunny afternoon my son Amos, then eight years old, ran to the house, saying that some children had taken his bicycle. I rushed out with him, got into my car, drove two blocks and found about nine boys riding bicycles. One of the youngest—about five years old—sped away from me on Amos's bike. I shouted aloud, "Stop! Come here." The tallest and oldest boy, the ring leader of the group, was shouting, "Run away! Run away!" The little boy was scared, however, and came back to me. We got back the bicycle with Amos's wrist watch hanging on it. "Are you going to report us to the police?" asked one of the boys. I replied, "I will report the incident, but I will not turn you in to the police." They had a girl's bicycle with them, too. Therefore, I began to moralize with them for a few minutes, and then I confronted the oldest boy (who said he was fourteen years old), demanding that they not do such a thing again. He did not like my reproof and he reviled me. He even threatened me by showing me part of something metal in his back pocket. I was scared, but I asked, "What's that, a gun?" (Ril Beatty, Sr., a civil rights leader, was killed by a seventeen-year-old boy two weeks before this incident—September 24, 1994—when he tried to quiet three rowdy youths in front of his house. He was the father of one of our seminar-ians.) The other kids said, "No." In fact, it was a pair of pliers. In the end, all the boys except the oldest apologized and promised that they would not do such a thing again. However, I felt humiliated by this fourteen-year-old boy and experienced hurt.

I came back home depressed. My mood lasted for several long days. During this time my yearning for a just and peaceful society in the United States became real. It gradually dawned on me that the incident of the bicycle theft brought back memories of the Los Angeles eruptions (I was a resident of the Los Angeles area at that time and witnessed the eruptions). Beyond the problem of racial division, these two incidents revealed the problems of the socio-economic and political structures that result in class division and racial conflict. When Amos's bike was stolen, we lived near the seminary in Dayton, in a predominantly middle-class African-American neighborhood, whereas these children came from west Dayton, a poor neighborhood where, not long ago, one child killed another in order to steal his expensive jacket.

The United States has faced racial and ethnic strife and economic disparity for a long time. It may not collapse suddenly, as the Soviet Union did in 1992, but it can disintegrate slowly. How this country deals with these matters will determine its final destiny.

To provide a portrait of a harmonious ethnic America sociologists have come up with different theories. Amalgamation theories envision a melting-pot America, where all different racial and ethnic groups intermingle and integrate together, finding their new American identity. Assimilation views stress the consolidation of diverse cultures into the dominant culture. On the other hand, cultural pluralism theories project a society where various groups keep their cultural identities, celebrating their diversities. The ideal is unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

In the early part of the twentieth century, melting-pot theories and assimilation theories predominated. The policy of the government, favoring European immigration, made such theories possible. Presently, with more non-European immigrants, the view of cultural pluralism prevails in our social arena. Although racial and ethnic diversity is stressed, we have experienced little unity. These sociological models are insufficient to advance our society to a new plane of racial and ethnic relations. By focusing on racial and ethnic relations, these theories have endeavored to improve them. This focus, however, is the precise reason that they have not accomplished their purposes, for they overlooked the significance of socio-economic and spiritual factors. The nine African-American children did not steal my son's bicycle because he was a Korean-American. The Los Angeles eruptions did not start from South Central Los Angeles, the poor neighborhood of African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans, without reason. Even if ethnic and racial harmony is achieved today in Los Angeles, more racial eruptions will occur tomorrow unless we change the inner-city economy and its socio-spiritual structure and ethos. This book is an effort to prevent such destructive events and to improve ethnic relations.

I would like to address this issue of racial and ethnic relations from an Asian-American perspective. Very little work has been done in this area from either theological or Asian-American perspectives. Most churches, except for some ethnic churches, have been relatively silent on the issue. Few theological models have been suggested on this pivotal matter. There was no map I could depend on to find my way out of the mire of racial and ethnic relations. This project is the result of my own struggle to create such a theological and Asian-American model.

We need a strategy to change our social conditions. By changing the way we see, I believe that we can turn our society into a community of care and equity. To do so, not only a paradigm shift in our thinking but a vision shift is needed. When our inmost vision is shifted, action will come naturally.

To change our social problems, cultural diversity and unity are not enough. Economic and political changes must take place. Simultaneously, we need to change our religion, which is the soul of our culture. Without changing the spirit of the culture, a deep change is unlikely. That is, in order to change our society it is necessary to change our cultural "unconsciousness" and "superconsciousness," as well as the consciousness of the society.

In shifting our images of the self, others, and society, we move from the society (*Gesellschaft*) of oppression, repression, injustice, violence, and mammonism into a community (*Gemeinschaft*) of equity, fairness, and consideration for others.¹ We need, therefore, some theological models for our racial and ethnic relations. The basic motif of this book is *han* (a Korean term describing the ineffable pain of the unjustly oppressed). A deep *han* of this society is its individualistic ideology, which underlies corporate America, its media, culture, and Christianity.

This book suggests a model of *transmutation* as an alternative vision. This theological model surpasses the view of the melting-pot community (assimilation to the one dominant culture) and the view of a culturally pluralistic society, where either unity or diversity is stressed. The vision of transmutation underscores economic, socio-political, and cultural *conversion* as well as their diversity and unity. This model espouses the shared enhancement of various racial and ethnic groups. To change others means recognizing that they have their own bases from which they carry out their dialogue and transforming work. Through strengthening one another, various groups move toward unity. Through finding their own bases, they come to find their own uniqueness (diversity).

The impetus of reciprocal enhancement does not arise from simple theories or models. It emerges from the indispensable and inmost visions that diverse groups share. These visions draw us near and empower all of us to become ourselves.

The methodologies we employ are crucial in our struggle for treating the *han* and the sin of our society. The process of healing is as important as healing itself. Such transformation does not begin with good intentions only. First and foremost, we must *see* each other. Seeing is the power of mutual transmutation. It changes both the seeing and the seen. If we truly see, the seeing will guide us into the next steps to resolve our social *han*. We are here to see each other. Seeing presupposes *being*, causes *understanding*, and elicits *change*.

We can engender a society in which we truly see each other and enjoy each other's company. In this seeing, people's *han* begins to melt. By seeing each other's strength, our capacity comes to its full blossoming. By seeing others' shortcomings with supportive eyes, we help each other to complete our incompleteness.

Augustine set a theological model for his own time in *De Civitate Dei* (*The City of God*). This work was his defense of Christianity against accusations that neglect of the old Roman gods was the cause of the downfall of Rome. Augustine posited two cities, each founded on love. The *earthly city* is built on love of self, even to the contempt of God; the *city of God* is founded on the love of God. Although these two cities are intermingled at the present, only the city of God will last in the end. Built on self-love, all the powerful earthly kingdoms and cities will wither and fade away in spite of their transitory glories, as Babylon and Rome did. Constructed on God's will and salvation, the city of God will stand tall and endure.

The present work treats the current socio-economic and cultural issues against the backdrop of the Los Angeles eruptions of 1992. Analyzing the root causes of the eruptions, I make distinctions between sin and *han*. Discussing and treating the problem of sin as traditional churches have done does not fully address certain issues that our society is facing. To make our society sounder, we must distinguish sin from *han* and provide some relevant prescriptions for their dissolution. Korean-Americans as well as many other ethnic people suffer more from *han* than sin.² Accordingly, Korean-American churches must address the issue of actual *han* more, although they should not neglect the matters of sin. For example, few Korean-Americans kill others; more are killed by others. It is perhaps unnecessary to stress not killing to the victims of violence. We need to keep a balance between *han* and sin, but in the past we have unilaterally emphasized the matter of sin; for the oppressed, we need to put more weight on *han* for their healing and new visions for social change.³

This project consists of three parts. Part I is a diagnosis of social problems from a Korean-American perspective. Chapter 1 describes *han*, sharing tales of *han* as related to the Asian-American experience. Chapter 2 analyzes the *han* of the Korean-American community in the setting of the 1992 Los Angeles eruptions. Their root causes are diagnosed as the expansion of transnational corporations, racial discrimination, redlining, discrimination against entrepreneurs, and classism. Since the *han* of our society is more decisive than its sin in our daily struggle, it is discussed first. We need, however, to be concerned about the issue of sin as well. Chapter 3 treats the sins of the Korean-American community, such as labor exploitation, racial prejudice, and a sexist culture.

Part II suggests some answers to the problems we investigated in Part I. Chapter 4 suggests developing some visions that can lead our society to becoming a community of unity. I mean here vital visions that no group can achieve by itself but can only accomplish in cooperation with other racial and ethnic groups. Without such visions, our society will balkanize further and further—and will suffer more racial

and ethnic conflict. Furthermore, we need some inmost visions that transcend the category of indispensability and reach an intrinsic appreciation of "otherness." When these deep-seated visions grasp us, we are bound to change our world.

Chapter 5 treats an innermost vision of the self in order to surmount American rugged individualism through suggesting the trinitarian self of Asian thinking. No self can exist by itself; the trinitarian self is formed from the relationship between a person and his or her parents. This understanding of the trinitarian self supports *parens, ergo sum* ("I am interconnected to parents, therefore I am") rather than *cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am").

Chapter 6 deals with a Christian understanding of *parousia*, an innermost vision of the future Christian society. Many Christians, particularly Korean-American Christians, are preoccupied with the wrong image of the second coming of Christ. As most Jewish people have waited for the first coming of a glorious messiah, so many Christians await the second coming of a magnificent Christ. Here *parousia* is reinterpreted as the coming of the *han*-suffering.

Part III discusses how to achieve the goals of the solutions. Chapter 7 treats major sociological theories for the racial and ethnic relations of America: the amalgamation theory, the assimilation theory, cultural pluralism, the triple melting-pot theory, and the new ethnic identity theory. Most dominant sociological theories are lacking in the dimension of societal reformation in their striving to bring about a harmonious society; they lack socio-economic analyses and solutions.

Chapter 8 looks into three Korean-American models: a withdrawal model, an assimilation model, and a paradoxical model. On the one hand, in light of the Korean-American models it can be seen that most sociological theories neglect the presence of non-European groups in society. On the other, this chapter indicates the need to develop a relevant Korean-American model for a creative society.

