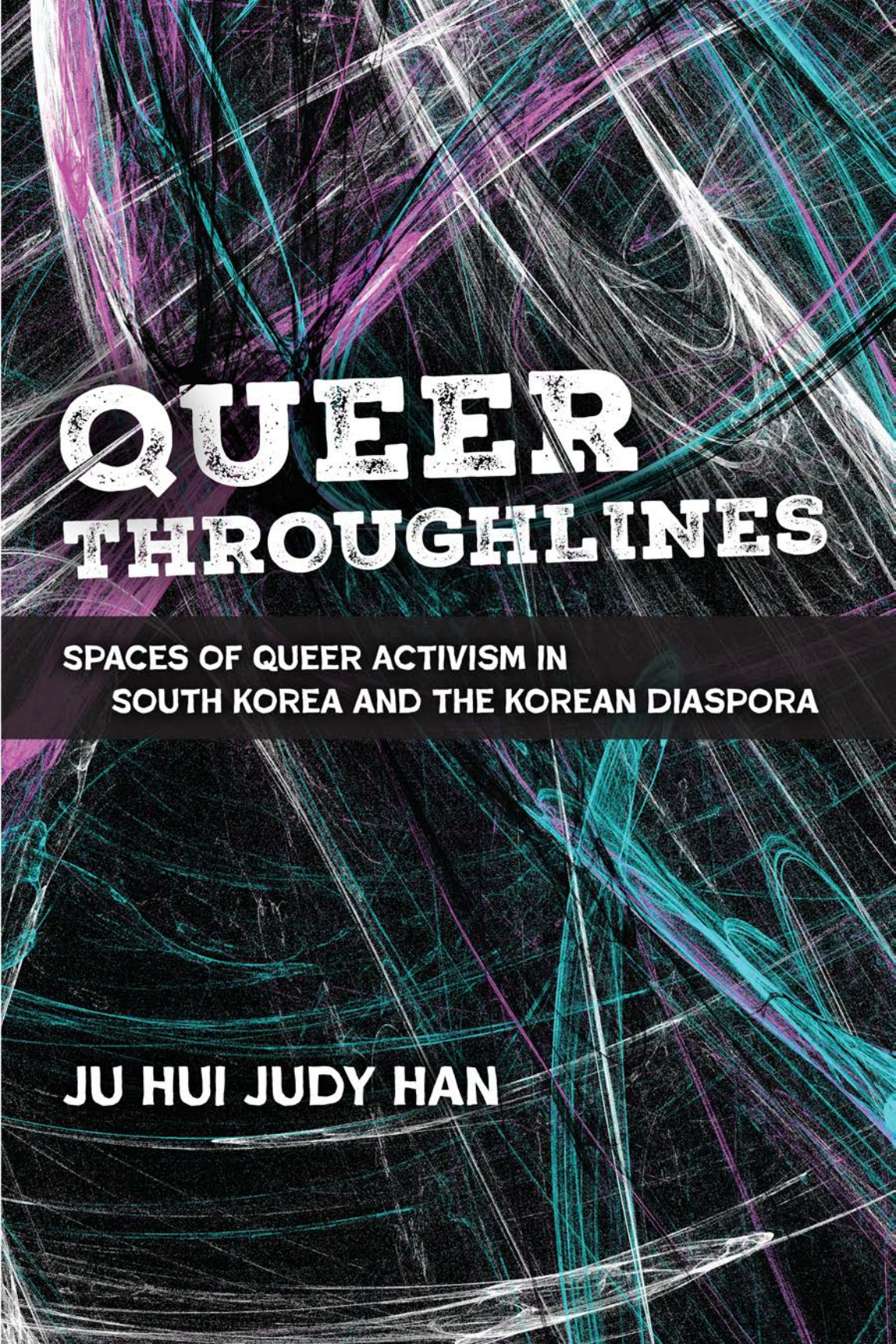
QUEER
THROUGHLINES
SPACES OF QUEER ACTIVISM IN
SOUTH KOREA AND THE KOREAN DIASPORA
JU HUI JUDY HAN

Queer Throughlines

The Global Queer Asias series provides an interdisciplinary platform for conceptual, archival, and ethnographic research that pushes academic discussions of Asia in new directions. The series publishes groundbreaking books from both established academics and rising scholars with innovative rubrics, frameworks, and agendas. Works in this series should engage with inclusively defined "queer" issues, that is, the social and cultural dynamics of gender and sexual diversity. Though situated in geographic sites typically associated with the label "Asia," this series pushes for comparative and global perspectives and calls for rigorous attention to themes, approaches, and social-cultural patterns that either emerge from cross-border movements or transcend regional and national boundaries. Studies in which diaspora and migration experiences come to the fore are especially welcome, as is research that brings critical race/ethnic theory, disability studies, and other intersectional approaches to bear on inter-regional studies outside the modern West.

Queer Chimerica
A Speculative Auto/Ethnography of the Cool Child
Shana Leodar Ye

Queer Throughlines
Spaces of Queer Activism in South Korea and the Korean Diaspora
Ju Hui Judy Han

Queer Throughlines

Spaces of Queer Activism in South Korea and the Korean Diaspora

Ju Hui Judy Han

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Glossary

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Chang'ae Yŏsŏng Kong'gam (장애여성공감; Women with Disabilities Empathy)
Ch'odonghoe (초동회)
Haengsŏng'in (행성인 / 행동하는 성소수자 인권연대; Haengdonghanŭn Sŏngsosuja Inkwŏnyŏndae; Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights of Korea)
Hantonghyŏp (한동협 / 한국 동성애자 단체 협의회; Korean Gay and Lesbian Alliance)
Han'gich'ong (한기총 / 한국기독교총연합회; The Christian Council of Korea)
Han'giyŏn (한기연 / 한국기독청년학생연합회; Ecumenical Youth Council in Korea)
Haptong (합동 / 대한예수교장로회); The Presbyterian Church of Korea–PCK Haptong)
Kajok kusŏngkwŏn Yŏn'guso (가족구성권 연구소; Institution for the Right to Found Family)
Kijang (기장 / 한국기독교장로; The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea—PROK)
Minkahyŏp (민가협 / 민주화실천가족운동협의회; Association of Families of Political Prisoners for Democracy)
PFLAG Korea (성소수자 부모모임; Sŏngsosuja Pumomoim; Parents and Families of LGBTAIQ People in Korea)

Sappho (사포)
Sumdol Hyanglin Church (섬돌 향린교회)
Taedong'in (대동인 / 대학 동성애자 인권연대; Taehak Tongsŏng'aeja Inkwŏnyŏndae; Association of Lesbian and Gay for Liberation)
Tonginhyŏp (동인협 / 한국동성애자인권운동협의회; Korean Association of Gays and Lesbians for Human Rights)
Tongilyŏn (동인련 / 동성애자인권연대; Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights of Korea)
Yŏnbunhong ch'ima (연분홍치마; PINKS)

Note on Romanization, Translation, and Pronouns

Following scholarly conventions, I primarily use the McCune-Reischauer System in this book to romanize Korean-language words and names of places, individuals, and organizations. I acknowledge that this will likely frustrate non-academic readers who are unfamiliar with the McCune-Reischauer System or those who prefer the Revised Romanization System. To improve readability for Korean readers, I provide the Hangul in parentheses at the first occurrence of most romanized words and names, for example, Yŏnbunhong Ch'ima (연분홍치마).

As with all rules, there are exceptions. I use unconventional romanizations of personal names if they are already widely in use. In such cases, I provide the Hangul and the McCune-Reischauer Romanization in parentheses at their first appearance, for example, Lim Borah (임보라; Im Pora). I use the McCune-Reischauer romanization for all place names with the exception of Seoul (서울; Sŏul) and place-based events such as the Queer Culture Festival in Daegu (Taegu) and Busan (Pusan).

For English words used as loanwords in Korean, such as "gay" (게이; kei), "lesbian" (레즈비언; lejŭbiŏn), or "trans" (트랜스; t'uraensŭ), or in the book title, *Feminist Moment* (페미니스트 모먼트; *P'eministŭ Momŏnt'ŭ*), I provide the Hangul and the McCune-Reischauer Romanization in parentheses at their first occurrence but subsequently use the original English word rather than re-romanize the loanword.

Most Korean organizations are best known by their abbreviated name in Korean. In such cases, I romanize the abbreviated name and provide the

alternatives at its first occurrence, for example, Taedongin (대동인 / 대학 동성애자 인권연대; Taehak Tongsŏngaeja Inkwŏnyŏndae; Association of Lesbian and Gay for Liberation) and Haengsŏngin (행성인 / 행동하는 성소수자 인권연대; Haengdonghanŭn Sŏngsosuja Inkwŏnyŏndae; Solidarity of LGBT Human Rights of Korea). Please note that many Korean organizations and publications have an English version of their name, though they do not always match the Korean name exactly in meaning. I include them as they are, rather than retranslate them. For a complete list, please see the glossary.

In cases where preferred gender pronouns are available, they appear after the name in parentheses, following the name in Hangul. I sometimes use the pronoun "they" as a gender-neutral pronoun, especially when the preference is unknown.

All translations are mine except when noted.

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Introduction

> The feminist identity and activism I developed in the student movement organization I was part of during my university years . . . evolved into what can be called movements for minority women, sexual minority rights, and queer activism. Of course, this process is not linear and remains simultaneous and complex. . . . I have at times been at odds and distant from some feminist movements and certain feminist individuals. But now, perhaps we can consider how to build relations from our changed positions and think about how we can stimulate, support, and compete with each other in order to contribute to creating more livable conditions.
>
> —NA YOUNG-JUNG, *FEMINIST MOMENT*[1]

> Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.
>
> —DOREEN MASSEY, *FOR SPACE*[2]

What does it mean to tell a queer story? Who gets to tell? This book threads through many sites of queer politics in South Korea and the Korean diaspora to offer stories new and old and think more deeply about the space of relations. To trace one of those threads, let me begin with a series of film screenings in Southern California that I helped organize and host in the spring of 2023. The weeklong events were built into an undergraduate gender studies course I was teaching at UCLA as an exercise in community-engaged, public-facing scholarship. The course was on the subject of Korean mothers and queer feminist politics and the syllabus covered a range of ordinary and extraordinary mothers and mother figures of which there were abundant examples: selfless immigrant moms and their sacrifices, unmarried/single mothers confronting

stigma and discrimination, mothers of Sewol ferry victims mobilizing grief into a powerful movement, and other mothers and grandmothers enmeshed in contemporary dynamics concerning generational trauma, transnational adoption, and reproductive justice. The course examined motherhood as a complex and endlessly fascinating site of gender and sexuality politics, and it was entirely fitting to feature *Coming to You* (너에게 가는 길; 2021), a poignant independent documentary film about two South Korean mothers and their queer and transgender (adult) children finding their way to one another and becoming part of a dynamic social movement.

The film had already screened widely throughout South Korea and received praise for its sensitive and thoughtful storytelling. Directed by Byun Gyuri (변규리; Pyŏn Kyu-ri) and produced by PINKS, the acclaimed queer feminist film and media activist collective better known by their Korean name, Yŏnbunhong Ch'ima (연분홍치마), *Coming to You* weaves together two main parallel narratives: veteran fire fighter Nabi (나비, she/her) and Han-kyŏl (한결, they/them) as they tackle a myriad of legal and bureaucratic obstacles for Han-kyŏl to access gender affirming care and change their legal gender; and flight attendant Vivian (비비안, she/her) who embarks on an unexpected journey to better understand and support her son Ye-jun (예준, he/him) when he comes out as gay. In a storyline structure that is common to coming out narratives, each mother initially experiences a period of introspection and adjustment, and though neither mother reacts horribly—I have seen far worse—their first reactions are not entirely positive, either. They say the wrong things and stumble over how best to express support, and they cry for reasons that are not always clear—is it sadness, pain, remorse, or something else? *Coming to You* documents Nabi and Vivian as they struggle to come to terms with their children's gender and sexual identity, gaining knowledge and learning about each other along the process, and rising to the challenge to accept the changing contours of their family relations. This experience turns out to be an empowering opportunity for personal growth, and the two mothers become outspoken activists, enthusiastic allies in fights for LGBTQ equality. It is by all means an uplifting film. Unapologetic in its positionality as coming from within South Korea's vibrant progressive media activism community, *Coming to You* presents an intimate portrait of individuals engaged in social activism, highlighting the crucial need for parents to mobilize for change that extend beyond their own immediate family members.

Nabi and Vivian are cast perfectly for the film's storyline. They are charismatic core members of Sŏngsosuja Pumomoim, also known as PFLAG Korea (성소수자 부모모임; Sŏngsosuja Pumomoim; Parents and Families of LGBTAIQ People in Korea), which has emerged as an important voice in

Fig. 1. Promotional poster for *Coming to You* screening events in Southern California, May 1–6, 2023.

queer and trans activism, committed to fostering critical conversations with families, faith-based communities, student groups, and so on. The two mothers are both funny and incisive, confident and welcoming, and they have traveled widely to present the film at over a hundred screenings since the film's release in 2021. In fact, they have spent so much time together that they have even coined a couple name for fun, NaVivian (나비비안). According to a story recounted by someone close to the film, a festival programmer in Europe once mistook the premise of *Coming to You*, apparently after seeing the poster (see figure 1), to be a story about a lesbian couple and their filmmaker child. We had a big laugh over this story when we gathered in Los Angeles; it was not the intention of the marketing team or the graphic designer to mislead anyone or to make such a "lesbian-looking" poster, but here they were, celebrating a kind of a queer family. The rapport among the director and NaVivian was evident. The documentary, after all, started when PFLAG Korea purposely invited Yŏnbunhong Ch'ima to document the story of their activism, and shooting and editing took several years of close collaboration. What has transpired in the process was camaraderie, friendship, and a sense of what I would call a queer kinship, an idea I will return to later in this introduction.

The weeklong series of events in Southern California in 2023 involved a grueling schedule as Byun and NaVivian traveled locally to meet with diverse public and campus audiences at UCLA, UC Irvine, Pasadena City College, and California State University, Northridge. The culminating event was held at the gorgeous independent art space called NAVEL in downtown Los Angeles on May 6, 2023, a public screening organized in collaboration with UCLA and three key community groups: PFLAG San Gabriel Valley–API, Korean Youth and Community Center (KYCC), and an arts programming collective called GYOPO. The heartfelt scenes and uplifting storylines of *Coming to You* resonated palpably with the audience at all five events, especially with the queer and trans Korean Americans and their families in attendance. Rainer Lee, a self-identified trans student and the editor-in-chief of OutWrite Magazine, wrote after the UCLA screening, "Nabi's overwhelming, steadfast love for Hankyeol [Hankyŏl] moved the audience to tears at the screening . . . a silent black screen followed her interview scene, and in those few seconds of quiet, the sniffles of the audience united us in a mostly silent understanding."[3]

And it was not just tears and sniffles in the room. The audience cheered and applauded, sighed and grunted as though on cue, following every twist and turn in the film with great interest and empathy. The director Byun Gyuri later recollected that she heard more laughter at the LA community screening than she had ever heard, even compared to the over a hundred other screenings in South Korea. She later sent me a short reflection she published

in a progressive South Korean media activist journal in which she wrote: "I remember being surprised once again by the reactions from the audience that filled the venue with over two hundred in attendance . . . we were filled with energy from the support and encouragement we received from the audience. It was truly a grateful opportunity to meet and greet LGBTQ parent groups and other diverse networks active in the United States."[4]

It was no surprise that *Coming to You* resonated with the members of PFLAG San Gabriel Valley–API in attendance, a chapter dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQ Asian Americans and their families. Their work was so similar, the shared concerns so relatable. A mother who attended the community screening with her gay son and his partner could barely contain her joy in meeting others just like her son and mothers just like herself. Another participant in the audience came up to me afterwards and said that it felt cathartic, the film *and* the community screening. As a young Korean American trans man, they said the space felt like a gathering of unicorns. They had not seen an audience that trans, that queer, that multigenerational, and that Korean all at once.

Changing Family Contexts

Though the film *Coming to You* might suggest that LGBTQ parent activism is an entirely new and unprecedented chapter in queer activism in South Korea, I would place it on a long line of queer feminist activisms that have historically sought to destabilize the institution of the heteronormative family. To be sure, the family form remains largely patriarchal, heteronormative, and misogynist, as reflected in the deep-seated ideology of *namjon yŏbi* (남존여비) or "revering the men and despising the women," but the traditional family form in South Korea has nonetheless undergone significant change over time.[5] A comprehensive historical account of the family is beyond the scope of this book, but I would like to highlight three (3) key features of the changing family form and gender dynamics in order to contextualize LGBTQ parent activism.

First is the geopolitical division of South and North Korea and the devastations of the Korean War (1950–53) that led to massive displacement of individuals from their homelands and separated family members from each other, establishing in the postwar years a new normal of fractured and dispersed families haunted by uncertainty, loss, grief, and longing. Gender disparity and violence against women were rampant in the postwar hardship and disarray. Given Korea's heteropatriarchal social norms, girls in poor families were typically the last to eat and the first to be abandoned or sent away to marry or work in other households. With unprecedented levels of internal displacement and

rural-to-urban migration throughout the period of the country's rapid industrialization in the 1960s and 1970s, girls and young women left the countryside in droves to work in urban factories, kitchens of wealthier households, and bars patronized by U.S. military servicemen in order to provide for themselves and support their dependent families.[6] Transnational adoption of Korean children reached new heights throughout the 1980s—not always orphans but typically children born to poor, working, disabled, or unmarried women. Boys and men were subjected to gendered violence, too, in the form of male-only labor and military conscription as well as the horrific conditions endured by thousands of wayward youth—delinquent, disabled, orphaned, homeless, panhandling, or simply lost—in carceral facilities resembling prison labor camps that operated throughout the 1970s and 1980s under a government mandate to "purify" the city streets of vagrants.[7] During the Asian financial crisis and the ensuing fifty-eight-billion-dollar bailout of South Korea by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1997, which subsequently led to a massive restructuring of the economy and heightened inequality, women workers were the first to lose their jobs in systems that prioritized male breadwinners; even today, women remain far more likely than men to be precarious workers, considered nonstandard or irregular in a neoliberal economy in which job security and union rights are hardly the norm.[8] In patriarchal political economic logics that justify lower wages for women, women workers are considered optional or secondary wage earners—working for extra "pocket money"—even though in fact, many women are the main or sole income earner in the household. Considering these geopolitical economic dynamics, it would be historically inaccurate to claim that the modern Korean heteropatriarchal nuclear family form has ever enjoyed stability or constancy, as that has certainly not been the case in actual practice.

Secondly, demographic changes in recent years have transformed the composition of the so-called Korean family. A growing number of migrant women from countries throughout Asia have been arriving in South Korea for decades seeking work and marriage opportunities, contributing to a rapid increase in racial and ethnic diversity in the country. The visibility of multiethnic families—commonly referred to as "multicultural families" by the government—does not necessarily indicate progressive social change. As feminist anthropologist Kim Hyun Mee writes, "What the Korean government wants from the multicultural family is a family based on traditional family values, that is, one that upholds patriarchy and emphasizes reproduction."[9] If gendered migration into Korea tells one such story, the outmigration of children tell another story about the shape of the Korean family. Widespread cultural stigma and structural conditions have historically made

it exceedingly difficult for unmarried mothers to raise their own children without the state-sanctioned protection of patrilineal bloodline. It is thus no surprise that the majority of South Korean children who were made available for transnational adoption are children born to single mothers, not orphans. Overseas adoption of children from South Korea may have started with a focus on war orphans in the immediate aftermath of the Korean War, but transnational adoption actually peaked decades later, in the 1980s.[10] As a reporter for National Public Radio (NPR) put it, "In an echo of the economic arguments made to impoverished women in the lean postwar years, women are often advised to give up their children, to give them the prospect of a better life, rather than raise them alone."[11] Put differently, overseas adoption has worked as part of South Korea's de facto child welfare and population management policy by casting out the children, far away from their biological families.

The third pivotal change concerns the law. South Korea's Constitutional Court ruled in 2005 that the male head-of-household system known as *hojuje* (호주제), which was formally introduced in 1953, discriminated against women. Coming after decades of feminist activism and advocacy, this ruling marked a fundamental shift in heteropatriarchal legal norms. The *hoju* system had not only relied on a male citizen identified as the family head but also used the patriarchal family unit to regulate all kinship relations, including ties between husband and wife—even when the ties are fraught due to abandonment, separation, or divorce—and ties between parents and children, requiring every child to be registered in a patriarchal household in order to be legible to the state. Put differently, a child could not exist legally unless they belonged in a family registry, under a male hoju. Without this line of attachment to the male head of household, an individual would be entirely illegible to the state. Feminist legal scholar, Hyunah Yang writes that the old hoju system gave "considerable disadvantages to divorced and remarried women," and that it defined family norms and "regard[ed] the increasing numbers of single-parent families, couples cohabiting without marriage, child-only family, etc. as abnormal."[12] Abolition of the hoju system in 2008, following the Constitutional Court's landmark decision in 2005, was a tremendous step in challenging heteropatriarchal normativity and gender hierarchy in family law. As gender politics scholar Ki-young Shin writes, it transformed the fundamental tenets of the family form in Korea, "from a patriarchal and patrilineal family to a family consisting of equal individuals . . . Under the new family law, each person registers with the state as an individual, not as a member of someone's family or as the head of a family. Married couples can decide children's family names, whether the mother's or the father's."[13]

Changing Marriage Norms

Legal change and institutional normalization are "the power to turn something nascent into something conventional," writes Tari Young-Jung Na.[14] An influential feminist activist-scholar and prolific writer, Na contends that normalization involves the power to declare something obsolete while at the same time declaring as a new standard something that had previously been considered aberrant. As such, normalization both recognizes and obliterates difference. Feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed puts it this way: "To institutionalize x is for x to become routine or ordinary such that x becomes part of the background for those who are part of an institution."[15] This kind of normalized institution would be concerning for those who demand fundamental, structural change because receding into the background could signal cooptation, acquiescence, and erasure of difference. One such complex site that pits normalization and fight against erasure of difference involves the institution of marriage including same-sex marriage. Quoting queer theorist Jack Halberstam, Na cautions, "While gay, lesbian, and trans people may think that, by tying the knot and going legal, they are changing a very old and conventional institution, be warned: before you change it, it changes you."[16] Instead of simply demonstrating a steadfast allegiance to antinormativity, Na poses what she calls "a methodology of skepticism," a politics of doubt, of liminality. Regarding same-sex marriage, for example, Na calls for a dose of skepticism toward the idea of individual entitlement to rights and instead emphasizes kinship forms that stretch beyond the heteronormative family.

These conversations are not new. Since the 1990s, feminist activists and researchers have actively grappled with changing forms of the family, same-sex partnerships, and the politics of marriage or lack thereof in *pihon* (비혼), a term that denotes being unmarried by choice as opposed to *mihon* (미혼), a term that normalizes marriage because it suggests one is *not yet* married. Over time, these conversations have built a robust archive of political discourses that center social-change advocacy for single mothers, migrant women, disabled women, and queer and trans women. In 2012, just a few years after the abolition of the head-of-household hoju system, two important feminist groups collaborated in producing an ambitious series of events to draw attention to nonnormative families, organizing a legal workshop on how to make a will, curating an art exhibition showcasing ten nonnormative families, and publishing a storybook titled *Pijŏngsang kajokdŭl ŭi pibŏmhan mirae* (비정상 가족들의 비범한 미래), which I would translate to something like *Nonnormative Families and Their Extraordinary Future*, with insightful interviews and photography. Tari Na, one of the organizers behind the events, writes in this storybook:

> The right to form a family is incomplete with only marriage, partnership, or cohabitation rights. It is also not a right that just affords comfort and security. I wish for the "right to form a family" to become a minimum standard, a safety net and a source of strength even for moments of sadness and despair, whether marked by death, illness, or separation.[17]

Similarly, feminist activist-scholar Kim Sun-nam (김순남) argues that the decline in marriage rates and the rise in unmarried (pihon) women are surely symptoms of changing times, not individual pathologies. She discusses how the heteronormative logic "normalizes the lifecycle of marriage-childbirth, child rearing, and aging," and suggests that what the pihon women she interviewed ultimately want is to resist and render the *question* of marriage itself obsolete.[18] They envision a society that does not plan, organize, or homogenize life with marriage invariably at the center. What they want is a future in which women can foster relationalities new and old without having to answer questions about their marriage status, to be able to apply for jobs without indicating their marriage status, to be able to conduct life without being defined in terms of their marriage status. To recognize and care for diverse kinship ties and intimacies, to value what nourishes and invigorates their lives and creates happiness, all without the guide of a script or normative conventions like marriage and the nuclear family—all of this requires far more than legalizing same-sex marriage. In the aforementioned 2012 storybook project about alternative families, an interviewee recounts that she and her partner have given this some thought. She writes, "When same-sex marriage is legalized, let's get married. And then after that, let's work to abolish marriage."[19]

Becoming Family: Queer Kinship

Coming to You presents the interwoven stories of NaVivian and their group, PFLAG Korea, also known as Sŏng sosuja pumomoim (성소수자 부모모임) or in English, Rainbow Parents. The group was formed in 2014, and the timing of this group's emergence at this time is interesting since left-progressive feminist political discourses were moving toward the framework of *kajok kusŏngkwŏn* (가족구성권) or the right to form a family. The research-advocacy group at the center of this movement is the Kajok kusŏngkwŏn Yŏn'guso (가족구성권 연구소; Institution for the Right to Found Family) which counts as its core members many of the feminist scholars I have cited above.[20]

PFLAG Korea traces a different queer feminist genealogy, as it began as part of a transnational movement and an incubator project at the left-leaning

LGBTQ activist group Haengsŏngin (행성인; see chapter 2). It has since become an independent group with over 130 members in 2023.[21] They hold support group meetings and attend queer and trans events throughout the year, run a popular "Free Hugs" booth at Pride festivals, and publish writings and videos as part of their activism. They maintain an active social media presence through projects such as a YouTube channel where Vivian hosts the Rainbow Table, a charming series of video episodes in which she invites guests to cook and eat together while talking about queer and trans issues in a personal and intimate setting.

PFLAG Korea can also be seen as part of a long history of transnational mothers' activism and activist mothering, including the well-known cases in the United States such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) that started in 1980; Mothers Reclaiming Our Children (Mothers ROC) that began in Los Angeles in 1992 in response to the criminalization of youth; and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America that formed in 2012 after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newton, Connecticut. In Argentina, Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo formed in 1977 in response to the military dictatorship with the goal of finding their loved ones among the *desaparecidos* or those abducted, imprisoned, and disappeared by the state.[22] In South Korea, *yukajok* (유가족) or surviving family activism includes Minkahyŏp (민가협 / 민주화실천가족운동협의회; Association of Families of Political Prisoners for Democracy) founded in 1985 with purple as its symbol color, that has fought for the most vulnerable under authoritarian rule—the dissident, the political minority, the protester. Today, the color yellow urges us to remember the senseless loss of 304 lives on Sewol over ten years ago on April 14, 2014, as the families of the Sewol movement continue to seek truth and accountability and mobilize their grief in powerful ways.[23] They are joined by the surviving victims and families of the Itaewon crowd crush in 2022 and other families who are likewise pushing for a full investigation and official accountability for injustice and loss of life.

The name PFLAG is originally an abbreviation for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, though nowadays, it is just PFLAG.[24] It was in 1973 that PFLAG first started as a small support group in New York City, and chapters have popped up around the world in a loosely affiliated network. Though not formally connected in a centralized structure, chapters such as PFLAG Korea and PFLAG San Gabriel Valley–API share the overall mission that emphasizes three aims: support, education, and advocacy. They urge families to *support* first and foremost those who come out as queer and trans, and they

promote activist parenting with the recognition that parents have a lot to *educate* themselves about, including their own homophobia and transphobia. The third aim is to confront social stigma, fight bigotry, and increase visibility, by engaging in *advocacy*.

PFLAG members—usually mothers and fathers, but predominantly mothers—often talk about how queer and trans individuals are not the only ones who grapple with staying in the closet or coming out of the closet. PFLAG parents describe the struggle of their own lifelong "coming out," a process in which they risk stigma and rejection from other family members and their social circles.[25] The very first line in the introduction of PFLAG Korea's 2023 "how to" resource book, *Welk'ŏm t'u reinbou* (*Welcome to Rainbow*) spells this out: "When a child comes out to their parent, a completely new world opens up for the parent. This new world comes sometimes with tears, sometimes with conflict, and sometimes with unspeakable pain. So some parents try to deny this world . . . but beyond the enormous shock and denial, there is a world of affirmation and embrace, pride and love."[26]

Reactions to PFLAG discourse, however, can vary. One of my interlocuters in this research cringed at what she described as a display of "hetero pain." She felt that PFLAG can potentially elevate the role of cisgender, heterosexual-identified parents in queer and trans activism to a point that parents are applauded for doing what some of us would consider pretty basic—not being terrible to their children. After all, PFLAG's focus on the family could be interpreted as reinforcing dominant ideals based on traditional parental roles and normative parent-child relationships, propping up the institution of the cisheteronormative and nuclear family even as it tries to aid the victims and survivors of this ideal.[27] This critique was echoed by Sung Tse, a Korean American mother and leader in PFLAG San Gabriel–API, who has called it a "very low bar," that supporting their children should be the most basic thing that decent parents should be expected to do.

Nonetheless, a crucial and important aspect of PFLAG Korea's work is how they create spaces for parents and families to meet and interact with each other. The significance of this is sometimes overlooked—cishet parents meet and interact with other parents and family members as well as diverse queer and trans and gender nonconforming individuals beyond their own children who identify as LGBTQ. In a manner of speaking, the structure of PFLAG grants straight-identified cisgender parents a pathway to access, however provisionally or in a limited way, queer and trans spaces so that they too can see and experience what their children might experience as gender

and sexual minorities. A telling scene in *Coming to You* shows the parent activists attending the infamous Incheon Queer Culture Festival in 2018, the city's first Pride festival, as they confront physical intimidation and hate-filled speech from angry anti-gay protesters. Raphael Rashid, a journalist and author wrote, "What was meant to be a celebration of love, pride, and identity turned into a violent attack on parade attendees by radical 'Christians.'"[28] *Coming to You* shows Nabi and Han-kyŏl, trapped in a standoff against the hostile protesters for several hours, exhausted and outraged, and consoling each other. But rather than simply be devastated by this distressing experience, Nabi was incensed. She became even more emboldened to fight on the frontlines for her loved ones, against bigotry. She was not alone. Rashid wrote after the Incheon Queer Culture Festival, "I went back home that day wondering what on earth I had just witnessed. . . . Everyone in the subway carriage back to Seoul was a damaged soul. I held back my tears. Dozens wept throughout the journey home."[29]

If that harrowing scene at Incheon Queer Culture Festival brings attention to the affective power of directly encountering bigotry and witnessing injustice, another scene in the film points to the affect of proximity and intimacy in a markedly different way. The popular "Free Hugs" offered by PFLAG Korea at queer events simulate parent-child embrace performed *in proxy*, its tearful enactment even more emotionally charged because the hug represents and replaces the real thing. The hugs, after all, are between strangers. For many parents and queer and trans individuals who are struggling or have struggled with family acceptance, the "free hugs" event represents what does not yet exist for them in the present and possibly in the future.

There is an especially heartfelt moment towards the end of *Coming to You* in which Nabi expresses her gratitude to the other PFLAG Korea members and uncharacteristically chokes up. "Thank you all for being with us throughout this process," she says in the film, "It makes me feel like my child and I are not alone in this world. Every parent comes [to PFLAG] for their own child, but they really care about every child. It's a pleasure to meet people devoted to sharing their belief and values." Nabi expresses a feeling of camaraderie and a sense of political kinship, an appreciation of the kindness of non-kin strangers who take part in queer and trans advocacy. For parent activists in PFLAG Korea, what initially begins as personal concern for their own relationship with their children's physical and emotional health and well-being grows into a critical understanding of systemic discrimination and structures of violence. In the process, activist mothers like Nabi and Vivian are catapulted into the fold of queer and trans cultural politics at large. Despite its heartrending and tearful moments,

Fig. 2. Acceptance in proxy, forging queer kinship. Tearful moments in "Free Hugs" from PFLAG Korea. (Video stills from Dot Face, "[Parents of LGBTQ Children] I Love You as You Are," YouTube, June 12, 2016. See https://youtu.be/rhoJRAsd7co?si=Y1NRUPkrHjm_My3F)

Coming to You manages to avoid becoming maudlin and casts an upbeat spotlight on the two central figures, skillfully refusing to celebrate NaVivian as heroic or exceptional. Instead, they are portrayed as complex human beings whose own lives are enriched by queer relationalities. It tells the story of women *learning* to mother in ways that embrace both the strength and fragility of ties that bind, enriching the stories we tell about ourselves and others.

Starting Lines

I began this introduction by discussing the film *Coming to You* and the spaces produced by the film and its screenings because they together constitute a recurring story line: queer activism is about as much a production of space as it is about creating social change. Repeated time and time again in queer activist narratives are stories about coming together, creating and inhabiting space together, and breaking or (de)parting from old spaces to create a different kind of space and sense of belonging. And sometimes, these spaces coexist with one another rather than the new simply replacing old ones in a sequential or linear manner. The first epigraph of this introduction by Na Young-Jung emphasizes this narrative of uneven progression, as she characterizes her own political biography of becoming an intersectional queer feminist as an ongoing process that is "not linear and remains simultaneous and complex."[30] These stories of community formation and change dynamics relate to what geographer Doreen Massey has called a "simultaneity of stories-so-far," her influential definition for space, as shown in the third epigraph of this introduction.[31] Massey's notion of "stories-so-far" evocatively suggests an ongoing and incomplete process of narrativity, an open horizon of possibilities. Her theories of space compel us to imagine both a plurality and simultaneity of stories and storytellers converging and assembling in an ever-shifting constellation, changing in dynamic composition and shaping communities-in-the-making. Massey popularized two other provocative terms that I find myself returning to over and over again in my work: "throwntogetherness" to refer to the occasional, contingent, and provisional character of space, and "event of place" as "the coming together of the previously unrelated, a constellation of processes rather than a thing."[32] Together, these ideas underscore a dynamic, relational understanding of space-time.[33]

I am especially interested in the reverberative affects generated by throwntogetherness. Whether in a fleeting or ephemeral manner such as in a single event like a film screening or in a more sustained gathering such as in a strategic coalition or political campaign, queer spaces have thrown together bodies and histories that come together and drift away, all the while generating a variety of reverberative political affects. These affects include a sense of being seen, a sense of belonging, and a sense of kinship that celebrate throwntogetherness as a provisional condition that renders visible minoritized identities, forbidden desires, and suppressed imaginaries, at least for the time being. But the way I interpret Massey's concept, throwntogetherness is contingent and uncertain, rather than planned and orderly. There is bound to be friction and contestation, and for sure, I do not wish to romanticize queer space regardless of how it may appear. Queer

spaces, after all, can also generate less positive affect, such as antipathy, disappointment, and alienation. Keeping in mind these dynamics, I am interested in examining how the spatial dynamics of co-presence and co-inhabitance—such as gathering in person to watch *Coming to You* at a community screening—take place and repeat with different participants at different times and places, constituting and reconstituting space in contingent and uncertain manner.

Defining Throughlines

I show in this book how a variety of intersecting activisms in South Korea and the Korean diaspora have converged at the site of queer and trans politics, which I understand not simply as instances of likeminded individuals coming together or as a singular axiomatic community revealing itself but rather, as recursive spatial practices. Community-building and creating social change, I argue, forge relational ties within and across space, over and over again. These are complex structures and practices built on repetitive processes. For this book, this also means that I understand queer and trans activisms in South Korea and the Korean diaspora to take place in sites that are enmeshed in a web of other political dynamics underway. For instance, I discuss in chapter 1 how queer Korean American activisms in the 1990s and early 2000s emerged at the intersection of competing discourses of immigrant rights and identity politics in Southern California, entangled also with conservative religious politics and dynamics of pro-democracy movements and human rights discourses taking hold in South Korea. It would be profoundly insufficient to examine queer and trans activisms in isolation, without tracing their foundational connections to radical student movements, diverse feminist formations, and a variety of other political movements that offer crucial context.

This argument about contexts and intersections is a key *throughline*, a concept I find especially capacious and generative as I weave together the various elements in this book. A throughline here refers obviously to a particular kind of a line, a connecting plot, but it also draws attention to lines and linearity more generally. What I want to challenge are conventional notions about lines and linearity similar to the way that space and spatiality have been challenged in recent decades. Take, for instance, Henri Lefebvre who writes on the very first page of *The Production of Space* that our understanding of space has changed significantly.

> Not so many years ago, the word "space" had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea it evoked was simply that of an empty area. In scholarly use it was generally accompanied by *some* such epithet as "Euclidean," "*isotropic*,"

> or "infinite," and the general feeling was that the concept of space was ultimately a mathematical one. To speak of "social space," therefore, would have sounded strange.[34]

Now consider the definition of "throughline": a unifying theme, a sense of continuity, and narrative focus that runs through history or a film, TV series, play, book, etc. Though it is not presently an official dictionary word, it is already widely in use in popular culture. For instance, Throughline is the title of a well-regarded historical podcast series and radio program on NPR, American public radio network, with a tagline that begins, "The past is never past. Every headline has a history." The emphasis here is on a line that spans time, a historical line that can be traced from the present to the past. In the Oxford English Dictionary online, a search for throughline is automatically redirected to an entry on "through line," two words simultaneously separated and conjoined by blank space, but it is also common to find "through-line," two words tethered together with a hyphen. Variations of spelling aside, the main idea behind a throughline typically suggests that a discernible connecting theme or plot operates *through* something to provide continuity and coherence in storytelling. I would also add a reminder here that a throughline is not limited to narratives. An obscure definition of the word in the dictionary refers to a nautical rope, which is not just any rope but one that is resilient even when submerged in water; it prompts us to imagine ropes of varying girth and weight, sometimes threadlike and fragile and other times, heavyweight in its ability to fasten and secure. A throughline can exhibit a range of durability. And lastly, another obscure definition of "through line" in the OED suggests "a railway line that covers a whole route without requiring passengers to change trains," conjuring the image of an uninterrupted line that neither pauses nor stops except at start and end, marked only by the points of departure and arrival.

The way I conceptualize throughlines in this book, they are not just recurring themes or plotlines. They are linear pathways that connect one point to another. They facilitate movement; they link different points, *and* they allow us to move through them. I do not think of throughlines as preexisting static lines that simply need to be discovered or traced. Rather, they are dynamic lines that are actively drawn, lines that draw attention. Thinking about the dynamism of throughlines this way has ramifications. Sara Ahmed writes in her discussion of lines and orientations in *Queer Phenomenology* that lines both divide things and create spaces that we imagine we can inhabit, that bodies "in line" create alignments and orientations that can direct us in powerful ways.[35] "We follow the line that is followed by others," Ahmed writes, "the repetition of the act of following makes the line disappear from view as the point from

which 'we' emerge."[36] In working through the concept of a throughline in this book, I conjure these manifold meanings and nuances to consider connectivity and relationality as well as the implicit sense of movement and motility. In order for me to argue that throughlines are drawn and not simply uncovered, I first establish that the practice of line-drawing—the act of creating a line to connect objects and events, to connect through space and time—is an active and directive process as well.

Put differently, theorizing throughlines requires a discussion of lines and linearity. Linear thinking is typically associated with rigidity, lack of flexibility, and narrowness. Being linear suggests resistance to change or refusal to consider nuance or context, and though linearity might imply clear, straightforward, and direct thinking, it also implies oversimplified relations of causality or instrumentality. Linearity is typically not considered to be a virtue.

I would like to shift this thinking a bit. Although throughlines are indeed linear, I suggest that we think *through* the space of a line and perceive the line itself as *spatial*. To be sure, this idea about the spatiality of a line goes against conventional notions of basic Euclidean geometry that defines a line as "length without breadth" or "breadthless length" between two points. A line is supposed to be a kind of a non-space, so some might even consider it controversial or blasphemous to consider a line as a space. But if we approached lines and linearity as lived and experienced, not limited to the terms dictated by theoretical mathematics or abstract geometry, could we not see how lines are in actuality quite spatial? Put differently, rather than abide by the abstract notion of a line that is presumed to be one-dimensional and breadthless, could we not think of the lines we encounter in our social and cultural life and recognize the spatial dynamics involved in those linearities: mundane line-spaces like the checkout line at the grocery store or the queue for the public restroom, infrastructural line-spaces like gas pipelines or subway lines, working on an assembly line, standing in a police line-up, fighting in the front lines, and so on? These lines are indeed spatial.

Lines are everywhere, in actuality and in idioms. We "stick to the line," staying steadfast to a predetermined course of action, and sometimes "toe the line," meaning we conform and comply with the line that is given to us. As Tim Ingold, who has written several books devoted to thinking about lines, asks, "What do walking, weaving, observing, singing, storytelling, drawing and writing have in common?" He then offers this answer: "they all proceed along lines of one kind or another."[37] If you think about it, even the promotional poster of *Coming to You* features rainbow-colored lines that guide NaVivian as they walk forward, suggesting a pathway along which they walk toward the viewer (see fig. 1). The title suggests motion; they are coming, moving from

one point to another, though it remains ambiguous as to where they are coming or going, and to whom the "you" refers.