Chapter 9 suggests a transmutation model, a Korean-American model. Instead of espousing sociological theories, this view challenges the horizontal emphases of racial and ethnic relations and treats the communal repentance of each ethnic group as well as the healing of its *han*, an approach the three sociological models lack.

Chapter 10 quests for some insights of Korean thought that might contribute to the wholeness of society. Such concepts as *hahn* (divine greatness and acceptance), *jung* (affection and endearment), and *mut* (harmonious beauty, the zestful art of life) are introduced to express Koreanness and enrich the meaning of cross-cultural transformation.

Chapter 11 illustrates a way of healing *han* at the basic level of the social unit: the family. Presently, we are approaching a post-nuclear-family era. The nuclear family is gradually disintegrating in many sectors of society. We cannot go back to the nuclear family, but we should

move forward to a modified form of the extended family in order to heal the brokenness of the lonely.

Part IV reaches toward an emerging theology of seeing. Seeing is the best gateway of transmuting *han* into the creative strength of *hahn*, *jung*, and *mut*. Chapter 12 discusses the significance of seeing in the Bible. The biblical revelation means nothing without our seeing. The good news is good news when we not only hear it, but also see it. Without seeing, revelation cannot be revelation.

Chapter 13 develops a theology of seeing through which we try to resolve the problems of *han* and sin. Genuine seeing triggers oppressors to repent of their sins and the oppressed to resolve their *han*. This book focuses on the disintegration of *han* and the vision of a new world order. Through what we have in our mind, we see others. Our creative seeing toward others changes their thinking and behavior. Seeing is *understanding* for the oppressors and *upstanding* for the oppressed. It is also transmuting.

Chapter 14 treats the four perspectives of seeing for resolving *han*: visual seeing, intellectual seeing, spiritual seeing, and soul seeing. Through all four types of seeing we transmute *han* into the vision of *hahn*, *jung*, and *mut*. Visual seeing uses an imagery hermeneutics of questioning to unmask the *han*-ridden world. Our senses and perception comprise visual seeing. Intellectual seeing corresponds to an imagery hermeneutics of construction, which transmutes our *han* into the vision of *hahn* at a conscious level. Spiritual seeing engages an imagery hermeneutics of affection, which turns our *han* into the heart of *jung* at an unconscious level. Soul seeing utilizes an imagery hermeneutics of celebration, which changes our *han* into the art of *mut* at a superconscious level. *Mut* arises when the mind of *hahn* and the heart of *jung* are united. It is the zestful art of life in the midst of sorrow and suffering.

Part I

PROBLEMS IN THE KOREAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Han-Talk

THE PORTRAIT OF HAN

When a person puts up with long suffering or a sharp intense pang of injustice, he or she develops a "node" of pain inside—a visceral, psychological, and pneumatic reaction to the unbearable pain. This phenomenon is called *han* in Korean. *Han* is the inexpressibly entangled experience of pain and bitterness imposed by the injustice of oppressors.

The term *han* is too intricate to define completely. Korean *minjung* theologian Young-Hak Hyun, however, describes it as follows:

Han is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wriggle, and an obstinate urge to take "revenge" and to right the wrong all these combined.¹

Han is the void of grief that the suffering innocent experiences. When grief surpasses its sensibility line, it becomes a void. This void is not a mere hollowness, but an abyss filled with agony. *Han* is the abyss of the dark night of grief. As a long or sharp agony turns into a dark void, the void swallows all the other agendas of life, intensifying its hollowness. *Han* is the experience of the powerless, the marginalized, the voiceless of our society. Women, particularly, have experienced the long suffering of dehumanization. Thus, their *han* is deeper than men's.

Social injustice, political repression, economic exploitation, cultural contempt, and war, all of which affect the downtrodden as a whole, raise the collective *han*. When the oppressed undergo suffering over several generations without release, they develop collective unconscious *han* and transmit it to their posterity. In Jungian terms, this is something similar to the "collective unconscious."² Collective uncon-

scious *han* is, however, different from Jung's. For Jung, the collective unconscious is "more like an atmosphere in which we live than something that is found in us."³ Jung's collective unconscious is universal, whereas the collective unconscious *han* is particular to certain persons or groups. Furthermore, for Jung, "the self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of consciousness."⁴ Individual unconscious *han* is not only embedded in the substratum of the self but also in the bottom of a racial ethos. This *han* deepens and hardens generation after generation in the history of the downtrodden.⁵

As an inexpressible feeling, *han* cannot be neatly analyzed. Neither can it be bifurcated, but, for purposes of illustrating its depth, we can distinguish four categories within it. It has two dimensions: personal and collective.⁶ Each dimension has two levels: conscious and unconscious.

At the personal conscious level *han* is expressed as the will to revenge and resignation. At its personal unconscious level, *han* is buried in bitterness and helplessness.

At its collective conscious level, *han* is demonstrated through the corporate will to revolt and corporate despair. At its collective unconscious level, it is submerged under racial, sexual, and religious resentment and the ethos of composite lamentation. Nature has global *han*, expressed through anomalies of climate and natural disasters.⁷

Han was originally a shamanistic term used to describe the unresolved entanglement of the dead, the bereft, and the down-and-out. Shamanism was the religion of the downtrodden, and its goal was to resolve their *han*. It was revived by *minjung* theologians in the 1970s. How to resolve *han* has been a major issue of Korean sociology, anthropology, history, literature, arts, and particularly theology since then.

The term *han* exists in other Asian countries. In Chinese, *hen*, which has the same ideograph as *han*, means "to hate" and "to dislike."⁸ It enfolds extreme passion for vengeance, abhorrence, and cursing. *Hen* holds a much stronger and more negative meaning than *han*. In speaking of remorse, Chinese *hen* contains more intensive meaning than that of Korean *han*. A story in the *Shih Ching* or "Classic of Songs" characterizes the Chinese concept of *hen*: King Fu-Tzu of Wu swore his vengeance against King Kou-Tzu of Yueh, and he slept painfully on top of brush wood in order not to rest his heart of revenge. In turn, King Kou-Tzu engraved revenge in his heart by chewing the dry gall bladder of an animal in order not to forget his original intention of vengeance.⁹

In Japanese, *han* is pronounced *kon*. *Kon* means "to bear a grudge" and "show resentment."¹⁰ The term *kon* is not used by itself, however. People use it in *enkon* to express a deep revengeful mind. *Enkon* or *urami* characterizes the unplaced spirit of the deceased.¹¹ It also sig-

nifies a vengeful mind like the Chinese *hen*. The popular story of the forty-seven samurai in the tradition of the Bushido spirit epitomizes the Japanese *enkon*. The story goes like this: A certain feudal lord was trapped into drawing his sword in the Edo castle and was unfairly forced to commit suicide. His forty-seven samurai vowed vengeance against the enemy lord. One snowy night when half the enemy castle guard was sent away, they stormed the castle and caught the enemy lord. They required him to commit suicide. When he could not do it, they decapitated him. After this vengeance, they quietly waited until the government required their suicide. All Japan chanted their praises, and ever since they have been the unrivalled exemplars of Bushido.¹² This real event took place in 1702 and epitomized the Japanese notion of *han* and its way of resolution.

In Vietnamese, *han* is *han*. Its meaning is similar to the Korean, probably due to their similar geopolitical situations. The *han* of Koreans coincides with the *han* of the Vietnamese. Luat Trong Tran, a Vietnamese-American pastor, summarized the tragic results of the thirty-year war (1945-1975) with the term *han*. Children were born under the thunder of bombers, grew up in battle fields, and experienced a life of destruction. Almost every Vietnamese has experienced the loss of a family member, relative, or friend in the war, which killed two million Vietnamese, injured four million, and left 57 percent of the population homeless.¹³ No other word can better describe their experience of bitterness than *han*.

Korean Buddhist Ko Eun explored the meaning of *han* in other Asian countries. In Mongolian, *han* is *horosul*, and it denotes melancholy and sorrowfulness. In Manchurian, *han* is equivalent to *korsocuka*. Its meaning has two phases: before the fall of the Ching Dynasty, *korsocuka* meant anger and hatred; after its fall, it has changed to mean sadness and grief over tragedy.¹⁴

In ancient Hindi, *han* is expressed as *upanaha*. It consists of two words: *upa* ("near to") and *naha* ("sitting or lying down") and originally meant "being close to me." Later, it evolved into "being attached to something," and then into "malevolence," "loathing," and "rancor." While Korean *han* features its passive character, Indian *upanaha* underscores its active nature.¹⁵

These expressions of *han* in different Asian countries have different emphases. The Korean notion of *han* stresses the more sad, melancholy, and passive aspect of *han* in its meaning and perception of human suffering. Each country's concept of *han* reflects its own geopolitical, socio-cultural, economic, and historical background.

The following narratives are stories of *han* limited to Asian-Americans, particularly to Korean-Americans. They are here because of *han*, and their living in a new land is a *han*-laden life. The stories will explain their *han*ful backgrounds.

THE HAN OF WAR AND THE DIVIDED KOREA

When Germany lost the war in 1945, it was divided because of its potential threat to future world peace. When Japan lost the war in 1945, Korea was divided, with its south occupied by the United States and its north by the Soviet Union. Why was Korea divided, when it was Japan that started the war and was a potential threat to future world peace? Let us review briefly the *han* of the division of Korea.

In 1882 the United States signed a treaty of amity with Korea, which stipulated mutual protection. After defeating China in 1894, Japan waited for the right opportunity to annex Korea. In July 1905 Japanese Prime Minister Taro Katsura and American Secretary of War William Howard Taft secretly met in Tokyo. Their meeting produced the Taft-Katsura Agreement, in which the United States sanctioned Japan's annexation of Korea; in return, Japan pledged not to object to American rule in the Philippines.¹⁶ According to Tyler Dennett, President Theodore Roosevelt wrote to Russia that "Korea must be under the protectorate of Japan."¹⁷ Not knowing of the agreement between Japan and the United States, King Kojong of Korea sent an emissary to President Roosevelt to beg for help based on the treaty of amity. Roosevelt refused even to see Homer Herbert, the emissary, an American missionary and educator.¹⁸

In 1905 Japan forced Korea to sign the Protective Treaty, which empowered Japan to interfere with Korea's governing. In 1910 Japan annexed Korea. For the next thirty-six years Korea suffered under the iron rule of Japan. Such a disgrace as the loss of its national sovereignty had never happened before in the five-thousand-year history of Korea. The deep pain and disgrace of the Koreans were increased when the Japanese imperialists forced them to use Japanese rather than their own language and to change their names into Japanese. For Koreans, their language and the act of naming were the core of their soul.

During the Second World War, Japan attacked the United States. The United States fought back furiously. Struck with nuclear bombs, Japan unconditionally surrendered to the United States in 1945. Patrick Blackett, the 1948 Nobel Prize laureate in physics, claimed that the United States did not need the atomic bombs to win the war against Japan. The all-out air attack on Japan was already accomplishing this. Yet the United States devastated Japan with the two nuclear bombs, slaughtering numerous, innocent civilians. Although many believed that the bombing was necessary to save American lives, Blackett believed that was only a partial reason. The major reason for dropping the bombs was that the long-demanded Soviet offensive was supposed to take its planned course on August 8, 1945. At that time the Soviet armies were moving from the Western front to the Eastern. The United

States feared that Stalin might claim a part of Japan by participating in the winding-down war against Japan. The United States wanted to force Japan to surrender to American forces alone. Therefore the United States dropped the first nuclear bomb on Japan on August 6, just two days before the Soviet Union formally declared war on Japan.¹⁹

On August 14, 1945, the United States received the unconditional surrender of Japan. Just before the war ended, on August 10-11, 1945, the decision to divide Korea was made. During a night session of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee in Washington, D.C., Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy asked two young colonels, Dean Rusk and Charles Bonesteel, to withdraw to an adjacent room and within thirty minutes to locate a place to draw a line across Korea. They chose the thirty-eighth parallel, because it included Seoul in the United States zone.²⁰ Dean Rusk later acknowledged that this line was "further north than could be realistically reached . . . in the event of Soviet disagreement," since the Soviets had already engaged the Japanese in Korea.²¹ When the Soviets complied with the proposed partition, Rusk was "somewhat surprised." This decision on division "has been attributed both to that confusion and to a simple U.S. desire to find a line to demarcate Soviet and U.S. responsibilities in accepting the Japanese surrender."²² Dean Acheson, then the Secretary of State, admitted that "the United States was an initiator, planner, and author of the division of Korea; if it does not bear the whole responsibility, it bears the major responsibility."²³

Korea, a non-threatening country, was divided against its will after thirty-six years of oppression by Japan. What irony! Korea was free from Japan only to be divided instead of Japan being divided. Korea became a historical sacrificial lamb in place of a Japan that had ruthlessly oppressed it for thirty-six years. Even worse was the fact that the division caused the Korean War, an outcome of the Cold War between the communist and capitalist camps. It cost millions of lives and the devastation of a barely liberated country.

In addition, the division has burdened both North and South Korea with heavy military spending. They have spent 30 to 40 percent of their national budgets and 6 to 10 percent of their GNP for national defense. For fifty years both Koreas have lost blood from their own defenses, perpetuating military cultures in both states. The year of 1995 is the year of *Jubilee* (the year of liberty, Lv 25:28), in which rest for soil, reversion of landed property, and emancipation from slavery take place. The blood-drenched soil of Korea should rest, separated families (a hundred thousand) should be reunited, the barbed wire of a divided land should be removed, and refugees should be allowed to have their homes back. The division, the root of many evils in Korea, is the main cause of *han* in Korea, and it is partially responsible for the emigration of Koreans. A large number of Korean women married to U.S. soldiers, their

families, some students, and many refugees from North Korea have immigrated to the United States.

God sent us to the country that liberated Korea and yet had a heavy hand in the division of Korea. Why are we here? What should we do in this country? There must be some missions for Korean-Americans in this country. I believe that one such mission is to be a voice of conscience over the national interests of the United States so that there will not be another Korea. Influencing this country from within to make honorable decisions is the best way for us to contribute to the true national interests of this country. However difficult our task may be, we should raise a voice for those whose voices are ignored in this country. We are not here just to live comfortably or complacently. God calls us to live justly, responsibly, and truthfully. We should not forget our experience in Korea but should use it for converting this nation to make foreign policy decisions that are just and conscientious before God and before humans.

"COMFORT WOMEN"

About two hundred thousand Korean young women and wives were tricked, conscripted, forcibly taken from their homes, or kidnapped on the streets by the Japanese military government from 1941 to 1945. Called "comfort women," they were raped daily by Japanese soldiers.²⁴

Song Ji Kim (alias) recalls, "I was returning home one day when Japanese and Korean men forced me onto a ship headed for Southeast Asia. There I spent four unbearable years."²⁵ Even now, fifty years later, she wakes up every morning with severe pain all over her weary body. Besides persistent migraines, she suffers from intense stomach cramps that are the outcome of a harsh beating by a Japanese soldier during a sexual assault. Compared with her psychological agony, however, her physical sufferings are minor. The memories of her past continue to haunt and torment her.

Although the Japanese conscripted women from several Asian countries, 80 percent of the comfort women were Koreans. They were scattered around the Asia-Pacific region, wherever Japanese soldiers were based. Some were sent to live in rundown buildings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, others to remote rural regions of Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Malaysia, and Papua New Guinea.

Since the Japanese usually provided these women with only small amounts of rice and radishes twice a day, the women were constantly on the border of starvation. Confined to partitioned rooms in stables, storage areas, schools, and temples, these women were coerced to have sex with an average of twenty to thirty and up to seventy soldiers a day.²⁶

Those who refused were punished with physical violence, torture, and brutal rape. Many women suffered from venereal diseases, tuberculosis, and other physical ailments, but no medical care was provided.

Kidnapped at the age of twelve while she was playing with a doll house with friends in her village, Oak Boon Lee testified, "On weekends, soldiers waited in a long line of a few hundred meters. . . . A woman from Bo-Joo contracted venereal disease, was beaten every day and died eventually."²⁷ When these women had free time, they were compelled to do kitchen work. Their conditions were inhuman; they were used for sex, and some were discarded or killed when they became sick. Most "comfort quarters" were quarantined, making escape or suicide almost impossible. When caught trying to escape, some were brought back and ruthlessly beaten or killed. Sung Ja Lee (alias), a survivor, states, "I remember the Japanese soldiers cutting off one of a woman's breasts when they caught a group of us attempting to escape. This atrocity was meant to horrify us."²⁸

Many Korean women committed suicide rather than be forced to have sex with Japanese soldiers. In Japan there is a cliff from which hundreds of Korean women plunged into the sea on the way to comfort quarters. The Japanese call it Tazimazmiski Cliff.²⁹

Since the Japanese government destroyed the documents concerning comfort women, it is hard to obtain detailed historical information. Documents recently found in Korea reveal that the Japanese government conscripted even elementary school students.³⁰

Yoshida Seigi, a former "mobilizer" of Korean women for the Japanese, confessed in an interview that most comfort women from Korea were not recruited but were abducted as slaves. He and his collaborators from the police or military surrounded a village with military trucks and captured young women. By 1943 few single women were available, so they took young married women.

At the end of the war most of these women were left behind to die in isolated areas or were exterminated to conceal evidence of these atrocious crimes.³¹ The soldiers had comfort women stand in front of open graves and then opened fire on them. Sometimes they bombed trenches and caves holding comfort women. There is even an account of some two hundred Korean women forced into a submarine that was later torpedoed.³² Seigi contends that the act of exterminating comfort women was as vicious as the Jewish Holocaust in Germany.

There are still survivors from among the comfort women, and in the early 1990s their story was picked up by news media around the world. In 1992, after forty-seven years of denial, the Japanese government reluctantly acknowledged the existence of comfort women. The Japanese government, however, offered no compensation to the survivors. The women suffer shame, nightmares, physical and mental sicknesses, hopelessness, darkness, and miserable self-esteem. They did not do

anything wrong, but they have borne the shame and false guilt of being comfort women. They were the victims of an atrocity, but they have buried themselves under history. This is their *han*, the unspeakable agony that continues to reverberate in the remote comfort quarters of various parts in Asia.

What can Korean-Americans do for these women? First, we must hear their groaning. Second, we must try to understand the voices of their *han*. Third, we can be amplifiers of their small voices. Fourth, we can work toward the resolution of their *han* through revealing the facts, bringing Japan to justice, and stopping sexual exploitation now happening in the world.

There are 800,000 Koreans in Japan today. Eighty percent of them are second and third generation Korean-Japanese, survivors or descendants of the 2,400,000 conscripted Koreans in Japan in 1945.³³ They are severely discriminated against in Japan. Even after losing the unjust war, the Japanese have continued to oppress the very people they once criminally conscripted and illegally exploited, now by despising them and legally discriminating against them.

The more than one million Korean-Americans are not in the United States for personal reasons alone, but also to help oppressed and maltreated Koreans and other groups in the world. One possible task of Korean-Americans is to be in solidarity with Koreans in Japan and cooperate with their efforts for liberation from oppression and exploitation.

Our loyalty should not be given to any particular country but to the establishment of the society of God. I believe that loyalty to God alone is the true way of caring for this country. God's Kingdom comes through building the society of justice in the United States and our ancestral country. We are here to tell the stories of our original country and also to tell the stories of the United States to our original country. We call ourselves *kyo-po* (bridging people). We build an arch between the United States and our original country through fairness, peace, and truth.

VINCENT CHIN

Vincent Chin's death, an extreme case of ethno-violence, speaks to racism against Asian-Americans. He was a victim of his time. In June 1982 he was bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat in Detroit, where Orientals and "Toyotas" are often rejected. It happened in a bar:

The victim, drafter Vincent Chin, 27, a Chinese American, was at his bachelor party; he was to be married in nine days. His attackers, a father who was a Chrysler foreman and his stepson,

were angry and addled: Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz blamed Japanese carmakers for Detroit's problems, and Chin—Chinese or Japanese, it made no difference to them—was a convenient target. "It's because of you we're out of work," screamed Ebens, who was in fact employed full time. The pair got a baseball bat and beat Chin to death. Said he as he lost consciousness: "It isn't fair."