Linear Space of Borders

One way to illustrate how lines are spatial is to consider the materiality of boundaries and borders that do the work of delineating space, dividing and separating, enclosing and excluding. Borders and boundaries are everywhere, metaphorically and physically. The closest border to my current place of residence is the Mexico–U.S. border, a particularly contentious site that is often represented in xenophobic terms as a state line to be reinforced through law and police force as well as the infamous thirty-foot steel border wall. The transnational labor market at this border appears, as legal scholars Mary L. Dudziak and Leti Volpp write, "not as a natural phenomenon, but fueled by labor needs of large-scale agriculture in the west, and by legal restrictions on Asian immigration to the United States. Once immigration was funneled into the *bracero* temporary worker program or through restrictive immigration quotas, preexisting migration outside these bounds became 'illegal.' At the same time, the border itself, a fluid, transnational space, was militarized and patrolled."[38] The militarized Mexico–U.S. border stands in striking contrast to another border that became familiar to me while I lived for a time in Vancouver, Canada. The Canada–U.S. border area at the forty-ninth parallel known as the Peace Arch Border Crossing—Peace Arch Provincial Park on the Canadian side, and Peace Arch Historical State Park on the Washington State side—features well-manicured green lawns in an oceanfront park with a lily pond, flower gardens in the shape of the Canadian flag, and a sixty-seven-foot monument displaying the words, "Children of a Common Mother" on one side, referring to the British Empire, and on the other side, "Brethren Dwelling Together in Unity" referring to the promise of peace between the two countries.

Politics of border crossings clearly vary in intensity and in their aesthetics, but perhaps one shared commonality is that the border is usually not a simple line but an area. Sometimes they feature a scenic park with rhododendrons and azaleas like at the Canada–U.S. border but sometimes they are marked by harsh, deadly terrains weaponized as a deterrent to unauthorized migration, as in the case of the Sonoran Desert in the Mexico–U.S. border. Robert R. Alvarez, Jr., a border studies scholar, calls for a reconceptualization of "the spatial imaginary of the border, a geopolitical cartography that is captured by the nation-state boundary."[39] He suggests that the metaphor of *bridging* can emphasize "connections and contrasts, spans and range to inform questions and scholarship" instead of conceptualizing the border simply as an impervi-

ous line enforced by the state. This metaphor of bridging does not work very well for envisioning a pathway across the unforgiving desert but interestingly, the idea of bridging still draws a line that crosses the border, simultaneously signifying a breach and a connection.

The metaphor of bridging also points directly to foundational texts in U.S. Third World feminism such as Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's landmark anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back* ([1981] 1983), which contains several contributions that conceptualize the work of bridge-building as hard, backbreaking work. In this work, bridges are lines that transect other lines. Bridges are, after all, liminal structures that create connections across space, themselves a space that promises to transform existing relations though this takes place sometimes at the expense of those who bear the weight. For several writers in *This Bridge Called My Back*, the space of the bridge is burdensome. Donna Kate Rushin's "The Bridge Poem," for instance, begins as follows:

> I've had enough
> I'm sick of seeing and touching
> Both sides of things
> Sick of being the damn bridge for everybody

And in another instance, when Moraga writes about the space of White women-dominated spaces of feminism (italics in the original), she writes, "*How can we–this time–not use our bodies to be thrown over a river of tormented history to bridge the gap?* Barbara says last night: 'A bridge gets walked over.' Yes, over and over and over again."[40]

In an untitled introduction to the section in *This Bridge Called My Back* titled "Between the Lines: On Culture, Class, and Homophobia," Moraga and Anzaldúa write:

> What lies between the lines are the things that women of color do not tell each other. There are reasons for our silences: the change in generation between mother and daughter, the language barriers between us, our sexual identity, the educational opportunities we had or missed, the specific cultural history of our race, the physical conditions of our bodies and our labor. . . . Here we begin to fill in the spaces of silence between us. For it is between these seemingly irreconcilable lines—the class lines, the politically correct lines, the daily lines we run down to each other to keep difference and desire at a distance—that the truth of our connection lies.[41]

The "seemingly irreconcilable lines" in the passage above are gaps and barriers that serve the purpose of dividing and separating individuals and groups

from each other, and yet the spaces they produce yield other connections and relations. Anzaldúa writes evocatively about the transgressive inhabitants of these in-between spaces in *Borderlands: The New Mestiza*.

> Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal." (italics in original)[42]

Quite different from this borderland is the production of South–North Korea borderland, created as an unnatural boundary line drawn on the map at the thirty-eighth parallel north of the equator. The line partitions Korea into South and North and has produced the border area known as the Demilitarized Zone or DMZ. Eleana Kim aptly describes this as a "fateful line," and though it may be just a line on a map, an abstraction in cartography, it is in fact a large swath of land with thousands of landmines, a belt-like area thriving today with vegetation and wildlife with rare biodiversity.[43] As Valérie Gelézeau also writes, "The inter-Korean border is a space where two types of gaze meet: that of defensive military surveillance and that of the inquisitive tourist for whom the border is a monument to the past and an ecological marvel."[44] Known as *samp'alsŏn* (삼팔선) or the Thirty-Eighth Parallel or alternatively, *hyujŏnsŏn* (휴전선) or Armistice Line, this border line (*sŏn*) figures prominently in contemporary Korean or diasporic experience. It is perhaps the most critical line in Korean geopolitics. It has severed and divided territories, histories, and families. Samp'alsŏn is known as one of the most militarized borders in the world today, one that cannot be casually crossed by ordinary civilians, and this sŏn defines the bounding edges of South and North Korean state territories locked in a state of ceasefire still without a permanent peace treaty. Samp'alsŏn is an exceptional linear space defined by war, militarization, and geopolitics, and yet, as Eleana Kim writes, it is also "a site where military/civilian spaces are hybridizing and physical borders are shifting dramatically," which is precisely "the condition of unending war."[45] Gelézeau likewise emphasizes in her work, as though she is referencing the passage I quoted from *Borderlands* by Anzaldúa, "the persistence, growth and continued emergence of enclaves around the inter-Korean border suggest that the border is anything but static."[46]

Put differently, lines are typically taken for granted as rigid and static and linearity synonymous with straight, direct, and sequential. But when we think through lines with lessons from border and migration studies, the borderland itself is anything but static and as historian Mae Ngai writes, even the so-called illegal migration to the U.S. "is not a natural or fixed condition" but rather, "contingent and at times unstable."[47] She argues that "the line between legal and illegal status can be crossed in both directions."[48] Critical histories of migration and border studies, especially with a focus on queer migrations and diaspora studies, have shown how international migration regimes rely on heteronormative logics and unequal power relations and demonstrate that "this line [between legal and illegal status] is not fixed but a continually shifting site of struggle and a mechanism for trying to discipline migrants."[49] The border is a contested site; the line is a shifting space.

Drawing Queer Throughlines

I find it useful to think of lines and linearities as spaces and spatialities, and this idea that lines too are a site of struggle constitutes a key part of *queer* throughlines. By tracing the continuities of queer activisms in South Korea and the Korean diaspora, I provide an interpretive account of events that took place and connect them to each other and other sociopolitical contexts.

A crucial throughline concerns religion. Religious conservatives, especially in the Protestant denominations such as Presbyterian and Methodist denominations, have mounted significant obstacles for LGBTQ rights in South Korea, not only by disrupting queer community gatherings but also blocking local and national legislations that could provide legal protection against gender and sexuality-based discrimination. The work of religious conservatives against marriage equality, human rights protection, as well as LGBTQ-affirming and inclusive ministry have without a doubt become a highly visible dimension of queer and trans politics. I do discuss them in detail in chapter 1, for example about the convergence of homophobia, Islamophobia, and xenophobia, but I am also interested in highlighting a line of queer activism in the modern history of South Korean Protestantism, namely in the work of progressive and LGBTQ-affirming Christians who have played a pivotal role in creating change within congregations and denominations as well as advocating for queer and trans communities under attack from religious conservatives. Especially in chapters 1 and 3, I discuss both religious hostilities and subversive hospitalities as converging at the site of queer and trans politics.

There are also lesser-known histories of queer activism that emerged as a result of anti-war, anti-imperialist movements that mobilized mass protests

throughout the 1990s and 2000s, and as I discuss in chapters 2 and 4, queer throughlines run not only through organized religion but also these sites of nationalism, radicalism, and political transition. My aim in this book is certainly not to provide a singular story or a comprehensive history of queer activism as though one could trace a continuous and uninterrupted thread from one point to another, a standalone throughline that can simply be uncovered and traced. I am partial to plurals; *Queer Throughlines* features various ways in which queer activists have interacted and entangled with each other and other adjacent social movements—sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile, but always in co-existence even in contradiction. These throughlines then are not queer simply in an antinormative sense. Queer throughlines are not queer simply because they feature queer-identified folks who transgress norms or defy boundaries. As it turns out, one of the most crucial queer throughlines in this book concerns how queer activists make sense of their relations with those who do not identify as queer, like with their parents or movement comrades.

This has implications for the dominant narrative in South Korea's modern history involving the arc of progress, defined as a linear sequence of catastrophes and hardships followed by overcoming and triumph. There are multiple chapters in this storyline: national liberation from Japanese colonial rule, democratization after decades of authoritarian rule, economic growth succeeding devastating poverty, and so on. Coursing through these historical narratives is a notion of progress, one that celebrates South Korea's ambition to advance on the world stage whether in the form of ascending in the political economic world order as ranked by the OECD or in popular culture as K-pop and television and film productions gain traction in the global marketplace. As I have written elsewhere, even the Korean and Korean/American evangelical Christian missionaries have global ambitions, a multifaceted desire for growth and expansion.[50] These are the aspirational trajectories, progressive in their linearity.

But to be sure, lines are not always progressive or straight. There have been plenty of important accounts of resistance and non-compliance, too, featuring persistent refusal to accept the status quo and tenacious disidentification with structures of domination. For every norm, I would assert, there has been resistance. And yet, defiance yields different consequences. Whereas the privileged groups may be able to bend or disregard rules and norms with a degree of impunity, subjugated groups and minoritized individuals who defy rules are consequently subjected to violence—physical, psychological, epistemic, and so on—and punished harshly for being disorderly and noncompliant.

Military conscription offers one such example. In 1949, when universal male conscription was established by law in South Korea, draft evasion was,

in fact, rampant, not only among the poor with dependent families but also the rich and powerful.[51] This did not change until punitive measures were intensified significantly in the 1970s.[52] It is no coincidence that an army general—Park Chung-Hee—took power through a coup d'etat in 1961 and ruled for eighteen years during which time the system of military conscription was reinforced and normalized as a rite of passage for men, a character-building national duty, and a symbol of masculinity. Militarism became so widely normalized in the workplace and throughout cultural life in the form of militaristic organization of rank and hierarchy in corporations as well as in leadership structures of social-movement spaces that militaristic camaraderie was valorized as a most desirable form of interpersonal relationship, rigid and disciplined order and efficiency regarded as a valued way of life. The state is at the center of producing these norms; after all, the military is an institution authorized to summon, unclothe, and evaluate conscripts to assess the quality and functionality of their bodies in degrading ways, and the state has the power to mark some citizens' bodies as fit for service and others as unfit or undesirable for the purposes of military service. In seeking to avoid military service, some have used these criteria to get themselves disqualified, either through fraudulent medical documentation or actual self-harm. And yet, it is important to remember that the system of conscription does not reward failure to qualify; disqualification and deviance carry social and cultural stigma, and non-normativity is subject to being pathologized and even criminalized. As queer feminist scholars have pointed out, this process of subjection and the construction of heteronormative soldier-citizens at its core involves an entrenchment of gender-binary and ableist norms.[53]

But even here, against the odds, there is dissent. Members of small but growing pacifist movements continue to resist military service and demand the decriminalization of conscientious objection, with most vocal dissidents objecting on religious grounds—most commonly Jehovah's Witnesses—but also anti-war, anti-militarism pacifists as well as a growing number of gender and sexual minorities who refuse conscription for a variety of political and ethical reasons, such as the right to refuse to kill or the moral imperative to oppose war, militarism, and imperialism. After the landmark rulings by South Korea's Supreme Court and Constitutional Court in 2018 that gave the government one year to stop imprisoning conscientious objectors, a new law in 2019 did introduce alternative service options. Today the conscientious objectors movement continues to intersect in complex ways with other struggles, such as the effort to protect conscripts and career soldiers from discrimination, harassment, and violence. The movement also has connected in recent years with the campaign to decriminalize homosexuality in the military, as

sexual minorities face the threat of exposure, dishonorable discharge, and even imprisonment. This intersection is especially interesting for conscientious objectors because, at least at first glance, the two groups may seem like an unlikely pairing—objectors who refuse to bear arms and LGBTQ-identifying individuals in the military who want to continue to serve without dishonor. What they have in common is a refusal to normalize the stigma associated with difference and to broaden the space of noncompliance. They also share the objective of destabilizing the military as a sine qua non of heteronormative citizenship.

My thinking about defiant lines and queer throughlines have been inspired over the years by the work of scholar-activists in South Korea as well as feminist and political geographers and anthropologists, but it all came into sharper focus with philosopher Sara Ahmed's writings on the concept of orientation and lines in *Queer Phenomenology*. Ahmed argues that bodies become straight by "lining up" with pregiven norms, that "[t]o follow a line might be a way of becoming straight, by not deviating at any point."[54] Thinking about the line as a trodden path, Ahmed writes:

> Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition. To say that lines are performative is to say that we find our way and we know which direction we face only as an effect of work, which is often hidden from view. So in following the directions, I arrive, as if by magic.[55]

Arrival might feel magical when we disregard the work it takes to give directions and the work it takes to heed directions, but not if we pay attention to the work of routes and itineraries. As Ahmed writes, "following a line is not disinterested"; it takes intentionality and effort, commitment and investment.[56] Further, continuing the idea that lines are spatial, that there is intrinsic spatiality within linearity, Ahmed offers a provocative way of thinking about how lines constitute space.

> What does it mean to think about the "nonresidence" of queer? We can consider the "affect" of disorientation. As I have suggested, for bodies that are out of place, in the spaces in which they gather, the experience can be disorientating. You can feel oblique, after all. You can feel odd, even disturbed. Experiences of migration, or of becoming estranged from the

> contours of life at home, can take this form. The angle at which we are placed gets in the way of inhabitance, even if it points toward inhabitance as its goal.[57]

Following Ahmed's insights, I invite readers to follow the multiple and intermittent threads in *Queer Throughlines* that crisscross and connect a range of transnational and diasporic sites and histories of Korean queer activism and political dissent in Seoul and Los Angeles from the 1990s to the 2020s. Lines can be broken, dotted, or so thin and tenuous that one might be inclined to dismiss them as insignificant. Some throughlines may seem organic or haphazard while others may seem planned or strategic. On the whole, *Queer Throughlines* examines how queer activisms engage with norms and normativities, how they interact with each other and sociopolitical forces in proximity, disavowing some relationalities while remaking and rekindling others, all the while insisting on the inter-connectivity of these contestations. There are certainly gaps and absences in this archive, but I follow in the same vein as decolonial and postcolonial studies scholar Anjali Arondekar who "propose[s] a different kind of archival romance, one that supplements the narrative of retrieval with a radically different script of historical continuation."[58] I imagine queer throughlines to be one such script, a kind of script that conjures historical continuation more differently, more openly, and more robustly. A *queer* throughline, I emphasize, is not about an insistence toward recuperating a line of antinormativity. It is not just about locating queers as having always existed in history or identifying similarities across disparate times and spaces. Instead, I offer the idea of throughlines as an active process of *drawing* connections, drawing each other closer, connecting and drawing together disparate moments in time and place as contested and uneven as they are.

Put differently, I am interested in examining queer relationalities as untidy and jagged lines, not a straight line of queer history. *Queer Throughlines* is informed by nearly three decades of my own participation in activist politics and engaged research, and the chapters in this book are based on ethnographic research and interviews as well as an archive of feminist, queer, and leftist materials that I have assembled over three decades. One might expect that throughlines imply a degree of evenness or coherence through these disparate sites, but that is not the case here. Queer activisms in South Korea and the Korean diaspora have engaged with numerous norms and normativities, contending with variegated sites of power relations and inequalities. In fact, it would be implausible to identify a single throughline as a unifying narrative of queer and trans Korea and the Korean diaspora. As such, I object to the very attempt to construct a single Queer Korea.

To reiterate my earlier point about conceptualizing activism as a recursive spatial practice, I consider the practice of drawing (and writing) queer throughlines to be a scholarly-activist practice as well—to repeatedly trace connections old and new, to constitute and reconstitute communities as they are remembered and documented, to draw and redraw notions of belonging and not belonging, and to align and realign queer and trans subjects and their families/allies/enemies in adjacency and proximity. *Queer Throughlines* considers the myriad ways that queer activisms have produced both pathways and ruptures, connections and new openings.

Methodological and Autobiographical Throughlines

Queer Throughlines draws from an archive that is perhaps around 80 percent in written or spoken Korean, though the language of choice for writing this book is presently in English. I mention this to flag the readers' attention to the politics of language and translation. The vast majority of literary and scholarly translation takes place in the direction of English to Korean—it is Korean readers who disproportionately consume English-language publications and cultural products that are translated into Korean, including gay and lesbian history and queer and feminist theory. This is especially true for theory. The reverse is far rarer, even when interest is occasionally piqued by K-pop or other pop cultural phenomena, and that is not to diminish the significance of the growing number of Korean literature and Korean studies texts being translated into English. It is still the case that Asian American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and American Studies as fields of study constitute a largely anglophone North American scholarship in which English operates as the dominant language. English-language Korean Studies have recently produced an impressive body of critical scholarship on contemporary Korea, but still multilingual or trans-lingual conversations can appear out of touch with timely conversations taking place in the Korean language.

The language gap is not just in scholarship. There is a gulf between the monolingual English-speaking public and the monolingual Korean-speaking public, including political discourse between and among social movements. In the case of the Korean diaspora, language dynamics have b/ordered and fragmented the space of community to such an extent that very little shared political discourse takes place across language. Monolingual English-speaking Korean Americans and monolingual Korean-speaking immigrants living in the U.S. organize separately, meet separately, and by and large form separate groups even among progressive and left-leaning activists. An English-language book like *Queer Throughlines* about queer Koreans and Korean Americans

would have to translated into Korean before it can be read by monolingual Korean immigrants living in the U.S. Even if the discussion had to do with Los Angeles or immigrant community activism (like chapter 1), it would not be accessible to those in Los Angeles if they do not read in English. Furthermore, a book written in English by a Korean American scholar would be far less likely to be translated into Korean, especially if the author is minoritized in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, and otherwise, than a book written by a prominent or mainstream White American author with renown. Korean translations of works by Korean Americans are not common.

These divides are typically bridged by those with bilingual proficiency—bearing in mind the earlier point about the burdensome work of bridging—especially those who are bilingual and so-called 1.5-generation Korean Americans who emigrated to the U.S. at an age young enough to acquire English fluency but also old enough to have retained proficiency in Korean as their first language. "How old were you when you came?" is a common question asked among Korean Americans of my generation as a way to establish one's cultural and linguistic location in the diaspora. Generally speaking, the age of twelve appears to be an important threshold—if emigration from South Korea took place before the age of twelve, one seems more likely to lose the Korean language proficiency from childhood. If older than twelve at the time of migration, one would have received primary education in South Korea and are more likely to have struggled with gaining English proficiency. There are plenty of exceptions to this, of course. Multiple migration and reverse migration histories complicate language proficiency in all kinds of ways, and besides, one's age works alongside other factors such as class, education, geography, and social milieu to determine how dynamics of acculturation and assimilation unfold.

I was twelve years old when I left South Korea, right on this bilingual and bicultural threshold. As a bookish child who grew up devouring comic books, newspapers, and abridged literary classics for children, one of the most devastating realizations I had upon arrival as a newcomer in the U.S. was that in English, I was illiterate. Unable to comprehend English and therefore also afraid of being spoken to or speaking incorrectly. I had to reorient myself in English as a foreign language. But language was not the only terrain on which I was made a stranger. I emigrated in 1984 in the middle of Chun Doo-Hwan's presidency in South Korea to the United States, where Ronald Reagan was about to be re-elected. It was via a circuitous route through Mexico, as I was smuggled in a commercial truck across the U.S.–Mexico border. In an arrangement made by my parents—they had their reasons—I traveled basically alone as an unaccompanied minor on a one-way flight from Seoul to an

unknown airport in Mexico. My father had already been living for several years in Orange County in California so the plan was that as the eldest daughter, I would leave Seoul first, followed by my mother and younger siblings who left together a few days later. Their flight to Los Angeles would take half a day from Seoul while my itinerary on air and land took nearly a week. I left before them and arrived after them. It was my first time on an airplane. I recall a series of modest hotel rooms in Mexico and a hideaway house arranged by a local "coyote" who led the group of migrants. I vaguely remember counting again and again several hundred-dollar bills needed to bribe my way forward on this journey.

I remember two rides most vividly. I was terribly carsick while hidden in a secret compartment created in the space between the tractor unit in the front part of the commercial truck and the trailer, wearing several layers of clothes and all my belongings on my body because we were not allowed to carry any bags. Overwhelmed with nausea and heat, I remember vomiting and being cared for by strangers standing next to me on that truck. Aside from four migrants from Korea on this illicit journey, the rest of the group spoke what I presumed was Spanish, though I do not know if the other migrants were from Mexico or Central America or someplace else entirely. The second car ride I remember required lying head to toe with the other passengers, hidden underneath the seats of a van. Because I could not look outside during either of these rides, I do not know exactly when and in which vehicle we crossed the border. I just know that when I was finally driven to a meeting point and let out of the van, the rest of my family was waiting for me. My siblings, having arrived in California several days before I did, were already full of stories about their new world. I remember being introduced to the cloying scent of maple syrup on pancakes and the tartness of yellow mustard on burgers that week. The Los Angeles 1984 Summer Olympics had just happened, so the paraphernalia was everywhere. And just like that, I became part of not only the largest Korean diaspora outside of South Korea but also part of a population known as undocumented immigrants in the United States.

I took our precarious immigration status to heart. I was aware at all times that my presence was unauthorized and that my new life in the U.S. could be taken away at any moment. When I eventually gained legal status in the U.S. in 1991, it was through the family reunification provisions of the amnesty program of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. I had just finished my first year in college—with intentions to declare my major in English and Women's Studies—and in the summer of 1991, I returned to Seoul for the first time so that I could fulfill the legal requirement to re-enter the U.S. with authorization this time. A couple of years later when I became a lawful

permanent resident in the U.S. with the right to travel overseas, the first thing I did was to plan a return visit to Seoul as an exchange student. By then, just nine years had passed since I left South Korea as a child migrant, so when I returned to Seoul as an exchange student in 1993, I hardly considered my subject position as a *kyop'o* or an overseas Korean. I had just gone away for a few years and come back.

During this six-month visit as an exchange student in Seoul in 1993, I became acquainted with several gay and lesbian activists who went on to found Ch'odonghoe (초동회) in December 1993, a short-lived group commonly referred to as the first modern gay and lesbian group in South Korea (see chapter 1 for more detailed discussion). There was already a group of lesbians that had formed a group in 1991, though—Sappho (사포), a group consisting of mostly Americans including U.S. military personnel and English-speaking expats as well as Korean Americans. A Sappho newsletter titled "the only lesbian/bisexual newsletter in all of Korea" (October 2, 1993) includes a copy of a letter of introduction that was sent to the group on my behalf. Signed by two Korean American activists, the letter was mailed to Sappho members with the message that they are "planning to find a way to communicate with Korean lesbians who have been actively involved in the Seoul women's movement through Judy Hahn [*sic*], a Korean-American lesbian, who will be attending the Yonsei International College [*sic*] from August of 1993 to January of 1994."[59] I did indeed get in touch with Sappho during that time and attended a couple of their gatherings, and it was there in South Korea that ironically, I met for the first time someone who identified herself as an American soldier, a lesbian stationed in South Korea. I remember hearing her firsthand accounts of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which was signed into law in November 1993, allowing gays and lesbians to serve in the military as long as they did not make public their sexual orientation. It was a strange time to be interacting in any capacity with an American soldier. Anti-American sentiments were high; the trial of U.S. Private Kenneth Markle had concluded on April 14, 1993 with a life sentence for the brutal murder of Yun Kŭm-yi (윤금이), which was later reduced to fifteen years on appeal, on December 16 that year.[60] In an unsent letter to an Asian American activist acquaintance, I wrote in 1993, "It's been extremely frustrating to work with this group of White expatriates who claim to have formed the only lesbian/bisexual women's group in all of Korea. One woman sighed and shook her head as she complained, 'why won't Korean women come?' as if this was a sign of indifference to their own liberation."[61] I subsequently visited Korea again in 1995 and 1996, and once every couple of years after that, each time reconnecting with activist friends and meeting new folks, becoming acquainted with the growing gay and lesbian communities

in Seoul. My firsthand accounts during these visits, in addition to news clippings, organizational newsletters, periodicals, and other materials I collected in person or received in the mail are all part of the archive that informs *Queer Throughlines*.

Concurrently, queer Korean diasporic groups in the U.S. emerged throughout the 1990s in cities with major Korean immigrant populations, taking on similar names though no formal or official relationships existed among them. These include Chinkusai-New York/Iban, Chingusai Los Angeles, and Chingusai-Chicago. A mix of Korean-speaking and English-speaking members organized and joined these groups, which were informal and geared mostly towards social networking and mutual support, though some were interested in policy advocacy and political action as well. In the 1990s in Los Angeles area, Korean Americans were also part of queer Asian American groups such as LAAPIS (Los Angeles Asian Pacific Islander Sisters), Asian/Pacific Lesbians and Gays (A/PLG), APAIT (Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team), and API-PFLAG.[62] Queer gatherings and histories in South Korea and the Korean diaspora were intertwined through transpacific mobilities and efforts to build a global and regional network as well. Though small in number, Korean and Korean American activists were part of mobilizing Asian Lesbian Network (ALN) conferences in Thailand, Japan, and Taiwan between 1990 and 1995. Queer Korean American women living in Seoul appeared on the cover of the premiere issue (spring 1996) and the second issue (summer 1996) of Seoul-based Kirikiri's magazine for lesbians, *Tto darŭn sesang* (또 다른 세상; *Another World*). The pioneering lesbian and gay popular magazine called *Buddy* (버디) which published a total of twenty-four issues between March 1998 and December 2003 featured a Korean American on the cover of its sixth issue (July 1998). Many of the correspondences, newsletters, flyers, posters, and magazines from these years are in my personal archive and inform especially the discussion in chapters 1 and 2.

Over the course of nearly three decades and many long-distance moves between Los Angeles, Oakland, Vancouver, Toronto, Seoul, and back to Los Angeles, I have packed and re-packed, sorted and discovered countless mementos, documents, and photographs from the recent past. These include undated, unannotated photographs of friends and family and acquaintances some of whose names and identities I no longer remember. There are also thousands of digital photo files saved across multiple devices and hard drives, numerous snapshots of marches and Pride floats, for instance from what is now remembered as the first Asian American contingent to participate in the San Francisco Japantown Cherry Blossom Festival in 1993 and subsequently, the Chinese New Year Parade in San Francisco in 1994.[63] I have saved photos

documenting my trip to New York City when I attended the historic Stonewall 25 March on June 26, 1994 that marked the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Inn riots, widely considered the birth of the LGBTQ rights movement in the United States, traveling with friends who were affiliated with the Asian Pacific Lesbian and Bisexual Network (APLBN) contingent.[64] It was my first time in New York City, though it was not my first LGBTQ related march or parade since as a college student in Berkeley, I had attended by then several large-scale LGBTQ Pride Parades and Dyke Marches in San Francisco. The New York Stonewall March in 1994, though, was an invigorating experience. I was thrilled to roam the city as part of a loosely organized contingent of Asian American lesbian and otherwise queer women from the San Francisco and Oakland/Berkeley Bay Area, participating in what was promoted as the International March on the United Nations to Affirm the Human Rights of Lesbian and Gay People. There were exuberant crowds numbering in the tens of thousands marching through Manhattan and gathering in Central Park, making political demands but also celebrating a sense of community-in-the-making. There are serendipitous records of this. I have a giddy, starstruck photo with the even-then-famous lesbian cartoonist Alison Bechdel while marching in the streets in New York. The Hollywood film *Jeffrey* (1995) contains short documentary footage from New York City, and during a 30-second span of crowds and participants of the Stonewall commemoration march, there is a passing glimpse of me carrying a sign, "Korean Dyke!," along with several other Asian American women holding signs that read, "Asian Pussy Power" and "Exoticize My Fist," and so on (see fig. 3). There are acquaintances whose faces I remember only because they are in these photos, and there are folks who I know are no longer alive. I have forgotten more than what I have managed to remember, and more objects have certainly been lost than kept, but still, there are materials such as these that connect my memory to narratives larger than my own.

In the midst of the march in New York City, I found myself dwelling in the implications of the oft-used slogan of "We are queer, we are here, we are everywhere," which often ended with even louder shouts of "Get used to it!" It was a commonly used and fun slogan, and I have appreciated the unapologetic audacity and entitlement implied by this slogan. And yet, in 1994, I distinctly remember how the slogan struck me as provocative and ambiguous. "We are queer, we are here"—who exactly is this "we" to confidently assert "our" presence, and where precisely is "here"? "We are everywhere, get used to it"—who is supposed to get used to "us" being "everywhere," pivoting from unacceptance to acceptance, from antipathy to empathy, getting used to queer presence even if it is with reluctance? Are "we" also supposed to get used to

Fig. 3. Still from *Jeffrey* (1995). Author is shown on the right side of the frame wearing a green shirt, holding a hand-drawn sign with an orange background that reads "Korean Dyke." New York City, June 1995.

ourselves, our own power and voice? Is this how acceptance and normalization happen? By folks simply getting used to social change underway?

In a comics story titled "Incidents of Travel" (see figures 4–10) which was originally intended as the first of a longer series of comics, I explored some of these themes through comics storytelling.[65] I carry the "we are everywhere" theme from New York City to Seoul and recount my experiences of traveling (back) to South Korea as a young queer person in my early twenties. I was grappling with what was then a newly felt tension between familiarity and unfamiliarity as a diasporic subject on a return trip to the place of my birth and childhood. I make a point of locating myself as a Korean-born immigrant in the United States, a diasporic subject who feels different from U.S.-born Korean Americans or others who might encounter the space of Seoul as a tourist, a traveler, a stranger. Being a relatively recent emigrant and a diasporic returnee, I stress these Korean/American differences in "Incidents of Travel." But the fact is that even though I grew up in Seoul, I had left at the age of twelve. When I returned for the first time as a college student in my early twenties, I still spoke Korean fluently and had built up a high level of proficiency in reading and writing so there was no language gap, per se, but still, I felt disoriented and out of place after being gone for many years. Returning just ten or so years after emigrating, I had memories of the city and the neighborhoods I grew up in, but Seoul nonetheless felt somewhere between familiar and strange, neither here nor there, requiring me to navigate con-

Fig. 4. "Incidents of Travel" (page 1). (Originally published as Ju Hui Judy Han, "Incidents of Travel," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, edited by Alice Y. Hom and David L. Eng, 398–404 [Temple University Press, 1998].)

Fig. 5. "Incidents of Travel" (page 2). (Originally published as Han, "Incidents of Travel," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* [1998].)

Fig. 6. "Incidents of Travel" (page 3). (Originally published as Han, "Incidents of Travel," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* [1998].)

Fig. 7. "Incidents of Travel" (page 4). (Originally published as Han, "Incidents of Travel," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* [1998].)

Fig. 8. "Incidents of Travel" (page 5). (Originally published as Han, "Incidents of Travel," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* [1998].)

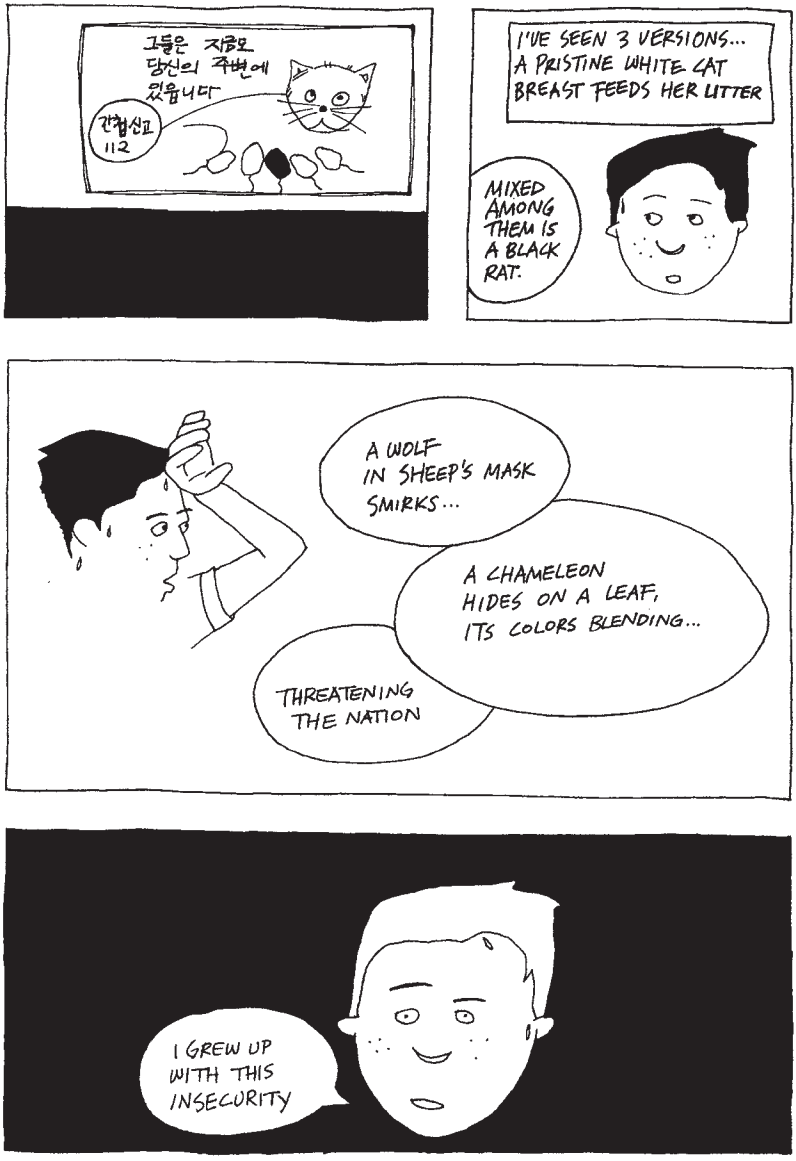


Fig. 9. "Incidents of Travel" (page 6). (Originally published as Han, "Incidents of Travel," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* [1998].)

Fig. 10. "Incidents of Travel" (page 7). (Originally published as Han, "Incidents of Travel," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America* [1998].)

stantly between the space of knowing and no longer knowing, feeling at home and estranged at the same time.

In "Incidents of Travel," I ride Seoul Metro Line 2, which is coincidentally the same circular subway line that is the site of the direct action I discuss in chapter 2. I grew up riding this subway line as a child, moving between home and family spaces, as well as the historic church my family used to attend near the Seoul City Hall. But after having lived abroad for nearly a decade in the United States, as I recount in the comics, I am different. I move through the city differently now as a young adult. I see things differently, and I find myself looking for different things. I see, for instance, Korean intelligence agency posters plastered throughout the Metro, urging the public to keep a look out for North Korean spies and infiltrators. One poster illustration depicts a white cat breastfeeding her newborn litter; hidden among the cute little kittens is a nefarious black rat. *They are everywhere*, the poster hisses. Another poster features a wolf smirking as he hides behind a sheep's mask. *They are good at hiding*, the poster whispers. A third version I remember shows a chameleon concealing itself on a green leaf, changing its colors to remain undetected. *They are everywhere*, the poster reminds us. The recurring message in these images is hardly subtle: North Korean spies are everywhere, posing a pernicious threat against national security. Look around, the posters remind the passengers, you are all responsible for protecting yourselves by recognizing those who do not belong and banishing them. In "Incidents of Travel," I draw myself looking around, wondering in half-amusement whether I would actually be able to detect North Korean spies hiding in plain sight.

Isn't it uncanny, this resonance between the geopolitics of (in)visibility and (un)detectability wherein spies and queers alike elude detection and capture, with possible ejection and rejection at stake? I was amused by the unlikely possibility that the ordinary passengers on the Seoul Metro would ever be able to identify and root out villainous North Korean secret agents among them. Everyday life on the subway was, after all, not like an action film. And simultaneously, I wondered about the other Others, to borrow from Sara Ahmed's provocations about recognizing strangers and strange encounters[66]: Would I be able to recognize those deemed deviant, not for national security reasons but for their antinormative, nonconforming gender and sexual identities? Would political and sexual subversives—North Korean spies and queers—ever recognize each other? I was, in fact, looking *all the time*. I had become part of a small fledgling group of likeminded friends in Seoul, some of whom would later become influential lesbian feminist activists, scholars, and community organizers, and we were all *looking all the time* to find folks who could join us in

building a critical mass and supporting the growth of queer and transgender communities in South Korea and the Korean diaspora.

I think to myself on the final page of the 1998 comics that "we" are supposed to be everywhere, but how would I know the difference between "us" and "them"? And not unimportantly, I ask: "If there are queers here, would they see *me*?" In other words, would South Korean queers be able to recognize me and my queerness in spite of my diasporic strange(r)ness? Would they be able to decode the way I wear masculine clothes, shoes, and hair, or the numerous subtle and unconscious ways in which I carry myself as a butch-identified, masculine of center queer woman from California? These questions were running through my mind as I scanned my surroundings on the Seoul Metro in the mid-1990s. Am I legible, how and to whom?

"Incidents of Travel" was published in a landmark anthology, *Q&A: Queer in Asian America* (1998), which also contained writer and artist JeeYeun Lee's essay, "Toward a Queer Korean American Diasporic History." In this prescient essay, Lee traces a "diasporic search for history in another language, in another land," a quest that she acknowledges is plagued with a variety of linguistic, political, and epistemological limitations.[67] Drawing largely from the fields of diaspora studies and black British cultural studies as well as the emerging critical scholarship on the queer diaspora, Lee sorts through contradictory desires—a longing for evidence of a queer past, for instance, and a desire to excavate "hidden" histories, even while cognizant that there is no there *there*, no past untouched by our reach from the present. Lee cautions readers to be wary of "using present-day conceptions of queer identities and behaviors to define individuals and actions in the past."[68] After all, "[th]e past is a story, motivated by investments and constituted through modes of representation in the here and now," as she reminds us.[69] JeeYeun Lee's gesture *toward* a history resonates to this day. In 2019, over twenty years after the publication of Lee's essay in *Q&A*, Anthony Yooshin Kim and Margaret Rhee titled their essay, "Toward Queer Korean American Horizons."[70] Part of what I imagined on the subway in "Incidents of Travel" and what Lee in 1998 looked to as the future horizon have already arrived. These comics and writings have in fact become a part of the past from the vantage point of Kim and Rhee's essay in 2019, and yet I note that Kim and Rhee continue to gesture *toward a horizon*. These throughlines are never complete or finished. *Queer Throughlines* is both a response and a continuation of these lines of inquiry, tracing the past in the present, and at the same time, gesturing toward something still not-yet-here.

Among the most delightfully surprising re-discoveries I made recently was a small box of Hi8 cassette tapes including a recording from my monthlong trip to Korea in 1995. The unedited video cassette with the date stamp of June

16, 1995 captures my twenty-something gaze in two parts. The first part of the tape documents my grandparents' house and their changing neighborhood in the rural countryside. The camera lovingly pans the walls and ceilings, tracing the lines of old door frames and roof tiles. Throughout much of the video, my grandparents' old wall clock ticks loudly, almost as though it was intentionally inserted as a soundtrack to make a statement about time. This recently unearthed footage which I had not seen for twenty years made me realize that I was searching for a memory, even then. I was trying to remember, even then, an earlier time in the 1970s and early 1980s when I used to visit my grandparents as a small child. Visiting their rural village in Kwiyŏri (귀여리) outside of Kwangju in the Kyŏnggi Province used to involve an all-day family excursion from Seoul—braving chaotic lines at the bus terminal, breathing exhaust fumes, and enduring long bumpy rides on half-paved roads to reach the house where my grandparents lived for fifty years until they passed away twenty-four days apart. The best part of the childhood journey was the sense of escape from the city, being treated to wide expansive views of rivers and rice paddies and the imbricated layers of gray-blue mountains in every direction my eyes could see. The bus would drive past barbed wire fences surrounding U.S. military bases common in many parts of Korea's countryside, and occasionally I would even catch a glimpse of White male soldiers in uniforms and camouflaged armed vehicles. For nine years after emigrating to the U.S., my family was unable to return to visit. And then every time I visited, I would sense the growing distance and became all the more self-conscious about feeling out of place. I was mortified to find a large eight-inch-by-ten-inch print of my high school graduation photo pinned prominently on my grandparents' wall. It was part of an assorted set of senior photos I had to order from school, and I remember sending it as part of my parents' care package to my grandparents happily because I did not want it for myself. It was an image I banished from my own life. In this portrait, I am at the height of my Southern California high school fem drag, with long permed hair with hair spray-lifted bangs, eyeliners and lipstick. Before the days of video chatting or casual and frequent digital photo sharing, this printed photo had become the best proximation of me in the eyes of my grandparents. Needless to say, they were surprised when I showed up in person, looking nothing like the photograph.