When Ebens, 44, and Nitz, 23, were sentenced last March after confessing to the murder, Chin's dying complaint seemed all the more apt: Wayne County Circuit Judge Charles Kaufman gave the killers three years of probation and fines of \$3,780 each. He said that the men, who had no prior criminal records, were "not the kind of people you send to prison."

The light sentences enraged newspaper editorialists across the country and prompted Asians to mount a protest campaign. "I love America," said Chin's mother Lily, 63, a naturalized citizen. "I don't understand how this could happen in America."³⁴

Facing strong protests, the Justice Department launched an investigation into Chin's murder in the summer of 1982. Finally, a grand jury in Detroit indicted Ebens and Nitz on new federal charges for conspiring to deprive Chin of his civil rights and killing him on account of his race. The new trial, however, ended in acquittal. The killers have never spent a single day in prison. No more energy was left to protest the verdict. The silence and tears of Chin's mother and Asian-Americans turned into *han* in this country.

This incident was not isolated. The resentment felt in Detroit was directed against the Japanese. New York real-estate tycoon Donald Trump declared on the Donahue television show: "The Japanese are taking advantage of us and ripping us off." He was applauded. "The Japanese are coming in. While we're trying to deal with things in the front yard, they're in the back yard taking over the country," Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca told a group of House Democrats in 1985. Bennett Bidwell, Chrysler official and former president of the Hertz Corporation, went further when he remarked that the best way to deal with the trade imbalance would be to charter the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.³⁵ Such comments revealed not only arrogant discrimination against Japanese but also the mood in society to despise all Asians. Bidwell would not dare to suggest massacring six million Jewish people, even if he detested Jews.

Some unemployed auto workers taking a sledgehammer to a Japanese auto received media attention. Following the footage of laid-off auto workers, Representative Helen Bentley of Maryland with nine of her fellow Republicans jointly smashed a Toshiba boom box on the Capitol lawn on a summer day. The photographers recorded the smiles

of the wrecking party members at the historic moment. Bentley told reporters that the boom-box bashing was not an anti-Asian or even an anti-Japanese gesture, but a simple way to send a message to Toshiba, which sold "highly sensitive technology to the KGB." But none of the products of Kongsberg, a Norwegian firm which sold a related high-tech system to the Soviet Union, was smashed along with the boom box.³⁶ Such a climate murdered Vincent Chin.

Chin's last words, "It's not fair," speak for his own death, the unjust trial, and the widespread animosity against Asian-Americans. It is impossible to imagine that in Detroit two Asian-Americans could bludgeon a white to death with a baseball bat and go free, with only three years of probation and fines of \$3,780. People and the news media would not downplay the incident as they did in Chin's case. They would make sure that such a criminal ruling would not leave a bad precedent for any other case.

These words must have been the last words of Abel to his brother Cain: "It's not fair." These are the words of *han*, reverberating in the hollow space of Asian-Americans' hearts. The many victims of racism barely whisper these words.

THE ABANDONED WOMAN

A Korean-American woman in her thirties walked into the Korean-American Community Center in Atlanta about the time of its closing. "It is all over. I want to die. Before my death, however, I'd like to share my *han*-ridden story to fellow Korean-Americans," said the woman to a counselor.³⁷

She trod the stony road of *han* in Korea as well as in this country. A stepmother who had become a widow during the Korean War raised her. In order to escape poverty, she married an American soldier. She yearned for and worked hard to create a warm and happy home. For eighteen years she was married to him. They had two sons, currently seventeen and thirteen years old.

When they moved to the States, their marriage began to crumble. Her husband frequently had extramarital affairs and harassed her, repeatedly saying that he regretted marrying a Korean woman. Finally, he filed divorce papers. Incited by their father, her children openly persecuted her for her poor English and her Korean background. The older son said, "Mom, get out of this house as soon as possible."

Through hard negotiation, however, she and her husband agreed that she should stay home until the younger son would become eighteen. After making the agreement, however, her husband disappeared, leaving word that he was going to Korea on business. It has been a year since he deserted them.

Because of the hardship of raising two sons by herself, she moved to a big city where there was a Korean-American community and had her children learn *Tae-Kwon-Do*, a Korean martial art. She became acquainted with her children's martial-arts master, who was quite nice to her at first but later showed his prejudice against her because of the interracial marriage in her background. His rudeness escalated to the point where he insulted her before her two sons. One day his abusiveness toward her was so extreme that the police arrested him. His church pastor came to see her in order to vindicate the master, advising her not to victimize him as a scapegoat and to help him get out of prison. Later a disgraceful rumor about her spread in her own church, and her pastor asked her to transfer her membership to another church or not to attend church services for a while.

The woman was rejected by her Caucasian husband because of her Korean background and was maltreated by the martial-arts master because of the stigma of her interracial marriage.³⁸ Even her own church disdained her as a sinner. She could turn to no one and was despondent.

This woman represents many victims of the Korean War caused by the division of the country, the agony of unequal interracial marriages, the Korean social stigma against American soldiers' spouses, the patriarchy of the Korean-American community, and the self-righteous attitude of some Korean-American churches. Her existence was full of *han* from being born in Korea as poor, female, and parentless. By bearing the *han* of Korea imposed by the Cold War of the superpowers, which caused the Korean War, she carried the sin of the world as its sacrificial lamb.

BIASED WRITER FOR FILM PRODUCTION

The media reflect, and sometimes foster, social racism. The film "It Could Happen to You," for example, characterizes a Korean-American grocer couple as unfriendly, overcharging workaholics.

Walking into Mr. Sun's store, the extremely principled New York cop (Nicholas Cage) sarcastically asks, "How are things in the mysterious Far East?" and "You aren't artificially inflating prices, are you?" Under the counter a robber is holding a gun to Mrs. Sun's head. Outside, Cage figures out that a robbery is going on inside because of two clues: Mr. Sun was unusually kind and generous to him (giving him free coffee), and Mr. Sun told him that his wife missed work because of sickness.

Bo, Cage's African-American partner (Wendell Pierce) rejoined, "That bitch would work even if she was dead!" This particular line upset MANAA (the Media Action Network for Asian Americans). MANAA president Guy Aoki protested: "This line lessens the seriousness of the situation and what real-life Korean-American grocers face on a daily

basis. It also adds a tone of hostility not found in any other scene—even with the more hateful Rosie Perez character (Cage's wife)—and is therefore incongruous with the rest of the film.³⁹ And that is not to mention the sexism toward Mrs. Sun ("that bitch"). Such a remark dampens the morale of hard-working immigrants and proliferates the distorted stereotype of Korean immigrant workers, ignoring hundreds of kind, earnest, and generous Korean-American shopkeepers.

Ironically, this film shows sensitivity toward African-Americans, particularly in a scene where Pierce tells Cage of his outrage at a fellow officer's stereotypical image of African-Americans. Pierce represents the present situation of our society; on the one hand, some African-Americans protest discrimination, and on the other, they discriminate against other ethnic groups. Such a double standard will hurt the genuine fight against racism.

Aoki asked the studio to edit out the word "bitch" from future prints in a telephone conversation with Kevin Misher (Tristar Senior Vice President of Production) and Ed Russell (Senior Vice President of Publicity). Russell promised to convey MANAA's concerns to both writer and director but did not believe that the deletion would be made.⁴⁰

The film's writer (Jane Anderson) and director (Andrew Bergman) show what they think exists in our society. They see what they want to see. If they intend to fight against racism, however, they should be consistent in avoiding stereotypes. Instead, they elevate the position of African-Americans by demeaning Korean-Americans. They criticize the diligence of Korean-Americans. We should not apologize for this! Diligence and perseverance should be acknowledged and valued rather than mocked.

Despite such denigration of Korean-Americans, we have been relatively silent. We do not have the strength to counter such injustice. We cannot speak out strongly, but only groan under insult, attack, and maltreatment. This is the *han* of Korean-Americans in this society. No one represents the many Korean-Americans who are hospitable, sincere, and caring, respecting African-Americans and other peoples.

WHITE CHRISTIANITY

Dr. Warren Lee is professor of Asian-American ministry at San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California. In his autobiography he shares two shocking events in his life. The first happened when he was a first-year student at the University of California Los Angeles. One day he was sitting on campus with his two close friends Rick Fries and Leroy Knouse. He grew up with them in an African-American neighborhood in Los Angeles and graduated with them from Manual Arts High School, a predominantly African-American school, in the early 1960s. Rick and Leroy are Caucasians. Then their mutual

friend Steve walked up and started chatting with them. While talking, Steve impetuously invited Rick and Leroy to apply for membership in his fraternity. Aware of Warren's presence, Steve turned and said to him, "I'm sorry, Warren, but our fraternity is for white Christians only."⁴¹ Those three words—"white Christians only"—shattered his Christian identity. For the first time he faced Christian racism.

The second incident occurred when he was a first-year student at the Princeton seminary. One of his classmates invited him to lead a winter youth retreat for his church in Pennsylvania. While he was leading the retreat, the pastor of the church came to see the progress of the program. He was quite impressed by Warren's leadership.

After dinner the pastor took him aside and advised him, warning that what he was about to say would hurt him: "Warren, I like you and it is clear that you are a gifted person. It would be a shame to see so much talent go to waste. You know that the Presbyterian church is 99 and 44/100% white so there's no place in it for you. You should withdraw from Princeton immediately, transfer to law school, and move to Hawaii."⁴² This piece of advice threw him into the pit of depression again.

Christianity in general has been white in this society. In the name of Christ, white Christianity has seduced and deprived the souls of colored peoples. The name of Christ has been used to propagate the subtle message of white superiority. For such white Christians the cross of Jesus Christ symbolizes not their suffering with others but the suffering of others for them.

In spite of the pastor's advice, Warren Lee became an ordained minister and a professor at one of the finest Presbyterian seminaries, instructing seminarians in the true meaning of Christianity. Nothing can prevail over the strength of truth. He was ordained despite the bias of people who tried to place him "where he belonged."

Still, racial discrimination within the church is serious. A visible example is the sharing of church buildings. Along with other Korean-American churches, a number of Korean United Methodist churches have a hard time finding United Methodist churches that are willing to share their facilities with their fellow ethnic Methodist churches. Although Korean-American and Euro-American pastors are appointed by the same bishop of a conference, many Korean-American pastors who start new congregations have to beg fellow Euro-American pastors to rent their buildings to their congregations. They are treated as second-class pastors.

POLICE DISCRIMINATION

Korean-Americans are a politically unprotected, vulnerable group. During the Los Angeles eruptions of 1992, Korean shopkeepers called the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and other officials for pro-

tection from the mobs invading Koreatown. There was no response from the LAPD! Over twenty-five hundred Korean-American stores were burned. The LAPD consciously opted to exclude Koreatown from its protection perimeter.

On the other hand, as looters began to invade major shopping malls, such as the Fox Hills Mall in Culver City, the police stopped them, and business people and residents praised police efforts.⁴³ The downtown businesses were also protected, and the predominantly Euro-American communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and Santa Monica "emerged remarkably unscathed by the riots" on account of the police forces, lauded the westside edition of the *Los Angeles Times*.⁴⁴

In Chicago a similar pattern of police racism was practiced in the early 1990s. After the National Basketball Association championship victory by the Chicago Bulls in 1991, seven Korean-American-owned stores were looted. In June 1992, after the Bulls' second championship victory, the mob damaged and destroyed a total of 350 stores, most owned by Arabs and African-Americans (forty were owned by Korean-Americans). Foreseeing a violent reaction to a victory by the Bulls, the Korean Merchants Association had urged the police department and the mayor to provide some plans to protect them. No response was received from either. On the night of June 14, thirteen hundred police were deployed throughout Chicago. Seven hundred were dispatched to the small northside area to patrol the Euro-American-owned businesses; three hundred were sent to the area around the Bulls' stadium; and three hundred were dispersed in the south and west side, where the small businesses of Arabs, African-Americans, and Korean-Americans were. While the south and west sides were being smashed, 450 state police were standing by, waiting for a call from the police superintendent, who never called them.⁴⁵ These are a couple of conspicuous examples of racist police acts. The racist police attitude itself triggered the wrath of African-Americans and then the police failed to prevent the 1992 riots. The LAPD policy generated the *han* of Korean-Americans. To the LAPD, Koreatown was a waste land, and West Hollywood and Beverly Hills holy lands. Koreatown was a marginalized land; no one came when it cried out for help.

VICTIMS OF MEDIA RACISM

The media of this country also have conjured up an image of a model Asian-American minority, praising these immigrants for having fulfilled the so-called American dream. They have depicted such immigrants as a hard-working, law-abiding, and self-sufficient people. This stereotypical picture of Asian-Americans is dangerous when it is used for chiding other groups. The subliminal message says to other ethnic mi-

nority groups, especially to African-Americans, "This country is not racist. Look at *this* minority group. Why can't you make it in this great country of equal opportunity like this group? You are basically lazy and inferior to the model minority. You deserve your miserable lot."

Sometimes the mass media use inter-ethnic tension to deflect attention from white racism. For instance, in the summer of 1990, when the tension between African-Americans and Euro-Americans was intensified following an African-American youth's death at the hands of Euro-American racists in Bensonhurst, New York, the news media shifted its focus to the conflict between a Trinidad woman and a Korean immigrant storekeeper in Brooklyn, New York. The African-American community in Brooklyn boycotted two greengrocer stores owned by Korean immigrants, and the media, sympathetic to the Korean immigrant-owned Red Apple grocery store, immediately branded the boycott as the act of racism on the part of the African-American community. As the media focused on the tension between African-Americans and Korean-Americans in Brooklyn, the Bensonhurst case slowly faded away. The Brooklyn case was scrutinized for six months.

In 1992 the media concentrated on the Rodney King incident and slowly juxtaposed it with Korean grocer Soon Ja Du's shooting of fifteen-year-old Latasha Harlins. In the Los Angeles area the media contributed to diverting the acute tension between African-Americans and Euro-Americans over the Rodney King incident to tension between African-Americans and Korean-Americans. Many Korean-Americans in Los Angeles believed that Soon Ja Du's killing of Latasha Harlins was wrong. The media, however, depicted Soon Ja Du as a "typical" Korean-American.

The sentence that Judge Karlin assigned Du—community service with a \$500 fine—was unfair. The sentence implied that taking an African-American girl's life is less serious than beating an intoxicated African-American man. Furthermore, this unjust verdict set the stage for an inevitable inter-ethnic explosion.⁴⁶ Personally, I was outraged by the verdict. Du's killing of Latasha Harlins was definitely wrong, and Karlin's verdict was too light. If she had sentenced Du to imprisonment, the results of the Los Angeles eruptions may have been different.

Moreover, the yellow journalism of the media fanned the furious reaction of the African-American community. Headlines in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Examiner* on November 16, 1991, trumpeted: "Korean Shop Owner Freed" and "Korean Grocer Receives Probation." In criminal cases such proclamations of ethnic identification violate standard journalistic practices. No headline dares to announce "Jewish Shopkeeper Convicted" or "Black Man Freed."⁴⁷ Since there had been many incidents between shop owners and customers, the case could have been treated as a case between a store owner and a customer rather than a racial conflict between African-Americans and

Korean-Americans.⁴⁸ The news media, as in the Rodney King case, chose to report it instead as a racial issue. The unfair verdict by an Euro-American judge and the unfair, sensational reports of the major California newspapers contributed to the destruction of Koreatown after the Rodney King verdict.

The *han* of Korean-Americans was that we did not have control over the verdict of the Soon Ja Du case or the bias of the news media. Our destiny was in the hands of the powerful. The media misguided the public, and the police force did not protect us; we were trapped in between. According to Edna Bonacich and Ivan Light, the economy of Los Angeles was revived by Korean immigrant entrepreneurs in the 1970s.⁴⁹ We have worked for the revival of the inner-city economy, but have received undeserved mistreatment.

Major U.S. mass media are controlled by powerful corporations. Eight business and financial corporations own the three major networks (NBC, CBS, ABC), some forty subsidiary television stations, over two hundred cable TV systems, over sixty radio stations; fifty-nine magazines (including *Time* and *Newsweek*), chains of newspapers (including the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*), forty-one book publishers, and various motion picture companies.⁵⁰ They are preoccupied with their own profit. Past events show that they have manipulated public information for their own benefits.⁵¹ The media corporations in Los Angeles certainly would not like to see arson and looting spill over into the Hollywood area. Their media must have worked hard to prevent such a happening in Los Angeles.

We are not struggling against a visible adversary but against invisible foes who control the power of the air. St. Paul shows us the universal dimension of this struggle: "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12⁵²). The media corporations serve only one god. The name of their god is Profit, and in its name they do all kinds of malicious acts. They inform and misinform society; they shape its culture, misguiding its direction.

By merely overcoming our sin in society, we cannot complete cosmic salvation. "The cosmic powers of this present darkness," the forces of evil, produce the structure of *han* in which we are caught. Even after the solution of the sin problem, we need the resolution of *han* to experience a holistic healing and salvation in our society. Jesus Christ represents the strength of truth, which unmasks the injustice of the world. His voice on the cross was not heard by many, but his voice has prevailed over history, because it is the voice of truth. The power of truth, the invincibility of the cross, will overcome the cosmic powers of the

present darkness. The cross of Jesus Christ exhibits the power of evil and the *han* of its innocent victims. With the power of the cross, we should expose the evil structures in our society and heal the wounds of the *han*-ridden.

The Han of the Korean-American Community

While most oppressed groups grapple more with the problem of *han*, most oppressor groups in society struggle more with the problem of sin. This does not mean, of course, that the oppressed commit no sin or that the oppressors suffer no *han*. Both of them experience both sin and *han*.

In the United States most ethnic groups have been preoccupied with repenting their sins, following the lead of the dominant theologies. American Christianity has focused on the problems of the oppressors, while scarcely treating the issues of ethnic communities. A few sources of *han* in the Korean-American community are racial conflict, transnational corporations, redlining, the "middle-agent minority" phenomenon, classism, and a crisis of identity. It is time for all ethnic groups, including Korean-Americans, to address the issue of *han* theologically.

RACIAL CONFLICT

The face of racism in the United States varies depending on the ethnic minority in question. Korean-Americans face two expressions of racism. One is racial discrimination because of their being Asian-American. The other is because of their being Korean-American. As economic hardship in this country increases, anti-Asian Americanism intensifies. As the inner-city economy hollows out, anti-Korean-American attitudes sharpen. First, we will look into discrimination against Asian Americans. Second, we will examine racism directed specifically toward Korean-Americans.

Prejudice against Asian-Americans

Anti-Asian-Americanism has its root in the nineteenth century. Chinese immigrants were welcomed in this country because they would

work hard in undesirable jobs for low pay. Yet they were also rejected because they brought a "strange" culture. Euro-Americans disliked Chinese immigrants so much that Samuel Gompers, founder of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), continually objected to helping Chinese laborers and rejected a union of Chinese restaurant employees within the AFL.¹ In 1882 Congress legislated the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited Chinese immigration for ten years and specifically refused citizenship to Chinese immigrants. In 1886 the Statue of Liberty was dedicated along with the poem by Emma Lazarus welcoming "the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses." This was a mockery to the Chinese.² Congress extended the Exclusion Act for another ten years in 1892 and renewed the Act after the turn of the century. Two decades later the Exclusion Act was extended again, this time applying to other groups.³ The Exclusion Act lasted until 1943.

Encouraged by the Exclusion Act, the Theodore Roosevelt administration confirmed the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan in 1908. According to the agreement, Japan would discontinue further immigration to the United States, and the United States would terminate its discrimination against Japanese already in this country. The Japanese immigration stopped, but anti-Japanese feelings endured.