The second part of the same Hi8 cassette tape with footage of my grandparents in 1995 contains a mysterious 30-minute recording of casual conversations, taken by me at a small private party at someone's house with a group of lesbians I met in Seoul. The content of this video is hardly extraordinary though one could nonetheless consider it a bona fide documentary evidence of everyday lesbian life in Seoul in the 1990s. I ask them questions from behind

the camera and they answer, but I do not remember where or how I came to hang out with this group of women, and I no longer have a way of tracing the connections. I do not recognize any one of the individuals, and I have not been able to locate or verify their identities. The women are in their twenties, single and in couples, butch and fem. There is drinking, lots of cigarette smoking, laughter and playful conversations about dating, music, and relationships. I am in this story by virtue of being there, but viewing this now, I am struck by a distinct sense of estrangement from this recent past. This time-place does not exist anymore, and the individuals on the recording are no longer known to me. I do not even remember being there or recording the video, though the video is real, serving as a proof of something. Every photograph is a "certificate of presence," as Roland Barthes writes, though their meaning and significance is far from static or obvious.[71] In so many ways, I myself am no longer the person who recorded these moments. These archives of ephemera from the recent past, full of memory and mystery, both intimate and strange, co-present as they are on this one Hi-8 cassette tape, shape how I draw the throughlines in this book.

As part of another research project on protest cultures, I conducted thirteen in-depth interviews between 2015 and 2017 with former and current activists involved in queer activism—five lesbian, one bisexual, two trans, two gay, and three straight—each lasting between two and three hours. Many of them pointed me to published sources including their own writings for elaboration and verification, either because they could not recall the details with precision or because they have already discussed the topic at length in writing. I have done my best to cross reference these documentations and use both the recent interviews and previously published accounts to verify details and accuracy, especially in chapters 2 and 4.

Many of the stories I tell in *Queer Throughlines* are within reach from the present—a near past that is more conducive to touch, to invoke Carolyn Dinshaw's evocative image of queer history as "the touch across time."[72] Dinshaw discusses the touch between the queer historian and medieval texts, as well as the queer readers who might subsequently be touched by both the historian and the past. But sometimes, the near past is arguably not any more accessible to touch than the distant past. In fact, the archive of the near past of gay and lesbian activisms in South Korea and the Korean diaspora continues to be—and perhaps always will be—difficult to grasp, partial and fragmentary, heterogeneous and contradictory. The stories of the near past for queer and transgender Koreans and Korean Americans are punctured and stitched, torn and spliced together, narrated through themes of isolation, discovery, community, struggle, and conflict, and certainly not always

or necessarily in that order. In this book, I assemble and curate an archive of stories and documents as well as fragments of my own memory and participant experience in order to draw a picture of history that is ongoing and underway. Insofar as this constitutes recent history of the near past—which is not meant to be a delineation of a new category of analysis—the objects of these stories are often on the move, nearly touchable and part of a changing present. Some have died in the course of writing and publishing this book, as is the notable case of Reverend Lim Borah discussed in chapter 3. My intention is not to rigidly define the thresholds between the distant and near past, or the past and present and future. Rather, the intention is both reflexive and investigative. As geographer Derek Gregory writes, in reference to Donna Haraway's reflections on situated knowledge, "reflexivity is always conditional, self-consciousness always partial and provisional, because all knowledge is produced by someone from somewhere."[73] By curating and discussing this untidy and wide-ranging archive—firsthand and secondhand accounts, photographs and illustrations, ephemera like newspaper ads, event flyers, home video recordings, newsletters and statements and manifestos, and interviews conducted with key interlocuters—I pursue in this book the interwoven threads that hold in tension the dynamics of queer and trans activisms and social change in South Korea and the Korean diaspora.

Chapters That Follow

I mostly use the term, "queer," in this book to denote the fluid self-identifications and open-ended social and political formations that refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex subjectivities. This is not to suggest that each of these categories are equally represented—transgender and genderqueer organizing has become more visible in recent years, but bisexual and intersex issues continue to remain far less so, for example. In discussions of 1990s and early 2000s when *k'wiŏ* (퀴어) was often used interchangeably with *tongsŏngaeja* (동성애자) or "gay and lesbian," I try to stay true to the parlance of the context by using those terms even if they seem outdated today. These terms do carry different nuances. Whereas "LGBTQ" suggests coalitional terms of identity politics, "queer" tends to draw attention to the mutability and fluidity of sexual identity and a politics of subversion and anti-normativity. The more recent term, "sexual minority," on the other hand, emphasizes the unequal relations of power and shared experiences of political marginalization among differently minoritized groups. In discussions of post-2010 or so, I increasingly use the term, "sexual minority" (성소수자; *sŏngsosuja*), because it is the most commonly used term today in activist

spaces in Korea and has significant implications for the politics of recognition as I discuss in chapter 2. But I sometimes use LGBTQ and LGBTI as these are also widely used by activists and scholars as well as policymakers. I use the terms "homophobia" or "queerphobia" interchangeably to refer to implicit and explicit platforms against LGBTQ identities and practices and individuals associated with those identities and practices.

Chapter 1 continues the diasporic positioning of this introductory chapter and examines the contemporaneous emergence of queer activism and political homophobia in California in the 1990s and early 2000s. The primary focus in chapter 1 is the anti-LGBTQ petition campaign for the California Defense of Sexual Responsibility Act (CDSRA) that emerged in 1999, driven largely by immigrant Korean American church leaders in Los Angeles, and how this in turn catalyzed new alliances and relationships among Korean American and Asian American LGBTQ activists and community-based organizations. Rather than place them sequentially on a linear timeline as occurring before or after the other, I am interested in seeing queer activism and the anti-LGBTQ activism of the CDSRA campaign as concurrent political spaces where multiple strands of majority-minority dynamics become intertwined. In other words, the CDSRA campaign in 1999 was neither a site of waning conservative minority opposing the inexorable tide of progressive social change in California nor simply the beginning of Christian conservative opposition to LGBTQ equality. It was nonetheless a start of a political throughline that would reverberate for decades to come, especially for Christian conservatives cultivating transpacific connections between South Korea and the United Sates. Interestingly, the anti-LGBTQ campaign and the LGBTQ rights camp both drew from the same source of political rhetoric: empowering immigrants and racial minorities, described as the new emerging majority in California. I show that in order to fully understand the dynamics of homophobia and anti-LGBTQ politics as they unfolded in immigrant Korean American spaces in Los Angeles, we must take seriously the political affinities and alliances that stretch beyond gender and sexuality politics. For instance, LGBTQ advocates highlighted the importance of coalitional solidarity and minority human rights in their political rhetoric, drawing clear connections to both U.S.-based social justice discourse and South Korea-based democratization and human rights activisms. I am interested in examining the co-presence of these throughlines as part of the recursive space of queer activisms to this day.

Chapter 2 traces the history of the South Korean gay and lesbian Left, positing queer geopolitics as a confluence between dissident minority politics and Left internationalism. Examining queer dissent and minority politics in the context of mass mobilizations and political upheavals especially in South

Korea in the late 1990s and early 2000s, this chapter unpacks the preposterous epithet of *chongbuk gay* (종북게이) which translates to a pro-North Korea gay person, a term that conflates sexual perversion and political subversion and conjures a queer political subject supposedly with traitorous allegiances to North Korea. It is a fictive monster, an abject figure, invented by anti-LGBTQ forces to rationalize homophobia through nationalism and anticommunism. But rather than focus on the falsity of this accusation, I argue that as some of my Leftist interlocuters point out with a sense of irony, some queers are in fact *ppalgaengi* (빨갱이) or communist subversives in their political orientation. Whereas liberal mainstream notions of equality would suggest that queers are in actuality just like everyone else, i.e. not different, non-threatening, and non-subversive, some of these more rebellious throughlines in modern queer and trans activisms do indeed pose a threat to the so-called national security and cultivate dissident political subjectivities beyond the liberal discourse of tolerance or campaigns for marriage equality. The history of the radical queer and feminist Left constitutes an important but often overlooked part of the South Korean social movements today. They challenge masculinist labour movements and heteronormative women's movements, and insist on an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist agenda rooted in radical student movements in which many queer activists began their political education.

Whereas chapter 2 focuses on queer subject formation and the idiom of nationalism and anticommunism that disciplines gender and sexual nonconformity, chapter 3 discusses a different kind of censure. This concerns the heresy rulings against Reverend Lim Borah (임보라; Im Pora) of the Sumdol Hyanglin Church (섬돌 향린교회), an important activist and progressive religious leader who tragically died by suicide in 2023. Dispute over heresy and heterodoxy are certainly not new or uncommon, as mainline Protestant denominations in South Korea and elsewhere have historically deemed numerous minor sects and radical theologies to be heretical to what they define as the mainline. However, the case against Lim was significant in many ways including the fact that it was South Korea's largest evangelical denomination, The Presbyterian Church in Korea Haptong (합동), that investigated Lim in 2017 and subsequently ruled her ministry to be heretical even though she was not even a member of their denomination. If that ruling produced more symbolic pressure than institutional ones—which is not to diminish the tremendous stress and relentless harassment Lim faced—the Korean Methodist Church turned against a member of its own denomination on March 4, 2024 and eventually excommunicated Reverend Lee Dong-hwan (이동환; Yi Tong-hwan) for performing blessings at the Incheon Queer Culture Festival in 2019. In examining these decisions by Protestant denominations to denounce LGBTQ-affirming

theology and ministry as heresy, I trace the long throughline of dissent and dissident politics in Korean Protestantism and examine the politics of the term for heresy, *idan* (이단), and its similarity to the colloquial neologism *iban* (이반), equivalent to the English word "queer" in many ways. These two words share the first character *yi* (이 異) which means different or transgressive.[74] As growing interest in queer theology and calls for LGBTQ-affirming ministry face religious conservatives' efforts to discredit and stigmatize difference and disidentification, I argue that what is at stake is not simply about the quashing or stifling of dissent. Rather, heresy debates expose the fissures and limits of dominant power and reveals the contours of vital resistance even when enormous difficulty and heartache are involved. After all, heresy rulings render visible queer theology and the presence of sexual minorities in the church, and through official ruling, the presence of heresy becomes a documented fact in official church history.

Chapter 4 offers a critique of the idiom of *sigisangjo* (시기상조), a term that means "too soon." It denotes being out of place in time. It became prominent as part of anti-LGBTQ discourse during South Korea's Candlelight Protests in 2016–17 which succeeded in impeaching and ousting the right-wing President for corruption and abuse of power and installing a new, more liberal government. The liberal political moment also registered a significant betrayal and disappointment for sexual minority movements that supported the regime change. From a jubilant, triumphant perspective, the Candlelight Protests drew from the legacies of pro-democracy movements of the 1980s and reinvigorated forms of decentralized collective action, spectacularly demonstrating the will of the people and the power of peaceful mass mobilization. But in spite of this dominant narrative of political transformation and social change, queer and feminist voices were sidelined in the period of political transition and told that they must wait until later to take part in this newly envisioned future. Engaging closely with the cultural logic of sigisangjo, an idiom that chastises against prematurity or being at odds with the mainstream, this chapter examines the time and place for queer politics and social change. I argue that sigisangjo, reimagined as a counterstrategy, could be conceptualized as an idiom *toward* disidentification, a move away from normative temporalities. After all, sigisangjo suggests a queer temporality, a defiant refusal of the present, and this idea of discord has been an important part of queer activism all along.

In the short epilogue, I return to the film *Coming to You* and discuss the implication of PFLAG activism for the changing politics of family, allyship, and solidarity. My reading of the film suggests that we expand the idea of the *tangsaja* (당사자), meaning those most directly impacted, to include not only the LGBTQ individuals but also their friends, comrades, and families.

Attacks against individual LGBTQ tangsaja ought to be considered also as attacks against their communities, and this book highlights the extent to which queer activisms are intertwined with a variety of social and political dynamics. By critically examining these spaces of interrelations—connections and fissures—we may be able to imagine more capacious assemblies and more horizontal, more unnatural, and more contingent kinships.

CHAPTER 1

Against Homophobia in the Diaspora

An unprecedented anti-LGBTQ petition raged in the immigrant Korean American community in California in late 1999. A grassroots petition drive in an effort to collect enough signatures to qualify for the California ballot for the following year in 2000, the campaign for California Defense of Sexual Responsibility Act (CDSRA) took off especially in Los Angeles Korean/American communities, prompting for the first time a broad public discussion of homosexuality and same-sex marriage in a variety of print and broadcast ethnic media outlets and public space. Even so, the case remains largely unknown partly because it was a relatively short-lived effort in a minoritized community. The CDSRA emerged on the eve of the much better-known California Proposition 22, which in 2000 sought to limit marriage to a union exclusively between a man and a woman. A few years later, another well-known California Proposition 8 in 2008 would mobilize communities and legal debates on both sides of the proposal to amend the state constitution to eliminate marriage rights for same-sex couples. In contrast to these well-known *major* California propositions and federal policies, the CDSRA campaign remains a *minor* incident in anti-LGBTQ politics.

I nonetheless consider the CDSRA petition drive and the countercampaign that emerged as a significant convergence in Korean/American history, as it marked the start of a long throughline of conflict mobilized by Christian conservatives committed to an explicitly anti-LGBTQ set of politics. The CDSRA petition effort was the first statewide legislative campaign led primarily by Korean Americans in California, a political spectacle with radical aims. Refusing to accept any form of LGBTQ equality in the public sphere, the measure sought to create a statewide legislation that would prohibit "public

entities from endorsing, educating, recognizing or promoting homosexuality as acceptable, moral behavior."[1] By "public entities" the CDSRA was referring to not only state agencies and government workers but public schools and teachers. Its proponents opined in newspaper editorials that parents are entitled to shield their children from being taught by out gay and lesbian teachers and suggested an outright ban against any LGBTQ content in primary school curricula. LGBTQ student groups and gay-straight alliances would be disallowed on campus, and if the effort were to be successful, teachers would have been mandated to teach school-age children that homosexuality was unequivocally wrong both on moral grounds and for the purposes of public health. This radically anti-LGBTQ measure even claimed that using the phrase "sexual orientation" implied a degree of tolerance and sought to remove the term from being used in "any law, regulation, rule, ordinance, code, policy, resolution, declaration, or proclamation." All of this was extreme even by conservative standards then. In the Korean-language news articles, well-known conservative politicians and Christian Coalition figures were initially reported to have attended the preparatory meetings and endorsed the launch event, but these individuals later denied having formal ties to the CDSRA campaign.[2]

Conservatives in the Community

Before I delve into a deeper discussion of the CDSRA and its precipitating conditions as well as what transpired in terms of the oppositional LGBTQ activism that emerged in response, I want to begin with a cautionary preface about discussing conservatism in the diaspora. A critique of homophobia among immigrants or people of color undoubtedly risks the possibility of reinforcing the racist perception that people of color—especially immigrants, poor and working-class people of color—are *more* homophobic than their white counterparts in the majority. Immigrants and racialized people of color are typically seen as more "patriarchal, homophobic, irrational, monocultural, backward or criminal," as Jin Haritaworn writes.[3] This "racialized discourse of homophobia" has been critiqued and debunked countless times over but it still circulates in public, sometimes explicitly and other times in subtle ways.[4] At the same time, Christian conservatives in the U.S. are commonly caricatured as White and fundamentalist, creating a rather large under-researched area concerning political and social conservatism among people of color.[5] Given how much anti-LGBTQ movements are flourishing in South Korea—routinely making the news for blocking Pride events or anti-discrimination legislations—it would be easy to assume that Koreans are especially intolerant, especially unwilling to accept non-normative genders and sexualities. That is

certainly not my argument here. To be sure, Christian conservatives in South Korea and the United States are indeed well known for their homonegative views and homophobic actions, and they play a major role in politics and community life.[6] The picture is even more stark in the Korean diaspora in the U.S. The religious diversity that exists in South Korea—where Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant populations coexist without a single majority religion—does not exist among Korean/American immigrants in the U.S., though the Christian majority seems to be less dominant now compared to two or three decades ago. The Pew Research Center's *Religion Among Asian Americans* report in 2023 found that Koreans and Filipino Americans were more likely than other Asian Americans to be Christian: "59% of Korean Americans are Christian, mostly Protestant—including 34% who identify as born-again or evangelical Protestants."[7]

I am interested in examining religious and political conservatism as a constitutive part of the Korean diaspora while rejecting the racist framing that views conservative immigrant Koreans as minorities who are *out of step* with the changing times and *out of place* in the liberal teleology of LGBTQ progress in places like the U.S.[8] Temporality is a key part of this discussion (also see chapter 4). For conservative Korean/American Christians, being part of a conservative bloc is about simultaneously opposing the tide of change from liberal and progressive policies and reverting them by advancing conservative causes. It is about changing things back to an earlier condition. On the other hand, progressive queer and trans activists narrate social change in terms of breaking the stronghold of so-called traditional family values and creating a more capacious space that would welcome gender and sexual minorities as equals. Both anti-LGBTQ and LGBTQ sides are invested in a futurity that diverges from the present. I want to think through these spatio-temporalities of homophobia and social change.

There is another important dimension of this spatiotemporal throughline. A Korean emigrant is a *kyop'o* (교포), a Korean abroad, defined by the fact of their departure from the homeland. In this view, a Korean emigrant is also defined by their place in time of South Korean history, which is typically periodized linearly from modernization and development in the 1960s and 1970s to democratization in the 1980s, followed by decades of both intensification of neoliberalism and expansion of civil liberties in the 1990s and beyond. Korean emigrants who left South Korea prior to the height of anti-authoritarian social movements in the mid-1980s would have missed the national election that led to South Korea's first civilian president in 1992, and they would not have experienced firsthand the political upheaval and possibilities for social transformation that opened up during that time. But if they attended college in the

1980s—a privilege far rarer then than it is now—they might have seen firsthand what radical student activism looked like in South Korea. If the emigrant left before the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics, they would not have witnessed firsthand the urban displacement and development projects throughout the city that made issues of poverty, eviction, and gentrification a key part of the student activism aligned with PD or People's Democracy (see chapter 2 for the ideological differences between PD and NL [National Liberation]). Emigrants would not have been privy to how anti-poverty activism, movements for deinstitutionalization, or disability justice organizing converged to shape a pivotal part of minority politics in South Korea, new social movements that connect with queer politics in ways that differ significantly from U.S.-based identity politics. Thrust into immigrant life in Los Angeles or California, the kyop'o subjectivity can be situated as much by what they left behind—or pulled along with them, like a nautical rope—as well as events that took place after emigration. I find useful this homeland-centered view of a kyop'o not only to contextualize what shapes their political subjectivity but also because this temporal frame diverges significantly from the Asian Americanist focus on the immigrants' arrival in the U.S., one that marks the moment of arrival and struggles for settlement as the key constitutive experience as new immigrants to the U.S. In this chapter and throughout *Queer Throughlines*, I try to carefully unpack the politics in the diaspora and discuss the dynamics of social change as seen from both South Korea and the Korean diaspora in the United States, as these relationalities continue to shift. Identities and subject positions are continuously in flux, after all, shaped by multiple and heterogeneous spatio-temporalities that co-operate in the diaspora. "Strewn into such assembly" is an evocative phrase that appears in the Korean American poet Myung Mi Kim's poem, "Into Such Assembly."[9] The line evokes for me Doreen Massey's term, "throwntogetherness," that I discussed in the introduction as well. Thrown or strewn together, provisionally and contingently—such are the contradictions of assembly in the diaspora.

Homophobia as Import/Export

The close ties between Korean and U.S. evangelical Christianity have historically shaped the dynamics of Korean/American religious conservatism. Beyond Korea, as well, it is by now a well-rehearsed argument to suggest that U.S. evangelical Christianity has influenced international policies concerning gender and sexuality, ethics of charity, and arbitration of morality or public decency.[10] Through political networks and U.S. aid policies, American Christian conservatives have restricted women's reproductive freedoms, promoted

heteronormative family planning, and shifted the focus of HIV/AIDS prevention from sex education and safer sex to sexual abstinence.[11] The well-known case of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill in 2009—it imposed the death penalty for certain homosexual acts and criminalized LGBTQ advocacy—and subsequent attention to American evangelicals' involvement in global movements against gender and sexual minority rights have shown that the American infrastructures of conservative religion can very much stoke and fuel the flames of bigotry abroad.[12] Such analysis offers the narrative frame that a certain legal-juridical and political form of *homophobia* is a *colonial* export, rather than homosexuality or LGBTQ rights being colonial impositions, and that global political homophobia is a consequence of the "exportation of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Euro-American models of gender and sexuality [. . .] now festering away in various places around the globe."[13] Along these lines, the Anglican priest and outspoken LGBTQ activist, Kapya Kaoma, writes in *The American Prospect*, "Pejorative attitudes toward LGBT people in Africa have long been widespread. But the recent upsurge in politicized homophobia has been inspired by right-wing American evangelicals who have exported U.S.–style culture-war politics."[14]

My concern with this line of critique—for instance when Kaoma argues that sexual minorities in Africa have become "collateral damage in the U.S. culture wars"—is that the analysis can potentially become so U.S.-centric that everything else appears secondary to U.S. interests, U.S. processes, and U.S. machinations.[15] The very language of "export" assumes a uni-directional orientation. Instead, could we not flip the import-export dynamic and imagine an American brand of homophobia as a strategic *import* for local Ugandan anti-LGBTQ movements that recruited international support to serve a homegrown political agenda? Rather than simply "collateral damage," local anti-LGBTQ movements and activists interface strategically with transnational networks, mobilizing others as much as they themselves are mobilized. We could easily lose sight of this if we attribute the U.S. as the clear source and main culprit, a singularly powerful agent of homophobia, and flatten the rest of the world as a mere receptacle or battleground for U.S. interests. Furthermore, this kind of export-oriented queer geopolitical frame conceals the complexities and unevenness within national borders. It groups anti-LGBTQ movements into distinct national units in such a way that a white American evangelical policy think tank in Washington, DC becomes no different from an evangelical people of color or immigrant group based in a Los Angeles suburb. Both would problematically be swept under the category of "American evangelicals."

This is precisely where a minor campaign in the diaspora at the periph-

ery of national politics—like the CDSRA petition campaign—complicates the narrative and complexifies the analysis. Take a typical Korean/American Presbyterian congregation. It might belong to a mainline U.S.-based denomination like the Presbyterian Church USA or they might claim membership in an independent denomination like the Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad, which as a South Korea-based denomination defines its mission as serving the "seven million Koreans *abroad*."[16] Depending on its institutional affiliation and denominational membership, a Korean/American congregation in Los Angeles might fall more closely in line with a South Korean religious denomination in terms of political, cultural, and linguistic proximity than with a U.S.-based denomination that might actually be closer in physical proximity. No one parameter determines whether the Korean/American congregation might be described as "more Korean" or "more American."

Consider as well the place of minority voices within and across denominations. In the 1990s when mainline American Protestant denominations were starting to debate their institutional policies to consider adopting a more inclusive stance toward LGBTQ members and same-sex marriage, Korean American churches stirred in opposition as a minority voice. This is not surprising given how theologically conservative they were known to be. The Presbyterian Panel Survey of 1997–99 found that 90 percent of Korean American Presbyterians "highly disapproved" same-sex partnership, a much higher percentage compared to African American and white American Presbyterians.[17] In 2000, the National Korean Presbyterian Council (NKPC), reportedly representing 350 Korean American congregations and over 37,000 individuals within the PC(USA), issued a statement that "homosexual partnerships are incompatible with God's created order," as "clearly and unambiguously written in the Scripture."[18] They urged PC(USA) congregations to support an amendment prohibiting Presbyterian ministers from conducting marriage-like ceremonies for same-sex couples or blessing same-sex relationships. Interestingly in the same statement, they reminded PC(USA) members of the geopolitical entanglements between Korean and American Protestants:

> We give thanks to this denomination that sent missionaries whose shed blood and broken bodies stirred our sleeping forefathers in the Land of Morning Calm (Korea) to call the great name of Jesus Christ in their fervent early morning prayer. In recent decades, many Koreans came to this blessed land with the legacy of Presbyterian Church and built churches and worshipped the true and only God wherever they settled. . . . [If same-sex unions were allowed, the] Korean-American constituency, which has experienced 50% increase in membership and 90% increase in per capital dur-

> ing the last ten years, will see a devastating blow in its membership growth because *Koreans, particularly young people, are conservative and evangelical in their faith and will turn away from our denomination*. In a word, the blessing of same-sex union would bring our demise as a church of Jesus Christ. (my italics)[19]

Their discussion of historical Korean church growth and the emphasis on conservative youth in Korean American churches contradict broader trends and dominant observations of "steady net membership loss among Presbyterian churches" and the "drift of young adults away from the church" since the 1970s.[20] In fact, U.S.-born Korean Americans have been discussed as *leaving* immigrant-generation Korean churches in what has been dubbed a "silent exodus" since the nineties, wherein the youth were increasingly choosing to attend a church where English is the primary language or not attend church at all.[21]

The NKPC letter to the PC(USA) is interesting also for another reason, and that is the notion of generational difference between presupposed conservative immigrant first-generation and the supposedly liberal U.S.-born second-generation. Generations are evidently important as an organizing force in many facets of Korean worship and church structure. An immigrant Korean church in the U.S. typically maintains a generationally stratified structure, a pattern that also repeats sometimes in other types of community-based organizations. These spaces are divided between Korean-speaking and English-speaking, immigrant and U.S.-born, first-generation and second-generation (and beyond). Take for example a typical Sunday church service at a Korean/American congregation: the so-called main adult service is the Korean Ministry (KM) worship service in Korean with the church's head pastor, while a smaller English Ministry (EM) service is held separately for U.S.-born and other non-Korean-speaking church members. In such structure, the main body of the church is typically referred to as KM, seen as a space for "adults," and meanwhile, the EM is marked as a space for "youth" or "kids," even when they are not minors or biological children of any adult church member. Similar age-based stratification can be found in South Korean congregations as well, but in the diaspora, age-based *generational* difference becomes even more complicated by linguistic and immigration generational stratification.

I will pick up on the ramification of these ideas around generations for queer politics in the epilogue, but suffice it to say for now that an overemphasis on generations can reinforce idioms of heteropatriarchal family order and stratification along gender, age, and geographies of birth, adolescence, and education.[22] It tends to assume that the future (generation) is more liberal

and open-minded than the past (generation), even though the NKPC letter above clearly contradicts this because it claims that the younger generation of Korean Americans are indeed conservative as well.

To be sure, there are many other vectors of difference that shape diasporic throughlines. Korean American communities are hardly homogenous. An important demographic dimension since the 1990s is the co-presence of diasporic Koreans from northeastern China and North Korea who live and work in the immigrant Korean/American communities in the U.S. and Canada. While the U.S. is known as the site of the largest Korean diaspora in the world, the second largest Korean diasporic population is in China, concentrated in northeastern China along the North Korean border. There is a complex historical geography and important developments in recent years that are beyond the scope of this book but let me just point out one relevant point. Ethnic Koreans in China are referred to as *chosŏnjok* (조선족), and many of them have sought work in South Korea, often finding low-wage work in restaurants, factories, farms, and domestic work.[23] As diasporic returnees, they encounter stigma and discrimination in South Korea, and when chosŏnjok individuals migrate again to places like the U.S., they do not necessarily integrate well into the immigrant Korean/American communities for there are significant divergences among them. Throughout Los Angeles and in places like Toronto, Canada, where individuals who previously identified as North Koreans or chosŏnjok intermingle with migrants from South Korea, these differences in origin can perpetuate and reproduce status hierarchies and class positionalities. An archetypal hierarchy in Korean restaurants and other businesses in Los Angeles area would look like this: the owner would be a South Korean immigrant, but the business would be managed by Korean Americans, and the lowest of low-wage cooking and cleaning work would be performed by chosŏnjok, North Korean migrants and refugees, or Latino workers.

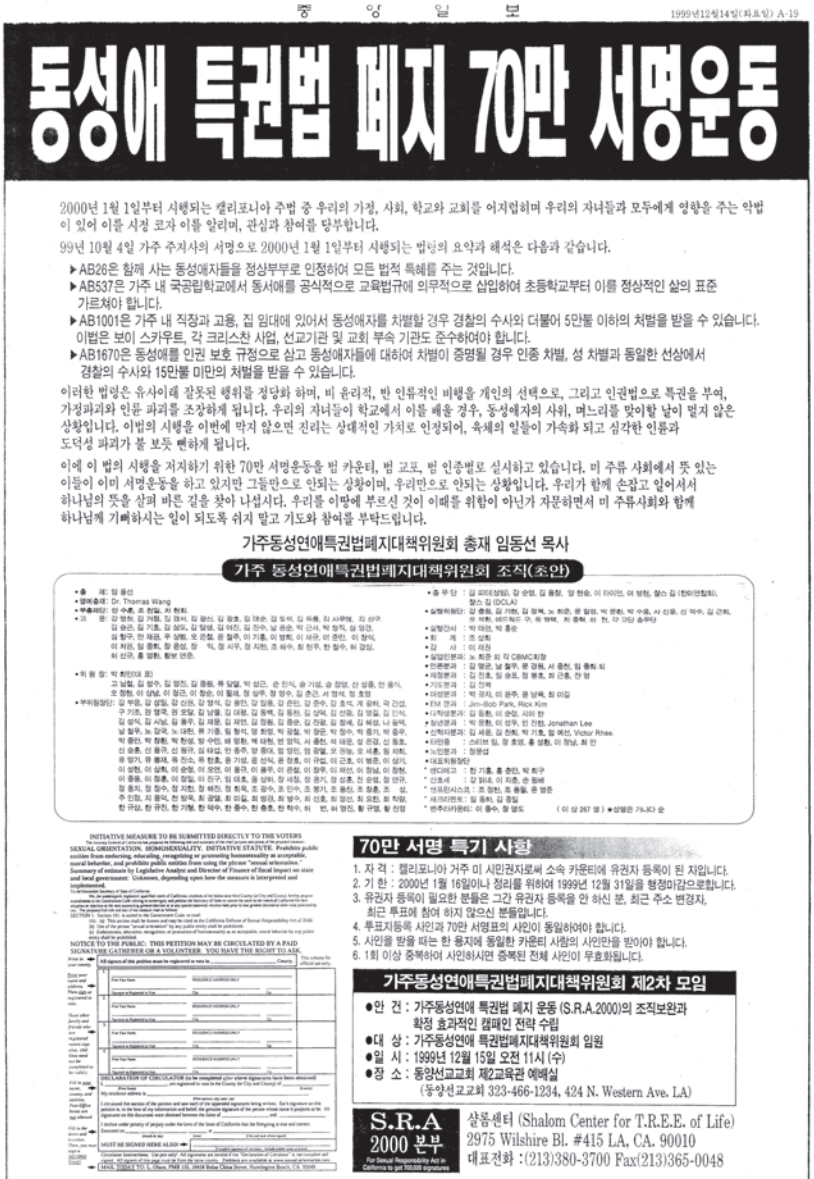
Ethnic background, visa status and citizenship status, education level and school alumni ties, socioeconomic class background and income levels, precipitating conditions before migration and the extent of downward or upward mobility upon migration. All these shape both lines of identification and disidentification in the Korean diaspora. In suggesting that we consider the heterogeneity of the Korean diaspora and take seriously the multiplicity of throughlines in identities and political subjectivities, I am contending that the predominant notion of inside/outside or *generational* difference can in fact obscure these important complexities. Queering these complex throughlines in the diaspora could better account for strategic identities and affinities that become imbricated across a range of minority political registers.

Regarding this discussion of queer politics as transnational minority poli-

tics, I heed Francoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih's important work on "minor transnationalism."[24] In pushing beyond "a binary model of minority cultural formations," Lionnet and Shih begin with discussing disciplines that are in one way or another racialized, marginalized, and "minoritized" in the major disciplines of English and French, in their respective cases. "We realized," they write, "that our battles have always framed vertically, and we forget to look sideways to lateral networks that are not readily apparent."[25] Minorities do not "necessarily and continuously engage with and against majority cultures in a vertical relationship of opposition or assimilation," but also forge relations with one another.[26] Though their concern is primarily with interethnic solidarity and international alliances forged between racial minorities and diasporic colonial subjects who, despite not sharing a specific geography, still converge on a politics of location, I find compelling their call to look at transnationalism from a "minor" perspective and trouble the "prevalent notions of transnationalism as a homogenizing force."[27] For one, if we envision transnationality as constituted at the intersection of "multiple spatiotemporal (dis)orders," as Lionnet and Shih quote from Saskia Sassen's work, then the space of transnationality is not simply about the U.S. and Korea but all the overlapping, contradictory, and uneven minority-minority interactions on multiple scales. These ideas about minor geopolitics will become clearer in the next section as I present a more detailed discussion of the CDSRA.

California Defense of Sexual Responsibility Act (CDSRA)

According to published accounts, the original draft of the CDSRA was authored by Lee Olson, a white American retired engineer from Orange County with no known ties to civic or religious groups or political parties. Olson reportedly described the CDSRA as "an opportunity to launch a torpedo toward the radical homosexual destroyer."[28] There is no record of CDSRA meetings or organizing activities prior to Korean American involvement, however, and Olson's proposal to annihilate existing civil rights protection for LGBTQ people appears to have failed to gain traction until it caught the attention of immigrant Korean American Christians. Once it did, the campaign spread rapidly through the ethnic Korean-language media. In December 1999 the two major Korean-language ethnic newspapers—*The Korea Times* and *The Korea Daily*—published full-page CDSRA advertisements endorsed by 267 prominent Korean American religious, business, and civic leaders. The organizing committee of the CDSRA campaign looked like a veritable "Who's Who" of immigrant Korean Americans in California. The committee's chair was Reverend Dong Sun Lim who founded the iconic Oriental Mission Church



중 앙 일 보 1999년12월14일(화요일) A-19

동성애 특권법 폐지 70만 서명운동

2000년 1월 1일부터 시행되는 캘리포니아 주법 중 우리의 가정, 사회, 학교와 교회를 어지럽히며 우리의 자녀들과 모두에게 영향을 주는 악법이 있어 이를 시정 코자 이를 알리며, 관심과 참여를 당부합니다.

99년 10월 4일 가주 주지사의 서명으로 2000년 1월 1일부터 시행되는 법령의 요약과 해석은 다음과 같습니다.

▶AB26은 함께 사는 동성애자들을 정상부부로 인정하여 모든 법적 특혜를 주는 것입니다.
▶AB537은 가주 내 국공립학교에서 동서애를 공식적으로 교육법규에 의무적으로 삽입하여 초등학교부터 이를 정상적인 삶의 표준 가르쳐야 합니다.
▶AB1001은 가주 내 직장과 고용, 집 임대에 있어서 동성애자를 차별할 경우 경찰의 수사와 더불어 5만불 이하의 처벌을 받을 수 있습니다. 이법은 보이 스카우트, 각 크리스찬 사업, 선교기관 및 교회 부속 기관도 준수하여야 합니다.
▶AB1670은 동성애를 인권 보호 규정으로 삼고 동성애자들에 대하여 차별이 증명될 경우 인종 차별, 성 차별과 동일한 선상에서 경찰의 수사와 15만불 미만의 처벌을 받을 수 있습니다.

이러한 법령은 유사이래 잘못된 행위를 정당화 하며, 비 윤리적, 반 인류적인 비행을 개인의 선택으로, 그리고 인권법으로 특권을 부여, 가정파괴와 인륜 파괴를 조장하게 됩니다. 우리의 자녀들이 학교에서 이를 배울 경우, 동성애자의 사위, 며느리를 맞이할 날이 멀지 않은 상황입니다. 이법의 시행을 이번에 막지 않으면 진리는 상대적인 가치로 인정되어, 육체의 일들이 가속화 되고 심각한 인륜과 도덕성 파괴가 불 보듯 뻔하게 됩니다.

이에 이 법의 시행을 저지하기 위한 70만 서명운동을 범 카운티, 범 교포, 범 인종별로 실시하고 있습니다. 미 주류 사회에서 뜻 있는 이들이 이미 서명운동을 하고 있지만 그들만으로 안되는 상황이며, 우리만으로 안되는 상황입니다. 우리가 함께 손잡고 일어서서 하나님의 뜻을 살펴 바른 길을 찾아 나섭시다. 우리를 이땅에 부르신 것이 이때를 위함이 아닌가 자문하면서 미 주류사회와 함께 하나님께 기뻐하시는 일이 되도록 쉬지 말고 기도와 참여를 부탁드립니다.

가주동성연애특권법폐지대책위원회 총재 임동선 목사

가주 동성연애특권법폐지대책위원회 조직(초안)

• 총 재: 임 동선
• 명예총재: Dr. Thomas Wang

INITIATIVE MEASURE TO BE SUBMITTED DIRECTLY TO THE VOTERS

SEXUAL ORIENTATION. HOMOSEXUALITY. INITIATIVE STATUTE. Prohibits public entities from endorsing, educating, recognizing or promoting homosexuality as acceptable, moral behavior, and prohibits public entities from using the phrase "sexual orientation." Summary of estimate by Legislative Analyst and Director of Finance of fiscal impact on state and local government: Unknown, depending upon how the measure is interpreted and implemented.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC: THIS PETITION MAY BE CIRCULATED BY A PAID SIGNATURE GATHERER OR A VOLUNTEER. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ASK.

70만 서명 특기 사항

1. 자 격 : 캘리포니아 거주 미 시민권자로써 소속 카운티에 유권자 등록이 된 자입니다.
2. 기 한 : 2000년 1월 16일이나 정리를 위하여 1999년 12월 31일을 행정마감으로합니다.
3. 유권자 등록이 필요한 분들은 그간 유권자 등록을 안 하신 분, 최근 주소 변경자, 최근 투표에 참여 하지 않으신 분들입니다.
4. 투표지등록 사인과 70만 서명표의 사인이 동일하여야 합니다.
5. 사인을 받을 때는 한 용지에 동일한 카운티 사람의 사인만을 받아야 합니다.
6. 1회 이상 중복하여 사인하시면 중복된 전체 사인이 무효화됩니다.

가주동성연애특권법폐지대책위원회 제2차 모임

● 안 건 : 가주동성연애 특권법 폐지 운동 (S.R.A.2000)의 조직보완과 확정 효과적인 캠페인 전략 수립
● 대 상 : 가주동성연애 특권법폐지대책위원회 임원
● 일 시 : 1999년 12월 15일 오전 11시 (수)
● 장 소 : 동양선교교회 제2교육관 예배실
(동양선교교회 323-466-1234, 424 N. Western Ave. LA)

S.R.A
2000 본부
For Sexual Responsibility Act in California to get 700,000 signatures

샬롬센터 (Shalom Center for T.R.E.E. of Life)
2975 Wilshire Bl. #415 LA, CA. 90010
대표전화 :(213)380-3700 Fax(213)365-0048

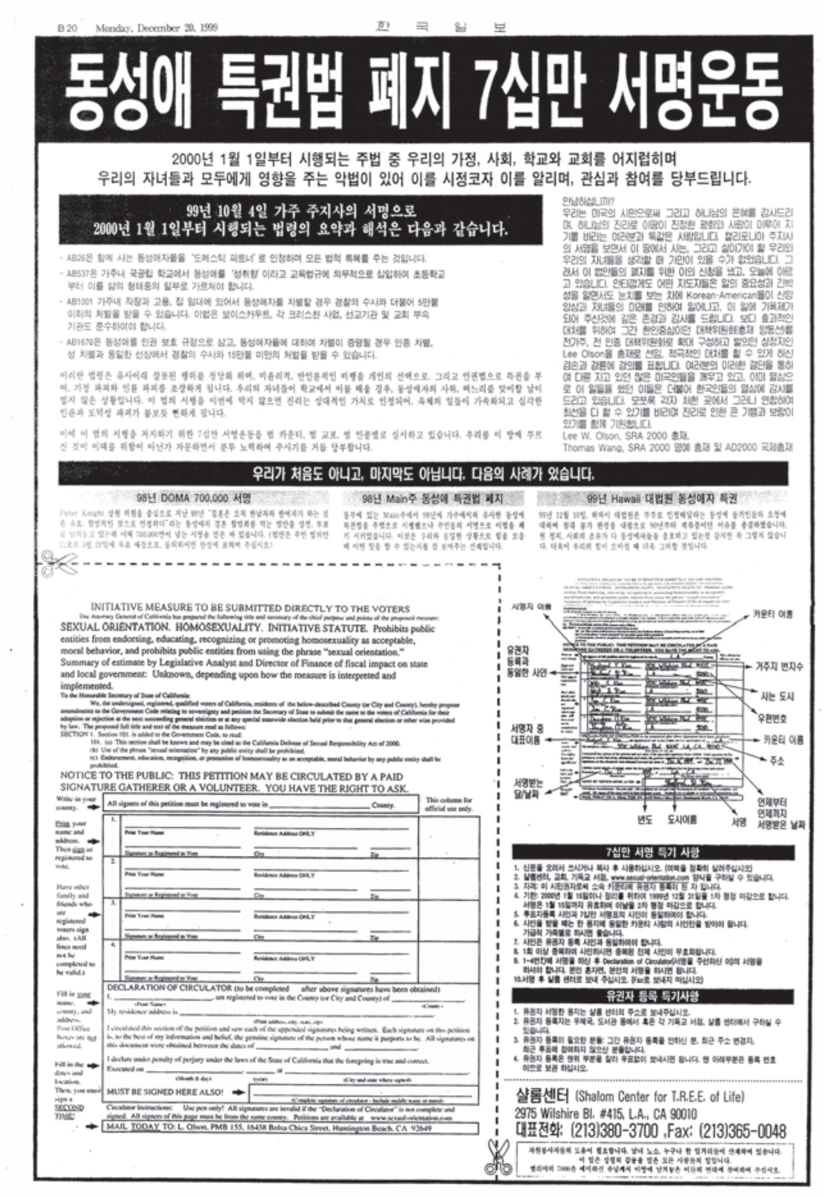
Fig. 11. CDSRA petition campaign advertisement in *The Korea Daily* (December 14, 1999, A19).