Laws on citizenship underlined the pervasive anti-Asianism. At first non-whites were prohibited by federal law from becoming citizens. This was modified to extend citizenship to persons of African descent in 1868 and to some Native-Americans in 1887. No modifications were made for persons of Asian descent. The Supreme Court repeatedly interpreted this silence as a constitutional directive against them. In 1943 federal law finally included the Chinese, and first-generation Japanese in 1952.

With Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, anti-Japanese feelings flared. Racism fanned by rumors spread widely. On February 13, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt endorsed Executive Order 9066, which ratified removal of any people considered menaces from designated strategic military areas. Over a hundred thousand people of Japanese ancestry (one-eighth was sufficient) on the West Coast were taken to concentration camps; two-thirds of them were citizens.⁴ They were not allowed to take their household belongings but only personal luggage. They had to liquidate their possessions very quickly. For instance, one woman sold a thirty-seven-room hotel for three hundred dollars. The evacuees lost from 350 to 500 million dollars, averaging nearly ten thousand dollars per family.⁵ In this country, the *yellow peril* has never disappeared; it has only fluctuated with international situations.

Even now, antagonism against Asian-Americans has not dissipated. In 1993, according to the National Asian Pacific Advocate Legal Center (NAPALC), crimes against Asian-Americans numbered 335, and there

were at least thirty murder cases considered hate crimes in the United States. The NAPALC reported that 28 percent of the crimes occurred in homes and 10 percent at businesses, and most of them were perpetrated by Caucasians.⁶

Prejudice against Korean-Americans

Korean-Americans suffer their own unique *han* of racism. Their immigration to this country started with the recruitment of 7,226 Koreans (637 of them women) by the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association between 1903 and 1905. Of these, 1,999 moved to the mainland to work building the railroads. They were the minority of the minorities among the Chinese and the Japanese and suffered more than these two groups.⁷

Koreans replaced the Chinese laborers who were excluded by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. In 1905 Korea became the protectorate of Japan, which stopped emigration. However, between 1907 and 1924 several thousand more Koreans immigrated into this country, most of whom were "picture brides," political activists against the Japanese occupation, or students. With the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 many Koreans came to the United States as refugees or as war brides. The 1965 Immigration Act liberalized eligibility rules, and Koreans could join family members in the United States. The chain migration pattern that resulted led to a fivefold population increase within ten years (from 70,000 in 1970 to 355,000 in 1980).⁸

Korean-Americans occupy a low rung on the ethnic ladder. According to the social distance⁹ ranking developed by Emory Bogardus (based on a predominantly Euro-American sample), Koreans ranked no higher than twenty-seventh (of thirty) during the five periods from 1926 to 1977.¹⁰ From an African-American sample, however, Korean-Americans were nineteenth of thirty-one groups.¹¹

As newcomers, Korean-Americans undergo direct and indirect racism from various groups. Many Korean-American small business people in particular are affected by anti-Asian-American sentiment. For example, in August 1993 a man shot a Korean-American grocer in Washington, D.C., took a potato chip package, and walked out slowly. It was surmised that the motive was not robbery but racial hatred. In the same month someone broke into a Korean-American's house at Rowland Heights, California, and left a burned swastika and racially insulting graffiti on a rug and a wall inside. About the same time, a New York policeman hurled racial epithets at a young Korean-American woman and then hit her. Her "crime" was a parking violation. In September 1993 a liquor store owner and his son in Lake Forest, New York, were beaten by six youths shouting racial epithets. In February 1992 a Korean-American youth, fourteen years old, was chased by twenty youths in the Bronx and was beaten with a baseball bat. In January 1991

Caucasian golfers in Milpitas, California, beat Korean-American golfers, shouting, "Get lost, Orientals!"¹²

STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

For Korean-Americans the racism of the dominant group is one thing and ethnic racial tension is another. We feel inter-ethnic tension particularly in the business world. This tension does not derive simply from cultural and social differences. Some problems Korean-Americans face stem from international economic and political factors. The Korean-Americans in the Los Angeles area, for example, experience interracial conflict with African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans because of economic and political contention among the groups. The 1992 Los Angeles eruptions focused national consciousness on racial and ethnic tension. The events started with the unjust acquittal of the policemen in the Rodney King case but ended with the burning of Korean-American businesses. All these incidents arise from structural problems that cause *han* for Korean-Americans and others. These deep-seated systemic problems of our society need urgent attention and change.

Redlining

The policy of redlining contributed to the Los Angeles eruptions. Redlining is the unethical practice by financial institutions and insurance companies of withholding home-loan funds or insurance from poor ethnic neighborhoods considered economic risks (originally marking these areas off on maps with red lines). In 1974 the Federal Home Loan Bank requested 127 of 180 savings and loan associations in the Chicago area to reveal the geographic locations of their home mortgages and savings deposits; it found that older neighborhoods were receiving far less home loan money than suburban areas. The predominantly white areas in the newer southwestern and northwestern parts of Chicago obtained 4.5 times more in new home loans than the areas of the city where the economically depressed African-Americans lived.¹³

The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) of 1977 bans redlining and empowers regulators to control a bank's requests to expand or merge according to its efforts to meet the credit needs of its diverse constituencies—poor and rich, minorities and majority. Unfortunately, CRA has produced a regulatory mess with large loop holes. Although more than 85 percent of all banks receive satisfactory or outstanding ratings from regulators on the CRA reviews, available data show that CRA has been far from fruitful in eradicating redlining of poor minority neighborhoods or racial discrimination in lending.¹⁴ Recently the Northern Trust Company of Chicago and three of its affiliates, indicted by the Justice Department, agreed to settle scores of loan discrimination claims by

compensating over sixty African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans whose mortgage loan applications were rejected.¹⁵

There are phases of redlining in home loans. The first phase involves increasing the difficulty of securing a home mortgage by imposing high interest rates and terms of under twenty years. The second phase involves cutting off conventional mortgages to a community. Home buyers then need to find financial institutions that will approve FHA-guaranteed mortgage loans. As conventional mortgages disappear, home improvement loans also decline, for some bankers who handle FHA loans do not cover home-improvement loans in areas redlined from conventional mortgages. Consequently, property in redlined neighborhoods falls further into disrepair. Opening businesses in these areas is exhausting because of the difficulty in obtaining bank loans and various kinds of business insurance. Only small mom-and-pop grocery stores exist in these areas. Since immigrants can start their businesses with relatively small amounts of money, they purchase inexpensive stores in these depressed neighborhoods.

A federal law, designed as a step toward abolishing redlining, requires all lenders to show that they are following affirmative-action programs by providing home loans to low-income neighborhoods.¹⁶ In spite of this law, redlining by banks and mortgage companies is conspicuous in African-American ghettos such as Harlem in New York or South Central Los Angeles.

In 1988 the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducted a second national study of housing market discrimination.¹⁷ This study comprises thirty-eight thousand paired tests completed in twenty-five metropolitan areas during the late spring and early summer of 1989. HUD data reveal that real-estate agents provide substantially different information for minority customers about potential sources of financing and are more likely to provide assistance to Euro-Americans in obtaining financing. In more than 20 percent of the audits, an offer to assist in securing financing was provided to Euro-Americans only. Minorities were less likely to be informed about conventional and adjustable-rate mortgages than were Euro-American home buyers and were more frequently told about FHA and VA financing than were their Euro-American counterparts. These government-based financing sources cost more, require more processing time, and have fewer financial institutions participating as loan originators. In addition, there is a ceiling amount that these loans can offer.¹⁸

The 1990 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data inform us that the rate of loan denial increases as the proportion of minority residents increases. And according to Federal Reserve data on mortgages, low-to moderate-income Euro-American applicants had a higher rate of securing loans in 1990 than high-income African-Americans.¹⁹

It is apparent that Euro-American landlords, apartment managers, suburban developers, and real-estate agents have obstructed ethnic minorities, especially African-Americans, in their access to housing in Euro-American areas. The lending policies of various financial institutions segregate ethnic peoples. Local governments have furthered segregation through zoning codes, building codes, and development regulations, as have the FHA and VA regulations of the federal government.²⁰ The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (which bans discrimination in the sale or rental of most housing), CRA, and a few important decisions of the Federal courts, have had little impact on exclusionary tactics.²¹ Various subtle tactics have defeated the purposes of the anti-discrimination policies.

In some cases, governmental policies against redlining are triggered by banks or other financial institutions. A good example is the case of Chevy Chase Federal Savings Bank and its subsidiary, B. F. Saul Mortgage Co. The Justice Department's civil-rights division filed a charge in U.S. District Court that from 1976 to 1992 these two institutions underwrote 97 percent of their loans in chiefly Euro-American areas. The bank and mortgage company had ninety-two offices but had opened no offices in any census tracts that had an African-American majority in the District of Columbia or in neighboring Prince Georges County, Maryland. The government charged that they engaged in illegal redlining by not opening offices in African-American neighborhoods. On August 24, 1994, they agreed to invest \$11 million in African-American neighborhoods to resolve the Justice Department's charges of mortgage discrimination.²² "To shun an entire community because of its racial makeup is just as wrong as to reject an application because they are African-American," said Attorney General Janet Reno.²³

After the investigation began in 1993, the bank opened seven bank or mortgage company offices in African-American areas. The bank denied any discriminatory intention on its part and did not admit breaking the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act or other laws. Nevertheless, it agreed to open offices in African-American neighborhoods, to consider inaugurating others, to advertise its loans in African-American areas, and actively to recruit African-American loan officers.²⁴

Insurance companies practice redlining too. Since a number of insurance companies do not insure businesses in redlined areas, in 1992 most Korean-American small businesses in Los Angeles had no insurance, were underinsured, or held policies with "non-admitted carriers," whose credibility was low. Business owners who held policies with non-admitted carriers assumed that they held valid policies. In spite of their claims of damages of over \$8 million from the eruptions, Korean-American shop owners were compensated only about \$3 million.

Some owners settled for drastically lower compensation because of their immediate need of funds; others are still waiting for promises from their insurance agencies to be met. Litigation against fourteen non-admitted insurance carriers is being conducted by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), Public Counsel's Urban Recovery Legal Assistance, and Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison.²⁵

These practices are common in cities throughout the United States. Many small businesses in Boston's inner city are not insured because most insurance companies refuse to insure stores located in poorer neighborhoods or put their premiums out of reach.²⁶ Accused of these practices, five insurance companies began a drive to provide more coverage to small business owners in Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester.