(OMC) in Los Angeles Koreatown in 1970. Also on the leadership roster were Reverend Hee Min Park, then the senior pastor of Young Nak Presbyterian Church, another well-known immigrant Korean megachurch in Los Angeles, and Charles Kim, executive director of the Korean American Coalition.[29]

The CDSRA advertisement that appeared in *The Korea Daily* on December 14, 1999 features a large headline, "700,000 signatures campaign to abolish homosexuality special rights" (fig. 11). Underneath, the ad presents an outline of summaries and analyses of new California laws that are about to go into effect on January 1, 2000, followed by a roster of 267 signatories who constitute the leadership of the group—predominantly middle-aged and elderly male pastors of immigrant congregations with conservative Protestant orientations, joined by several community leaders of mainstream civic organizations like the Korean American Coalition in Los Angeles. Listed on the bottom is the ad's sponsor—"Sexual Responsibility Act in California to get 700,000 signatures"—and information about signatory eligibility and voter registration. It also announces that a second meeting will be held the next day at the OMC.

The CDSRA ad warns the readers that several new state laws will "corrupt our family, society, school, and church and affect our children and everyone else." Urging the readers to oppose the so-called homosexual special rights, it deploys the political rhetoric against "special rights" popularized by the U.S. Christian Right throughout the 1990s. CDSRA proponents characterized the policy effects of California's non-discrimination legislations as essentially state-sanctioned imposition of a special minority interest—the "homosexual lobby" or the "gay agenda." In a manner reminiscent of other sites of evangelical Christian anti-gay politics, they argued that anti-discrimination measures violated their religious right and alleged religious persecution.[30] As Samuel A. Marcosson, a legal scholar with expertise on LGBTQ civil rights, points out, "the idea that anti-discrimination laws confer 'special rights' is not new," and "opponents of prior civil rights legislation have argued consistently" along the same lines as well.[31]

A week after *The Korea Daily* advertisement, another full-page CDSRA advertisement appeared in *The Korea Times* on December 20, 1999, with nearly identical content but with some change. The second advertisement did not list the signatories like the first time and instead said the following in bold: "We are not the first, nor the last. See the examples below." The first example the ad gives is the successful petition drive in 1998 that qualified the Knight Initiative (Proposition 22) for the March 2000 California ballot. It erroneously references DOMA or the Defense of Marriage Act, a federal law that had already been signed into law by Clinton in 1996, but more importantly, the CDSRA advertisement alerted the readers about the upcoming election and


B 20 Monday, December 20, 1999 한국일보

동성애 특권법 폐지 7십만 서명운동

2000년 1월 1일부터 시행되는 주법 중 우리의 가정, 사회, 학교와 교회를 어지럽히며
우리의 자녀들과 모두에게 영향을 주는 악법이 있어 이를 시정코자 이를 알리며, 관심과 참여를 당부드립니다.

99년 10월 4일 가주 주지사의 서명으로
2000년 1월 1일부터 시행되는 법령의 요약과 해석은 다음과 같습니다.

- AB26은 함께 사는 동성애자들을 '도메스틱 파트너'로 인정하며 모든 법적 특혜를 주는 것입니다.
- AB537은 가주내 국공립 학교에서 동성애를 '성취향'이라고 교육법규에 의무적으로 삽입하여 초등학교 부터 이를 삶의 형태중의 일부로 가르쳐야 합니다.
- AB1001 가주내 직장과 고용, 집 임대에 있어서 동성애자를 차별할 경우 경찰의 수사와 더불어 5만불 이하의 처벌을 받을 수 있습니다. 이법은 보이스카우트, 각 크리스챤 사업, 선교기관 및 교회 부속 기관도 준수하여야 합니다.
- AB1670은 동성애를 인권 보호 규정으로 삼고, 동성애자들에 대하여 차별이 증명될 경우 인종 차별, 성 차별과 동일한 선상에서 경찰의 수사와 15만불 미만의 처벌을 받을 수 있습니다.

안녕하십니까?

Lee W. Olson, SRA 2000 총재,
Thomas Wang, SRA 2000 명예 총재 및 AD2000 국제총재

우리가 처음도 아니고, 마지막도 아닙니다. 다음의 사례가 있습니다.

98년 DOMA 700,000 서명

98년 Main주 동성애 특권법 폐지

99년 Hawaii 대법원 동성애자 특권

INITIATIVE MEASURE TO BE SUBMITTED DIRECTLY TO THE VOTERS

The Attorney General of California has prepared the following title and summary of the chief purpose and points of the proposed measure:

SEXUAL ORIENTATION. HOMOSEXUALITY. INITIATIVE STATUTE. Prohibits public entities from endorsing, educating, recognizing or promoting homosexuality as acceptable, moral behavior, and prohibits public entities from using the phrase "sexual orientation." Summary of estimate by Legislative Analyst and Director of Finance of fiscal impact on state and local government: Unknown, depending upon how the measure is interpreted and implemented.

To the Honorable Secretary of State of California:

We, the undersigned, registered, qualified voters of California, residents of the below-described County (or City and County), hereby propose amendments to the Government Code relating to sovereignty and petition the Secretary of State to submit the same to the voters of California for their adoption or rejection at the next succeeding general election or at any special statewide election held prior to that general election or other wise provided by law. The proposed full title and text of the measure read as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 101. is added to the Government Code, to read:

101. (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the California Defense of Sexual Responsibility Act of 2000.
(b) Use of the phrase "sexual orientation" by any public entity shall be prohibited.
(c) Endorsement, education, recognition, or promotion of homosexuality as an acceptable, moral behavior by any public entity shall be prohibited.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC: THIS PETITION MAY BE CIRCULATED BY A PAID SIGNATURE GATHERER OR A VOLUNTEER. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ASK.

Write in your county. → All signers of this petition must be registered to vote in ______ County. | This column for official use only.

Print your name and address. Then sign as registered to vote. → 1. Print Your Name / Residence Address ONLY / Signature as Registered to Vote / City / Zip
2. Print Your Name / Residence Address ONLY / Signature as Registered to Vote / City / Zip
3. Print Your Name / Residence Address ONLY / Signature as Registered to Vote / City / Zip
4. Print Your Name / Residence Address ONLY / Signature as Registered to Vote / City / Zip

DECLARATION OF CIRCULATOR (to be completed after above signatures have been obtained)

MUST BE SIGNED HERE ALSO!

MAIL TODAY TO: L. Olson, PMB 155, 16458 Bolsa Chica Street, Huntington Beach, CA 92649

서명자 이름 · 카운티 이름 · 유권자 등록과 동일한 사인 · 거주지 번지수 · 사는 도시 · 우편번호 · 서명자 중 대표이름 · 카운티 이름 · 주소 · 서명받는 달/날짜 · 년도 · 도시이름 · 서명 · 언제부터 언제까지 서명받은 날짜

7십만 서명 특기 사항

유권자 등록 특기사항

샬롬센터 (Shalom Center for T.R.E.E. of Life)
2975 Wilshire Bl. #415, L.A., CA 90010
대표전화: (213)380-3700 ,Fax: (213)365-0048

Fig. 12. CDSRA petition campaign advertisement appearing in *The Korea Times* (December 20, 1999, B20).

urged them to vote yes on Proposition 22, which is known as the California Defense of Marriage Act. The second example the ad mentions is the repeal of "homosexual special rights" in Maine in 1998. It is described as an "identical situation as ours and a good example that shows what can be done with united force," with another emphasis on the importance of voting. Finally, the third example the ad references is the 1999 ruling against same-sex marriage by Hawaii's Supreme Court. The CDSRA ad implores, "It may seem like the political and social currents all advocate for homosexuals, but that is not the case. The more we consolidate our power the more we can resist the tide of LGBTQ rights." By weaving these cases together as successful examples, the CDSRA inserted itself in a historical narrative—not the first or the last, but in the midst of continued struggle.

There is a short letter that appears in the upper right corner of the second advertisement in *The Korea Times* (fig. 12). It is signed by Lee Olson, the CDSRA's author and chair of the organizing committee, as well as Thomas Wang, honorary chair of CDSRA and also the international director of AD2000, a project committed to building in Wang's own words, "a network of networks" under the slogan, "A Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person by the Year 2000."[32] Wang, a Beijing-born Chinese American leader, would later become well-known as a leading opponent against same-sex marriage in California and a voice representing conservative Asian Americans with anti-LGBTQ views. In February and March 2004 when San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom allowed some 4,000 same-sex marriage licenses to be issued before the California Supreme Court ordered a halt, Wang told the *San Jose Mercury News* that they "will not stand by to watch biblical marriage be destroyed by a radical agenda."[33] He also told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that "legalizing same-sex marriage would eventually lead to polygamy, multipartner marriage and incest."[34] Wang was instrumental in organizing against Proposition 8 in 2008 as well.[35]

Both versions of the advertisement articulate a special calling for Korean Americans. Describing the petition campaign as an important task that mainstream U.S. efforts cannot accomplish alone and also pointing out that Korean Americans alone cannot accomplish this urgent task of opposing LGBTQ rights, the ads urge multiracial cooperation. "We ask ourselves whether this was not the reason that God has called us to this land," they state, as they narrate the very purpose of Korean migration as anti-LGBTQ. The second advertisement included a sample petition with detailed instruction for filling out the form, using an amusing set of fictitious names: Husband Y. Kim, Wife S. Kim, Son C. Kim, and Daughter A. Kim, with the husband listed as the family representative.

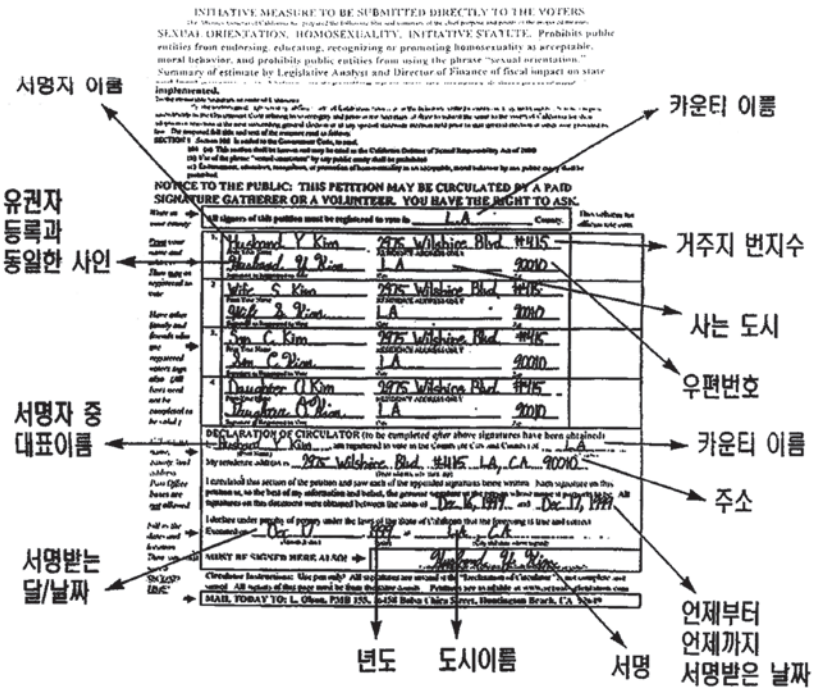


Fig. 13. Close-up of the CDSRA petition campaign advertisement (*The Korea Times*, December 20, 1999, B20).

What prompted the urgency of CDSRA was the passage of four non-discrimination bills in California that were about to go into effect in January 2000: AB26, AB537, AB1001, and AB1670. Assembly Bill 26 established the largest statewide domestic partnership registry with the California Secretary of State, granting hospital visitation rights between same-sex domestic partners and extending eligibility for healthcare coverage to same-sex domestic partners of state and local government employees. Especially with California Proposition 22 against same-sex marriage just around the corner, any such recognition of domestic partnership was seen as a precursor to full marriage rights for same-sex couples. Assembly Bill 537 amended the California Education Code's general non-discrimination and anti-harassment to prohibit discrimination and harassment in the public schools and community colleges' programs and activities and referenced the current hate crimes statute. Authored by Sheila James Kuehl, who became the first openly gay California legislator in 1994, the bill was intended to protect actual or perceived LGBTQ students

from discrimination and harassment in public schools. This was interpreted by its opponents as forcibly imposing LGBTQ identities on school-age youth.

Assembly Bill 1001 strengthened California's prohibition on sexual orientation discrimination in housing and employment, the culmination of several decades of struggle in the legislative and electoral arena. The CDSRA campaign perceived this as an attack against the religious liberty of landlords and businessowners who wished to be able to evict LGBTQ tenants and terminate LGBTQ employees. Assembly Bill 1670 amended the California Civil Rights Code to strengthen and clarify various civil rights protections afforded by the Fair Employment and Housing Act and other civil rights statutes. It would increase the amount of damages and administrative fines in some cases from $50,000 to $150,000, but it does not mention sexual orientation or includes it as part of a protected class. The CDSRA advertisement misrepresented this and claimed that the bill would include homosexuality in human rights protection and if proven to be discriminatory towards homosexuals, one would be subjected to police investigation and $150,000 in fines, the same as if the discrimination was on the basis of race and gender.

It is not surprising that the CDSRA campaign engaged California's ballot initiatives system to oppose these legislative reforms designed to strengthen civil rights protection against discrimination.[36] Myron Dean Quon, former Deputy Regional Director of the Western Regional Office of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, who was a key organizer in the ad hoc committee—Korean Americans for Civil Rights—that later formed to oppose the CDSRA petition campaign, traces a contentious history of postwar California and the regressive ballot initiatives.[37] It was in California, he points out, that the anti-LGBTQ Proposition 6 in 1978—better known as the Briggs Initiative—sought "to fire all California teachers who were 'imposing, encouraging or promoting homosexual conduct.'"[38] Though the Briggs Initiative did not pass, other regressive measures subsequently succeeded. Between 1994 and 2002, in a span of seven years, California voters not only denied public education and public services for undocumented immigrants (Proposition 187) and repealed public affirmative action programs (Proposition 209), but also outlawed bilingual education and toughened criminal sentencing.[39] Daniel HoSang argues that these propositions do not constitute a *sudden* wave of racial conservatism and that they must be seen as an essential part of a longer postwar California history that demonstrates racism as a "dynamic and evolving force, progressive rather than anachronistic, generative and fluid rather than conservative or static."[40] The CDSRA likewise ought to be considered as part of a dynamic and evolving conservative force, not a sudden wave of regressive politics.

Importantly, the political homophobia stoked by the CDSRA tapped immigrant desires and anxieties—heightened anxieties concerning persecution and wrongful prosecution as well as growing desires for civic participation and immigrant empowerment.[41] Though immigrants are not unique to pit religious liberty against LGBTQ legal equality or mobilize on the basis of fear for wrongful prosecution, immigrant configurations matter in how sentiments *against* anti-discrimination took hold. For instance, the CDSRA leader Peter Kim told the Korean-language evangelical flagship newspaper, *Kidok Sinmun* (기독신문; *Christian Newspaper*), that anti-discrimination laws would force Christian seminaries and religious schools to tolerate or even promote homosexuality lest they face state defunding and even criminal prosecution. He echoed the familiar refrain of the Christian Right that religious liberties are in danger and that LGBTQ equality would uproot "the moral value systems of the church and the family."[42]

Through these claims, the CDSRA organizers added another layer of alarm for immigrant Korean Americans who feared becoming unwitting victims of a punitive and litigious legal system in which they were structurally marginalized as immigrants with limited English proficiency. Put differently, the push for the CDSRA was cultivated at the intersection of regressive racial politics and immigrant fear of racist persecution, paradoxically fostering both homophobia and mobilization for racial empowerment.

The CDSRA campaign thus warned immigrant Korean American landlords that businesses cannot operate the same way as they might have in South Korea. It cautioned that in the U.S., where non-discrimination legislations protect racial and sexual minorities, Christian landlords would be required to rent even to pedophiles and other sexually depraved tenants who will take advantage of their American privilege and familiarity with the law. Korean Christian employers would not be able to terminate gay and lesbian workers even if they refuse to work, the CDSRA campaign implored, because gay and lesbian workers could easily make false claims of discrimination. Parents were warned that unbeknownst to them, schoolchildren would be shown gay pornography in class and instructed in the ways of anal sex, and as limited English-speakers unfamiliar with the U.S. school system, immigrant Korean parents would have little opportunity to object. It is telling that in all these examples, Korean Americans are described as occupying the position of parents, landlords, and business operators. Korean Americans are rarely, if ever, described in anti-LGBTQ rhetoric as schoolchildren, renters, or customers who should be protected from discrimination and homophobia.

The fervor associated with the petition drive was not well known outside Korean communities. The CDSRA generated no news coverage in English-

language media until it was well underway, and even then, it was only reported in local community news outlets. Within the immigrant Korean/American enclaves throughout southern California, however, anti-LGBTQ messages became front page news day after day. California-based Korean-language ethnic media outlets including print, radio, and television published dozens of stories and editorials in a short period of time, with the dominant voice being against LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage. They urged voters to stop the tide of LGBTQ rights in California and beyond. For several months, virulent anti-LGBTQ rhetoric permeated immigrant Korean/American community spaces—at churches, businesses, Korean language schools, and community centers. Pastors delivered sermons urging churchgoers to oppose the spread of homosexuality; teachers and childcare workers asked parents to sign the petition to protect children; and groups of volunteers stood with clipboards outside supermarkets, restaurants, and video rental stores to collect signatures and donations for the CDSRA campaign.

Taking place in the months leading up to the Christmas holidays in 1999, the heightened pitch of political homophobia was matched perhaps only by the widespread Y2K panic that year. The so-called Year 2000 (Y2K) problem in computer programming had stoked anxiety about catastrophic computer failure and technological havoc during the calendar transition from 1999 to 2000, with households advised to stock up on emergency supplies of bottled water, batteries, and canned food provisions. Homosexuality and same-sex marriage were on top of the list of concerns in these apocalyptic narratives. In yearend lists compiled by Korean-language news media like *The Christian Herald* and *The Christian Daily*, the CDSRA and Y2K panic ranked first and second as the most significant community news event of the year 1999.[43]

The momentum built around the CDSRA among Korean Americans helped expand the registered base of voters who identified with the anti-LGBTQ agenda. It also enabled the U.S. Christian Right to identify Korean Americans as key allies in expanding its reach into communities of color. By supplying the Korean/American community with an arsenal of anti-LGBTQ language—from the Heritage Foundation and the Traditional Values Coalition, for instance—anti-LGBTQ propaganda made inroads in the Korean-language media in the U.S. as well as in South Korea.

But the anti-LGBTQ campaign for the CDSRA in 1999 also presented new opportunities for queer political visibility. The CDSRA, like other political campaigns that leave durable traces regardless of their success or failure, did more than simply mount a temporary stage for political homophobia in the Korean diaspora. Even though the CDSRA petition campaign activated a conservative immigrant Christian base with a political mandate that linked

up with other conservative and anti-LGBTQ networks, it also catalyzed an organized response by gay and lesbian activists of color and allies who felt the political urgency of this confluence of religious conservatism and political homophobia.

Organizing Queer Koreans in the 1990s

In the early 1990s Korean diaspora in the U.S., knowledge about Korean or Korean American gay and lesbian community histories relied largely on anecdotal accounts and short newsletter and magazine articles written by anonymous or unknown authors. When more stories and documentations started coming out in South Korea, they were printed and photocopied on paper, assembled into envelopes and mailed from Korea. As I recounted in the methodological and autobiographical throughlines section of the introduction, I, too, exchanged countless letters and packages with friends and acquaintances this way, with fax machines later providing faster correspondences. International long-distance phone calls were expensive, so they had to be made with judicious constraint, and even though discounted calling cards and callback numbers with cheaper rates made communication more affordable, it still took a great deal of time and effort to share news and information across geography. There were group calls—so-called party lines or conference calls as they were sometimes known in the U.S.—but these spaces rarely if ever included international callers and these telephone-based gatherings were largely social in purpose, not motivated by political advocacy. Flyers and postcards, newspaper clippings, newsletters, magazines, books, postcards—these were all ephemera delivered by postal mail or via persons traveling back and forth between the U.S. and South Korea. Gay and lesbian Koreans in the diaspora, myself included, longed to reach communities across space, to learn about and forge connections to fledgling communities in South Korea. I savored and collected these scraps and objects from Seoul as if to shore up evidence that the elsewhere existed in actuality, cherishing them as glimpse of new horizons of queer lifeworlds.

The Internet did change everything, and it is not just a cliché. In the early days of the World Wide Web and dial-up modems and 5.25 inch floppy and 3.5 inch disks, what first transformed community formations in South Korea and the U.S. was the Usenet, message boards and bulletin board systems (BBS), followed by email lists. Technical issues notwithstanding, an unprecedented amount of information about lesbian and gay content in the arts, films, and scholarship started to flow through diasporic Korean networks. This was not always easy or accessible. Computers were expensive and there were hard-

ware and software issues as well. Unicode language encoding problems often "broke" Korean language text in emails and on the Web, making them undecipherable. We had to find and install a number of software applications, fonts, and sometimes even a whole new operating system to be able to read and type in both Korean and English. This, plus the unaffordability of computers and lack of Internet access for the majority of the world's populations, points to patterns of inequality, and the extent to which these online communities were hardly horizontal though their popularity certainly grew exponentially.

An email list I created in 1994 and managed for several years was called KoreanQ, which at one point reached 120 subscribers. I had instituted a short vetting process to ascertain whether the subscription requestor was indeed lesbian or bisexual-identified woman with some claims to a Korean heritage. A new member would usually introduce themselves to the list and spark conversation about mutual interests and share event announcements, often seeking opportunities to meet up in their local area. Though there was already a thriving online community in the 1990s for Korean-speakers, KoreanQ email list was a rare space for English-speaking Korean Americans, including many transnational adoptees. KoreanQ was hosted on QueerNet, which was started by Roger Klorese in 1991. As the founder and operator/administrator based in San Francisco, Klorese oversaw the system of hundreds of lists and many thousands of subscribers who used the mailing list form to communicate with one another. Sadly, a catastrophic server crash and hardware damage took place sometime in the late 90s, destroying the KoreanQ email list without a backup list. No subscribers list survived, but by then the list had become fairly inactive, replaced by other online communities. There were more and more ways to connect to one another.

This timeline in the Korean diaspora converges with new developments in South Korea. As mentioned in the introduction, I had been involved in several initial meetings in Seoul in 1993 that led to the founding of Ch'odonghoe in December 1993 by six activists that included three Korean Americans—not including myself since I had already returned to California by the time the group officially formed. The name Ch'odonghoe references an idiom about blues and greens being like colors, but it dissolved after just a few weeks. Two organizations reemerged along gender lines: the gay men's group Chingusai, formed on February 7, 1994, and lesbian group Kirikiri, formed on November 27, 1994. Diasporic Korean groups began to form across the U.S. as well, taking on similar names though no formal or official relationships existed among them: Chinkusai-New York/Iban, Chingusai Los Angeles, Chingusai-Chicago, KoALA (Korean American Lesbians Altogether) in Chicago, and later, Hanuri in Los Angeles. The U.S.-based groups consisted of a mix of Korean-speaking

and English-speaking members, and they were informal and largely geared towards social networking, though some were invested in building a community base for political advocacy as well.[44]

Korean/American mobilities blurred borders in these fluid spaces of transnational queer diaspora. At least two Korean Americans visiting or briefly living in Seoul appeared on the covers of Seoul-based Kirikiri's magazine, *Tto darŭn sesang* (*Another World*), and the pioneering lesbian and gay popular magazine called *Buddy* that published twenty-four issues between March 1998 and December 2003.[45] A Korean American woman by the name of Grace Lee was living in Seoul, "unwavering in her involvement in Kirikiri" according to their newsletter, and by the time she was approached by the Los Angeles-based Korean American filmmaker Grace Yoonkyung Lee to be part of her documentary film, *The Grace Lee Project* (2005), Grace Lee in Seoul had already appeared publicly in some of South Korea's earliest TV news coverage of the emerging lesbian communities. She was a core member and organizer of Kirikiri and a frequent contributor to their magazine. In *The Grace Lee Project*, the filmmaker narrates, "in a culture where gay people are often disowned, physically threatened, and forced to live underground, Grace Lee is out to her family and publicly speaks out on behalf of gays and lesbians." As the film entered the editing stage, however, lesbian activist Grace Lee informed filmmaker Grace Lee that she was returning to the U.S. and thus wished to withdraw from the film project in order to respect the wishes of her immigrant parents in the U.S. who wanted her not to be out. This story line, however, was not deleted entirely from *The Grace Lee Project*, an independent documentary film that explores issues of identity and individuality of Asian American women named Grace Lee, which includes the acclaimed scholar-activist Grace Lee Boggs. Instead, the lesbian Grace Lee appears in the film with her image blurred as a "pixelated blob," and the filmmaker Grace Lee narrates, "Three years after filming with Grace Lee, she tells me that she can't be in my documentary for fear that it will bring shame to her parents. She has stopped her activist work and no longer publicly identifies as a lesbian."[46] In an ironic twist, one of the most visible faces in the early chapter of lesbian activism in South Korea thus disappeared from the public eye. A lesbian activist in South Korea told me in an interview that this story remained in circulation for years as a cautionary tale against outing, a public disclosure of one's sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent, in a group known to stand against all forms of coming out:

> When joining the group, new members were trained on why we needed to be careful about outing. This was emphasized as an important rule all

members must abide by. The primary example for this lesson was what happened to someone named Grace in the early days. It goes like this: She appeared on a TV news program, and it reached her family even though they were in the U.S. Her parents suffered so much in the Korean American community, and coming out made things difficult for everyone. This is why we must never appear on TV, why it is impossible for lesbians to come out, and this is what it means to live as a lesbian, period. That's what we were told.[47]

Organizing Against the CDSRA

Soon after the Korean-language media began publishing news of the CDSRA campaign in 1999, I joined other concerned activists in Los Angeles in calling for a meeting to discuss our response. We formed an ad hoc coalition that consisted of immigrant and bilingual Korean/Americans, U.S.-born Korean Americans with limited Korean proficiency, and Asian Americans who worked as attorneys, political activists, and community advocates in nonprofit organizations. The group was particularly concerned about the pernicious effects of the CDSRA especially in the immigrant context of linguistic isolation and patterns of ethno-national segregation. In order to counter the misinformation that was flooding the Korean-language media and oppose the petition campaign that was gaining traction in the community, the group decided to articulate our position in terms of mainstream legitimacy and adopted a rather generic name of Korean Americans for Civil Rights (KACR).

There was some debate about the framing of our work including, for instance, how directly we should address the issue of homophobia and whether we should use the term "human rights" (*inkwŏn*) or "civil rights" (*minkwŏn*) in our rebuke of bigotry. We decided to use "civil rights" in part because the CDSRA and upcoming Proposition 22 directly referenced minority civil rights in the U.S., and also because in the U.S., "human rights" tended to point to international concerns *outside* the U.S., such as in the work of Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch. This does not mean that we did not recognize human rights concerns in the U.S., but that "civil rights" seemed more appropriate at the time. In South Korea, the human rights discourse as inkwŏn activism was starting to take shape in movements against authoritarianism and state violence, but many of us felt that this was not (yet) a familiar framework that would resonate in the Korean diaspora.[48] Some members of KACR did express reluctance about using the civil rights discourse because they felt constrained by the idiom of liberal rights and minority protection, but given the context of the CDSRA petition campaign, we eventually reached a

consensus that an insistence on basic legal protection and solidarity with U.S. civil rights movements seemed crucial.

Though there seemed to be little interest from predominantly white, mainstream LGBTQ organizations in Los Angeles and there appeared to be little capacity for organizing assistance from national advocacy organizations, KACR did draw strength and knowledge from Korean Americans and Asian Americans who already had working relationships with such groups. This includes staff attorneys and legal services staff at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, National Centre for Lesbian Rights, Lambda Legal Defense Fund, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), and the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. Also involved in KACR were individuals from a newly formed gay and lesbian Korean American support group, Chingusai of Los Angeles, and the larger Asian American community group, Gay Asian Pacific Support Network (GAPSN). Particularly important were the larger community-based organizations such as the Korean Resource Center (KRC) and the Koreatown Immigrant Worker Advocates (KIWA) that had already established themselves as important critical voices in the immigrant Korean/American community against labor exploitation and immigrant disenfranchisement. Health and social service-oriented organizations with mainstream programs such as the Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC) and Korean American Family Service Center (KAFSC) declined our invitations to join. In private conversations, staff and individuals affiliated with these organizations explained that the 501c3 nonprofit tax code made it difficult for them to take a political position, and besides, they felt that it would be impossible to gain the consent of their board of directors or membership base, many of whom were Christian conservatives.

Because of the largely Protestant character of the CDSRA petition campaign, we tried but could not find a single immigrant Korean/American Protestant pastor until Reverend Seung-bae Paik (Sŭng-pae Paik) of Wesley United Methodist Church in Glendale stepped forward as the sole representative of progressive Korean Christian clergy in Southern California and spoke at our press conference that was held at a United Methodist Church space in downtown Los Angeles on January 17, 2000. Though unable to attend meetings or participate in person, Reverend Kil Sang Yoon, a long-time pro-democracy and reunification activist, also sent his support from Nashville where he worked for the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry. After a grassroots fundraising effort that involved over three hundred individuals sending donations by cash or personal check, KACR paid for a full-page ad in the Los Angeles *Korea Times*. The ad appeared on January 18, 2000, the day after the press conference.


A8 Tuesday, January 18, 2000 한 국 일 보

소수계의 민권을 옹호합시다.

동성애자들에 대한 어떠한 차별도 반대합니다.

이민자, 여성, 소수민족의 기본적 권리를 박탈하는 활동을 주동해온 크리스찬 코얼리션과 코리안 커뮤니티의 일부 인사들이 최근 야합하여 캘리포니아주내 모든 공무에서 동성애자들에 대한 차별을 조성하는 내용을 담은 '가주동성애특권법폐지법안' (California Defense of Sexual Responsibility Act of 2000) 발의를 위한 서명운동을 전개했습니다.

이 서명운동은 캘리포니아주내에서 인종, 성, 출신민족, 피부색, 종교, 신념, 정신 및 육체 장애, 성지향을 이유로 차별 받고 혐오범죄의 대상이 되어온 소수계를 보호하기 위하여 캘리포니아 상원과 하원을 통과하고 주지사의 승인을 받은 민권보호법과 민권법의 수정안입니다. 이번 서명운동은 4가지의 캘리포니아 주법 (AB 26, AB 537, AB 1001, AB 1670)을 동성애자들에게 주어지는 특권법이라 왜곡, 선동하고 있습니다.

- 직장을 구하거나 거주지를 구하면서 모든 사회 구성원이 정당하고 동등한 대우를 받는 것은 민주주의 사회에서는 당연한 권리이지 특정인에게 주어지는 특권이 아닙니다.
- 폭력과 차별로 무너져 가는 교육현실에서 학생들이 폭행과 희롱의 두려움 없이 교육받도록 보호하는 것은 너무나 당연한 일이지 특정인에게 주어지는 특권이 아닙니다.
- Domestic Partner는 같은 장소에서 거주하며 생활비를 분담하며 혈연관계가 아닌, 미혼의 동성이나 미혼의 62세 이상의 이성인 두 사람이 캘리포니아주 총무처 장관에게 등록하였을 때 주어지는 명칭입니다. AB26가 보장하는 유일한 권리는 병원 방문 시 이 두사람을 가족으로 취급하는 것이며, 주 공무원이 자신의 Domestic Partner를 건강보험에 포함시키는 것입니다. 자신이 아끼는 사람의 병간호를 위하여 병원의 방문을 허용하는 것은 인륜적인 관행이지 어떠한 특권이 아닙니다.

동성애자들에게만 주어지는 "특권"이란 없습니다.

민권은 모든 사회구성원의 기본적인 권리이지 특정계층에게만 주어지거나 특정계층을 소외시키지 않습니다. 동성애자를 포함하는 민권법은 이미 시민들이 보편적으로 누리고 있는 권리로써 직장을 구하고 일만 잘하면 직장을 유지할 수 있는 권리, 동등하게 거주지를 구할 수 있는 권리, 자녀를 양육할 수 있는 권리 그리고 폭력으로부터 보호받는 권리 등이 있습니다. 캘리포니아주 법 내용을 왜곡 발표하고 거짓 주장으로 코리안 커뮤니티에 편견과 분열을 조성하는 크리스찬 코얼리션과 일부 코리안 인사들의 정치적인 배경과 숨은 의도를 직시하고 민권신장을 위하여 커뮤니티 전체가 단결되어야 합니다.

차별보다 평등한 사회를 위하여,
소수계의 민권을 보장하는 사회를 위하여,
편견보다 관용하는 사회를 위하여
우리의 커뮤니티의 단결된 목소리를 높입시다.

GAPSN/KACR
PO Box 461104
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kacr@otherwise.net

투표권을 행사하여 3월 7일 선거에는
주민발의안 22를 반대합시다.

Vote NO on Prop. 22

Fig. 14. Korean Americans for Civil Rights (KACR) advertisement in *The Korea Times* (January 18, 2000, A8).

Over the course of six months during and immediately after the CDSRA campaign, KACR activists made a conscious effort to avoid making sentimental appeals for tolerance. We framed the conversation as a basic matter of law and equality and actively used the idiom of U.S.-based minority politics and legal protection for vulnerable communities including immigrants and racial and sexual minorities. Rejecting the notion that LGBTQ people exist *outside* immigrant Korean/American communities and refusing to naturalize anti-LGBTQ bigotry and homophobia as a "traditional" value or a cultural norm, KACR activists framed political homophobia as an attack against not only LGBTQ people but also immigrants, women, and people of color. Faith in coalitional solidarity pervaded KACR's political rhetoric. In order to cast homophobia as an untenable minority position, misled by outside right-wing agitators like the Christian Coalition, our ad insisted on the importance of basic legal protection and solidarity within a civil rights framework.

The ad urges in bold on top, "Let us support minority civil rights. We oppose any discrimination against gays and lesbians" (fig. 14). On the bottom of the page is a reminder: "Let's exercise our vote and oppose Proposition 22 on March 7 election. Vote NO on Prop. 22." The ad identifies the CDSRA campaign as spreading misinformation about anti-discrimination laws and asserts that there are no "special rights" given only to gays and lesbians. Here is the rather didactic text in the middle of the ad, in translation:

> The Christian Coalition, which has led efforts to deny basic rights of immigrants, women, and minority people of color, has joined hands with several leaders in the Korean community to launch the California Defense of Sexual Responsibility Act of 2000 which fosters discrimination against LGBTQ individuals in California.
>
> This petition campaign seeks to revise civil rights protection laws that have already passed the California Senate and Assembly and has been approved by the Governor. These laws are designed to protect minorities who are targets of hate crime and discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, skin color, religion, political belief, mental and physical disability, and sexual orientation. The CDSRA petition campaign distorts and maligns four California laws (AB 26, AB 537, AB 1001, AB 1670) as special rights for gays and lesbians.
>
> Being treated justly and equally when seeking employment or housing is a basic right in a democracy, not a special right given only to some.
>
> Protecting students from violence and harassment in a world of violence and discrimination is a right thing to do, not a special right given only to some.

"Domestic partner" is a term given to two individuals who are not related by blood and live together and share household expenses. They must be an unmarried same-sex couple or an opposite-sex couple over the age of 62 and registered with the California Secretary of State. The only right guaranteed by AB26 is the recognition of domestic partners in context of hospital visitation, and for state employees to be able to extend health benefits coverage to their domestic partners. To allow someone to care for their loved one and visit them in the hospital is a humane practice and not a special right.

There are no "special rights" given only to gays and lesbians.

Civil rights are basic rights for all members of society. They are not given only to a particular class of people or denied only to a particular class people. Civil rights protection laws that include gays and lesbians are universal rights that all citizens already enjoy, including the right to seek employment, the right to maintain employment as long as the work is done, the right to seek housing like anyone else, the right to raise one's children, and the right to be protected from violence. We must confront the hidden intent and political background of the Christian Coalition and some Korean community leaders who have distorted these laws and made false representations in order to foster prejudice and divisiveness and we must unite the community behind civil rights advocacy.

For a society that is equal, not discriminatory,

For a society that protects the civil rights of minorities,

For a society that is tolerant, not prejudiced,

Let us raise our voices in unity.

Conclusion

Though one might be tempted to say that the KACR's efforts succeeded in stopping the CDSRA, a more accurate assessment would be that the CDSRA campaign failed on its own. Not only were they unable to collect enough signatures by the deadline of January 17, 2000, but the bill's language had already raised legal concerns over discrimination and non-compliance with federal funding requirements. But in total, an estimated 15,000 Korean Americans became newly registered voters through the CDSRA petition campaign, which is not an insignificant number considering that the year 2000 was a presidential election year, one that put George W. Bush in the White House. As many feared, the momentum built around the CDSRA later delivered an astounding 72% of Korean American votes against the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2000 (Proposition 22), and in large numbers again in banning same-sex

marriage in 2008 (Proposition 8). Korean Americans have historically voted against LGBTQ rights in larger numbers than other Asian American groups, according to exit polls, and Korean American religious leaders continue to organize vocally against extending LGBTQ rights in several U.S. denominations including the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Methodist Church, as I discussed at the start of this chapter. While churches certainly offer spiritual guidance, ease immigrant anxieties, and meet practical social needs through networks of mutual aid, the CDSRA campaign's mobilization of political homophobia demonstrated that churches also operate as powerful incubators of regressive ideas, as developers of political agendas and economic interests, and as mobilizers of public sentiment and electoral power.[49]

A local campaign like the CDSRA may seem relatively inconsequential to LGBTQ politics on national or international scale, but it was nonetheless an example of how a hegemonic group of religious leaders of an ethnic minority group sought to shape local policy and mobilize public sentiment via multiple throughlines. They did not see themselves as part of a fading, unpopular minority, on their way out of the mainstream due to the gains of LGBTQ movements in the U.S. Rather, the CDSRA gained traction at an intersection of conservative minority politics, progressive social justice activism, and transnational infrastructures of religion. By discussing its anti-LGBTQ rhetoric in its place-based genealogy and discourse—such as the California ballot initiatives and conservative politics in California, Korean Americans as standout conservatives among Asian Americans, churches and their ties to U.S. and South Korean denominations, and the grassroots organizing that brought together various Asian American individuals and groups—I have emphasized the geographical particularities and political complexities behind the emergence of the CDSRA. I have also argued that the oppositional formation of a straight-gay and multiethnic alliance forged by KACR brought to the fore the contested politics of race, sexuality, and religious faith in the diaspora and the rhetoric of minoritarian politics. The CDSRA in fact took place at a remarkable crossroads of the U.S. Christian Right, the conservative Protestant hegemony that spans South Korea and the Korean diaspora in the U.S., and a regressive political landscape in California where homophobia was cultivated alongside racism and anti-immigrant politics. In this sense, I see the CDSRA as neither a narrowly "ethnic" immigrant event nor a minor chapter in strictly American or Californian electoral politics, but rather, a transnational diasporic event fundamentally constituted by a multiplicity of minority politics. The ramifications of this moment have reverberations in the transnational circulation of homophobia in subsequent years, as both anti-LGBTQ forces and LGBTQ activisms escalated in contested coexistence.

CHAPTER 2

Tracing the Queer Left

"We are feminists, though our identities continuously change depending on who we fight against and who we forge solidarity with."

—CHANG'AE YŎSŎNG KONG'GAM (장애여성공감; WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES EMPATHY) 20TH ANNIVERSARY DECLARATION IN 2018

A small, unconventional direct action unfolded quietly on the Seoul Metro on a Saturday afternoon on March 6, 2021. It was in response to the news of transgender soldier and former army staff sergeant (SSG) Byun Hee-soo (변희수; Pyŏn Hŭi-su) who died by suicide on March 3, a death that sent a jolt through communities already reeling from the recent spate of suicides. In a span of less than a month that year, three well-known queer and trans community figures including SSG Byun had passed away. On February 8, just a month before SSG Byun's death, critically acclaimed transgender writer Yi Ŭn-yong (이은용) had died by suicide. On February 24, Jeju-based nonbinary transgender activist and music teacher Kim Ki-hong (김기홍) had died also by suicide.[1] As I revise this introduction in 2023, I have another name to add to this list of February deaths—on February 3, 2023, Reverend Lim Borah (임보라), South Korea's best-known LGBTQ advocate in the Protestant church and a beloved progressive activist, also died by suicide.[2]

Suicide is extraordinarily common in South Korea. The country has the highest suicide rate among OECD countries and the rate is alarmingly high and on the rise among women and young people especially under the age of thirty. LGBTQ suicides are also disproportionately high. But the extraordinary propinquity of the three deaths in February and March of 2021 spurred

an outpouring of sorrow and heightened concern especially because of the conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing just how devastating and difficult it was for stigmatized and marginalized communities to survive in isolation—without political and social events, without clubs or support groups—and how crucial it was for them to stay connected to one another. Suicides are not disavowed or stigmatized in the same ways that they are in North America; there is a great deal of understanding and empathy for suicides as premature deaths, as a tragic result of unlivability, as a deliberate decision. Efforts to prevent suicides thus involve not just disparaging the act but to improve the quality of life, to make queer and trans life more livable. For many queer and trans individuals, gathering as a community was proving to be nothing less than sustenance, truly a lifeline.

Because of COVID-19 public health policies in place in 2021 that strictly prohibited mass assembly, it would have been ill-advised to hold a community vigil or a rally for commemoration purposes. So instead, Rainbow Action came up with a creative mobilization in collaboration with two other ad hoc coalitions—a group calling for a comprehensive national antidiscrimination legislation and another group that had come together to call for the reinstatement of SSG Byun Hee-soo after she was discharged from the military in 2020 for undergoing gender affirmation surgery. The plan was simple, though it required a bit of coordination. The organizers sent out a call on social media including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and set up a group chat on KakaoTalk. This is what the grief-stricken community members were asked to do: Starting at 3 p.m. KST at the City Hall station of the Seoul Metro Line 2 (Green), participants would get on the train with a book of their choice, a book that would reflect a sentiment they wanted to hold dear, a book that would resonate with the politics of mourning and community. Once on the moving train, each passenger would open their book of choice and read quietly on their own, riding the full circular course of the subway line clockwise for approximately eighty minutes until the train returned to the city center. They would then exit the subway and gather at 4:30 p.m. at the Seoul City Square, individually but together, abiding by the law that required safe physical distancing.

4:30 p.m. would be the same time that SSG Byun had held a tearful press conference over a year ago on January 22, 2020, to challenge her dismissal.[3] Byun, who had voluntarily enlisted in the army and was dismissed after undergoing gender affirmation surgery, had announced her fight for reinstatement as a career soldier at an emotional press conference. She made international news headlines for setting a precedent as the first transgender soldier to come out, the first to be dismissed and the first to fight for reinstatement, all in the public eye. Heeding the suggestion of the organizers, participants of the subway

action would use the social media hashtag #Pyŏnhŭisu_hasarŭl_kiŏkk'apnida (#변희수_하사를_기억합니다; #We_Remember_SSG_Pyŏnhŭisu) and post photos of the books they brought to read, and visually document the stickers and buttons they donned on hats, shirts, and coats. When the subway action began, rainbow and transgender flag colors on scarves, bracelets, and face masks flooded the photo streams on social media. The action curated a physical and virtual co-presence, a quiet memorial procession, one in which participants would recognize each other by the books and small, personal markers of community and collective mourning that marked their bodies.

From Los Angeles, I followed in real time the streams of photos and comments as they appeared on social media. I was aware of what I was witnessing: South Korean activists expressing connections and affirming interrelations while also collectively curating their reading lists in queer and trans studies, self-consciously placing themselves in the transnational, transhistorical context of queer and trans political struggles. Several photos from this action featured Susan Stryker's *Transgender History* (2008, Korean translation published in 2016) and Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw* (1994, Korean translation published in 2015), sometimes displaying the book covers and sometimes showing the book opened to highlight a particular page. An acquaintance of mine posted a photo of Mimi Marinucci's *Feminism is Queer* (2016, Korean translation published in 2018). A queer activist friend posted a photo from *Celebrate People's History: The Poster Book of Resistance and Revolution* (2009, Korean translation published in 2018), opened to the page discussing celebrated activist Sylvia Rivera and the Stonewall Uprising in New York in 1969. The passage by Sylvia Rivera was as follows, quoted in the original publication:

> The movement was born that night, and we knew that we had done something that everybody in the whole world would know about. They would know that gay people stood up and fought, and that would make everybody else stand up and fight.[4]

This direct action on the Seoul Metro captures many of the recurring themes of this book. These scenes took place on a line, literally on a subway line that loops around the middle of the city. A scene, typically associated with dramatic film or theatrical production in performing arts, refers to a part of a story or a unit of action with a specific beginning and an end. It is a specific time-space in the course of a series of events, and in these scenes on the train, individual actions took place separately from one another and coordinated as a whole to conjure interconnectivity. The movements of this direct action were choreographed not only according to the script of the original call to action

but also in sync with each other and to the rhythm of the Metro line itself. And interestingly, the action self-consciously performed citational connections to the books and associated communities selected by the participants who broadcast their social and political praxis as explicitly translocal and transhistorical.

In spite of the prohibitions against assembly during the Covid-19 pandemic, the action made possible a physical co-presence through heartfelt proximity and mutual recognition. It was not disruptive, and it was not spectacular. Instead, the protest action quietly enacted a performance of grief and mourning, fostering an intimate collectivity that urged participants to see and to be seen by one another even in small numbers, without speaking or making physical contact. Separately but together, participants were able to poignantly demonstrate their refusal to abandon one another in times of sorrow. I saw many social media posts about how reassuring it was to be affirmed by each other, how exhilarating it was to transform the ordinary space of the train, how moving it was to see so many passengers wearing rainbow colors and carrying queer and trans feminist books, exchanging knowing smiles and silent nods of acknowledgement. The affective manner in which this took place on a circular subway line reminded me of the "chain of obligations" that the feminist philosopher Eva Kittay writes about in *Love's Labor*. Discussing reciprocity and obligations in a "linked and nested set of social relations," namely that "what goes around comes around," Kittay writes:

> This chain of obligations linking members of a community creates a sense of reciprocity between those who give and those who receive that raises the expectation that when one is in the position to give care, one will, and when that person is in need another who is suitably situated to give care will respond. It is a reciprocity of those who see their equality in their connection with, and obligation toward, others.[5]

Just a few months before this action took place on Seoul Metro Line 2, queer and transgender individuals had to worry not only about protecting themselves from COVID-19 but also how they could comply with contact tracing requirements that might reveal private information about their identities and social activities. Whenever COVID-19 cases surged in the Itaewon area of Seoul, sensationalized stories in conservative news media would spark a wave of homophobic backlash against gay and trans bars and nightclubs and their patrons, insinuating the not uncommon links between homosexuality and virus, infection and disease. Ironically, the only people who openly flouted the government's COVID-19 policies against mass assembly in public space were Christian conservatives hostile to President Moon Jae-In (2017–22) and the

policies associated with his liberal-conservative administration. In remarkable contrast, the participants of the #We_Remember_SSG_Pyŏnhŭisu action on the subway were quite compliant and law-abiding. They exited the subway at the end of the circular route in an orderly manner and walked outside while maintaining appropriate physical distance to protect one another and stood two meters apart from each other in a single line. They encircled the public space known as the Seoul City Square—which means, paradoxically, that they circled the square—performing an assembly strewn in a kind of a dotted line. Keeping apart, they stood together, mourning together.

Far away in Southern California, geographically distant from the direct action on the Seoul Metro, I tracked the social media posts as they appeared on my screens. I took note of friends, acquaintances, and strangers who shared photos and reflections, interacting with them through comments, emojis, and "likes" and "hearts" as one does in these virtual social spaces, all the while wishing I could join them in person, physically there in Seoul. These diasporic feelings of longing *to be there*, to be able to take part in person—these familiar feelings were accompanied by a sense of consolation, also familiar, that through communicative technologies that enabled some lines of transnational connectivity, I could still claim a sense of attachment to this community. These are, no doubt, common feelings in the transnational diaspora. These affective lines of longings have crisscrossed my understanding and experience of the queer Korean and diasporic politics as long as I can remember, with fluctuations of proximities and distances, sometimes virtual and sometimes actual, undergirding the knotty contours of belonging.

Beyond the Spectacle

One commonly offered example for increase in LGBTQ visibility is the annual Queer Culture Festival (QCF) in Seoul that has grown exponentially in recent years, reaching an estimated 150,000 spectators and participants at its twentieth celebration in 2019. The festival is comparable to similar Pride events in North America and Europe in that it combines a festival, a parade, and a street party. It was a tiny affair when it first began in 2000, a small-scale event with no more than fifty or so activists who mostly faced disinterested onlookers and only occasional verbal harassment from unsympathetic passersby. In subsequent years, the organizers implemented a no-photography policy to protect those who wanted to participate without revealing their identities and prohibited the media and the attendees from taking photos or videos without explicit consent. Outing was a real concern. Partly as a result of this, the early QCF gatherings are poorly documented; hardly any photographs exist.

This began to change in 2010, as higher resolution digital cameras and phone cameras became more ubiquitous, and the organizers began to allow some photography while still relying on the voluntary use of no-photography stickers, ribbons, and so on to mark those who declined to be photographed. By 2012, many participants were photographed wearing face masks, festive wigs, costume hats, and dark sunglasses to obscure their faces while asserting their numbers visibly and publicly, adding to a masquerade-like visual aesthetics that are not traditional to South Korean public culture.

The QCF continued to grow in participation numbers and visibility, becoming more and more elaborate and professional in its production and programming. The festivities took a dramatic turn on June 7, 2014, however, when antiqueer Protestant protesters disrupted the fifteenth annual QCF held in Sinch'on. This was the first time in the history of the QCF that an organized opposition was mobilized. A large contingent blocked the QCF's parade route, with hundreds of protesters lying down with linked arms in front of parade vehicles to block the procession, refusing to move aside even when the police tried to intervene. Anglican priest Min-Kim Jong Hun, also known as Father Zacchaeus (자캐오), who has long been a supportive ally in queer activism, found himself in the very front of the QCF parade line-up, faced with Christian conservatives (see fig. 15). He recalled the experience as disheartening.

> The familiar hymns and gospel songs that used to comfort my life and connect me with God were now being used as songs of hate from the other side. It was truly horrifying. They were singing about the cross and the blood of Jesus, and that felt like a dagger in my heart. This might be a bit of an exaggeration, but it almost felt like an acid attack. I felt drenched in their hate.[6]

Another interviewee who also witnessed the confrontation in 2014 said:

> We were stuck there for so long in that standoff. We started at five in the afternoon and should have finished by six, but we were there until at least ten that night. When the standoff ended and we were finally able to move, I remember being incredibly exhausted and emotional. Everyone was hugging each other and shouting over and over again the QCF slogan that year—"Love Conquers Hate."[7]

Three weeks after the Sinch'on disruption, nearly a thousand antiqueer protesters would again organize a contingent to block the QCF parade in Daegu on June 28, 2014.

Antiqueer disruptions continued to escalate in 2015. QCF organizers faced

Fig. 15. Christian conservatives' organized opposition to the Seoul Queer Culture Festival began on June 7, 2014, but so would the ceremonial blessing by Christian clergy that year. In front of the QCF vehicle is Father Zacchaeus, and the late Reverend Lim Borah. (Photograph by Pak-Kim Hyŏng-jun, in [The cruel history of the queer culture festival interruption], *News & Joy*, June 28, 2023. https://www.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=305455)

intense opposition even during their search for the year's QCF location and event registration with the city. The incredibly troublesome registration process led registration applicants to camp out around the clock for eight days in a queue at the Namdaemun Police Station, which was an especially contentious process because individuals representing Christian conservative groups had been tipped off in advance—presumably by a police insider—and had also taken their positions at the start of the queue to register their anti-QCF event instead. As such, the queue outside the Namdaemun Police Station itself became a site of competition, with dozens of volunteers taking turns to keep QCF's place in line. But as I discussed in the introduction, lines are spaces, too. This queue outside the police station became a linear space of community and collectivity, with supporters delivering food and beverages and others visiting the site to deliver words of encouragement and appreciation.

When it was time for the registration paperwork to be submitted, the police denied the applications from both QCF and its opponents by citing the Act on Assemblies and Demonstrations—that "rallies may be banned when two or more rallies are planned by groups with conflicting goals" and when "there

is a possibility of inconvenience to pedestrian and vehicle traffic."[8] The QCF organizers subsequently contested this denial and won. They had to change the event date to later but nonetheless secured the coveted location of Seoul Plaza for the QCF in 2015. Nearly ten thousand antiqueer protesters would show up to surround the QCF that year, according to estimates published in news media and QCF organizers, but a larger number attended the QCF. After the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in June 2015, the U.S. Embassy in Seoul raised a large rainbow flag on its building for the first time in support of the QCF, and the U.S. ambassador himself took part in the festival, joining other ambassadors and representatives to take the stage to read a joint declaration supporting LGBTQ rights. Reaching fifty thousand attendees in 2016, the QCF welcomed nearly a hundred booths, including the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), various student organizations, progressive political parties, and foreign national embassies in Seoul. By 2017, the QCF grew to an estimated eighty thousand attendees and one hundred and twenty thousand attendees in 2018, earning the recognition as one of the largest such events in Asia.[9] The Korea QCF was renamed in 2018 as Seoul QCF in part to recognize and encourage more local and regional gatherings—in Daegu (2009); Busan and Jeju (2017); Incheon, Kwangju, and Jeonju (2018); Gyeongnam (2019); and Chuncheon (2021).

Rather than interpret the spectacle of the QCF simply as an advancement in queer visibility or as a kind of an achievement of political power, I want to consider in this chapter other strands of activism that do not get nearly as much attention as the QCF, such as the small-scale direct-action protest on the Seoul Metro I discussed at the start of this chapter. This is not because they represent radically different political genealogies or communities that do not overlap but rather because I think an overemphasis on numerical strength and spectacular assembly can obscure minority voices and critique of majoritarianism that are raised especially by Left-identified queer activists. These other arenas of queer and trans politics may not be as spectacular as the QCF, but they offer telling glimpses into the growing diversity of queer and trans activism in which there is simmering tension and friction as well as synergy and solidarity.

In 2023, a group of over forty activists organized a No Pride (노프라이드) party to raise their objection to the QCF's continued inclusion of booths from pharmaceutical corporations and foreign embassies especially the U.S. Embassy. A recurring point of controversy was the participation of Gilead Pharmaceuticals in the Seoul QCF in 2023, as the same concern was raised in 2022 as well.[10] Gilead manufactures PrEP, the only HIV prevention drug on the market, the cost of which is considered prohibitive for many LGBTQ people, especially those without adequate health insurance and those in the

developing world. Gilead's corporate sponsorship had generated similar controversy at Pride events in San Francisco and New York City in 2019, where critics decried the company's profit from the LGBTQ community. "Not only should Gilead be prevented from exploiting pride sponsorship to make their brand more valuable," states a 2019 article in the socialist news site called Left Voice, "but they should be prohibited from profiting from an essential drug."[11] With the headline, "No Rainbow Capitalism: The Five Worst Corporations to Kick Out of Pride," the article describes Gilead as a "heinous . . . corporation that sponsors Pride events [in order to] distract from the harm that it inflicts on marginalized communities."[12] Similarly, South Korean critics pointed to the marginalization and exclusion of the undocumented, disabled, and virus-infected (as well as drug users and sex workers)—and challenged the QCF's spotlight on notions of pride that they saw as perpetuating the stigma and criminalization of non-normative individuals.[13] No Pride in South Korea would continue in 2024 with the tagline, No Pride in Genocide, this time underscoring the worldwide protest against Israel's assault on Gaza and U.S. government's complicity in this humanitarian catastrophe, and they again objected to the inclusion of the U.S. Embassy in Seoul QCF. Several participants in the No Pride in Genocide emphasized to me that their position was not anti-Pride or anti-QCF—many of them attended both QCF and No Pride—but an expression of disappointment in QCF's political capitulations. Chang Pyŏng-kwŏn (장병권), an outspoken queer activist posted on Facebook, "Inviting the embassies of nations that have assisted in committing massacres and transnational pharmaceutical companies that are blinded by profits all under the pretext that they contribute to LGBTQ rights as partners in the celebration of LGBTQ Pride—this is a matter that hurts our pride."[14]

Criticisms and political debates surrounding the QCF will likely continue in the future as gender and sexual minority activisms further diversify and diverge. Indeed, many queer and trans activists have traveled distinct historical paths and hold fundamentally different political ideologies. And here, rather than anticipate future strife and further division, I want to offer alternative ways of recounting the path to the present, decentering the focus on the politics of LGBTQ visibility and growth represented by the mainstream QCF. In the next section, I take a closer look at the uncommon history of internationalist and revolutionary Left activism in the early days of gay and lesbian organizing in the late 1990s and early 2000s in South Korea. Some of the current points of difference such as the No Pride critique of transnational capital and U.S. imperialism indeed have deep roots that can be traced to political and ideological differences that span many decades, and I am interested in showing how a radical queer politics emerged in conversation and interac-

tion with the liberal discourse of individual rights. Most notably in 2007 and in 2014, debates concerned how queer activists should resist state censorship and challenge the national security apparatus, as well as campaign for anti-discrimination legislations. What I hope to bring into sharper focus is a more complex politics of dissent against not only authoritarianism and religious conservatism but also capitalism and imperialism. The chapter concludes with a discussion of "*chongbuk* gay" (종북게이)—a pejorative term that is difficult to translate exactly into English but means something to the effect of a "gay person who is loyal to North Korea"—a figure of dissent created at the intersection of right-wing nationalism, anticommunism, anti-Left sentiment, as well as good old homophobia. Rather than dismiss this figure as a preposterous monster invented by antiqueer conservatives, I use the epithet to show how queer Left activists have historically contended with the conflation of political subversion and sexual perversion, in defense of subjects that defy heteronormative and even homonormative order and status quo.

Queer Geopolitics and Student Activism

One way to narrativize the mainstreaming of queer politics would be to point to the group QUV that represented self-identified sexual minority students in universities across the country. It was a national association of seventy-nine groups at sixty-nine schools in every province, including not only the major colleges and universities in large urban centers but also Anglican, Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhist schools and seminaries as well.[15] In 2016, the election of two out lesbian student leaders at prominent universities made headline news: Kim Bomi (김보미; Kim Po-mi) as the fifty-eighth president of the student government at Seoul National University and Yi Yewon (이예원; Yi Ye-wŏn) as the thirty-third vice president of Korea University's Tong'ari Yŏnhaphoe (동아리 연합회) or an association of student campus groups of all political stripes and persuasions. Both were significant wins especially considering the historical importance of elected student leaders in South Korea, especially at these two schools with a tradition of radical student activism.

It should be noted, though, that while university student activism is certainly an important site of political critique and social movements today, elected student leaders are no longer automatically aligned with anti-government or radical Left activism—*undongkwŏn* (운동권)—that had once defined student movements until the 1980s and into the 1990s. The election of non-undongkwŏn student leaders at Seoul National University in 2006 and Korea University in 2002 signaled a shift from the revolutionary and militant politics of the past

to a more conciliatory and lighthearted politics.[16] When Kim Bomi, a non-undongkwŏn leader elected by an overwhelming 86.8 percent of votes cast, was invited to speak on stage at the Queer Culture Festival in 2016, she said, "There is change taking place among us. Let's celebrate the day," and added jokingly, "Let's play loud and play dirty," to a rousing round of laughter and applause. In an interview published later in a popular magazine on university life, Kim explained that she sought the advice of older lesbian activists before deciding to run for office as an out lesbian candidate. "For the work that I have done and the work that I will continue to do," she said in the interview, "I wanted to make sure to show that [being a] lesbian is not a stumbling block."[17]

The trend of sexual minority student representation has continued. The following year in 2017, three self-identified sexual minority student leaders were elected at Yonsei University, KAIST, and Kaywon University of Art & Design.[18] In 2018, this time at the Anglican Sungkonghoe University in Seoul, an openly gay student named Baek Seungmok (백승목; Paik Sŭng-mok) was elected president of the student government, declaring his vision to "create a university where everyone is treated equally without discrimination."[19] His policy platform for the campus included developing a human rights guideline, promoting gender neutral restrooms, implementing an anti-violence and gender equality training for school officials, and increasing accessibility to accommodate those with disabilities.

Though the political platforms of these student leaders hardly resemble the radical and militant politics of student activism during the authoritarian era, it does not mean that QUV was an apolitical formation defined only by liberal aims and identity-based interests. At the national coalition level, for example, QUV was involved in campaigns to decriminalize homosexuality in the military, an especially salient issue for college-age youth since for most able-bodied young men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, going to college and fulfilling their military service often take place within the same time frame in their life course.[20] QUV joined efforts to repeal the infamous Article 92 (6) of South Korea's Military Criminal Act that prohibits and punishes sex acts between men even when there is mutual consent. Known as Korea's version of anti-sodomy law that has its origins in British juridical history, Article 92 (6) is the only instance in which homosexuality is explicitly criminalized in South Korean law. To be clear, the prohibition applies to sexual relations among career male soldiers as well as conscripts fulfilling their compulsory military service, and it criminalizes any romantic relationships—sexual or nonsexual—among out gay men serving in the military, and even between gay conscripts and civilians.

In a photograph published in an April 24, 2017 article in the English edition of *The Hankyoreh*, members of QUV—referred to in the article as "University Sexual Minority Solidarity," which appears to be a careless translation of the group's Korean name—are seen holding a press conference with a rainbow colored banner that reads, "Our generation is different."[21] They urged political leaders, especially the candidates in the 2017 presidential election, to support anti-discrimination legislations, to legalize same-sex marriage, and to abolish Article 92 (6). Included in the article is a poster photographed on Sogang University campus in Seoul, featuring a handwritten poem by an anonymous soldier who identifies himself as a "KATUSA gay" (fig. 16). It is titled "Arrest me, too" referring to a *taejabo* (대자보) relay—a series of protest posters that appeared on several university campuses in a grassroots campaign to denounce the raid and prosecution of gay soldiers in the army that had come to light in early April, 2017.[22] It echoes another article in *The Hankyoreh* that quotes from a poster on the campus of Sogang University that included this line from Hwang In-ch'an's poem "Forest of Figs": "I dream of a day when we can love and not be hassled. But the reality now is one where you get arrested for loving."[23] I have translated the poem, "Arrest me, too."

Arrest me, too
by Anonymous

I am a gay KATUSA.
When an American soldier treats me well, my heart flutters
and when a senior officer treats me well, my heart pounds, I am
a gay KATUSA.

The American soldier who came here voluntarily
faces no problem if he loves me
but dragged here by force
I face problems if I love an American soldier.

If this is right and just,
Arrest me, too.

The phrase, "arrest me," here refers to being taken away by force, being taken in custody for violating the anti-homosexuality clause in Article 92 (6). Short for Korean Augmentation to the United States Army, KATUSA is an elite branch of the South Korean Army, coveted by conscripts interested in possible perks that come with working with English-speaking soldiers and stationed at a base close to metropolitan areas with more availability for leaves on weekends. Considered by many to be highly competitive and desir-

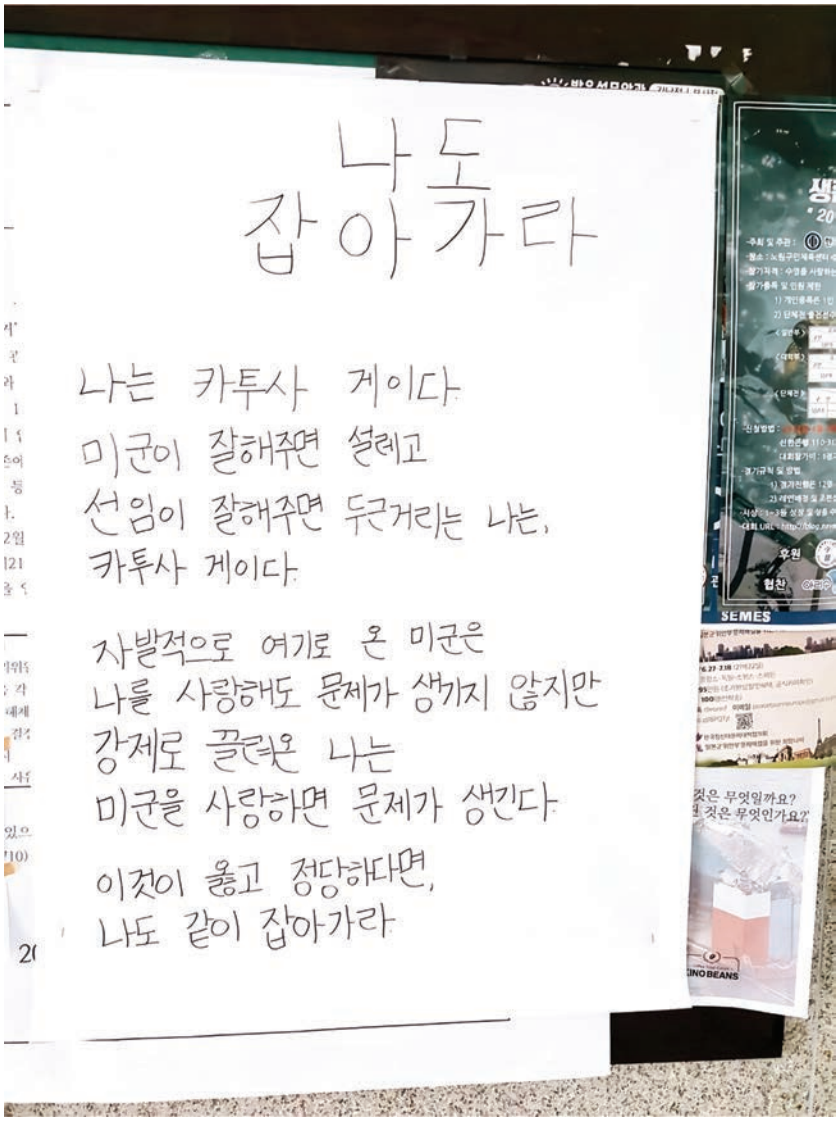

Fig. 16. "Arrest me, too," poem appearing on a poster on the campus of Sogang University. (Su-ji Pak, "Presidential Candidates Evasive on Issue of LGBT Rights," *The Hankyoreh* [English edition], April 24, 2017.)

able, KATUSA placements are made by a lottery after a preliminary assessment of English proficiency. The anonymous writer of this poster compares his position as a conscript albeit in the relatively privileged location as a KATUSA soldier with the position of a voluntarily enlisted U.S. soldier, questioning the differential consequence if the two were to be found engaged in a romantic—or just sexual—relationship. By pointing to the relative precarity of his position and by aligning himself with other South Korean soldiers who would be prosecuted for engaging in gay romance, he glosses over the fact that the U.S. only repealed the so-called Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy in the military in 2011.

What is also remarkable in this poem is the openness with which he describes seeking romance with a U.S. military personnel, a relationship that would have certainly been taboo in the midst of widespread anti-American and anti-imperialist critique in earlier formations of South Korean student activism. Furthermore, the poem alludes to attractions between junior and senior officers, in contrast to the discussions of gay men in the South Korean military that tend to focus on violence they experience. For example, the 2019 autobiographical work by Yi Sang-mun (이상문), *Nae irŭm ŭn kundae* (내 이름은 군대; *My Name Is Military*) provides a harrowing account of a gay conscript's experience in the military, including the unending physical and psychological violence inflicted in the name of discipline and training. "It may be difficult to understand why someone who was so harmed by the military, someone who is trying to recover from those injuries, would keep remembering the military rather than forget it," Yi Sang-mun writes. "But it is difficult to look away from the institution of the military. It still exists in reality, and it continues to create problems. No matter how much I do not want to look, I have no choice but to keep looking [at the military]."[24] The author's refusal to forget or to look away performs a dual purpose: recognition of the military as the culprit of his misery, and refusal to normalize the indignity.

Sexual minorities face the threat of exposure, dishonorable discharge, and even imprisonment. Within the system of mandatory male conscription in South Korea, gay men and gender non-conforming conscripts today have little choice but to conceal their gender and sexual identities. They routinely encounter physical and sexual violence in the military and face numerous challenges in completing their military service obligations safely and with dignity. Article 92 (6) of the Military Criminal Act has been documented as being enforced on mere hearsay and allegations, and it has been used flagrantly to penalize and isolate sexual minority conscripts or to subject them to clandestine operations that seek to root out gay soldiers. Article 92 (6) is applied broadly not only to

criminalize homosexual acts but also to pathologize conduct, appearance, and identities that are perceived to be non-normative.

In a landmark decision in 2022, the Supreme Court of Korea reversed the lower court's convictions of two soldiers under Article 92 (6), stating that the law does not apply to off-duty soldiers engaged in same-sex acts taking place off base and by mutual consent. The Constitutional Court is currently considering whether to uphold the criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual activity by military personnel. The situation of violence in the military is serious enough that some South Korean gay men and pacificist conscientious objectors have applied for asylum abroad; few have successfully gained political refugee status in Canada and France, where their fear of homophobic violence and human rights violations during military service in South Korea were determined to be credible and probable.[25] The activist campaigns to decriminalize homosexuality in the military and simultaneously to forge paths for gay asylum abroad are taking place along with pacifist efforts to decriminalize religious and political conscientious objection to military conscription. As I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, the idea of gay soldiers in the military has fueled a great deal of anti-LGBTQ political discourse as well.

The Queer Left in the 1990s and Early 2000s

As the story is commonly told, Ch'odonghoe (초동회) was founded in December 1993, ushering in a new era of gay and lesbian organizing. Soon afterwards in April 1995, gay and lesbian student groups formed on two major universities: Come Together (컴투게더) at Yonsei University under the leadership of Seo Dong-Jin (서동진; Sŏ Tong-jin), a queer theorist, cultural critic, and activist; and Maŭm 001 (마음 001) at Seoul National University, which changed its name periodically to Maŭm 002, Maŭm 003 in subsequent years. There were also Saramkwa Saram (사람과 사람) at Korea University, and Inha sit'i (인하시티) at Inha University, all formed in 1995. At the University of Seoul (서울시립대학교), Yang Ji-yong, who was the editor of the school paper, came out on campus and started a group with likeminded gay college students, forming the group known as Taedongin (대동인/ 대학 동성애자 인권연대; Taehak Tongsŏngaeja Inkwŏnyŏndae) in 1997, which was renamed as Tongilyŏn (동인련 / 동성애자 인권연대; Tongsŏngaeja Inkwŏnyŏndae) in 1998.

Four groups formed an umbrella group by the name of Tonginhyŏp (동인협 / 한국동성애자인권운동협의회; Korean Association of Gays and Lesbians for Human Rights) on June 26, 1995—Kirikiri, Chingusai, Come Together, and Maŭm 001.[26] The following year, nearly four hundred participants celebrated the one-year anniversary of Tonginhyŏp at a festive event

in It'aewŏn on June 22, 1996.[27] Soon, developments in computer network technologies hugely impacted the organizational landscape, especially with the rapid growth of online communities on HiTEL, then the biggest commercial PC communication service provider in South Korea. Three years after Tonginhyŏp launched, it was replaced by a new umbrella group by the name of Hantonghyŏp (한동협 / 한국 동성애자 단체 협의회; Korean Gay and Lesbian Alliance) on June 29, 1998 that now included a total of twenty-six groups.[28] That was also the year that the ambitious magazine *Buddy* first launched, becoming South Korea's first national gay and lesbian popular magazine. Its publisher, Han Ch'ae-yun (한채윤), subsequently established in 2003 what is now known as the Korean Sexual Minority Culture and Rights Center (KSCRC), associated with producing the annual Queer Culture Festival. The umbrella coalition Hantonghyŏp dissolved in the early 2000s, but other ad hoc coalitions would subsequently come together around specific legislations or shared concerns.

Taedongin and Tongilyŏn

A specific genealogy of the queer Left can be traced in this organizational landscape. As mentioned earlier, Taedongin (대동인 / 대학동성애자인권연대) started in 1997 as a group of university students who wanted to form a Leftist activist group. The group sometimes translated its name as Association of Lesbian and Gay for Liberation.[29] It officially changed its name to Tongilyŏn (동인련 / 동성애자인권연대) in 1998 and then to Haengsŏngin (행성인 / 행동하는 성소수자 인권연대; Haengdonghanŭn Sŏngsosuja Inkwŏnyŏndae; Solidarity of LGBT Human Rights of Korea), a membership-based activist group that to this day holds on to its leftist genealogy. To be sure, *tongsŏngaeja* or "homosexuals" was the parlance of the time in the 1990s. But throughout the nineties and since then, terms like "lesbian" or "gay" or "sexual minority" have been used interchangeably.

Led by university students including Jeong Yol (정욜), Yang Ji-yong (양지용), and Lim T'ae-hun (임태훈), who were all becoming disillusioned with the heteronormative student activist culture in anti-authoritarian pro-democracy struggles and wanted to work instead with likeminded activists in forging a different kind of a radical political formation, Taedongin/Tongilyŏn—paired together because one transitioned into another over a brief period and their names were sometimes used interchangeably—represented a distinct gay and lesbian politics on the Left. They were different from the gay men's group Chingusai or the lesbian group Kirikiri that primarily focused on community networking and building social support without an explicit political

platform for societal change. In contrast, Taedongin/Tongilyŏn began as an explicitly leftist group and organized publicly around issues that were not narrowly defined as gender or sexual minority issues. In an interview, Jeong Yol, recounted that he had grown tired and bored with his role in student activism.

> By my second year, I found myself just throwing Molotov cocktails and feeling like a mere cog in the student movement, running around distributing leaflets and doing propaganda work. I found this work uninteresting and not a good fit for me, and I didn't think it was changing the world. . . . Once I met Tongilyŏn, I found people with extensive experience in student activism. It was very important to us to find others who were lonely and alienated, just like us, and recruit them into our group. After meeting Tongilyŏn, I rarely participated in [mainstream] student activism anymore. There was no reason to.[30]

One of Taedongin/Tongilyŏn's first political actions was to join the widespread protests that became known as the General Strike of 1997. Led by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) that had just been founded two years prior, these militant protests—"the largest General Strike in the nation's contemporary history"—had at their height mobilized over a million workers, students, and others.[31] Taedongin joined countless protests that erupted in response to the new controversial labor laws that made it easier for companies to lay off workers, passed in secret at a parliamentary session attended only by ruling party legislators.[32]

This requires a more detailed explanation. In the same clandestine session that passed the controversial labor law, the government also dealt what the *New York Times* editorial criticized as "a damaging blow to South Korea's emerging democracy," in the form of "a pernicious new law through the National Assembly that allows the country's notorious Agency for National Security Planning once again to spy on Korean citizens."[33] Critics feared that rather than address any actual threat from North Korean secret operatives and infiltrators working to foment dissent in South Korea, the strengthened National Security Law (NSL) would "more likely be applied against university students and other government critics."[34] First enacted on December 1, 1948, the NSL in fact has its origins in the government's suppression of left-wing insurgency. Its stated purpose is to repress "anti-state groups"—defined as "domestic or foreign organizations or groups whose intentions are to conduct or assist infiltration of the Government or to cause national disturbances."[35] Probably the most criticized section of the NSL is Article 7, which punishes those who "benefit the enemy." Punishment is harsh, ranging from death sen-

tences or life imprisonment for leading or participating in so-called anti-state groups, though these cases are far less common now than they used to be. Still in enforcement, Article 7 reads, "Any person who praises, incites or propagates the activities of an antigovernment organization, a member thereof or of the person who has received an order from it, or who acts in concert with it, or propagates or instigates a rebellion against the State, with the knowledge of the fact that it may endanger the existence and security of the State or democratic fundamental order, shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than seven years." It also includes a clause that states, "Any person who manufactures, imports, reproduces, holds, carries, distributes, sells or acquires any documents, drawings or other expression materials" that praise or incite the activities of antigovernment organizations shall be punished.

The rationale for the NSL has always foregrounded the perceived threat from North Korea. However, though there have been several well-known cases of espionage and assassination attempts by armed North Korean agents in South Korea, the NSL has been used not only for such purposes but also "for an illegal and illegitimate government to suppress its dissidents."[36] A longtime human rights attorney Jang Kyung-wook told *The Nation* that the NSL was "bloodstained and political from its birth," known as "the ultimate ideological law, designed to drive North Korea and South Korea apart and to strike fear into people."[37] This is a characterization echoed by Diane Kraft who calls the law as "a tool of oppression."[38] The NSL has been amended several times since the beginning, but it has retained at its core a link between political dissent and threats to national security. James West and Edward Baker write,

> The dictatorship has long invoked national security to rationalize its repressive regimentation of South Korean society. The ideological pretext for human rights abuses has been a fanatical anti-communist demonology. In order to retain power with minimal accountability, the military regime purposely blurred the distinction between political dissent and real threats to national security. For two decades, criticism of the government has been viewed as tantamount to treason: To question the judgment, competence, or motives of the ruling stratum is to echo North Korean propaganda and to open oneself to the charge of "pro-communism" or "impure left leanings."[39]

These "impure left leanings" have famously included "home-grown and hard-line anti-regime political organizations in South Korea like Sanomaeng, the Korean Socialist Workers' League," which was alleged to be a dangerous anti-state organization and "the biggest home-grown socialist revolution-

ary organization after the Liberation," leading to the arrests of its leaders and nearly two hundred members between 1990 and 1992, effectively shutting down the organization.[40] The election of the first civilian president of the Republic of Korea in 1993 did not halt the arrest of political dissidents. Amnesty International reported that during the period of January to December 1996 alone, over 450 people were arrested under the National Security Law for alleged pro-North Korean activities and "at least 150 other political prisoners convicted in previous years remain held."[41] An amendment to the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP) Act in December 1996 further strengthened the power of the ANSP to investigate people detained under Articles 7 and 10 of the NSL. During the economic crisis of 1997–98, the NSL was used against protesting students, political activists, trade unionists, publishers, and religious figures, resulting in more than four hundred arrests in the first half of 1998.[42]

The widespread protests in 1997 and 1998 articulated an opposition to both the labor laws and the national security laws, and they mobilized not only labor and student activists but a wide range of human rights activists including the fledgling lesbian and gay groups like Taedongin. In its inaugural issue of the organization's newsletter titled *Dyke*, Taedongin published an article about the history of gay and lesbian activism in Korea, listing its participation in the anti-NSL protests as marking a new chapter in the movement's political history. January 14, 1997 is proclaimed by Taedongin as the first time that a rainbow flag was flown at the Marronnier Park (마로니에 공원) in Taehangno district of Seoul.[43]

> [The rainbow flag was] the most direct and enthusiastic support and sign of solidarity with the working class. Nearly seventy-two of our members participated in protest rallies that have been held throughout the month since January [1997] and distributed approximately 10,000 copies of our statements of solidarity. Though joining these efforts had raised some debate among gays and lesbians, the majority of gays and lesbians supported the decision, and this was confirmed through the fundraising and rally participation by several groups. On February 3, the Solidarity Committee organized a discussion forum with the leaders of the LG Fire and Marine Insurance Company Union concerning the solidarity between gays and lesbians and the working class. Furthermore, as the General Strike was winding down on March 11, we held a forum at Yonsei University to evaluate our activities thus far and to discuss future directions of Korean gay and lesbian rights movement. Participants in this forum came from a number of gay and lesbian groups and they engaged in heated debate based on their own

points of view. Their overall evaluation of the work so far was very positive. [. . .] Our participation in the struggles throughout January demonstrate the political maturity of gays and lesbians, and that gays and lesbians who have united solely on the basis of a shared identity are starting to divide along class lines.[44]

On the front page of its second issue of *Dyke*, an editorial from Taedongin recounted a discussion forum that was held at Hanyang University on May 8, 1998.[45] Organized by Taedongin in conjunction with the influential human rights group Sarangbang (established in 1993), the popular lesbian and gay magazine *Buddy* (1998–2002), gay men's group Chingusai, and several other university student groups, the event drew connections across lesbian and gay rights, the passage of the controversial labor and national security laws, and the emerging of human rights activism of which Taedongin saw itself as a part. On the second page in the same issue of the newspaper appeared an article that offered specific information and concrete advice concerning the right to remain silent during a police investigation as it pertains to gays and lesbians. It highlighted the troubling case of an April 29, 1998 incident that had just taken place at a gay bar in Seoul. Plainclothes police officers coerced two bar patrons suspected of being underage minors to disclose their names and national identification numbers. The police also tried to force the men to write a statement of confession. A Taedongin activist who was present at the scene protested and intervened on behalf of the young men being questioned by the police and advised them of their constitutional right to remain silent—and to exercise their right not to incriminate themselves in any way. The police officers eventually left the scene, but not without causing a disturbance.