Despite the redlining occurring in cities across the country, legislation that contained revised CRA regulations was introduced in both the House and Senate on March 30, 1995, that would relieve banks with less than \$250 million in assets—almost 88 percent of U.S. banks—from in-depth scrutiny under the Community Reinvestment Act. The original twelve-factor review was replaced with a streamlined review of only three areas: lending, service, and investment. These regulations became effective January 1, 1996.²⁷

Redlining is an economic, social, moral, and spiritual issue. Regulations alone are not enough to deter the various ways to practice redlining. All ethnic groups should cooperate to resist any kind of redlining practices. They should raise their voices against these practices, stressing the social responsibility of financial institutions. It is necessary to have prevention programs as well, such as requiring social ethics courses in MBA degree programs. Meanwhile, churches need to teach members, particularly youth, the anti-Christian nature of redlining.

Transnational Corporations

The looters of the Los Angeles eruptions represented various ethnic groups. Contrary to common understanding, the issue probably was not African-Americans *vs.* Korean-Americans. It was more likely lower class *vs.* lower-middle class.

The gap between the rich and the poor has widened over the years. The Los Angeles eruptions tell us that race matters are intimately connected with class matters, in part through transnational corporations. Let us examine the eruptions from a global economic perspective.

The capitalist global economy controlled by transnational corporations is responsible directly and indirectly for the eruptions. According to Peter Drucker, the world economy has changed from international to *transnational* since the mid-1970s.²⁸ A transnational corporation does not have clear loyalty to any nation but only to its own profits. For

U.S.-based transnational corporations, this country, as well as other countries, is a target, a potential market.

In the *Wall Street Journal* Blant Hurt depicts Arkansas as a third-world country with a ruling oligarchy, a small and powerless middle class, and a disenfranchised leaderless people. He believes that this can be applied coast to coast.²⁹ Bernard Sanders in the *Los Angeles Times* concurs with Hurt by pointing out three issues: the United States is rapidly moving toward an oligarchy; the United States is becoming a third-world economy; the United States is fast becoming a non-democratic country.³⁰

Transnational companies ravage U.S. cities and countryside as they have third-world countries. Compared with the Japanese economic model, U.S. capitalism is destructive for inner cities. In *Beyond Capitalism*, Eisuke Sakakibara, a senior official in Japan's Ministry of Finance, describes Japan as a "noncapitalist market economy," one that strives to maximize production and employment, as opposed to the U.S. capitalist economy that stresses consumption and return to investors.³¹ U.S. capitalism should learn to keep the balance between profit-making and people's employment.

Ivan Light and Edna Bonacich explain how U.S. investment stimulated Korean immigration in the 1960s, bringing forth labor conflict in U.S. inner-cities. U.S. conglomerates invested in major cities in Korea, attracting farmers and laborers into the cities. The more farmers and laborers concentrated in cities, the cheaper labor became. Meanwhile, farming in Korea declined. The authors contend that the surplus laborers of the working class were absorbed in the United States through U.S. immigration policy.³²

Immigration is a traumatic experience. Living in a strange land itself is stressful. Nevertheless, Koreans immigrate to this country for better living conditions. As Korean immigrants arrive, they look for jobs. Because of the language barrier and cultural differences, they find no jobs commensurate with their skills and training. Thus, they are forced to work in Korean immigrants' stores where they need only minimal English to survive. Eventually they tend to open their own businesses and hire newly arrived Korean immigrants or Hispanic-Americans. In the United States, the basic struggle between employers and employees has been over the issue of compensation for labor. As new immigrants enter the job market, Korean-American immigrant employers prefer hiring cheaper immigrant workers to local workers. Because Korean immigrant shopkeepers pay low wages and offer no benefits package to newly arrived immigrants, they can survive in a tough competitive market, contributing to maintaining cheap labor. Such a hiring pattern among Korean immigrant shopkeepers elicits a conflict between immigrants and African-Americans (local workers). The mu-

tual misinformation on customs, culture, and language, as well as ethnocentrism, escalates the inter-ethnic conflict.

The above shows that the conflict between African-Americans and Korean-American shopkeepers is inherent in the structure of U.S. capitalism. Any immigrant store owners will have some tension and conflict with local groups. They are in inner cities and ghettos to distribute the goods of transnational corporations. Immigrants and local workers compete over little crumbs of the corporations' wealth. Transnational and financial corporations occupy some 40 percent of U.S. trade, including international trade.

Meanwhile, transnational corporations and financial institutions in the United States have caused real wages to fall to the level of the mid-1960s. Economic Policy Institute economists Lawrence Mishel and Jared Bernstein report that more than seventeen million workers were unemployed or underemployed by mid-1992, with an increase of eight million during the Bush administration. About 75 percent of those job positions are permanently lost.³³ In the 1980s, of the limited increase in total wealth "70% accrued to the top 1% of income earners, while the bottom lost absolutely," says M.I.T. economist Rudiger Dornbusch.³⁴

In the entire globe, approximately 900 million of the world's 5.5 billion people are unemployed. Free-market capitalism created such massive unemployment through its contemporary servants—automation and modern communications. While some leaders worry about their national unemployment state, business people cash in on the global oversupply of workers. They spread the corporate culture.³⁵

Furthermore, transnational corporations control international financial institutions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the Group of Seven industrial nations are designed to serve the interests of transnational corporations and financial institutions. These institutions reap the harvest of international trade. The World Bank reports that protectionist practices by the industrialized countries slim down the income of third-world countries by nearly twice the sum of official aid to them. With the help of the programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, these protectionist measures have doubled the gap between rich and poor countries since 1960. Most of the rich countries in the past decade have increased protectionism, with the Reaganites waging wars against economic liberalism. Resource transfers from the poor to the rich countries added up to more than \$400 billion from 1982 to 1990. For the savings and loan associations and transnational corporations "free-market capitalism" means "risk free."³⁶

GATT and NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) should be understood within this frame of self-interest. The primary objective of the United States in these treaties is to protect the interest

of its "national" corporations. The U.S. International Trade Commission estimates that U.S.-based companies will collect \$61 billion a year from third-world countries, provided that U.S. protectionist measures are accepted at GATT.³⁷

The Labor Advisory Committee, instituted by the Trade Act of 1974 to advise the executive branch on trade agreements, concluded that NAFTA, an executive agreement on August 12, 1992, would be beneficial for investors but harm workers in the United States and probably in Mexico. NAFTA will help U.S. agribusinesses wipe out Mexican corn farming and drive farmers from rural to urban areas, depressing already low labor wages even further. According to economist David Barkin, labor's share of personal income in Mexico plummeted from 36 percent in the mid-1970s to 23 percent by 1992.³⁸ Senator Ernest Hollings argues that the direct effect of NAFTA is to underpin Mexico's one-party state and the corrupt oligarchy that regulates its politics and economy.³⁹ In the United States, after twenty-two months of NAFTA, nearly fifty thousand Americans have lost their jobs. This prompted a bipartisan group of lawmakers to drive for a renegotiation of the free trade pact.⁴⁰

In international trade transnational corporations reap enormous harvests. They undermine the infrastructures of the national as well as the foreign economy, shattering local communities through relocations, creating friction between immigrant workers and local workers, and driving out local industries and businesses through competition.

The "Middle-agent Minority" Phenomenon

There is another factor that contributed to the Los Angeles eruptions and increases the *han* of Korean-American business people: the "middle-agent minority" phenomenon. This theory was developed by observing minority groups in the world: Jews of the diaspora; the Chinese in Southeast Asia; East Indians in Burma, Uganda, and South Africa. According to this theory, the middle-agent minority group acts as a buffer between dominant and oppressed groups of society. In times of socio-economic stress, the middle-agent minority provides a target for the anger of the exploited yet is itself socially isolated and politically unprotected. The buyer-seller relationship is inherently one of conflict, and this situation becomes worse when the buyers are poorer than the sellers and the sellers are immigrants or foreigners. Sociologist Herbert Blalock reasons that middle-agent minorities easily become a target of attack by the angry downtrodden in times of crisis because (1) immigrants and foreigners are visible; (2) they have economic power but no political power, thus no political protection; and (3) they are the symbolic representatives of the dominant group in the eyes of the oppressed.⁴¹

Sociologists Bonacich and Light decided, however, that the middle-agent minority theory was too restrictive to describe Korean immigrant business people in the United States. They widened their terminology from "middleman minorities" to "immigrant entrepreneurs."⁴² The first reason they broadened the term was that Korean immigrant entrepreneurship takes place in a developed society, whereas the middle-agent minority theory arose from third-world contexts. The second reason was that while traditional societies disparage commercial roles and the minorities that fill them, U.S. society treats small business owners as cultural heroes. The third reason was that while the middle-agent minority theory features sojourning minorities—such as Chinese, Jews, and Gypsies—whose historic status is that of pariahs in society, Korean entrepreneurs have no tradition of wandering through the world as commercial middle-agents.⁴³

Despite this new term developed by Bonacich and Light, I will keep using the term *middle-agent minorities* because the theory runs parallel with the situation of Korean-American business people in the Los Angeles area. Indeed, the economy of the South Central area of Los Angeles is turning into that of a developing country.

Korean-American shops in the Los Angeles area became the targets of looting and arson during the Los Angeles eruptions in part because they represented the face of the dominant group. But in addition they were identified as the oppressors who exploited African-Americans and despised them. The New York boycott of the Red Apple Grocery and the Latasha Harlins cases stoked anti-Korean-American feelings in the African-American communities.⁴⁴ So Korean-American storekeepers effectively functioned as a buffer between Euro-Americans and the oppressed and poorer groups of society. When the verdict of the Rodney King case was announced, Korean-American store owners became the target of the anger of the outraged African-Americans. Located between the South Central Los Angeles of the suppressed and the Hollywood of the dominant group, the Korean-American community was severely attacked and damaged.