According to the article in *Dyke*, the bar patrons including the Taedongin leader who happened to be there were reeling from yet another recent incident—a raid at a gay bar on April 18, 1998 that had led to a police chase of two men suspected of being underage. During the chase, one man had fallen down a flight of stairs, fracturing a leg and breaking his nose. Taedongin writes in the article, "The gay man who was injured on this day incidentally was a soldier and not a minor. He testified that he ran because he was afraid of being outed [as gay] in the process of the police raid. He wishes he could take legal action against the police but has decided to hold off taking such action because of his current status as a soldier."[46] Incidents like this illustrated for Taedongin that the heightened national security regime and anti-gay policing were intertwined, that opposing police violence and promoting lesbian and gay rights were interconnected aims.

Taedongin did not last long in this particular formation. It changed its

name in August 1998 to Tongilyŏn or an association not exclusive to university students in order to expand its political platform and membership to beyond the university. Alongside various other gay and lesbian groups that also formed during this time and anti-war and militant labor activists, Tongilyŏn served as a key voice on the gay and lesbian left. It grew significantly in membership and political capacity throughout the 2000s and 2010s and after seventeen years, changed its name once more in 2015 to Haengsŏngin to adapt the updated language of "sexual minorities," to reflect a wider range of gender and sexual diversity, and to emphasize the centrality of solidaristic *action* (*haengdong*). Unlike Chingusai and Kirikiri that trace their origin to the 1994 founding of Ch'odonghoe, Haengsŏngin traces its history to the radical Left political organizing that began with Taedongin in 1997 and continued with Tongilyŏn in 1998.

NL, PD, and Queer

Taedongin and Tongilyŏn articulated a queer Left politics that had not been seen before at this scale. A member who was actively involved in the early days of Tongilyŏn was also a member of International Socialists (IS), a Trotskyist group that set itself apart from the dominant paradigm of NL (National Liberation) and PD (People's Democracy) tendencies that characterize political movements in South Korea. She recalled that some of the internal difference alluded in the passage I quoted above had to do with the tension between IS members who pushed Tongilyŏn to prioritize anti-war activism and non-IS members who wanted to focus more narrowly on so-called gay and lesbian issues. "IS saw itself as a revolutionary vanguard, not a popular front," she explained, "so its purpose was to lead the gay and lesbian movement in a revolutionary direction."[47] She was influenced by the radical history of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in the U.S. and their revolutionary critique of structures of oppression.

The differences were not always only ideological. There were cultural differences as well in movement practices along ideological lines. A queer activist who was aligned with the PD tendency described the NL/PD difference from their perspective as follows.

> I was a PD, while the rest of the student council was hardcore NL . . . their approach to activism was quite provocative, and they recruited people by being provocative, placing a lot of importance on emotional impact. In their rallies, too, they maximized emotional appeal and emphasized personal connections in political organizing. My seniors who were PD really

> disliked this approach. [*laughs*] They would say, "[NL students] are always drinking and never read any theory." PDs would mock NLs for being sentimental, and caricatured NL as reciting poetry about the motherland and refusing to smoke American cigarettes and things like that. NLs wouldn't even touch coffee because they said coffee was imperialist. [*laughs*]

This was a recurring theme, that activists with NL tendency prioritized base building through emotional appeal, with strong nationalist inflections. Conversely, a queer activist who identified as part of the NL tendency in college made this observation about the PD tendency:

> I don't think I would have fit in well with PDs. [*laughs*] I think I got along better with NL. It was a matter of disposition, really. I preferred drinking with people, listening to their stories, and valued close relationships more than deep political discussions. NL seniors, even if they didn't understand anything about being gay, they would comfort a junior who needs a shoulder to cry on. They would offer their support. PD activists back then seemed . . . so cold. [*laughs*] I did not feel like they would be kind to me.

Another queer activist who had once identified as NL but drifted away offered this comparison based on what they experienced in college:

> PDs criticized NLs for being ignorant and following blindly. NLs criticized PDs for talking and talking and being just all talk with no character. NLs did emphasize embracing their own members like family, protecting them even if they did wrong, but this had a lot of negative aspects, too, like glossing over internal criticisms and being very patriarchal. Women had specific roles, like being motherly, even for young college students, and ultimately that's the main reason why I left. I discovered feminism.

Youth Protection and Anti-War Activism

Two deaths are remembered as pivotal moments for the queer Left. On April 25, 2003, an eighteen-year-old youth activist who went by the name of Yook Woo-Dang (1984–2003) hanged himself in the office of Tongilyŏn. It was a shocking and devastating discovery for activists who found his lifeless body. It had been nearly five years since another core member named O Se-in (1976–1998) was found dead in the hallway outside the group's previous office location also in an apparent suicide by hanging. Jeong Yol, who was part of the group since its fledgling days and served as its representative from 2002 to

2012, knew both young men well. He said, "Yook Woo-Dang and O Se-in's suicide made us realize how important it was to support young people who identify as sexual minorities. People often ask why the two of them chose to die by suicide at the Tongilyŏn office. But the answer is simple. They had nowhere else to go."[48]

O Se-in, the young man who killed himself in the hallway of Tongilyŏn in 1998, had come out as gay to his family including his policeman father who subsequently kicked him out of the house. Rejected by his family with nowhere to go and no financial means, he resorted to spending nights at the Tongilyŏn office or staying with friends before deciding to end his own life. O Se-in took his life on May 17, known then as the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO), which was not a coincidence.[49] Similarly, Yook Woo-Dang came to Tongilyŏn as a high school-age youth after experiencing violent harassment at school and lack of support at home. He had impressed other Tongilyŏn members as an enthusiastic and active member, a poet and a devout Catholic who often shared irreverent yet heartfelt pieces he wrote about identity, faith, and homophobia. Yook Woo-Dang participated in protests against the U.S. war in Iraq that began in March 2003, alongside Tongilyŏn and the Joint Action of Homosexuals Against War (Chŏnjaeng pandae tongsŏngaeja kongdong haengdong); in fact, many of Yook Woo-dang's friends in Tongilyŏn found out about his death while attending a protest action against South Korean government's decision to dispatch troops to aid the U.S. war in Iraq.

In an interview about this time, Jeong Yol recalled vivid memories of an anti-war rally that was held at Marronnier Park in September 2003. He explained that at the organizing meeting to plan the rally, there was a great deal of debate about who should speak at the rally and in what order. The anti-war political formation was diverse, ranging from progressive churches like the Hyanglin Church (see chapter 3), Leftist anti-imperialist groups, labor activists, and peace and reunification activists. Those affiliated with the more conservative reunification group P'yŏngt'ong (the National Unification Advisory Council), he recalled, voted against including a sexual minority activist on the speakers list with a claim that the speakers list was already too long. Jeong Yol watched quietly as others debated on whether sexual minorities were important enough to take the stage. After labor solidarity groups in particular advocated for an LGBTQ speaker, Jeong Yol was slotted as the ninth speaker that day.

> There was a youth who spoke, a farmer who spoke, and a worker, too. I spoke definitely towards the end. It was really important to show just how diverse the anti-war movement was, how so many people and so many different groups opposed this imperialist war in Iraq, that we don't just care

about class struggles or South and North Korea issues. It was the first time, I think, that an openly gay activist would speak at a mass rally, so I put a lot of thought into it. I was nervous that I might make a mistake.

I decided to speak about the idea of *pyŏnt'ae* (변태; pervert), that mainstream society keeps calling gay people as being *pyŏnt'ae* and abnormal, but that the real problem is with people who start war. It went over well. We were in the middle of the fight over the Juvenile Protection Act, so we were also able to publicize that campaign at the intersection with the anti-war movement. After that, we started getting invited a lot to speak at rallies.[50]

In Tongilyŏn's newspaper *LGBT Paper* March/April 2003 issue, an article written by an author identified by the name of Intifada recounted that the most common question they were asked as part of the anti-war movement was, "Why do gays and lesbians oppose the war?" In response, they wrote, "Bombs do not avoid the heads of gays and lesbians. [. . .] Gays and lesbians are extremely oppressed under the system of capitalism, accused of spreading AIDS and denied welfare benefits, and even shamed and fired by employers if they are found out as homosexual. Gays and lesbians are even killed or assaulted by homophobes."[51] They continue by narrating a history including the persecution of homosexuals in Nazi Germany and the resistance against the U.S. war in Vietnam, locating the Stonewall rebellion in 1969 in the revolutionary context of Black power and feminist struggles. In the same issue of the newspaper appears a short report from a Tongilyŏn leader who attended the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2003, highlighting the speeches by Noam Chomsky and Arundhati Roy on the topic of imperialism and resistance. Next to the article is an illustration that reads in English, "Without homophobia, another world is possible!"

Yook Woo-Dang himself had participated in anti-war rallies and planned to declare himself as a conscientious objector. When he died by suicide in 2003, he left his entire life savings of 340,000 Won (approximately USD $300) as a donation to Tongilyŏn. In addition to his writings against war and capitalism, his suicide note contained a blistering critique of religious homophobia and conservative Christianity. He wrote:

> Reckless prejudice and fucked up society are pushing countless sexual minorities off the edge of the cliff. Do they know how cruel and unbiblical that is? If my death results in the removal of gay websites from the government's list of banned and indecent media, and if my death could teach a lesson to those hypocritical Christians who say this and that about Sodom and Gomorrah, then my death would not be in vain.[52]

This reference to government censorship and Christian prejudice concerned the controversial mandate issued on August 25, 2000 by the Information and Communications Ethics Committee (predecessor to the current Korea Communications Standards Commission), which used to be under the Ministry of Information and Communication, as well as the Christian conservatives' support of this mandate.[53] The Committee had without warning come to a decision that Exzone, a large gay community website known to be the first of its kind for Korean users, ought to be considered obscene and harmful to minors because of its subject matter—homosexuality.[54] Subsequently, the Commission on Youth Protection, which had been established along with the Juvenile Protection Act in 1997, decided to follow the Committee's decision and added Exzone to the blacklist of media considered dangerous and harmful to youth.[55] This would have resulted in all domestic and international gay and lesbian websites being placed on a list of sites deemed inappropriate for access by youth, a devastating blow to the growing gay and lesbian communities online and activists who saw the Internet as a critical opportunity for community building and resource sharing, especially for gay and lesbian youth who had little to no access to information or community.

Exzone was already serving a crucial function to thousands of anonymous users who logged in to meet one another and find community in the midst of an overwhelmingly hostile social environment. What Exzone allegedly violated was the Article 7 of the Juvenile Protection Act which contained this clause: "Depiction of bestiality or the promotion of adultery, incest, homosexuality, sadomasochism or other deviant sexuality, prostitution, and other sexual relations that are not tolerated by the general social norm."[56] Especially for so-called PC bangs (Internet cafés), the once booming businesses that provided around-the-clock computer access in relative privacy to paying customers, this ruling meant that they would now be required to install identification and monitoring software on each computer to prohibit underage users from accessing any and all websites with gay and lesbian content, including websites designed to provide counseling and advocacy for gay and lesbian youth.

The Juvenile Protection Act made no distinction between the idea of homosexuality in abstraction and the actually existing identities and practices of individuals with non-normative sexual orientations and nonconforming gender expressions. Nor did the legal prohibitions against "exposing" youth to homosexuality define what precisely constitutes homosexuality. As in many other legal prohibitions against *tongsŏngae* (homosexuality), the law conveniently covered an ill-defined and wide expanse of identities and practices based on assumptions of what constitutes aberrant, undesirable, and harmful. As a result of this draconian law, every single gay and lesbian website including those of educational,

counselling, and advocacy organizations would be required to prohibit minors from accessing their websites or be forced to shut down.

Understandably, this caused an uproar. The new prohibitions in the Juvenile Protection Act were widely perceived as an attack against gender and sexual minorities. The Internet was still somewhat new but fast becoming essential for many aspects of social and political life and especially necessary for gay and lesbian communities that were starting to experience phenomenal growth online. Not only Exzone but sites like Ivancity and TG-Net, each with a thriving online community offering virtual meetings and facilitating in-person meet-ups, were already becoming popular lifelines for lesbian and gay users throughout the country and in the Korean diaspora.[57] The case brought to light the extent to which discrimination against gender and sexual non-normativity could become codified into law under the guise of protecting youth.

In response, the campaign against the Act was framed as a matter of life or death, against premature deaths like that of O Se-in and Yook Woo-Dang. Tongilyŏn's newsletter—now renamed as *LGBT Paper*—immediately following Yook Woo-Dang's death featured a bold front page that read, "Stop the killing. Immediately remove the discriminatory clauses against homosexuals in the Juvenile Protection Act" (see fig. 17). Activists in Tongilyŏn recognized that the issues of youth suicide and the criminalization of gay and lesbian life online and offline were interrelated and saw them as nothing short of state-sanctioned death. Tongilyŏn's youth played a role. Many members were still university students or students until recently, and they were incensed not only by the stigmatization of homosexuality but also the heightened vulnerability, not protection, of youth who are subjected to belittlement, isolation, and discrimination. A queer activist said in an interview:

> I couldn't stand the whole *pyŏnt'ae* (변태; pervert) discourse. Everybody kept talking about gays being *pyŏnt'ae* and abnormal, but seriously, should we not say that about people starting wars? They're the real *pyŏnt'ae*, don't you think?

I am reminded of the idea of premature death as articulated by the political geographer and prison abolition activist Ruth Wilson Gilmore whose influential definition of racism zeroes in on its fatal consequence: "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[58] Furthermore, it is worth considering the kinds of coalitional politics that animated this crucial focus on premature death. In discussing the work of Black lesbian writer and activist Audre Lorde, Grace Hong argues that Lorde articulated a set of coalitional politics "that is

Fig. 17. "Stop the killing. Immediately remove the discriminatory clauses against homosexuals in the Juvenile Protection Act." (*LGBT Paper*, a publication of Tongilyŏn, June and July 2003.)

not based on the protection of self-interest or claims to injury, but on a critique of the uneven but connected dispersion of death and devaluation that make self-protective politics threaten to render others precarious."[59] Similarly, what Tongilyŏn articulated—such as the message, "Stop the killing," shown in the image of its newspaper (fig. 17)—was not a narrowly cast politics of identity based on self-interest but a critique of state-sanctioned death and devaluation that prevented lesbians and gays from living fulfilling lives or living at all, whether due to nonconforming gender and sexual identity, poverty, disability, or war and militarism. In the issues prior to June/July and afterwards as well, Tongilyŏn's *LGBT Paper* devoted a great deal of its space to assert its position against the U.S.-led war in Iraq and the subsequent decision by the South Korean government to dispatch troops to Iraq.

Yook Woo-Dang's despair had been compounded over several months of protests that had yielded little sign of change except for the recommendation by the National Human Rights Commission of Korea on April 2, 2003, which was issued approximately a month before his death. The NHRCK recommended that the discriminatory language be removed from the Juvenile Protection Act. Specifically, the NHRCK pointed out that singling out homosexuality in such a way violated the Constitution's Article 10 ("Right to pursue happiness"), Article 11 ("Right to equality"), and Article 21 ("Freedom of expression").[60] Though not legally binding, this was considered a significant gain for gay and lesbian rights.

Yook's suicide nonetheless generated significant media coverage and led to a surge in lesbian and gay political organizing especially against religious-fueled homophobia. Christian conservatives continued to vociferously disagree with the NHRCK's recommendations and insisted that homosexuality violates "mainstream social values" and should be considered harmful and dangerous especially to youth.[61] The national flagship organization of evangelical Christians called Han'gich'ong (한기총 / 한국기독교총연합회; The Christian Council of Korea) issued a statement to articulate this position, and echoing a common refrain from antiqueer Christian rhetoric, claimed that "Sodom and Gomorrah incurred God's wrath due to its immoral embrace of homosexuality" and that the story of catastrophic destruction that ensued in the Bible should serve as a warning for Korean society. In the wake of Yook Woo Dang's death, Tongilyŏn and several other gay and lesbian groups in alliance with progressive and reformist Christian groups held a commemorative service on June 5 outside the Han'gich'ong office, protesting their stance and demanding that the conservatives apologize for their offensive comments about Yook Woo Dang and express condolences for his death. A progressive

Christian youth group called Han'giyŏn (한기연 / 한국기독청년학생연합회; Ecumenical Youth Council in Korea) delivered a letter to urge Han'gich'ong to recognize their direct and indirect involvement in Yook's death, describing it as a "homicide at the hands of the Korean church."[62] Han'gich'ong steadfastly refused. At the commemorative event, Tongilyŏn protesters were told by a Han'gich'ong representative, "If you are a homosexual, you should be ashamed of yourself."[63] Han'gich'ong denied that Yook's death had anything to do with their position on homosexuality or their opposition to the NHRCK's recommendation that homosexuality be removed from the Juvenile Protection Act, and they refused to apologize or express any regret over Yook Woo-Dang's death.

The clause that defined homosexuality intrinsically as a harmful influence on youth was eventually deleted in 2004 from the Juvenile Protection Act. But the underlying suggestion that youth must be protected from gender and sexual nonconformity persists to this day in sex education curricula and public decency clauses in a variety of educational, legal, and political contexts, as can be seen in the ongoing debates over student human rights ordinances in a number of provinces and municipalities in South Korea. Christian conservatives have been the main force of opposition against these human rights ordinances. The idea that youth need protection from homosexuality still appears routinely in Christian opposition to sexual minority rights, such as in slogans that claim that exposure to an LGBTQ-affirming curriculum would compel a cisgender heterosexual youth to become transgender or homosexual.

In *The Human Rights Situation of LGBTI in South Korea* (2016), an invaluable report that documents in detail contemporary news and issues that in many ways resemble what had incensed Yook Woo-Dang back in 2003, findings from a survey conducted in 2015 paints a grim picture. According to the survey of two hundred LGBTI youth between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, the majority (54.3%) reported rampant discrimination at school based on sexual orientation or gender expression, not only among their peers but also from school administrators and teachers.[64] Further, the survey found that nearly half (46%) of secondary school students have heard their own teachers echoing the homophobic comment that "heterosexual students might become homosexuals if the curriculum teaches about homosexuality." Discussing homosexuality or supporting youth who identify as LGBTQ, in other words, was seen as tantamount to promoting or "spreading" homosexuality, seen as detrimental not only to the youth but society at large. The treatment of homosexuality as a harmful social contagion certainly has a long and varied history, and it intersects with other attempts to denaturalize, pathologize, and

criminalize homosexuality and other expressions of non-normative genders and sexualities. Tellingly, half of one hundred *teachers* surveyed for this annual LGBTI human rights report in 2016 responded that they themselves believed "love between men is not natural."[65] The pernicious depiction of homosexuality as unnatural, abnormal, and intrinsically a negative influence on youth persists to this day.

Politics of LGBTQ Solidarity

On the one hand, queer activists today are a regular presence in various political spaces, invited to deliver speeches in solidarity with laid off factory workers, to reject repressive national security laws and police surveillance, to join disability justice activists in demanding access to public transportation and end of ableist policies, to protest against inhumane detention of migrants and refugees, and to campaign alongside feminist activists in working to decriminalize abortion. These are just a few exemplary spaces of solidarity that have become commonplace. They are, no doubt, achievements of political legibility made possible by LGBTQ activists who have forged solidarity with—and as an integral part of—a range of political movements since the 1990s. This is reminiscent of the history of gay and lesbian left in the U.S., as Emily Hobson writes in *Lavender and Red*:

> [gay and lesbian leftists] argued that sexual liberation could be won only through a broader social revolution and that, conversely, sexual liberation was a necessary part of revolutionary change. Further, they held that because gay and lesbian liberation challenged both material structures of oppression and leftist hostility, it could be won only through mutual support across difference. Solidarity described a day-to-day habit of activism: the work of showing up at protests, joining campaigns, and building a culture of political camaraderie.

For gay and lesbian activists in Korea, these "day-to-day habit of activism" typically constituted showing up at protests organized by movements not focused on—or even really interested in—gay and lesbian movements. Described as "lending" solidarity in the somewhat transactional characterization of building camaraderie across difference, the effort of gay and lesbian activists began to pay dividends in the 2000s. The experience of being on the "receiving" end of solidarity for gay and lesbian activists stems largely from two key moments in 2007 and 2014.

Solidarity for Anti-Discrimination, 2007 and 2014

In 2007, the South Korean Ministry of Justice introduced the much-anticipated anti-discrimination legislation to require various levels of government bodies to develop plans to eliminate discrimination. There, however, was formidable opposition by the Congressional Missionary Coalition, composed of Christian-identified members of the National Assembly, joined by U.S.-style right-to life groups and conservative Christian groups who opposed the bill primarily because they objected to the inclusion of sexual orientation as a category for protection. Corporate lobbies also joined the anti-gay opposition because they wanted to be able to discriminate in hiring practices on the basis of "education and medical record" as well as criminal history. Ultimately, on November 2, 2007, the Ministry of Justice dropped the following seven protected categories from the anti-discrimination legislation: medical history, national origin, language, family situation or family status, criminal or probation history, sexual orientation, and educational background.

What first began as a campaign to legislate against discrimination soon turned into a campaign to refuse to permit discrimination against these disputed categories. Importantly, as Bak Sun-jin of Sarangbang Group for Human Rights is quoted for saying in an article by Hyun-young Kwon Kim and John (Song Pae) Cho, "the coming together of sexual minorities and the anger that sprung forth were in themselves a great form of 'coming out' for human rights activists."[66] Kwon Kim and Cho further write that the occasion was significant for a newfound feeling of solidarity *among* gay and lesbian activists "who had been largely estranged from each other."[67] Though forty lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups that formed the national Alliance Against Homophobia and Discrimination Against Sexual Minorities organized to restore sexual orientation as a protected category, the bill eventually failed altogether, not to be seen again during the presidency of self-described born-again evangelical President Lee Myung-bak (2008–2012). In 2013, it was announced that the long-awaited reintroduction of an anti-discrimination legislation was in the works, but following immediate Christian backlash, the bill's co-authors withdrew their sponsorship even before attempting to introduce it. As the moderate liberal newspaper, *The Korea Times*, described the bill's demise in its editorial, the politicians were set back by "the face of a formidable force—the church."

The second pivotal moment came in December 2014 when Protestant groups including the Coalition for Moral Sexuality pressured the Seoul mayor Park Won-soon to reverse his position and indefinitely postpone the enactment of the Seoul Charter of Human Rights. Mayor Park, a former human

rights attorney and pro-democracy activist elected largely by progressive voters, gave in to conservative pressure and refused to proclaim the Seoul Charter of Human Rights, which was drafted over three months by a committee of 164 citizens and human rights expert advisors. Outraged by the mayor's betrayal, Rainbow Action, a coalition of twenty LGBTQ groups and allies, staged a sit-in to protest and subsequently occupied the lobby of the Seoul City Hall over six days from December 5 to December 11, 2014. In a show of solidarity, other human rights activists, striking workers, and religious allies visited the site of protest occupation in an unprecedented show of support that demonstrated the growing significance of coalitional solidarity that embraced sexual minorities. Together they chanted slogans and shared food, taking turns to deliver testimonial statements in what many described as emotionally charged and politically empowering.

The Seoul Charter of Human Rights was never proclaimed, but the protest occupation of Seoul City Hall registered sexual minorities as clearly legible social movement actors in the broad and interwoven political movement landscape. They were actively supported by progressive religious clergy, human rights groups, and mainstream women's organizations, and the many years of flying the rainbow flag at labor solidarity rallies paid off with representatives of the Korean Metal Workers' Union, Ssangyong Autoworkers Union, and other striking workers visiting to deliver messages of support during the occupation. Even the bereaved families of the Sewol ferry disaster who were holding a protest encampment themselves at the public square nearby sent blankets and words of encouragement, and more than enough food and other provisions were sent to aid the occupation. Queer folks traveled to Seoul from all over the country to meet each other and form new relationships, and by the time the occupation formally came to an end with a lukewarm apology from the mayor, it was clear that queer activists now occupied a seat at the table, recognized not only as vulnerable minorities but as an empowered political voice.

LGBTQ-Labor Solidarity

On May 31, 2017 in Seoul, I attended a community screening of *Pride* (2014), an uplifting British film based on a true story about Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) and their activism in solidarity with the miners' strike in 1984. The story features a distinctly urban, London-based group of white lesbian and gay activists who mobilized fundraisers and organized public campaigns to support rural working-class miners engaged in a national strike against pit closures and Thatcher's neoliberal economic policies that ravaged the UK countryside. The film narrates the story of the rather unlikely

alliance between LGSM and the mining community in Wales' Dulais Valley, underscoring the remarkable tenacity in movement organizing and the importance of affective ties in forging political solidarity. There were nearly two hundred people in the audience who filled the seats of the historic Seoul Cinema theater in Jongno that day, at this screening that was jointly organized by Haengsŏngin and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions. With queer and transgender artists and students sitting alongside autoworkers and nurses on strike, human rights activists next to metal workers union representatives and labor lawyers from KCTU, the audience laughed and cried and applauded together as they followed the storylines about class struggle, family strife, and religious homophobia. It was revealed during the panel discussion afterwards that many in the audience had already seen the film before. They came to watch the film again because this space, organized jointly by labor and sexual minority activists, was an unprecedented collaboration made possible over many years of building solidarity.

To the surprise of many, in what was a highly unusual political act, a trade union lawyer on the panel took the occasion to come out as gay himself. He told the audience that the film struck a chord for him because of his ongoing work at the intersection of labor and sexual minority movements. He had told no one prior to the screening that he planned to come out to the audience that night, except a close comrade—Kim Deuk-jung (김득중; Kim Tŭk-jung), the leader of the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU) Ssangyong Motors branch, who, much to the audience's delight, went up to the stage to present him with a colorful floral bouquet. The moment captured a telling resonance that had been building for years between organized labor and sexual minority movements. In particular, the history of solidarity between Ssangyong Motors unionists and sexual minority movements can be traced back to queer activists' participation in the Hope Bus caravan to support unionist Kim Jin-suk during her unprecedented high-altitude occupation in July 2011 and the unionists' subsequent show of support during the sexual minority activists' six-day protest occupation of Seoul City Hall in December 2014. The screening of *Pride* concluded with the audience taking the stage for a group photo, holding up rainbow picket signs and shouting slogans together, demanding the release of the imprisoned KCTU leader Han Sang-gyun (한상균), who at the time had been in prison for nearly two years out of his five-year sentence on charges of orchestrating illegal anti-government protests.

The Invention of Chongbuk Gay

Similar to the case of the anti-discrimination law in California and the attendant backlash in the Korean diaspora that I discussed in chapter 1, what we

see in the two examples in 2007 and 2014 as well as in other moments since the 1990s is the intensification of anti-LGBTQ opposition led by Christian conservatives. This is a history of co-incidence, what one interlocuter characterized as *ag'yŏn* (악연) or cursed relations. As the first gay and lesbian groups like Kirikiri, Chingusai, and Tongilyŏn emerged in the mid-nineties in South Korea and the Korean diaspora, so did the conservative evangelical Han'gich'ong, which was first established in 1989 but began in the mid-nineties to operate as a key hub of conservative Christian and right-wing political forces. The nineties are also the period when megachurches and Christian conservatives started to become more vocal as political actors, staging unprecedented mass prayer rallies in support of U.S.-Korea military alliance, for example, and campaigning against legislations they consider objectionable.

Though anticommunism has always been one of the most defining features of Korean Protestantism, it was around the anti-discrimination legislation in 2007 and subsequent discussions of student human rights at the provincial and municipal levels that a constellation of small but vocal conservative Christian advocacy groups began to draw explicit links between Communism with homosexuality, political subversion with sexual perversion. There are four key groups in this constellation of political homophobia: Kŏnsayŏn (건사연 / 건강한 사회를 위한 국민연대; Korean Citizens' Alliance for a Healthy Society); Yesu Chaedan (예수재단; Jesus Foundation), which is led by a self-described ex-gay pastor; Esŭtŏ Kido Undong Ponbu (에스더기도운동본부; Esther Prayer Movement); and Sŏngsihwa Undong Ponbu (성시화 운동; Holy City Movement). Wielding considerable power as a self-proclaimed representative of the moral majority, they promote homophobia as simultaneously a religious-cultural value, a geopolitical imperative, and a political right. In their geographical imaginary, the city is not a model of modernity or destination for sexual liberation, but a basic geopolitical unit for heteropatriarchal reproduction and securitizing national territory.

Tori, a queer activist who worked as part of Rainbow Action to pass the Seoul Ordinance of Student Rights in 2011,[68] discusses the emerging anti-LGBTQ discourse at the convergence of anticommunism and homophobia as follows:

> Even if religious doctrines are fundamentally conservative and offer no room for compromise, there has never been a regime as devoted to religion as the Lee Myung-bak's administration, which was self-proclaimed to be conservative. Of course, the church and dictatorships were inseparable even in the past. But while those regimes in the past used guns and swords

as forces of oppression in addition to the ideology of the church, today the hate mongering propaganda of religious fundamentalism is the core weapon.

In the past, the Right used their hatred of *ppalgaengi* (빨갱이; Red/Communists) and leftists as a mobilizing ideology, but today they have succeeded in modernizing this by linking it to homophobia. Most reasonable people would scoff when they hear something like "Allowing homosexuality in the military will undermine military discipline, and this is a conspiracy by Kim Jong Il [of North Korea]." But some Christians connect homosexuality with Communism and leftist ideology, all as a modern-day axis of evil. Fundamentalist churches know that hatred towards *ppalgaengi* and leftists will not resonate as much today so they are using homosexuality to attack the progressives and benefit the conservatives.[69]

As queer activists were calling for the revision of the military legal codes to remove the derogatory references to sodomy and to decriminalize homosexual acts and relationships within the military, these geopolitically inflected rhetoric of homophobia began to surface in full force: homosexuality will hurt public health, jeopardize military strength, and threaten national security. In addition to the recurring messages of pastors being unable to preach according to their faith and conscience—against homosexuality—or churches being forced to marry gay people in their chapels, this combinational logic argued that national security depends on maintaining militarized masculinity and heteronormativity, and that queers, like communists and other political subversives, must be expunged or converted into proper national subjects.

Over the course of several months of mobilizing against the anti-discrimination legislation in 2014, the anti-LGBTQ rhetoric began to explicitly conjure this figure of a *chongbuk ppalgaengi* (종북 빨갱이)—a communist not only in ideology but also in political membership and absolute allegiance to North Korea—as also *gay*. Online and offline, political messages began to urge Christians to fight against *ppalgaengi* who are fomenting social instability by normalizing individuals with gender and sexual variance, in the military as well as in churches, schools, and families.[70] This invention of *chongbuk gay* combined the commonly deployed label of *chongbuk*, a pejorative term to denote someone who is seen as loyal to North Korea, with the ambiguously defined gay person, a sexual deviant who would corrupt youth, military, family, and thus national security. The history of McCarthy-era "Lavender Scare" in the United States was not lost on Korean queer activists and critical scholars.[71] They recognized that the idea of *chongbuk gay* in

Korea resembled Senator Joseph McCarthy's charges that communists and homosexuals had infiltrated the federal government, which then led to a moral panic and persecution of gay men and lesbians who were accused of posing a threat to national security. Feminist theologian Min-Ah Cho points out that in both South Korea and the U.S., a baseless suspicion grew into a political ideology, that the neologism of chongbuk gay reflected a desire on the part of the status quo to maintain political power and reject change, and that the discourse sought to Other and banish those who held oppositional views or were located in the margins.[72]

But if an age-old favorite enemy of Christian conservatives have been North Korea or so-called communist sympathizers, they have also begun to focus on Islam as a new target. In a booklet I picked up from the Christian protesters outside the Queer Cultural Festival in 2016, the political rhetoric against homosexuality is combined explicitly with a rhetoric against Islam, in what is another emerging pattern of conservative Christian geopolitics in Korea. "They are coming," the booklet warns with an image of a shadowy masked figure carrying a gun, referring to Muslim migrants. There is no question that Korean flag-waving conservative Protestant forces have been terribly unkind to minorities—sexual minorities, immigrants and temporary migrants who constitute religious and ethnic minorities in South Korea, and trade unionists, dissidents and social justice activists who compose political minorities. But this has intensified even further in recent years, for example in South Korea's general elections in April 2016 that saw the hypervisibility of anti-gay political rhetoric, promulgated especially by the fledgling Christian Liberal Party (CLP). An ultra-conservative Protestant political party, the CLP ultimately failed to gain a seat in the National Assembly—but it came very close, earning 2.6 percent of votes nationwide, just shy of the 3 percent required for a proportional representation seat. Tellingly, the CLP earned more votes than the progressive Green Party and the Justice Party combined. The increased prominence of formations like the CLP signals a new chapter in religiously charged political homophobia and Islamophobia in South Korea, where troubling and outrageous political rhetoric finds traction in the formal political arena. Conservative Protestants and homophobic political leaders have even linked gay and lesbian rights with terrorism and radical Islam, as can be seen in the Christian Liberal Party's 2016 platform of "No to homosexuality, no to Islam, no to anti-discrimination," all in the name of national security. Some have gone as far as to call for a stop to immigration from Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh. In their extreme and most troubling formations, homophobia is combined with Islamophobia and xenophobia to bring hatred and bigotry to feverish new heights.

Conclusion

Given the mainstreaming of LGBTQ issues and the visibility of queer and trans activism across the social movement landscape in South Korea, the charge of chongbuk gay appears preposterous, invented clearly to smear sexual minorities as political subversives. The term chongbuk is worse than *ch'inbuk* (친북), which refers to pro-North Korea sentiments or affinities with the regime in North Korea. Chongbuk, on the other hand, is a pejorative term that suggests an absolute subservience and loyalty to the ideologies of North Korea. It is not a charge anyone would readily accept even if they were in fact communist or sympathetic to North Korea. But to simply dismiss the label of chongbuk gay as groundless would be to deny a certain legacy of the gay and lesbian left. As one informant who is a long-time queer activist said to me with a chuckle, "but some of us are actually ppalgaengi" or Commies. The gay and lesbian left faced persecution not only because of their nonnormative gender and sexual identities and practices, but also because of their internationalist and solidarity politics that were aligned with politically subversive throughlines of dissent. Queer activist-scholar Na Young-Jung writes:

> Being aware of how the state treats ppalgaengi has led me to a sensibility that I think guides us toward queer practices, constantly producing and transforming queer things and queer spaces. For me, what is queer is not about identifying as a sexual minority but something that occurs in our interactions with the state. It encompasses what is deemed illegal, diseased, subversive, immoral, and disruptive to public order, as well as sexual in nature. Reading state violence through a queer lens and trying to resist state violence should be recognized as equally important as securing and institutionalizing rights. This is because institutionalization simultaneously produces exclusion, and state violence takes place easily in that space of exclusion.[73]

The figure of chongbuk gay points to the importance of considering the genealogies of the Left in queer geopolitics. Geopolitics is a study of the effects of geography on politics, the relationship between geographical space and political power. Much of South Korea's religious activism against homosexuality has emerged in the context of historical and ongoing U.S.–ROK military relations and security alliance, South Korea's place in U.S.-led war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, and a convergence of the global war on terrorism, the rise of Islamophobia, and the intensification of racism and xenophobia. Because the Korean Protestant attachment to the U.S. has fundamen-

tally shaped theological orientations and religious practices, these dynamics have affected a wide range of historical formations and political mobilizations as well. The continued presence of U.S. troops in Korea, U.S. wartime operational control of the South Korean military, and South Korea's proximity to the U.S. empire are all significant features of the U.S.–Korea transnational security alliance, and these are still ongoing and urgent political concerns for those who aspire to mobilize revolutionary change.

CHAPTER 3

Queer and Heretical, Iban and Idan

On June 15, 2017, Reverend Lim Borah of the Sumdol Hyanglin Church (섬돌 향린교회) in Seoul received an unexpected registered letter from the Haptong denomination of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK). Sent by a committee charged with investigating heresy allegations, the letter asked Reverend Lim to submit a number of evidentiary materials—books, articles, sermons, and audiovisual recordings, especially concerning her work on the Korean-language translation of an edited book titled *The Queer Bible Commentary* (2006). This was peculiar; not only was the communiqué asking her to submit self-incriminating evidence, but it was also issued by an evangelical denomination with which she has no formal affiliation. Reverend Lim was a pastor ordained in the more liberal and ecumenical Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), commonly known as Kijang, whose founder was in fact cast out as a heretic in 1952.[1] Since neither she nor her ministry was under the institutional purview of the more conservative and evangelical Haptong Presbyterian, Reverend Lim was under no obligation to comply with the heresy investigation. As a result, there was also no formal procedural recourse for her to defend herself against the charge that by ministering to LGBTQ communities and "promoting homosexuality," she was committing heresy. The investigation, in other words, marked the end rather than the start of any discussion concerning the place of non-normative genders and sexualities in the church.

The letter from Haptong soon spiraled into a multi-denominational effort to condemn Reverend Lim as a heretic or *idan* (이단), a remarkably ambiguous and pliable charge as I will show in this chapter. To be sure, heresies are not made hastily or without a process of rationalization. Though the deci-

sions may be controversial, idan decisions do typically involve purposeful self-legitimation and public-facing declarations. Protestant denominations like Haptong periodically issue decrees and advisories concerning the threat factor of minor sects and radical theologies, updating heresy determinations on an ongoing basis. New groups, individuals, and practices are declared to be idan every year; and sometimes, a previously heretical group is exonerated or forgiven after issuing apologies, undergoing change, or simply because new authorities in power see the matter differently.

The heresy controversy over Reverend Lim requires both a close look and a wide-angle view of the historical geography of Korean Protestantism and the institutional arrangements of religious power. In doing so, the threshold of heresy can be recognized as a liminal site of multiple contradictions and transgressions, a location where numerous lines meet and part ways. In addition to the cries of condemnation from conservative Protestant formations that espouse *pantongsŏngae* (반동성애; homophobia), we can find at the threshold a multiplicity of voices from progressive reformers and critics of Christianity as well as LGBTQ-identified Christians and their allies inside and beyond the church.[2] There are denominations, churches, hospitals, schools, networks, and media outlets, as well as retreat and training facilities, for-profit businesses, and charitable foundations affiliated with Christianity, all taking part in vast, far-reaching religious political economy. Religious infrastructure can be so expansive and their influence so powerful that an affluent megachurch in Seoul was even permitted in 2010 to take over the space under a public road and build a chapel underground with a direct exit from the nearby subway station.[3]

Heresy rulings are not merely symbolic. Once gender and sexual nonconformity is condemned and codified as heretical at the denomination level, ordained clergy and affiliated faculty can be disciplined for even suggesting that gender and sexual minorities need protection from harm. Seminary students in South Korea can be—and have been—blocked from moving forward in their pastoral career, barred from ordination and placement as pastors in the denomination they are affiliated with.[4] These corporeal consequences take place today in an overwhelmingly heteropatriarchal world of cisgender male pastors in their fifties and sixties, men who occupy nearly every position of power and institutional leadership.[5] This picture of gender inequality should be kept in mind as this chapter discusses the threshold of heresy as a contested site of gender and sexual politics, a power-laden terrain where dogmatic orthodoxy, cisgender heteropatriarchy, and religious rule of law meet resistance. Protestant denominations—across the ideological spectrum—are even more male-dominated than the male-majority sphere of secular political leadership in government, schools, and businesses. While the overall number of church-

goers are declining, the clergy is getting bigger; an unprecedented number of pastors are being produced by the Presbyterian Church in Korea, though denominations like Haptong do not ordain women pastors at all.

To put simply, Reverend Lim was a Kijang pastor of a small community-oriented ecumenical church, who was singled out by the largest and most powerful evangelical denomination in the country. They accused her of affirming and promoting LGBTQ identities and practices—not by being an LGBTQ-identified person herself or by engaging in LGBTQ sexual activities but by acting on her belief that there is nothing wrong or wicked with gender and sexual non-conformity and variance. The heresy here lies not in being an LGBTQ person; the problem apparently is in speaking positively about individuals who are, in holding events and creating spaces to support and worship with LGBTQ-identified Christians, and in espousing the message of acceptance and anti-discrimination.

The question I am most interested in pursuing in this chapter is not whether Reverend Lim was actually idan but rather, what political work the idan discourse performs. On the one hand, idan declarations spur religious censure and social stigma in order to discredit and stifle dissent. It mobilizes a variety of institutional apparatuses to apply pressure and create public disrepute. On the other hand, the case involving Reverend Lim demonstrates that heresy determinations are not a simple top-down institutional mechanism that enforces doctrinal borders; they, in fact, make legible the *struggle* between orthodoxy and heresy. It has been argued that "heresy is socially constructed in the midst of social conflict" and that "the heresy hunt, in which heresy is labeled and heretics suppressed, serves as an anxiety-relieving ritual for institutional elites and facilitates their dominance within the institution."[6] Heresy declarations serve several political functions: solidify authority, define institutional boundaries, enhance group solidarity, and offer a ritual outlet for collective anxiety. To put it another way: the activity of "naming and removing heretics is a predictable aspect of rhetorical 'power-maintenance.'"[7]

This certainly resonates with heresy and South Korean queer religious politics. There is growing visibility of conservative Protestant-led activism against gender equality policies and human rights ordinances, against decriminalization of abortion and against anti-discrimination measures. These efforts converge often with the political right-wing that holds fast to the pro-U.S. and anticommunist legacies of Presidents Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee. But among the various camps and ideological factions, there are intra-Protestant chasms and competition for power and influence.[8] Behind the public spectacles of mass rallies and mobilization capacity of megachurches, the Korean Protestant church has in fact been experiencing a crisis in declining

membership as well as diminished status in public opinion.[9] Given the crisis of moral illegitimacy and unfavorable public opinion, "heresy hunts" would be politically efficacious for supplying "a common enemy," the heretic as a "deviant insider" who must be disciplined.[10] The idea of a heretic as a "deviant insider" alludes to one who is an outsider but inside, both near and far. Different from an infidel, who is outside the faith, heretics are like strangers within the bounds of faith, "close enough to be threatening but distant enough to be considered in error."[11] To be in error means to be in need of correction, and a heretic is within reach from the center.

It is important to remember that the subversive threat that queer theology and LGBTQ-affirming ministry pose to the conservative church status quo hails from within the Protestant church. "They constitute 'the perversion within the normative,'" as Carolyn Dinshaw might describe it.[12] Heresy rulings push dissent to the margins and keep the critics within striking reach.[13] As Michel Foucault writes, "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."[14] I likewise suggest that resistance here is not located outside institutional power but rather tethered to it. Dynamics of power and heretical resistance complicate easy inside/outside distinction; heresy helps bring to light the complexities of power.

Following the book's interest in queer resistance against normative political order, this chapter focuses on the thresholds of heresy concerning Reverend Lim and also what it might say about queer religious politics. First, I trace the semantics and politics of the term for heresy, idan, and highlight the intersection between heretical Christianity, gender and sexual nonconformity, and ideological difference. I then explain how queer (*iban*) became heretical (*idan*) as interests in queer theology and calls for LGBTQ-affirming ministry stoked the flames of heresy allegations. Rather than simply stifle dissent, as I will show, the heresy controversy has exposed the limits of dominant power and revealed the contours of what I suggest are "new queer vitalities" and the life-or-death stakes of activism.[15]

Semantic Ambiguity of Idan

What becomes evident in a survey of heretical Christianity in modern Korea is that not only can the delineations of heresy be politically pliant, but to begin with, there is an enormous semantic ambiguity over the very word for heresy, idan (이단 異端), which is used to denote a wide range of unorthodox positions. Heterodoxy, heresy, heretical sects, cultish movements, as well as new religions that are located quite far from mainline

Protestantism are all swept under the category of idan.[16] For example, the 2018 heresy list released by the International Korean Christian Coalition Against Heresy (IKCCAH) condemns as heretical long-established minor Christian sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as the fast growing new religious movements like Shinch'ŏnji and Jesus Morning Star that have caused serious concern in recent years.[17] Sinch'ŏnji (신천지; Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony) is widely considered to be an extremely aggressive and persuasive heretical Christian group that has grown rapidly in recent years—they are considered to be one of the most dangerous idan by mainline Protestants. On the doors of several megachurches in Seoul are notices that read, "Shinch'ŏnji not welcome." Given the well-known heterodoxy of the Mormon Church or the Unification Church, it is perhaps not surprising to find them on the mainline Protestants' list of idan, but the second largest Presbyterian denomination in 2017 caused a stir—and critics' ridicule—by declaring not only Roman Catholicism to be heretical but also the practice of magic tricks and yoga.

Unlike the Catholic Church, Protestant churches do not have a singular centralized governing body that determines who or what constitutes idan. Instead, each denomination makes these decisions, sometimes conferring with one another but sometimes contradicting each other as well. Fingers point, sometimes, to former friends. Haptong's heresy list in 2019 included the leader of IKCCAH, the U.S.-based Christian watchdog against heresy that I mentioned earlier, for deviating from key theological doctrines. In a strongly worded report, Haptong authorities pointed out that the IKCCAH's leader was not an ordained pastor with seminary training and stated, "This goes to show how important but dangerous it is for (untrained) lay person to conduct research on idan."[18] Consequently, all churches, pastors, and congregation members within Haptong Presbyterian denomination are now prohibited from contributing to, subscribing to, advertising in, or supporting in any way, activities associated with the IKCCAH.

Often used interchangeably and concurrently in these discussions are the words *sagyo* (사교 邪教) and especially *saibi* (사이비 似而非), a more explicitly pejorative term that implies cultishness. In religious contexts and beyond, *saibi* denotes things that are fake, false, or fraudulent. The words *idan* and *saibi* are often used together—*idan saibi*—to indicate shadowy, fringe locations on the heretical margin, far from a normative center. In this sense, the semantic ambiguity of idan insinuates both religious illegitimacy and secular stigma and marginality. It is one thing for Christians to expel something as idan based on doctrinal issues, but when non-Christians also use the idiom of idan saibi to

disparage a religious group or individual, they are deploying terms of censure that span religious and secular divide.

The latest idan controversy over queer theology and Reverend Lim's LGBTQ-affirming ministry diverged in important ways from these heresy contentions. For one, previous heresy debates are concerned mostly with doctrinal challenges, controversial radical theologies, or doomsday groups with cultish leaders. New religious movements gaining widespread popularity under charismatic leaders have been an especially popular target for idan advisories and excommunication decrees.[19] According to the influential theologian and an expert on idan, Tark Ji-il (탁지일; Tark Chi-il), there are four telltale signs of heretical Christianity: the sanctification or deification of religious leaders; religious leaders who seek to rule rather than serve their members; apocalyptic end-time prophecies; and "mind control" of behavior, information, thought, and emotions.[20] The online inventory published by Tark and a monthly publication he directs, Hyŏndae Chonggyo (현대종교; *Modern Religion Monthly*), detail many cases of heresy that meet such criteria—religious leaders who rather clearly contradict doctrinal orthodoxy by denying the holy trinity, for example, or claiming to be a prophet, as well as figures who claim to possess supernatural or superhuman powers.

Reverend Lim did not fit this typology. She was neither a charismatic leader of a popular religious cult nor a self-proclaimed messiah. Her theological claims and activities placed her squarely in left-leaning social justice activism and social gospel ministry. Rather than constituting an individual deviance, she was recognizable as an influential figure in the genealogy of Korea's liberation theology known as *minjung* theology, updated with feminist and queer intersectional inflections.[21] It is telling that homosexuality or queer theology do not come up in any of the major idan scholarship until 2017 when Haptong turned its attention to Reverend Lim. In other words, gender variance and non-normative sexualities denoted by the word "queer" was not heretical until then.

How Queer Became Heretical

Writing in 2016—a year before the heresy label first surfaced—Reverend Lim described the work of translating *The Queer Bible Commentary* as part of the emergent Christian-centered movement seeking to counter anti-LGBTQ politics.[22] Reverend Lim presciently mentioned the word *idan* twice in this article—first when she pointed out that diverse theological frameworks that pose a challenge to the dominant authority often get denounced as "false, fraudulent or idan," and a second time when she wrote specifically about *The Queer Bible Commentary* and the promise of queer theology.[23] She wrote:

> [*The Queer Bible Commentary*] confirms the interconnected links between LGBTQ folks and religion, Christianity, and the Bible in not only Korean society but even in societies where same-sex marriage has been legalized. The bleak reality is that in Korea, even feminist theology has a difficult time getting established. It is a total wasteland when it comes to queer theology. . . . Those who are leading anti-LGBTQ movements issue warnings against queer theology and try to devalue it as a substandard theology. Or they treat it like *idan*, not sound [Christian] theology. But in foreign seminaries outside of Korea, queer theology is part of a regular and legitimate theological curriculum.[24]

In this passage, Reverend Lim rejected the normalization of anti-LGBTQ sentiments in South Korea and pointed out that another world is possible, and that indeed it already exists. She placed the subordinated position of feminist theology alongside queer theology to illustrate the dominant heteropatriarchy and parochialism of the South Korean church. This, of course, is a common rhetorical strategy—to claim that something would not be the case elsewhere, somewhere better—that draws legitimacy through a global comparison. By pointing to the ostensibly more LGBTQ-friendly climate outside of Korea—presumably in liberal seminaries in North America and Europe—Reverend Lim flipped the minoritizing gaze and turned it around against the anti-LGBTQ movements. She described the conservative leaders as myopic and unwilling to change, failing to recognize feminist and queer theology as legitimate theological fields, the way they ought to be. She ended the Chingusai article with a long, translated excerpt from Thomas Bohache's commentary on Matthew from the *Queer Bible Commentary*:

> For contemporary queer people . . . although we may be second-class citizens in much of the world, although we are unable to marry and may have our children taken from us, although in many places it is a crime to express our love, nevertheless in the Reign of God (the place where *God* rules) there is freedom and liberation for all people. Queer empowerment requires each of us to proclaim this good news to all we meet.[25]

Considering its dissident and rebellious approach to interpreting the Bible, it is no surprise that the Korean translation of *The Queer Bible Commentary* (2006)—publication forthcoming in 2020—provided a key spark for the heresy allegations against Reverend Lim Borah. A groundbreaking publication and a collaborative undertaking that involved twenty-seven South Korean theologians, clergy, and scholars working at the intersection of religion, gender,

and sexuality studies, the translation would serve the much needed purpose of advancing queer theology and demonstrating that the Bible need not be "texts of terror."[26] By rejecting oppressive heterosexist teachings and putting forth interpretations that elevate the dignity of queer lives, the book seeks in part to "disarm Biblically based gay-bashing."[27] Rather than be oppressed by the Bible, *The Queer Bible Commentary* suggests that the Bible has "the capacity to be disruptive, unsettling and unexpectedly but delightfully queer" and deploys a range of hermeneutical approaches to highlight aspects of the scriptural text that are relevant to LGBTQ issues.[28] Given the feverish pitch of anti-LGBTQ rhetoric among fundamentalists, the translators felt that this book would be an invaluable tool to deepen the conversation.

On May 17, 2017, at a public forum celebrating the completion of the translation, the emcee described the Korean translation as part of an emergent LGBTQ-affirming movement.[29] The event was titled "Korean queer theology movement with a rough start," with an emphasis on the rough and rugged (*t'ubak'an*; 투박한) environment in which the book was being launched. The emcee of the event, Hyanglin Church's Reverend Ko Sang-kyun who is also a contributing translator to the volume, explained the unusual word choice of "rough" as referring to being unruly and disorderly, and stated that the translated book signals the LGBTQ-affirming movement's departure from a place of lives out of order.[30] Yeong Mee Lee, Professor of Old Testament at the Kijang-affiliated Hanshin Graduate School of Theology and a contributing translator to the edited volume, described that in Korea, queer theology must necessarily take shape as a social movement in order to foster critical public discourse, much like the way the original *Queer Bible Commentary* came about as the product of a diverse range of minoritized scholars who worked tirelessly to establish queer theology as a dynamic field of study in the U.S. Their success was tied to steadfast activism against a hostile terrain, she said, and in Korea as well, queer theology must accompany activism in order to foster the much-needed critical public discourse. By saying this, Lee made it clear that *The Queer Bible Commentary* was not just a book but part of a movement. It was not just a product of activism, either; it was a provocation for a counterhegemonic praxis, a critical building block in a long-rising and ongoing movement.

Minjung Precedents and Queer Theologies

What Yeong Mee Lee points to is an important movement context for *The Queer Bible Commentary* in South Korea, one that involves the legacies of liberation theology and Korea's own minjung theology and the social critique and solidarity activism that emerge from these theological traditions. Lib-

eration theology, typically known for originating in the Catholic Church in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s, arose in response to poverty and social injustice. It was a moral and religious response to what it identified as immoral secular socioeconomic conditions, namely capitalism and imperialism. In South Korea, pro-democracy activists and critical scholars similarly developed minjung theology, a contextual theology of liberation, during Park Chung Hee's eighteen-year authoritarian dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s. Inspired by Latin American and North American liberation theology and in concert with anti-colonial independence and democratization movements throughout the Third World, minjung theology took hold as an important and critical minority voice that prioritized defiance and radical inclusion of the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. At the heart of minjung theology is "a concern for those who suffer exploitation, poverty, and sociopolitical and cultural repression."[31]

Lee herself is an expert on minjung theology and writes: "At its inception, minjung theology focused on the deplorable economic and cultural conditions of minjung [the masses]. As it developed, and as the context changed, later minjung theology expanded to address political and social concerns that emerged from the minjung movement for democracy in the early 1980s."[32] As the context changed, theological communities also changed. Many minjung theology-inflected networks of scholars, activists, and churches in South Korea subsequently became involved in supporting human rights activism in which gender and sexual minority politics have emerged as a key concern.

This is not to say that queer theology in Korea can be traced entirely or solely to minjung theology or that minjung theology necessarily leads to LGBTQ-affirming ministry. In fact, there are multiple queer theological traditions that constitute the recent identification of queer as idan, just one of which is represented by the group that came together to translate *The Queer Bible Commentary*. Emergent queer Christian movements in Korea have heterogeneous genealogies and approaches to fostering community, justice, and liberation.

A Christian-led movement to counter anti-LGBTQ politics within the church and beyond includes a constellation of advocacy groups and LGBTQ-affirming ministries. According to a map produced by Mujigae Yesu (무지개 예수; Rainbow Jesus)—a coalition of LGBTQ-affirming ministries and groups that have been building a national network—there are eleven LGBTQ-affirming ministries in Seoul and eight more throughout South Korea (fig. 18). The colorful map also notes that there are more "rainbow churches" not marked on the map, and that one should contact them to find out more. A "rainbow church" is defined on the map as a church where "sexual minorities and allies can worship together without discrimination, and safely practice their

Fig. 18. Rainbow Church in Korea, map of LGBTQ-affirming churches in 2018. (Map produced by Mujigae Yesu, from Korea Institute of Rainbow Theology website, rainbowtheology.co.kr [accessed on March 11, 2019].)

faith."[33] They are not necessarily affiliated with progressive political activism or founded by proponents of feminist or minjung theology, and some identify as evangelical. Among the best known in Seoul are Rodem Church (founded in 1996) which ministers primarily to gay men, Open Doors Metropolitan Community Church (founded in 2011) which is an interdenominational, ecumenical fellowship primarily for English-speaking and gay-identified expatriates from North America, Sumdol Hyanglin Church led by Reverend Lim Borah (founded in 2013) plus three other Hyanglin churches (see below for more detailed discussion), and the Pilgrimage Church (Kilch'atnŭn Kyohoe, founded in 2013) and Yongsan House of Sharing (Nanumŭijip, founded in 1986) with their community activism anti-poverty mission led by the Anglican priest Min-Kim Jong Hun, a.k.a. Father Zacchaeus; and Open Doors Metropolitan Community Church (founded in 2011), a congregation of the Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) and the Progressive Christian Alliance. The MCC is an international Protestant Christian denomination with over two-hundred-member congregations in thirty-seven countries that specifically outreach LGBT families and communities. Also part of Mujigae Yesu are an iban women's Catholic group, a Methodist group, as well as several feminist and other human rights advocacy groups. Together these churches constitute a minority religious politics that offer positive recuperations as well as transgressive reinscriptions, asserting its place in social critique and solidarity activism.

Minjung theology is one counterhegemonic tradition; queer theory, feminist theory, and even some corners from evangelical theological traditions have developed approaches to diversify religious understanding of gender and sexual non-conformity.[34] Nonetheless, it is worth noting that much of South Korean LGBTQ politics and queer theology are taking root at the progressive and social change-oriented intersection of minjung and minority politics, with a recognition of "the need to stand in solidarity in a shared struggle against repression and injustice," a familiar idea from minjung theology as well as a progressive minority politics.[35]

Hyanglin Churches stand as a good example of a progressive minority politics embraced as a continuation of minjung theology. Reverend Lim's Sumdol Hyanglin was founded in 2013 as an offshoot from its famous and historic parent church, Hyanglin Church (founded in 1953), which is part of the liberal, ecumenical Kijang Presbyterian denomination. Hyanglin has an explicit anti-growth strategy that was proposed in 1993 by the church's co-founder and well-known minjung theologian, Reverend Ahn Byung Mu (안병무; An Pyŏng-mu). The policy meant the church size would remain relatively small, with the maximum congregation size capped at around five hundred adult members. The church would not pursue unfettered growth the way mega-

churches have famously done. Reverend An's organizational model involving *pun'ga* (분가 分家), the cultivation of an offshoot household as a grown child might branch out in a family tree, meant that when the need arose, self-selected congregants would break out and form another church with the blessing of the "parent" church. Still connected to each other through shared values and non-hierarchical genealogy, the Hyanglin Church and its offshoots—Kangnam Hyanglin, Tŭlkkot Hyanglin, and Sumdol Hyanglin—exemplify a model of community building that rejects the pitfalls of growth-preoccupied strategies. They share a critique of the megachurch model, avoiding the downsides of church growth such as exorbitant construction and maintenance expenses for larger church buildings, a diminished sense of intimacy and fellowship that comes with larger congregation size, an increasing conflation of pastoral work with corporate executive management—the pastor as a CEO—and lastly, the potential for financial corruption and abuse of power that comes with managing a large organization.[36]

Whereas the radical antigrowth approach reflects minjung theology's anti-capitalist critique of the prosperity gospel and growth-oriented development model, anti-normativity is a defining feature of queer theory's influence on queer theology. Patrick Cheng, author of *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (2011), succinctly describes queer theory as marked by the following: "(1) identity without essence; (2) transgression; (3) resisting binaries; and (4) social construction."[37] These four "marks" of queer theory together construe "queerness as strangeness or transgressivity" and creates a "fluid body of ideas that is constantly in the process of becoming."[38] Queer theology builds on these marks from queer theory. Cheng argues that these notions subvert not only the normative constructions of gender and sexuality but also potentially unsettle the Christian polity and orthodox theology at large. Defining queer theology as no less than "queer talk about God," Cheng posits that queer theology is not a narrow, minoritizing, identarian topic of interest exclusively to LGBTQ-identified theologians alone—an arcane subfield, perhaps, or a self-legitimating political inquiry—but rather a universalizing orientation with wide-ranging critical implications.[39]

Like Cheng, queer theologians often make a distinction between recuperative and radical strategies. Positive recuperations that rely on identity categories in order to affirm LGBTQ-identified individuals within the faith are distinguished from transgressive re-inscriptions that seek to transform society and achieve political liberation.[40] The first kind yields LGBTQ-affirming ministries and gay and lesbian theologies that call for the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities in Christian communities. In contrast, the more transgressive queer theologies extend beyond LGBTQ individuals

and identities and pose epistemological and structural emphasis on non-normativity and transformation.

It is in this way that some conceive queer theology as a "branch of liberation theology . . . intimately connected to utopian visions of equality, justice, and compassionate care" and "grounded in prophetic traditions of personal and social transformation."[41] Queer theology, Linn Marie Tonstad writes, is not just "about apologetics for the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities in Christianity, but about visions of sociopolitical transformation that alter practices of distinction harming gender and sexual minorities as well as many other minoritized populations."[42] Such transformative visions can encompass liberation from imperialism, colonialism, and capitalism among other interlocking structures of violence and oppression. As Thomas Bohache writes, "queers constitute differently but comparably subordinated subjects who 'live under the hegemony of heterosexuals, heterosexuality and heteronormativity.'"[43] In his contribution to *The Queer Bible Commentary*, Bohache utilizes a "hermeneutics of suspicion," a term he adapts from the work of feminist critical theologians like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Elaine Wainwright in order to bring to life counternarratives of resistance against hegemonic power.[44] Suspicion towards orthodoxy, normativity, and authority is put forth as unorthodox, transgressive, and radical hermeneutics, a defining feature of queer theology. It is in this way that this chapter locates queer theological traditions in Korea as being shaped by the entangled genealogies of minjung and other liberation theologies, feminist and queer theories that have animated pro-democracy human rights activists and emboldened reformers who are collectively engaged in transforming structures of power.

Witch Hunt

The four churches that make up the Hyanglin community came together to hold a press conference on July 7, 2017 in defense of Reverend Lim. They are all part of Mujigae Yesu. Held at the historic parent Hyanglin Church in Myŏngdong near the frenetic city center of Seoul, the solemn press conference featured a panel of clergy and activists who defended Reverend Lim's record as a compassionate and courageous religious leader and praised her dedication to social justice activism. The panel speakers stressed that the heresy disputes were part of an ongoing historical contestation between traditions that had diverged long ago—evangelical and fundamentalist Yejang and ecumenical and liberal Kijang—and that the label of heresy has been used in political efforts to legitimate denominational dogmatism.

A representative from a queer Methodists' group said succinctly at the

press conference: "This is modern-day witch hunt. This creates a scapegoat to cover up the clear and evident crisis—the crumbling church authority and declining church membership."[45] The gendered language of "witch hunt" appears repeatedly in media coverage and rebuttal documents including the July 3 response from Kijang Presbyterian women's group.[46] The sharply worded statement pointedly place modern-day heresy controversy in the long historical context of women and heresy and states, "We remember in medieval history that the medieval church accused countless women of being witches and burned them at the stake as sacrificial lambs when in fact their authority was in crisis due to a famine and the plague."[47] They stressed that even with controversial positions, differences in theological interpretation should lead to open discussion and debate, not condemnation and purge.

Modern history of heresy in South Korea does feature several controversial women, though none were burned at the stake. In his 2016 book, *Han'guk Idan Kidokkyo*, theologian Heo Ho-Ik (허호익; Hŏ Ho-ik) traces the genealogy of modern Korean Christian heterodoxy as beginning essentially with three female heretics.[48] The first heretic he lists is a woman by the name of Yi Sun-hwa (이순화) who in 1917 founded Chŏngdogyo (정도교 正道敎), and the second heretic he lists is an anonymous woman known only as Nambang Yŏwang or Queen of the South who is said to have traveled widely throughout Korea in the 1920s. Heo posits that these two heretical women were relatively inconsequential in reach and influence, but nonetheless allocates an entire chapter to discuss the third heretic, Deaconness Kim Sŏng-do (김성도 권사, 1882–1944) who gained notoriety in the 1920s and 1930s as the founder of a new religion called Saejugyo (새주교).

Women's religious leadership seems to elicit scorn and suspicion, especially if they are successful. Arguing that nascent religious movements become more established only when they successfully manage the leadership transition from the founder's generation to the next, heresy and cult expert Tark Ji-il implies that women leaders are essentially a sign of failure. He suggests that in many well-known cases of idan, women are named as de facto or temporary successors to the founding patriarchs when there is no suitable male heir.[49] His examples include Han Hak-ja (한학자, 1943–), widow of Reverend Moon Sun Myung and the current head or "True Mother" of the Unification Church; Chang Kil-ja (장길자, 1943–), "God the Mother" of the World Mission Society Church of God; and Chŏng Cho-ŭn (정조은/김지선, birthdate unknown), who has emerged as the de facto leader of the infamous Christian Gospel Mission (CGM), also known as JMS or Jesus Morning Star, while its founder and leader Chŏng Myŏng-sŏk (정명석, 1945–) was imprisoned to serve ten years for sexual assault. Interestingly, Tark singles out these women figures not as

cases of successful leaders but as examples of a legitimacy crisis that inevitably befalls idan organizations.

Not surprisingly, the statement from the Kijang Presbyterian women leaders does not try to position Reverend Lim's heresy dispute in the historical lineage of these heretical women. As mainline Protestants, albeit marginalized by conservative evangelicals, the Kijang women would not have claimed affinity with groups like Jesus Morning Star or Sinch'ŏnji, or other radical sects located far from mainline Protestantism. In fact, the Kijang women leaders do not dispute that there are "real" heretics out there; they just deny that Reverend Lim is one of them.

While sexism and misogyny are an important part of the "witch hunt" discourse, gender is not the only axis of difference in heresy politics. The Kijang Presbyterian women leaders situate the heresy controversy over Reverend Lim also in the old feud between conservative fundamentalists and progressive ecumenicals, tracing the conflict back to the 1950s when Korean Presbyterians split into two camps, the ecumenical National Council of Churches in Korea (NCC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) on the one hand, and on the other, the fundamentalist evangelicals and affluent megachurches who have taken an anti-WCC position. In fact, when the WCC held its assembly in Korea in 2013, thousands of conservative Protestants protested outside in what was described as the most "well-organized and vehement opposition" against WCC since its founding in 1948.[50]

Specifically, the Kijang Presbyterian women leaders reference the historic figure Reverend Kim Chae-jun (1901–1987), a liberal theologian who was excommunicated from the Presbyterian Church in 1952 before becoming the founder of the Kijang Presbyterian denomination. He also helped establish Amnesty International in South Korea and served as its first chairperson in 1972.[51] Reverend Kim's reputation as a minjung theologian and a pro-democracy activist in the 1960s and 1970s against Park Chung Hee's dictatorship has earned him a place in church history as an esteemed elder figure and a respected teacher who mentored a generation of prominent religious leaders including Reverend Mun Ik-hwan (1918–1994) who was a long-time leader in Protestant activism for democracy and South-North Korea reunification and Reverend Ahn Byung Mu (1922–1996), known as a pro-democracy movement leader and a leading architect of minjung theology as well as the founder of the Hyanglin Church. But for sixty-three years in the eyes of the conservative Yejang Presbyterians, Reverend Kim Chae-jun remained officially a heretic until 2016 when his excommunication in 1952 was finally voided.

Reminding the readers of this religio-political history, the Kijang Presbyterian women leaders' statement asks, why heresy now and why heresy again.

Why now does the Haptong Presbyterian stir up another heresy dispute with Reverend Lim, a Kijang pastor? "If there is an issue with [Reverend Lim]," they retort, "we will investigate it ourselves. We must make it very clear that this is not a matter that another denomination should trouble itself with." Here is a longer excerpt from this remarkable statement that directs our attention again to the intersection of gender and power.

> [The Haptong Presbyterian denomination] has willfully misinterpreted the Bible verse, "Women should remain silent in the churches," and have tolerated ludicrous statements like "Women wearing diapers should not stand at the pulpit." Their anachronistic acts include refusing to ordain women pastors and continuing to engage in gender discrimination. They should attend to addressing their own internal issues. They should stop discriminating against women and stop punishing neighbors who are in pain. We encourage them to see the plank in their own eye before looking for a speck in another's eye.

The letter suggests that Haptong Presbyterian is conducting the heresy hunt as a diversion, because it is mired in internal criticism and surrounded by voices for reform. It points to Haptong's dismal record on gender equality and critiques the low status of women in the denomination's leadership as anachronistic and indefensible and urges change.

There have been other public statements and open letters expressing support for Reverend Lim.[52] No doubt, she was a frequent target of awful epithets, hate speech, and harassment, demonized among conservative Christians engaged in anti-LGBTQ organizing work. However, to progressives and LGBTQ communities familiar with her name and activist work, Reverend Lim had become a fearless leader and a tremendously important figure in queer activism in and beyond the Christian church.

Given the fractured and decentralized landscape of Protestants—especially Presbyterians—there appeared to be an unusually swift force of support behind the heresy charges against Reverend Lim. Haptong's initial standing committee on heresy was joined by seven other major denominations, with the notable absence of Reverend Lim's own Kijang denomination, which denounced the heresy charge. On September 1, 2017, the joint heresy committee of eight denominations—in short, the "Heresy Committee"—spoke in rare unison and found Reverend Lim's ministry guilty of heretical tendencies.[53] They organized their allegations against Reverend Lim in six sections that addressed what they considered to be theological transgression and political concerns. Citing a sermon she delivered on February 14, 2011, they took issues with

Reverend Lim's feminist discussion of the gender of God and the idea of a feminine God, and took particular offense with her expression of God as coming out of the closet as LGBTQ Christians start to come out of the closet. They called it blasphemous to use a phrase associated with homosexuals—coming out of the closet—to describe God and to apply non-Biblical concepts to discuss God. They criticized Reverend Lim's embrace of gender and sexual diversity and acceptance of non-normative family forms, denouncing her advocacy for "people who are not in a patriarchal heterosexual family form" and describing same-sex unions as social minorities who are entitled to the same rights as "normal families."[54] The joint report also denounced Reverend Lim's refusal to weaponize the Bible against LGBTQ-identified individuals and communities. Presented as evidence for this was Reverend Lim's visible participation in the annual Queer Korean Culture Festival in Seoul, in which she "prayed for and blessed homosexuals"; they considered this as going against the teaching of the Bible and committing apostasy. In a particularly interesting section concerning Reverend Lim's promotion of diverse family forms, the joint report cited a radio interview that took place several years ago in 2014 as an attempt to justify same-sex marriage, polygamy, and incest. The report also found fault with Reverend Lim's writing from 2012 in which she wrote:

> People who have not had access to higher education, people who are not in a patriarchal heterosexual family form, people who are ill, migrant workers, people who for a variety of reasons came to have criminal records, and sexual minorities—these are the most powerless people among those who are powerless in this society. They are a minority among minorities, without guaranteed basic human rights that are afforded to all people. People who were treated as minorities throughout the Bible are still, thousands of years later, excluded as minorities and yet this is still not object for our concern.[55]

The Heresy Committee expressed concern over Reverend Lim's use of the term "basic human rights" to refer to sexual minorities and stated that this was tantamount to promoting the "legalization of homosexuality" and same-sex marriage. They cited the book, *Hanŭnim kwa Mannan Tongsŏngae* [*Homosexuality Meets God*] (2010), in which Reverend Lim urges repentance for Christians who are "busy saying malicious things against homosexuals as if they are true and using this to conceal their own flaws."[56] In another article where she criticizes orthodox Biblical interpretation as literalism with no concern for human rights, Reverend Lim describes queer theology as "a cry against the majority of Christians who consistently respond with prejudice and ignorance."[57] The

Heresy Committee states in the joint report that Reverend Lim has waged an attack against the church's orthodoxy, that she has shown defiance, and that she continues to insist that she is right and her claims Biblical. "This is no different from what other heretics always assert," the report concludes, "and such heretical claims made by Reverend Lim are rapidly spreading among homosexuals and those who support homosexuality. The Korean Church must protect the church and the faithful and let it be known that Reverend Lim Borah's ideas are heretical ideas."[58] Based on this report, several Presbyterian denominations subsequently put the matter to a vote in their annual general assembly. In 2017, Haptong became the first to declare Reverend Lim officially as idan. The next year in 2018, two other Presbyterian denominations would base their idan declarations entirely on the 2017 joint report, without taking into consideration the objections from Kijang or opening up space for further discussion.[59]

Conclusion

As it should be evident by now, heresy allegations have to do with much more than a theological debate on homosexuality. Though it is beyond the scope of this chapter to delve more deeply into women's role in heretical Christian formations or fully comprehend the politics of gendered leadership as divine mothers and revered wives, or how dynamics of gender and sexuality contribute to discourses on sexual (mis)conduct and moral (in)decency, I have tried to lay out an account of heretical Christianity to raise questions about the throughlines of heresy as they weave in and out of leftist and queer politics.[60]

On February 3, 2023, Reverend Lim Borah died by suicide, leaving behind a grief-stricken family and a congregation of progressives stunned and devasted by this sudden loss. In many ways, Reverend Lim is a familiar figure in Korean history—a progressive pastor in the minjung theological tradition, ministering to movements against militarism and despotism and contesting the hegemony of the conservative Protestant church in both religious and secular realms. Her so-called heresy was in forging solidarity with sexual minorities and engaging in queer minority politics without apology—and that placed her as a significant part of growing movements to break ranks with the status quo and seek ways to build life and community based on values of social justice. Her legacy represents an important throughline of faith in social change that courses through LGBTQ activism.

The heresy charges against her in 2017 point to queer theology and LGBT-affirming ministry as a destabilizing threat to the heteropatriarchal normativity and theological orthodoxy. But what also transpired is that the heresy

controversy in part exposed the long-standing contestations between the left and the right, the split between the progressive and the conservative currents in the Protestant church. As much as it gave voice to Christians who espouse an anti-LGBTQ platform, it also rendered visible minority Christians who do not agree with their anti-LGBTQ politics or heresy charges. The heresy decision in fact made legible the challenge against heteropatriarchy and gender and sexual normativity.

History suggests that the heresy controversy concerning Reverend Lim Borah and queer theology has more to do with internal crisis and longstanding political struggle than some sort of consensus on gender and sexual diversity. The question of heresy reflects more about shifting alignments among conservative factions in a galaxy of competing denominations and political interests.[61] As I have argued in this chapter, heresy declarations are an exercise of power that defines and articulates the contours of right and wrong, an effort to clarify the border between inside and outside. Heresy-making works by hardening the edges of orthodoxy, locking heresy and orthodoxy into a symbiotic relationship, "two sides of a social process through which a belief system is . . . formed *via negativa*."[62] In fact, the heresy controversy surrounding Reverend Lim spurred an occasion for anti-LGBTQ Protestant groups to articulate their views and flex their institutional muscles. Ironically, however, in declaring Reverend Lim and LGBTQ-affirming ministry to be idan, the process also revealed the defiant contours of new queer vitalities, minority solidarities that extend beyond exclusive religious or sexual identity boundaries. The threshold of heresy ends up creating visibility for non-normative ideas and contradictions rather than entirely silence discussion or stifle dissent. Strewn all over the threshold of heresy then are transgressions of not only gender and sexuality (iban) but also ideological differences and historical fissures, minority publics in religious and secular politics.

Heresy decisions delineate a threshold between permissible dissent and dangerous deviance. In order to establish the threshold for heresy, authorities must first acknowledge the presence of the dissent, recognize its shape and iterate the nature of its threat, and determine how much dissent to permit and how much to reject. As such, heresy decisions fundamentally shape both heresy and orthodoxy, two sides of an interactive process by which institutional identities are forged and sharpened.[63] Put differently, definition of heresy is also an attempt at defining orthodoxy. The heightened effort to root out heresy is tied to an effort to bolster internal coherence and strengthen hegemony. I suggest in this chapter, though, that heresy declarations are not simply a hegemonic group's attempt to delegitimize a minority, though it pains me to edit this line years after first writing it because Reverend Lim has died while

fighting against these attempts to delegitimize her and demean her work. I maintain, however, that heresy declarations are both an acknowledgement of dissent and a provocation that spurs religious censure and secular stigma, the political implications of which reverberate far and wide. Especially given the decentralized and fractured landscape of Protestant Christianity in South Korea and the multiple vantage points from which the label of heresy can be deployed, heresy cannot be situated solely in the realm of religious dogma; heresy declarations conjure a great deal of secular affect.[64] What heresy-making reveals is a multivocal account of complex boundary work and the dialogic threshold of power and resistance.[65] And sometimes, the vitriol and venom surrounding accusations of heresy are enough to kill.

CHAPTER 4

Sigisangjo

Out of Place in Time

No other expression describes the dismissal and postponement of LGBTQ rights better than *sigisangjo*.[1] A required textbook used at the Korean Language Institute at Yonsei University in 2016 included the following vocabulary exercise.[2]

> Fill in the blank in the following dialog.
> Ŭn-hŭi: I hear that these days in other countries, there are movements calling for the legal recognition of homosexuality.
> Myŏng-suk: Don't you think South Korea would soon follow?
> Ŭn-hŭi: Given our reality, I think that would be _____

The correct answer provided for the vocabulary exercise above is sigisangjo (시기상조 時機尙早), a commonly used idiom that refers to being untimely and premature; it is the equivalent to saying, "ahead of time" or "too early for that" The term is typically used disparagingly toward reformist aspirations or to discourage nonnormative gestures that surface against good timing, taking place earlier than when they might be welcome. It is one of the most commonly used four-syllable idioms (*sajasŏng'ŏ* 사자성어) in modern Korean language. It is also among the most commonly given reason for opposing same-sex marriage or postponing LGBTQ equality in the law.[3]

While the textbook lesson above singles out the "legal recognition of homosexuality" as an exemplary instance of sigisangjo, there are plenty of other examples of counterhegemonic ideas and practices that are labeled as prema-

ture and untimely. Allowing openly gay men to serve in the Korean military has been described as sigisangjo, and likewise for the suggestion for raising the minimum wage. There are historical precedents, too. The end of the patriarchal head of household registry system (*hojuje* 호주제) in 2005 and the decriminalization of adultery in 2015 were opposed by critics who insisted that these policy changes were sigisangjo—"not yet" the right time—and calamitous for the traditional institutions of marriage and family, and further, society and nation. Civil rights movements including LGBTQ rights (see chapter 1) and struggles to abolish the National Security Law and abolish the compulsory military service (see chapter 2) are still considered by conservatives to be a terrible sigisangjo, for they believe that the heteronormative family structure and Cold War law and order are necessary mechanisms to ensure social harmony, peace, security. It is common in fact for any reform effort that meets resistance to be accused of being sigisangjo.

In this chapter, I consider sigisangjo as part of a constellation of aspirational temporalities in contemporary queer political throughlines. The normative temporality of economic development underscores a linear trajectory from *hujin'guk* (후진국) to *sŏnjin'guk* (선진국)—which literally means from "backwards" to a "forwards" nation—or a developing nation becoming an economically developed and "advanced" nation. Any discourse of restoration or reconstruction also suggest an aspirational temporality, such that an unfinished task of the past will need to be addressed in order to assure a movement forward. In discussions of *chŏkp'ye ch'ŏngsan* (적폐청산) or *kwagŏ ch'ŏngsan* (과거청산)—coming to terms with the past injustice, especially the Japanese colonial past, or addressing ongoing corruption—these notions of linear movements back and forth undergird aspirations for progress and a better future. In another example, the case of the 4.3 Massacre in Jeju, as Crystal Baik writes, "linear time segues with the public discourse of national forgiveness, economic prosperity, and resolution."[4]

These chrononormative ideas, though, can suggest both a horizon ahead and a narrowing of present possibilities, as can be seen in conservative parts of the nationalist political longing for South–North Korea reunification. The anti-authoritarian, pro-democracy movements of the 1980s—the so-called 1987 Generation—have proffered a phrase of utopian promise, *kŭnari omyŏn* (그 날이 오면), which means "when the day comes," to assert reunification as the single most significant milestone after which all kinds of sociopolitical calibrations toward justice would follow. But implicit in the phrase at the same time is the suggestion that other causes or struggles for social change are less significant and lower in political priority and must wait for kŭnari omyŏn. Granted, the sentiment of kŭnari omyŏn is largely hopeful for future change,

so I do not wish to overstate the conservative dimensions of such nationalism. But I also want to make sure to note that heteronormative and at times even violently sexist nationalist movement cultures have sidelined projects for gender equality, sexual liberation, and minority rights and while the sentiment of kŭnari omyŏn may not condone denialism in ways that the idiom of sigisangjo denies noncompliant or nonconforming subjects a place in the present, it articulates a sequential structure and order of social change that denies minor priorities.

Sigisangjo as an Idiom of Denialism

The denialist logic of sigisangjo operates in three important ways: as a diagnosis of an aberration, as an assertion of chrononormativity, and as a foreclosure of futurity. Sigisangjo relies on the diagnosis of a supposedly aberrant condition—an ontological oddity and spatiotemporal non-correspondence, a misalignment against the current of time—in other words, that LGBTQ lives do not belong in the here and now. Thus diagnosed as out of place in time, the anomalous queer object of sigisangjo is considered untimely and therefore improper, deserving of contempt and rebuke from the present, a time-space that is not the right time for queer existence. Herein lies a powerful rhetoric of denial. By suggesting as the Korean Language Institute's textbook example does, that the protection of LGBTQ rights might be tolerated in other countries but not in South Korea, sigisangjo reinforces a developmentalist timeline in which South Korea is "not yet" ready for social change, either behind other nations in degrees of social tolerance or underdeveloped in terms of legal mechanisms to protect minority rights.

An important second step in deploying sigisangjo is thus to deny the dignity, humanity, the very existence of LGBTQ individuals as rights-bearing citizens in contemporary South Korea. What is simultaneously being denied in the idiom's use is that the present is in fact changeable, that there are popular and counterhegemonic social movements already underway, in and beyond the nationalist agendas of democratization and reunification and national spectacles such as the Candlelight Protests of 2016–17. LGBTQ activists and allies have been expanding the bounds of queer and trans activism beyond narrowly defined identity politics, addressing policy concerns in the workplace, schools, and within religious institutions (see chapter 3), but this powerful logic of deferral denies the capacity of the present to change and casts out nonconformity to the realm of a future located elsewhere. Sigisangjo thus reveals itself as an exercise in denialism, which Didier Fassin defines as a systematic refusal elevated as a "morally sanctioned form of denial."[5]

Another kind of denial in the idiom of sigisangjo concerns the past—a denial that gender and sexual minorities have already been part of South Korean society and movements for social change. LGBTQ activism has *already* contributed to human rights and minority coalitions and political discourse in South Korea, most notably since the 1990s, diversifying and growing as part of dynamic and interwoven networks of dissent and solidarity that helped shape several moments of political upheaval, including the Candlelight Protests of 2016–17.[6] There are queer and transgender people *already* active in dissent, *already* present in movements. As I have discussed in chapter 2 and elsewhere, a distinct queer Left formation in South Korea has grown since the 1990s out of progressive-Left activism and social movements that included student, labor, anti-poverty, anti-war, and anti-militarism, as well as a variety of feminist and disability justice groups.[7] Self-identified gender and sexual minority activists can be found across a wide range of progressive human rights advocacy spaces, and there is growing recognition of LGBTQ politics as dissident minority politics, an essential part of a functioning participatory democracy. The idea that South Korea is not yet ready for gender equality and sexual liberation obscures this historical present-in-the-making. To deny that LGBTQ politics has a place in the present by dismissing it sigisangjo undermines the dynamism of the present.