Because of unemployment or underemployment many highly educated Korean immigrants have been driven to open their own businesses (Korean immigrants' self-employment rate is higher than that of any other ethnic group in the United States⁴⁵). With the help of relatives, friends, or *kye* (a small rotating credit group that allows its members money on a rotating basis to gain access to even more additional capital), they purchase small mom-and-pop grocery stores in rather inexpensive areas. A 1984 Chicago survey showed that 34 percent relied on a *kye* for their businesses.⁴⁶

In South Central Los Angeles a number of Korean immigrants bought their grocery and liquor stores from African-American owners. Many of these stores had been owned by Jewish people before the Watts erup-

tions of 1965. One aftermath of the Watts event was the exodus of the Jewish people from that area. In the mid 1960s African-American entrepreneurs obtained these stores for low prices (around \$80,000, or twice monthly gross sales), assisted by the easing of government-backed loans. But in the late 1970s and early 1980s the deregulation of liquor pricing (in 1978) and subsequent price wars, combined with the high-risk nature of the job, elicited a sell-off of the stores to Korean immigrants who were looking for such opportunities. It was a good time for African-American entrepreneurs to sell; selling prices had risen to about five times monthly gross sales or \$300,000.⁴⁷

After purchasing the stores, Korean-American owners worked to establish their businesses, often without considering their neighborhood problems. This contributed to the conflict between Korean-Americans and African-Americans. It would be ideal for more African-Americans to purchase back businesses from Korean-Americans in their own neighborhoods.

Clearly redlining, the capitalist global economy, and the middle-agent minority phenomenon lie behind the eruptions that occurred in Los Angeles on April 29. These are not only immediate causes of the eruptions, however, but symptoms of an unjust social structure. To prevent such eruptions, we should collaborate to abolish covert and overt redlining policies of financial institutions and insurance companies. Further, small business ownership in South Central Los Angeles and other ethnic enclaves must shift. Until ethnic groups own most of the businesses in their own communities, racial unrest will recur. Korean-American businesses need to move slowly out from these communities, with local people taking over most businesses in their own areas.

Classism

The extensive participation of various ethnic groups in the looting following the Los Angeles eruptions indicates that class factors as well as racial ones played a significant role in the eruptions. The verdict of the Rodney King case ignited not only racial outrage but also became a channel to release the pent-up indignation of the low-income class. The Los Angeles eruptions were not an accident but rather the consequence of the poverty experienced by the oppressed for the past few decades.

Since the 1965 Watts riot politicians have not kept their promises to improve conditions in the area. Few of the recommendations of the McCone Commission report were carried out, and Caucasians moved to the western part of the city or to the suburbs. In 1976 the Euro-American middle class succeeded in a tax revolt—Proposition 13—to dump the burden of the urban poor whom they left behind. It was a bad di-

voiced with no alimony for the urban poor.⁴⁸ For example, no public investment was made in the education of inner-city youths.

The economic gap between Caucasians and African-Americans has widened since 1965. In 1992 the poverty rate in South Central Los Angeles was more than two times higher than the national average (30.3%); dropouts from the labor force made up close to half (41.8%) of the adult population; about one-quarter (24.9%) were on welfare.⁴⁹

It was estimated that in 1993, 39.3 million Americans (15.1%) were below the official government poverty level. In 1983, 32.4 million (13.1%) were poor. Median household income, adjusted for inflation, dwindled from \$33,585 to \$31,241 over the period.⁵⁰ According to a 1994 report, about twenty-two million people, 10 percent of the total population, are hungry or depend on soup kitchens or food stamps. The Internal Revenue Service reveals that the richest 1 percent of U.S. households possessed 36 percent of the nation's wealth in 1989 (up from 31 percent in 1983).⁵¹ The Congressional Budget Office reports that between 1977 and 1989 the wealthiest 1 percent of American families hoarded 60 percent of the growth in after-tax income, while the poorest 40 percent of families experienced declines in income with the bottom 20 percent of poor families suffering a 9 percent income loss. In the same period CEO (chief executive officer) salaries rose from 35 to 120 times the average worker's salary.⁵² Economic historians document that the concentration of wealth at the top, begun in the 1960s, accelerated in the 1980s. This reflects the national income disparities that marked the late 1800s and early 1900s and were halted only by the Great Depression.⁵³ The recent phenomenon has a tie with the unbridled capitalism and political and bureaucratic corruption in the 1980s: corporate mergers, junk bonds, and financial mismanagement plagued by deregulation and the multi-billion dollar Savings and Loan crisis.

Further, in 1994, federal expenditure for national defense was \$279.9 billion, in contrast with an expenditure for education of \$50.8 billion.⁵⁴ In other words, the federal government spent over five times more for national defense than for education. In the present system many young urban dwellers feel deep frustration and despair. They have little education, no jobs, and no future. For them, the only solution they see may be to bring down the present system of society.

Identity Crisis

First-generation Korean-Americans who have lived in this country for a long time usually undergo an identity crisis, especially if they return to visit Korea. They realize that they are neither fully Koreans nor fully Americans. And most second-generation Korean-Americans experience role-confusion at home, in schools, and in society.

I am well acquainted with the family of a teenage girl named Julie (not her real name). Julie is undergoing a serious identity crisis. A se-

nior in high school, tall (5'9"), and "thin," she is a beautiful girl and a good student. However, because her fellow students have mocked her as a "flat nose," "flat face," and "Chink" for a long time, Julie has lost her sense of identity and self-esteem. Indeed, she has become seriously depressed. Although Julie was born in the United States, she feels estranged from this country; she does not have a sense of belonging. At home she feels not quite Korean; at school she is not fully accepted as an American. Caught in between the two cultures, she has been torn apart and has even considered committing suicide. Why in the world should such a fine young woman think of ending her life? It is *han* that she has to undergo such a struggle of identity because of her Korean heritage. Such a struggle is very common among Korean-American and other ethnic youths.

Another young woman disclosed the *han*-ridden life of her immigrant home:

I am a high school girl. Because my parents always work, I don't have enough time to share something with them. My mom works as janitor during the day and as a tailor at night. My father works at a gas station during the week and at a hotel on weekends. Frankly speaking, my sister and I are very disappointed that we don't have enough time with our parents. Is there any way to persuade them that we need parents more than money?⁵⁵

This girl endured the emptiness of immigrant life. In the absence of her parents, any economic success would be meaningless. Her letter shows that many immigrant families tend to lose the meaning of life in busyness. For what do they have to survive and for whom do they bring financial success? A parentless home is no home. They live a life without content.

A third-generation Japanese-American articulates his identity-confusion in a poem. He thinks that he is an American. But people who see his Asian appearance constantly question his nationality.

Who am I?

I sometimes wonder.

Am I Japanese?

Am I American

or just both?

I am me, a human being.⁵⁶

Erik Erickson pointed out that a healthy identity includes "the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others."⁵⁷ He pointed out that adolescents can be strongly clannish

and cruel in their exclusion of those who are unlike them in skin color, cultural background, tastes, and habits.⁵⁸ Thus many Korean-American and other ethnic youths suffer feelings of exclusion and the loss of self-identity. Their heart is broken in *han*—the feeling of helplessness.

To Erickson, it is important to have the double requirement for ego-identity: a sense of historical and cultural connectedness with one's past, present, and future; and a sense of belonging in a community. When people lack these elements, they feel marginal and may withdraw into self. The loss of self-identity results in role-confusion, a sense of inauthenticity and feelings of shame and worthlessness. This disconnectedness between the past and the present is experienced by many Korean-Americans, particularly the young.

RESULTS OF STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS

Korean-Americans and other ethnic people live as second-class citizens in their own country. The dominant groups in this country often remind them of their "inferiority." They do not treat Korean-Americans as fully equal with them; something is missing in the Korean-American and Asian-American face, appearance, speech, behavior, thinking, and working.

Even though Korean-Americans succeed in their careers or businesses, they feel left out of society and thus feel failure. By internalizing the negative projection of the dominant group toward them, they feel a certain gap between their own values, behavior, and identity and the dominant group's values, behavior, and identity. When they realize that the dominant group will never fully accept them, they experience marginality. Their marginal situation creates anxiety, confusion, and insecurity.

We have discussed the *han* of Korean-American communities, centering on the Los Angeles eruptions in 1992. Some of the *han* results from racial and ethnic conflict, redlining, the work of transnational corporations, scapegoating, classism, role-confusion, police discrimination, and media bias. One of the deepest causes of *han* is that the world has shaped us, and we are unable to determine our own destiny. We have worked hard to develop our latency, but our efforts have been thwarted by outside forces. We cannot give up, however, for we are called from above to use our *han* as an opportunity to change the world.

The Sin of Korean-American Communities

One of the major problems for Korean-Americans is fear. Out of insecurity, many Korean-Americans withdraw into their own enclave and tend to be exclusive, losing the opportunity to know other groups. Instead of enhancing respect for other groups, such isolation produces indifference toward other groups or fosters prejudice and misunderstanding. Within the Korean-American community the tendency to withdraw nurses the sins of racial prejudice, sexism, and the practice of labor exploitation.

RACISM

Korean-Americans have been discriminated against by Euro-Americans since Korean immigration started. Racism is original sin, according to Jim Wallis, editor of *Sojourners*. Racism consists of prejudice and discrimination. Discrimination is an outward act, which is criminal; prejudice is an attitude, which is intangible. It is an anti-Christian attitude. Although they may not overtly discriminate against others, many Korean-Americans have prejudice against other ethnic groups, particularly African-Americans. The pejorative depiction of African-Americans in the U.S. news media prevails throughout the world. It is no accident that then Japanese prime minister Yasuhiro Nakasone bluntly remarked in 1986: "The level of intelligence in the United States is lowered by the large number of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans who live there."¹ Nakasone did not know that nurture (as well as nature) is the decisive factor in human development. I.Q. tests were given to all children over four years of age in 101 transracial adoptive families when the adopted children were seven years old (on average) and once more when they averaged seventeen years of age. The findings suggest that the influences on intellectual development in the sample of African-American adoptees raised in Caucasian families are similar to those for children in the ma-