While I do not know why the writers of this particular Korean language vocabulary exercise chose "legal recognition of homosexuality" as the best illustration of sigisangjo, it is not surprising to find troubling exercises like this in language textbooks since textbooks often contain norm-reinforcing lessons on culture, tradition, and history. What I find especially intriguing in the sigisangjo example here, though, is that the dialogue acknowledges two things simultaneously: that there are other countries where struggles for LGBTQ rights might be more fitting, and that it is not yet the case in South Korea. Put differently, sigisangjo is rendered in both spatial and temporal terms. "Not now" is equated with both "not here" and "not yet." The vocabulary lesson thus establishes the prevailing normativity in spatiotemporal terms, inscribing homophobia and heterosexism as constitutive of "our reality" in South Korea. Considering the intended audience of the textbook—students of Korean as a foreign language—the lesson serves multiple pedagogical purposes. It proffers intolerance as an uncontested social consensus in South Korea and positions LGBTQ activism as incompatible with this purported norm. Further, it territorializes gender and sexual nonconformity as exterior to the norm and as out of place in time and space. It is a remarkable illustration of how sigisangjo concurrently demarcates the time and space of heteronormativity.

I thus suggest that we recognize sigisangjo as a salient idiom that captures

Fig. 19. The official promotional poster for the 15th annual Daegu Queer Culture Festival, with its chosen slogan, Urinŭn imi (우리는 이미)—best translated as a humorously ambiguous and open-ended phrase "We already . . ." In the absence of a verb, the phrase can be finished in a variety of ways such as "We already are here" or "We already have won this fight." (Courtesy of Daegu Queer Culture Festival, https://www.dqcf.org/daeguqueerfes)

the un/doing of chrononormativity, what Elizabeth Freeman defines as the process whereby "naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation" for the purposes of "maximum productivity."[8] While Freeman is primarily concerned with how temporal regulation, inextricably intertwined with capitalist economic regulation, subordinates reproduction to production, what I see here as chrononormative is the temporal regulation of gender and sexual difference, marked as subordinate to "nation time." Here I echo several writers in the volume *Feminist Time against Nation Time* who situate "the present moment in and through a problematization of temporality" and argue that "as a project that acts on the present in order to enact a different future, feminism necessarily operates in a different temporality from that of the nation."[9] And in thinking further about feminist temporalities of dissent, Chandra Mohanty's foundational discussion of the politics of location and "temporality of struggle" bears quoting at length here:

> [A] temporality of struggle . . . not only disrupts and challenges the logic of linearity, development, and progress which are the hallmarks of European modernity . . . [T]he notion of a temporality of struggle defies and subverts the logic of European modernity and the "law of identical temporality." It suggests an insistent, simultaneous, non-synchronous process characterized by multiple locations, rather than a search for origins and endings which, as Adrienne Rich says, "seems a way of stopping time in its tracks."[10]

Indeed, the queer throughlines I trace in this book are connected to a robust nexus of incisive and intersectional queer feminist scholarships coming out of contemporary South Korea.[11] Their critiques are fueled by the outrage against rampant misogyny and violence against women and pervasive bigotry and violence toward ethnic and sexual minorities. They center trenchant critiques of heteropatriarchal nationalism and male-dominated nation time and cultivate insurgent spaces of critique and antinormativity that are diverse and multiple, nonmonolithic and heterogeneous, radical and often controversial. They contradict the hallowed grounds of the so-called 1987 Generation, which claims to represent the project of national democratization as a singular fait accompli. My point here is not that queer feminist time and nation time are somehow mutually exclusive or perpetually irreconcilable with one another, but rather that queer and feminist critiques pose serious challenges to the primacy of nation time as represented, for instance, by Moon Jae-in's "Candlelight presidency."

I am concerned with a normative temporality that claims to be a force of social progress. This is a complicated dilemma. As I discuss throughout this

book but especially in chapter 2, gay and lesbian activism has helped constitute numerous human rights and minority coalitions since the 1990s, diversifying and growing as part of dynamic and interwoven networks of leftist dissent and political solidarity. In that chapter, I have focused on a distinct queer left formation that forged affective ties with a broad range of progressive-left civil society groups and social movements including labor, anti-poverty, anti-war, anti-militarism, disability justice as well as feminist and environmental justice efforts.[12] Nonetheless, there operates a hegemonic liberal logic of incremental social change that ostensibly seeks noncontroversial social consensus as a prerequisite for change. And it is against this logic that queer and trans politics are being cast out of time. Despite the undeniable gains in visibility and recognition in recent decades, today we see not only a more clearly articulated backlash against sexual minority rights and LGBTQ equality especially from Christian conservatives but also in widespread resistance from liberal-progressives—and sometimes even self-identified feminists—that seek to forestall change. This has played out with remarkable consistency as self-proclaimed progressive and liberal politicians and public figures have backtracked or reversed their positions concerning gender and sexual nonconformity. Moon Jae-In set perhaps the clearest example of this when, as a presidential candidate, he articulated his opposition to LGBTQ equality during a televised debate on April 25, 2017, setting off a fire storm of angry protests, as I discuss later in this chapter.

Rainbow Flags over Time

> When the United States launched the war in Afghanistan, there was a rainbow flag in front of Seoul Station. And again in 2002 with the war in Iraq, there will be peace-loving homosexuals (gays and lesbians) at Insa Park in Chong-no. Join us.
>
> —TONGILYŎN (SOLIDARITY FOR LGBT HUMAN RIGHTS OF KOREA) NEWSLETTER, OCTOBER 25, 2002

An important way that sexual minority activists have responded to the denialism of sigisangjo has been through an insistence that queer and trans folks have been here all along, as illustrated by the Daegu Queer Culture Festival slogan of "We Already" (see fig. 10). Put differently, LGBTQ activists have used history to counter displacement in time. In the quote above from 2003, Tongilyŏn called for gay and lesbian participation in an anti-war demonstration, emphasizing the fact that they had previously participated and flown the rainbow flag as part of a mass rally at Seoul Station. Each rally constitutes a layer of shared experience that incrementally builds a greater sense of community over time.

Participating together as LGBTQ activists or as individuals affiliated with a variety of other progressive social justice concerns, queer and trans folks have flown the rainbow and transgender flags alongside liberal-progressive human rights groups—disability justice and mobility rights groups, feminists working to decriminalize abortion, pacifist groups working to decriminalize conscientious objection to military conscription—as well as through minor left-leaning parties such as the Green Party, Justice Party, and the Labor Party.

As discussed in chapter 2, left-leaning queer-labor solidarity has become particularly salient in recent years as exemplified by the relationships forged between sexual minority groups and organized labor, most remarkably the Korean Metal Workers' Union in the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions—traditionally a bastion of militarized masculinity and site of an unmistakable movement *ajŏssi* (아저씨) culture.[13] Sexual minority activists are today a regular presence in South Korean political spaces, and it is no longer unusual to see G-Voice (a gay men's choir) performing at labor rallies or out lesbian organizers in leadership roles of feminist, progressive labor, and human rights advocacy spaces. There is growing recognition of queer politics as dissident minority politics, a necessary part of a participatory democracy that respects difference. Insofar as mass protests can be seen as spaces of dissent on display, the rainbow flags they display contribute to a politics of visibility and recognition of LGBTQ people *already active* in dissent, *already present* in social movements.

Especially in 2015 and 2016 when some of the field research for this book was conducted, I found protests large and small wherever I went in Korea. Demonstrations of all sizes and forms were taking place all over the country, refusing to accept layoffs and unjust termination; voicing outrage against misogyny and violence against women; and urging change of policies that endangered the lives of disabled people, migrants, refugees, and poor people who were abandoned by the state and their own families. Protests were visible particularly in the downtown center of Seoul. On any given day near Kwanghwamun Square and Kyŏngbok Palace, I could find within a half mile radius at least a dozen labor and other political rallies, protest tent encampments, press conferences, a hunger strike or an occupation underway, sidewalks with makeshift altars for victims of violence and political martyrs, as well as countless individuals standing silently with petitions and placards in front of buildings that represented state power and bureaucratic authority. In light of the political repression and deepening social inequality in the recent decades marked by the relentless forces of neoliberal capitalism and the back-to-back conservative administrations of President Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013) and Park Geun-hye (2013–2017), these ongoing sites of protest seemed to illustrate both how bad

things were, how dire conditions of life were, and perhaps more importantly, how persistently people were trying to effect change.

Since political protests tend to target sites of power, many protests were unsurprisingly concentrated in urban areas, especially in proximity to government buildings, foreign embassies, and corporate offices in Seoul. The Candlelight Protests in 2016–17 were no exception. They took on decidedly urban, capital city-centric aesthetics, one representation of which are the aerial photos of the spectacular crowds flowing through the city streets, winding around high-rises marked by illuminated billboards. There were ongoing long-term struggles far from the city, too: against the military base construction and further militarization in Kangjŏng on Jeju Island in the south and the tenacious fight organized by the local residents in the mountainous Miryang in the South Kyŏngsang Province in southeastern Korea. The Kangjŏng struggle in Jeju (2007–ongoing) has long involved local residents and activists from near and far, and notably a large number of activist clergy, musicians, and visual artists, to fight against the Korean government's decision to displace the fishing village and cause ecological devastation in order to construct a naval base for the use by the U.S. military.[14] The treasured volcanic rock formation has been blasted away to make way for a sprawling military base, and the struggle in Kangjŏng drew national and international outrage among feminist, antimilitarism, anti-base, and environmental justice activists.

Queer and trans activists were among them, participating in solidarity caravans to lend a hand in the ongoing opposition in Kangjŏng. O-ri, a queer activist who spoke at a protest gathering in Kangjŏng on April 2, 2012 explained why they were there in their solidarity speech:

> I am really very nervous [to be here]. It's because there are still a lot of people who see gays and lesbians as abnormal, mentally ill, or sinful. We came here because we care about peace, but we also know that local folks might not like us, and we were worried about getting verbally abused or kicked out. But we still came. If we don't speak up, it would be like we're not here—even though we are. [If we don't speak up], we would not be changing the bigotry and discrimination against us. If we don't speak about peace, nobody will promote peace. We want a peaceful world without war or military, without discrimination against sexual minorities. We dream of a world where all of us fight together. This is how we will continue to show solidarity.[15]

The nervous uncertainty O-ri expresses above is echoed by a seasoned activist who recalled the feelings he associated with carrying the rainbow flag at a political rally he attended:

> I had flown lots of flags in my life as a student activist, but the rainbow flag felt different. The first time I carried the rainbow flag at a rally, I was so nervous that my hands were trembling. Don't get me wrong—I was proud of the flag! And the rainbow colors looked amazing in the midst of all these other familiar organizational flags. But I wasn't sure how things would go. Would they accept our solidarity? What would they think of us, queer people in their midst? But before long, I felt like the rainbow flag gave me superpowers. They saw me, like I saw them. I felt recognized.[16]

In addition to Kangjŏng on Jeju Island, another long-term fight has been taking place in Miryang (2005–ongoing). The Miryang residents, many of them elderly women farmers who had little to no prior experience with political resistance, were joined by environmental justice activists in fighting against the construction of high-voltage 764kV transmission towers that tore through lifelong communities.[17] Importantly, what the Miryang protesters opposed were not only the environmental health hazards as well as the unprecedented urban-industrial expansion and state appropriation of rural land. They were also resisting the shortsighted climate and energy policy that turned a blind eye to the costs and risks of conventional energy and nuclear power. Especially in light of the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, the Miryang struggle has served as "a potent symbol," as the *New York Times* put it, "of a growing battle in South Korea over nuclear power."[18]

Like in Kangjŏng, queer activists showed solidarity by joining caravans to visit Miryang, rendering visible LGBTQ and sexual minority activism as a constitutive part of broader coalition politics. They asserted LGBTQ activism as an active and familiar presence in intersecting social movements. Protest caravans—called Hope Bus and replicated on several different occasions since 2011—mobilize and transport busloads of activists and supporters from throughout the country to a focal point of protest to foster solidarity on the ground over several days and sometimes even weeks. Tŏk-hyŏn, who was at the time a full-time activist on staff at Haengsŏngin in 2013, shared his reflections about visiting Miryang in an article for the group's webzine:

> When the final program was over and we were getting on the bus to head back home, I saw grandmothers and grandfathers shedding tears. When I think about what the crowd [of supporters] must mean to folks like them who continue to assert their demands in spite of the overpowering force of the police who repress them day after day, my eyes well up with tears as well. That's because that is [also] what I want, as a sexual minority.[19]

He interprets the tears of the elderly protesters as a sign of gratitude for community support, identifying with the significance of such affective relations. Even though he is neither from a rural farming background nor engaged in similar political struggle on a day to day basis, Tŏk-hyŏn empathizes with the farmers' experiences of subordination and marginalization. This process of empathetic identification affirms for him the power of minority coalitions. He continues,

> Many, many workers, including Ssangyong auto workers, die. They are killed. The surviving families of the Yongsan disaster know all too well how the state and the police took away the foundations of their lives. Recently, an HIV-positive person died without being able access proper care. For all these reasons, we see ourselves in Miryang. Lots of folks who come here keep on fighting in order to live. They know how difficult it is to simply keep on living. That we must keep moving, that we must keep raising our voices along with the others, that it is important to go and convey our thoughts—that is why "we are Miryang."[20]

These sentiments and relationalities are reinforced over the long course of many repeated visits. In fact, in common parlance in Korean, activists "do solidarity," rather than somewhat passively "be in solidarity." This means they show up routinely at another group's events including rallies, conferences, and fundraisers. Tŏk-hyŏn draws necropolitical connections between such disparate cases as laid off Ssangyong auto workers (thirty of whom have died from illness or suicide since being laid off in 2009) and the eviction case in Yongsan (which killed four protesters and a policeman in a horrific police raid that erupted in fire in 2009), along with the stigma and denial of care that in this case led to the death of an HIV-positive person. Staying alive and keeping death at bay, Tŏk-hyŏn writes, are the shared basis upon which political solidarity is built.

Such relational ties are not made overnight. Jeong Yol, one of the most visible out gay activist working today who appeared in chapter 2 as well, recalls his first encounter with a rainbow flag at a protest in 1997 before he had come out of the closet. His most vivid memory was about feeling nervous and apprehensive.

> There was a loud and vibrant flag that really stood out from all the other organizational flags. It had rainbow colors. I could only count six colors, so I thought they accidentally left out the color navy. I asked some upperclassmen who they were, and they told me they were homosexuals. My

heart started racing. I did not want them to approach me or anything, so I kept watching them furtively from a bit of distance, but I still carry the vivid memory of [watching] the group of them, carrying on a conversation under the rainbow flag.[21]

This memory was shared with me in an interview and the account also appears in feminist activist scholar Kim Sunnam's incisive essay on queer counterpublics and world-making, in which she asks, "What are the reasons behind the 'still vivid memories' of one's first encounters with a rainbow flag, and why does [one's] heart race when recounting these moments?" Engaging with Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's classic essay, "Sex in Public," Kim Sunnam posits queer world-making as a practice that "includes more people than can be identified, more spaces than can be mapped beyond a few reference points, modes of feeling that can be learned rather than experienced as a birthright."[22] The space under the rainbow flag or the space of the viewing distance that Jeong Yol refers to can both be seen as producing affective experiences and "modes of feeling." These feelings include curiosity in the furtive glances at the rainbow flag, the longing for community from the outside, and feeling compelled to continue looking even while afraid of being recognized or possibly outed. Kim Sunnam argues that these fledgling moments of affective solidarity accumulate over time, enabling sexual minorities to "stare at a new world undergoing transformation," in fleeting moments of joy that lie beyond the narrative frames of discrimination, victimization, and pain.[23]

Decentralized and loosely coordinated networks over time linked sites and connected struggles to one another, developing infrastructures of solidarity and mutual recognition. An activist in 2015 called the constellation of best known long-term struggles as "MC-SKY," a clever acronym that refers to Miryang, Ch'ŏngju (and Sŏngju, related oppositions to the THAAD missile defense system), SsangYong auto workers, Kangjŏng, and Yongsan.[24] These five sites were certainly not the entirety of contentious politics, of course, but they were at the time some of the most influential sites of resistance in Korea's modern history of protests. The Hope Bus, whose origin can be traced to solidarity caravans that were organized to support the well-known labor activist Kim Jin-suk who occupied a construction crane for 309 days in 2011, is now recognized as a concrete movement strategy. This protest form fosters a great deal of solidarity by mobilizing both public transportation networks and rented tour buses to send hundreds of supporters from the city to struggles in rural or remote areas.[25] Adapted and replicated many times over the years since then, what first began as five rounds of the Hope Bus in solidarity with Kim Jin-suk in 2011 continued to support efforts in MC-SKY and beyond, and sexual minor-

ity activists have been integrally embedded in these networks of mobilization and mutual recognition.

Queer and trans activists, like Jeong Yol, often recall awkward and uncomfortable encounters in solidarity spaces. But they also emphasize the tremendous surge of confidence and meaningful relationships they forged through the Hope Bus caravans. After the Hanjin workers ended their strike, they came to Seoul in December 2011 during the unprecedented queer protest occupation of the Seoul Metropolitan Council building and delivered a solidarity message to the queer activists. Jeong Yol wrote, "As sexual minorities, we have actively forged solidarity with a number of progressive movements. And now, we have come out to the people we are in solidarity with and requested their solidarity. Hanjin Heavy Industries workers remember our solidarity efforts with the Queer Bus caravans and paid us a visit despite freezing cold weather, and Kim Jin-suk herself sent us strength through a phone call. Ssangyong auto, Kiryung electronics, and Jaenung workers all joined us."[26]

Showing up to participate in each other's rallies and events, sending bodies and materials to support contentious frontlines with urgent needs, and flying the rainbow flag—these acts of solidarity were not only strategic in letting others know about the existence of queer and trans identities but as theorist and translator Shiwoo (시우; Siu) writes in *Queer Apocalypse* (2018), they constituted invaluable "sites of performative praxis, a radical epistemology."[27] In the flyers and posters distributed by the Queer Bus participants in 2011 were messages like these: "Most sexual minorities live as ordinary workers. There are gay workers in auto factories, and of course there are transgender postal carriers and lesbian teachers. We are everywhere at places of work." Shiwoo astutely argues that solidarity is not forged bilaterally between labor movements on one side and sexual minorities on the other side. Rather, he argues that by becoming aware of the many crisscrossing formations of "we" within what is imagined as a foreclosed "we," and by redefining one's ontological existence beyond that of an individuated "I," a solidarity forged at the moment of political marginalization becomes a site with radical political potential. Though event-oriented acts of solidarity could be limited in scope and there are pragmatic constraints in building urban-rural solidarity, a proliferation of protesting bodies—including queer and trans bodies—have been gathering and assembling in solidaristic communities in a nationwide network of mobilized publics.[28] This was taking place long before the Candlelight Protests erupted in the fall of 2016.

Candlelight Protests, 2016–17

In the fall of 2016, the protest landscape took a dramatic turn in Seoul. In what

began initially as a convergence of organized labor and anti-government protests in October 2016, the Candlelight Protests kept growing into the fall and kept on going through the bitterly cold winter. By the time the seasonal smog blanketed the city in early spring, the record-breaking mass protests and political upheavals led to the impeachment and ousting of President Park Geun-hye in March 2017.[29] The special election held in May 2017 subsequently led to the liberal administration with President Moon Jae-In at the helm, a former human rights attorney who had narrowly lost the election to Park Geun-hye in 2012. Let me first describe the Candlelight Protests a bit before addressing their implications for queer politics.

The scale of the Candlelight Protests was astounding. Over the six months between October 29, 2016 and April 29, 2017, Seoul was the site of twenty-three mass Candlelight Protests over twenty consecutive Saturday evenings, six of them drawing near a million protesters and two of them gathering over two million people in the center of Seoul despite subzero temperatures in the winter months. Among other factors, the public transportation infrastructure played a key role in making these gatherings possible. The efficient and largely affordable—though not often accessible enough to wheelchair users—urban, regional, and national transportation networks of buses and trains made it possible for such crowds to gather and disperse without incident. City zoning regulations required downtown office buildings to make public restrooms available to the thousands of pedestrians who made up the protest participants. Though much of the public discourse highlighted the voluntaristic nature of the gatherings, I must note that there was no shortage of highly competent and experienced social movement personnel with decades of know-how, movement actors who knew how to mobilize bodies and facilitate the large-scale gathering. The contemporary South Korean citizenry also tends to be well disciplined by a lifetime of militarized culture of mobilization and mass assembly in public life as well as accustomed to mass spectatorship in popular music or sporting mega-events. Many of them are already familiar with mass protests as part of an enduring protest repertoire, having attended earlier waves of mass protests. The Candlelight Protests in 2016–17 were, after all, not the first mass scale protests that filled the city streets of downtown Seoul. Significant large-scale candlelight vigils and protests like the vigils for two young girls killed by U.S. military vehicles in 2004 and the anti-free trade protests in the summer of 2008 are joined by experiences of mega-events like the World Cup Games held in 2002.

In a beautifully edited five-minute documentary video that screened at the twentieth Candlelight Protest on March 11, 2017, the acclaimed feminist filmmaker and media activist Kim Il-rhan (김일란; Kim Il-lan) captures

the remarkable course of events as a series of achievements.[30] She is a well-recognized member of Yŏnbunhong Ch'ima (연분홍치마; PINKS), the queer feminist media activist collective that also produced *Coming to You*. Strikingly interspersed throughout the video are scenes of workers building and setting up the stage scaffolding and breaking it down afterwards, connecting metal rods and wiring heaps of audiovisual equipment and setting up LED screens the size of small buildings This was something that repeated weekend after weekend during the Candlelight Protests. It is no coincidence that Kim Il-rhan, being a media activist herself, would not overlook the labor taking place behind the stage. It is also no secret that many of the student activists from the 1980s had subsequently built professional careers in media, event planning, and audiovisual productions, building on their experiences with staging protest events albeit on a different scale. Behind the efficient stage construction and the impressive quality of audiovisual technical set up then—what I would assess as extraordinarily high production value—were a complex of seasoned professionals and experienced activists, including many queer activists, working as volunteers and contractors to stage the Candlelight Protests.

Kim Il-rhan's untitled video, produced for the Emergency National People's Action for the Dismissal of Park Geun-Hye, a coalition of 1,533 civic and nongovernmental organization, was screened on the main stage of the Candlelight Protest on the day after the Constitutional Court validated the impeachment of Park Geun-hye. An estimated crowd of 720,000 jubilant participants that night watched the video together on several large LED screens in Kwanghwamun, an experience that Kim Il-rhan later described as one of her proudest moments as a filmmaker and media activist.[31]

The video begins with scenes of public wailing from a "people's funeral" for Baek Nam-ki, a sixty-seven-year-old farmer and former student activist, who at a labor protest in 2015 was blasted at close range with a police water cannon and fell into a coma for nearly a year before he died in September 2016. His death catapulted a regularly scheduled mass rally into a martyr's funeral and candlelight vigils, which subsequently led to the Candlelight Protests. The remarkable five-minute assemblage manages to include the political fallout from the 2014 capsizing of the Sewol ferry that killed 314 passengers, mostly high school students on a school field trip, and references the 2016 murder of a young woman in a public restroom in Kangnam, recognizing both to have helped set the affective tone for the Candlelight Protests. Life and death are mutually constitutive in these key scenes, showing death as "the basis of a politics in the contemporary moment, impossibly alongside the antagonistic pursuit of a politics based on the preservation of life."[32]

As depicted in Kim Il-rhan's video, the Candlelight's Protests' initial tone

of outrage and grief concerning the social and political catastrophes at hand evolved over time into a festive celebration of participatory democracy. In marked contrast to other mass protests in the previous years that prompted violent police suppression and physical confrontations—involving batons, barriers, arrest, tear gas, and high-velocity water cannons—the scale of the Candlelight Protests meant that protest participants far outnumbered police presence. The constant emphasis on peaceful assembly meant that Candlelight Protests were accessible to families with children and youth, for instance. Part political rally and part street festival, part pedagogical and instructional and part performative and expressive, the Candlelight Protests drew from a heterogeneous range of social and political actors. Some no doubt relished the space with nostalgia for the bygone days of student activism, while for others, this was the first protest they had ever attended. Youth—as young as middle school students—took to open mic on stage to speak out about economic justice and precarity, and I overheard dozens of young parents answering their small children's questions about democracy and recounting the earlier candlelight protests they themselves had attended nearly ten years ago in 2008.

If life and death constituted a potent dialectics, so did the narrative of old and new with questions of historical similitude and future implications. The space of the 2016–17 Candlelight Protests were, depending on the person, either nothing like the old days of violent police repression or reminiscent of the anti-free trade protests in 2008 or perhaps the public viewing of the World Cup games in 2002.[33] In a marked departure from mass rallies in recent years where protesters can sometimes expect to face water cannons or other forms of police violence, the Candlelight Protests from the start insisted on being peaceful, family-friendly political spaces.

"The Candlelight Protests demanded more than just regime change," writes queer activist O Sŭng-jae. "It was a place to oppose inequality, oppression, and irrationality, a place to confirm and realize the basic democratic principle of equality and dignity for all. As agents of change, sexual minorities also stood with our candles and flew our flags. Over the twenty Candlelight Protests, there was not a single day that sexual minorities were absent from the square."[34] In this spirited response, O Sŭng-jae directly counters an anti-LGBTQ group's homophobic take on the Candlelight Protest Declaration of Rights.[35] Like the quotes by Tŏk-hyŏn and O-ri discussed earlier, O Sŭng-jae also emphasizes the place of sexual minorities alongside other protesting voices, the active presence of sexual minorities in spaces of protest. He is full of hope: "On March 11, 2017, shouts of victory resonated through the Kwanghwamun Square. The Candlelight Protest that day was a place to physically experience the removal of an unjust President through the sovereign power of

the people. The mighty people enjoyed the precious victory they cultivated with their own power and expressed their hopeful expectations for a better life post-Park Geun Hye."[36]

Such hopeful outlook was expressed against political homophobia that has been steadily on the rise. Christian conservatives have for years blocked anti-discrimination and human rights legislations designed to expand minority protection, as I discussed in chapters 1 and 2, as well as in religious institutions as discussed in chapter 3. The ultra-right Christian Liberty Party with its explicit platform of homophobia, Islamophobia, and xenophobia had garnered nearly enough electoral votes in the 2016 mid-term elections to gain a seat in the National Assembly—which was shortly before the Candlelight Protests—and though that particular effort failed, the CLP boasted close ties with the conservative Protestant umbrella organizations, Han'gich'ong (Christian Council of Korea) and the Communion of Churches in Korea. The increasingly polarized landscape of Protestant politics has resulted in the intensification of conservative leadership in denominations and national representative organizations even while the more liberal and reformist, as well as radical and critical Protestant voices, were growing, leading to several conservative Protestant denominations declaring queer theology and queer-affirming ministry to be heretical and forcing seminaries to prohibit students from embracing gender and sexual diversity.

O Sŭng-jae, beaming with a sense of pride from the achievements of Candlelight Protests but also deploying rhetorical tone and language that is very similar to political manifestos and statements released by labor unions, political parties, and human rights activist, constructs a narrative of righteous progress with hope and democracy in the road ahead. "Bigotry and discrimination belong to people of a bygone era," O writes, "Hopefully, I hope [the anti-LGBTQ group] work for God in leading the way to embrace love and kindness, not stoning by death. If they do choose to throw stones, it's not clear they can be stopped. But we will not quietly accept being hit and struck. We will resolutely stand and fight back, and not conceal the brilliance of our love."[37]

The Politics of Najunge (Later)

More than two years into his Presidency, Moon nominated his close aide and human rights legal scholar Cho Kuk as the Minister of Justice. This is the same Cho Kuk the critical legal scholar whose impassioned call for the abolition of the National Security Law and the implementation of an alternative to allow conscientious objectors to the military conscription had previously established him as a strong progressive ally. During the highly polarized and contentious

confirmation hearing for the position of Ministry of Justice in September 2019, Cho surprised queer activists by stating that he does not think homosexuality is a matter to support or oppose (neither pro- nor anti-) but that he believes sexual minority rights including same-sex marriage recognition would be sigisangjo.[38] He said on September 6, 2019: "I think that a legal recognition of same-sex marriage is premature in the Korean context."[39] Responding to Cho Kuk's statement, a collective known as the Trans Liberation Front (Tŭraensŭ haebang chŏnsŏn) stated, "Sexual minorities' human rights that keep getting deferred to the future, this is about life and survival to some of us. We live in the present and cannot postpone survival to later."[40]

It is in this context that the word *najunge* (나중에) became a pivotal keyword in the latter part of the Candlelight Protests, joining sigisangjo as an emblematic mode of thought that attempts to displace sexual minority rights from the horizon of social change. While sigisangjo denies present difference, difference in the present, it also implies that the future could be different. But importantly, such prospect is held in suspension, in a permanent state of postponement. I want to emphasize here that sigisangjo does not signify "never"; suggested in fact is the distinct possibility that something might occur later, in the "not-yet" time. Continuing the discussion of political dissent and the queer left in chapter 2 and heterodoxy and queer theology in chapter 3, my argument here concerns a queer politics out of temporal order, a move towards a politics of radical disidentification.

To return to the Korean language textbook example from the outset of this chapter—why did the writers of the textbook choose "legal recognition of homosexuality" as the best illustration of something that is rebuked in the present? Given the intended audience of the textbook—students of Korean as a foreign language—the lesson serves a dual pedagogical purpose: it proffers what is allegedly an unquestioned social consensus and norm (*against* homosexuality) and it spells out what is considered a transgression against the said norm. It is an illustration of how sigisangjo demarcates a territory of social norm. Note also that the dialogue does acknowledge that there are movements calling for legal recognition and that they might succeed elsewhere, but not now, not here, not yet in Korea. The lesson posits that non-acceptance is the norm in South Korea—"our reality"—and that a "legal recognition of homosexuality" would be premature.

Given these political discourses at the forefront of queer throughlines through the Candlelight Protests, it is no surprise that a short video of a queer protest—a political direct action—went viral.[41] In the video clip edited and distributed by an independent now-defunct online media project called Dot Face (.Face), Kwak Ekyeong (곽이경; Kwak I-kyŏng) and several other queer and

trans activists, human rights attorneys, and disability justice activists appear as they stage a protest at a public forum on February 16, 2017, three days before the sixteenth Candlelight Protest. Presidential frontrunner Moon Jae-in was to announce his "blueprint for gender equality policy" there, throwing salt to the wound since just four days before, Moon reportedly reassured conservative Protestant leaders that he agrees with them and stands with them, against LGBTQ equality.[42] Moon reportedly told them:

> I do not support homosexuality, but I do not think sexual minorities should face discrimination. [. . .] Same-sex marriage is not tolerated in public sentiment or in the current legal system, but the current National Human Rights Commission of Korea does have laws that prohibit discrimination or exclusion on the basis of sexual orientation. The official position of the Minjoo Party is that we must stop additional legislations [like marriage equality or anti-discrimination legislations] from causing unnecessary controversy.

Moon had previously stated to *The Hankyoreh* in January 2017 that he values traditional forms of family and marriage, but that he also opposes bigotry and discrimination.[43] Moon had also supported comprehensive anti-discrimination legislations in 2012 that included protection for gender and sexual minorities. Appalled at his reversal and alarmed by this conservative turn, LGBTQ activists organized a press conference earlier that morning in front of the Democratic Party headquarters. A handful of activists rushed over to the public forum afterwards in hopes of confronting Moon in person.

After waiting for a while for Moon to finish the main part of his speech during which he declared himself a "feminist president," the protesters interrupted the event by standing up, each holding an A4-size protest messages and shouting their demands that Moon clarify his position on LGBTQ equality. At the center of the video is Kwak Ekyeong who shouts:

> I am a woman and a lesbian. How is it that you can slice my human rights in half? How is that my right to equality can be sliced in half? If you are the frontrunner for the Presidency, please answer me. Why is it that in this policy of gender equality, you cannot include equality for sexual minorities?[44]

Kwak is part of a small cohort of queer left activists who have been organizing since the early 2000s, alongside activisms I discussed in chapter 2, and was a key figure in building Tongilyŏn (Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights Korea). She was, at the time of the protest against Moon, the Director of External

Fig. 20. "I am a woman and a lesbian. How is that you can slice my human rights in half?" (Video stills from Dot Face, posted to YouTube, February 16, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fV5jfZSE3OA)

Relations & Solidarity at the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), a position that prioritizes building political ties among a wide range of issues and constituent communities. One might describe her office as the face of South Korea's social movement unionism, a practice in which labor unions engage in not only narrow workplace concerns or class mobilization but also connects labor with broader political struggles for human rights and social justice. Though Kwak Ekyeong is certainly not the only queer activist in the labor movement, she is one of the best-known out lesbian who openly traverses across a wide range of queer-labor solidarity movement spaces. During the Candlelight Protests 2016–17, she also served on the core coordinating committee for the Emergency National People's Action for the Dismissal of Park Geun-Hye.

The scene captured on the Dot Face video was widely shared on social media, but the video went viral not only because of the moving image of Kwak Ekyeong trembling with anger or the spectacle of political disruption (fig. 11). What registered as even more powerful was Moon's and the audience's response to Kwak's utterance. "I will give you a chance to speak later," Moon is heard telling Kwak when she continued to press for his response. Then, a few voices from the audience can be heard repeating Moon—*najunge* (later)! This catches on and within moments, the audience chants in unison, "*najunge! najunge! najunge!*"

It is a chilling scene of a crowd silencing the voice of one, the cheery collec-

tive chants in eerie contrast to the urgency of the protester's demands. Kwak EKyeong and other protesters are seen in the video looking aghast at their surroundings, their protests soon drowned out by the collective chants of an auditorium full of women, many of them feminists and leaders of women's organizations. "Later" set a menacing scene. The tension between now and later—queer futurity—soon became identified as a key recurring theme in queer politics, articulating a politics of refusal of a promised future that comes only at the expense of the present. It was no surprise that the annual Korea Queer Culture Festival that year in 2017 adopted as its slogan, "Right now! Not later!" Several other political campaigns followed this emphasis on the urgency of the now—labor rights now, anti-discrimination laws now, minimum wage now, etc.

A couple of months later on April 25, 2017, during the televised presidential debate, Moon emphatically agreed with the right-wing candidate that he too was concerned that homosexuality would weaken the military and reiterated that "of course" he opposed homosexuality and same-sex marriage. LGBTQ groups again denounced Moon's comments, which were by now seen as a predictable betrayal, and the next day on April 26, another disruption protest was organized to demand his apology. Running into a press conference designed to promote Moon's image as a military man committed to national security, LGBTQ activists approached Moon at the podium, widely captured by cameras present for this press event, unfurling a rainbow flag and shouting, "I'm gay. Are you opposed to my existence? Are we not human beings? Apologize for hate speech!" (fig. 21). In total, thirteen LGBTQ activists, attorneys, student leaders, and media activists were arrested and taken into custody.[45] Later that day outside the police station where they were detained in custody, more than two hundred protesters held a vigil to demand their release.

These queer protests were somber and disheartened, in stark contrast to the jubilant end of the Candlelight Protests that resulted in national political change. Queer politics in the context of the mass Candlelight Protests underscored the likelihood that political concessions would be made at the expense of gender and sexual minorities who were considered dispensable or at least deferrable, confirming the concerns of left progressives who predicted that Moon and his liberal party would chart a course to the right to appease centrist and conservative voters. Whatever euphoria of collective action and hopes for radical social change might have been in the air for the nearly a million participants of Candlelight Protests just days ago, human rights for gender and sexual minorities appeared to be excluded from the imagined future of collective flourishing. Even as the Candlelight Protests continued, sexual minorities were relegated to the territory of "later," shouting "not later, but now!"

Fig. 21. Queer protesters disrupt Moon Jae-in's press conference on April 26, 2017. (Photograph from *Kyunghyang Sinmun*, https://www.khan.co.kr/politics/politics-general/article/201704261423001)

Queer Temporalities

The queer throughlines in Candlelight Protests in 2016–17 highlighted the critical importance of minority contentions before, during, and after waves of social change. Large numbers of LGBTQ protesters participated in the Candlelight Protests and other political events week after week, actively intervening in the conduct of conduct in protest spaces. Alongside feminist and youth activists, queer and trans activists advocated for conscientious public speech and peaceful conduct, a public culture of civility and mutual respect, and sought to build inclusive spaces that did not stigmatize mental illness or disability or condescend towards youth. It was feminists who put a stop to derogatory criticisms of President Park on the basis of her gender, no matter how reviled she was, and it was queer feminist voices that helped institute policies against misogyny and hate speech on stage and to make a conscious effort to include more women and other diverse voices in decision-making leadership and in programming. They established "Femi zone," a designated feminist safe space within the Candlelight Protests to call attention to the pervasive violence against women and to serve as a meeting place and a training ground for new and young feminists.

With rising concerns over widespread spy cams in public space and rampant unauthorized recording that plague private and everyday space, feminist activists known as the Uncomfortable Courage—notably young and largely

unaffiliated with traditional social movement formations—made history with protests of their own. Even before the Candlelight Protests, the Kangnam murder of a young woman by a professed misogynist had galvanized large-scale protests, but after the Candlelight Protests, feminist protests broke all records with the strength of #MeToo and #WithYou campaigns in South Korea. More than ten thousand women protested to demand increased prosecution of digital sex crimes in May 2018, followed by fifteen thousand in June, and nearly twenty thousand in the third protest on July 7. The fourth protest set a new record for a women's political event with an estimated seventy thousand participants. The fifth protest mobilized an estimated sixty thousand women, and the sixth and final Uncomfortable Courage protest on December 22, 2018, concluded with a new record of 110,000 protesters. But feminists continued to face intense and violent backlash from those who consider feminism to be a detraction—short-sighted and ill-timed efforts that hinder important men, important *progressive* men, from doing important work for the nation, perhaps even for South–North reunification.

What is the investment in assuming against the odds, against lived experience, against all signs, that the future will be better than now? For whom and when? Without minimizing or dismissing the important gains or the significant resonance that minority rights discourse has had on queer politics, I hope to shift the frame from the uncritical optimism of incremental and sequential gain as expressed in nationalist narratives of social change and examine more closely how ideas of futurity and progress are built in discourses about the present. What if we were to listen to the LGBTQ activisms and relocate the place of later to the present, improperly and prematurely, and make those demands in the now—queer liberation now and racial justice now, prison abolition and feminism now? Do we not want it all now? Queer throughlines in activism calls for a capacity to aspire to something beyond the limited horizon.

One could argue that sigisangjo is simply an idiom of pragmatism. Moon's defenders have argued that he and the audience were simply asking Kwak Ekyeong to wait her turn to speak at the end of the event, and that the chants of "Later! Later!" were not meant to be menacing but simply asking protesters to wait in order. But as such, it functions as an alibi for a heteronormative ranking of life that prescribes premature queer death. I suggest that we recapture sigisangjo as what Elizabeth Povinelli has called "a grammatical figuration," a defiant refusal of the narrative of linear progressive time and orderly conduct, unsettling normativities concerning the right time and the right place, the right order and priority.[46]

The claim that nonconforming genders and sexualities do not belong in the present in fact complements the conjuring of the future as an intrinsically more

hospitable territory than the present. This should not be surprising—under the teleological auspices of progressive social change, it is typically expected that LGBTQ rights would march, or at least inch, toward a field of better circumstances. Such sequential outlook is behind the well-known—and subsequently much-criticized—U.S.-based "It Gets Better" campaign in 2010, which promised inevitable progress and highlighted a trajectory of upward mobility and neoliberal aspirations, promises that ultimately relied on a great deal of cisgender, race, and class privilege.[47] The forward-bound improvement trajectory promised by "It Gets Better" is different from the revolutionary futurity of the aforementioned sentiment of kŭnari omyŏn—a reference to an assumed inevitability of South–North Korea reunification—but they are similar in that they both project, conditionally, a utopic vision of happiness and well-being. Interestingly, in both cases, the future serves as an alibi, offered in advance to justify or at least pacify the discontent in the present.

Put differently, the chrononormative logic of sigisangjo depicts gender and sexual minorities as if they have been transported from the future in a time machine. The salience of time in both the najunge incident and sigisangjo discourse becomes even more remarkable when we consider the extent to which temporal discordance has been an important theme in queer and transgender studies, fields long concerned with questioning and problematizing temporality. Being at odds with normativity has been theorized as "temporal disorientations and disorienting feelings,"[48] "disorderly narratives,"[49] and "unruly visions"[50] in a "state of permanent dislocation."[51] Queer temporalities and futurities have in fact been among the most productive threads of inquiry in queer theoretical scholarship, discussed extensively in titles such as *No Future*, *In a Queer Time and Place*, *Feeling Backward*, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, and *Queer Times, Black Futures*.[52]

A key discussion in these works on queer temporality concerns "unscripting"—or "going off script"—involving antinormative queries into the "potentiality of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing."[53] This fundamentally signals a temporal disruption. Building on the critique of time that is conventionally scripted as linear and progressive, "across which the history of nations supposedly marches forward," Freeman in *Time Binds* rejects the notion of time as "seamless, unified, and forward moving."[54] Rather, she focuses on "textual moments of asynchrony, anachronism, anastrophe, belatedness, compression, delay, ellipsis, flashback, hysterion-proteron, pause, prolepsis, repetition, reversal, surprise, and other ways of breaking apart what Walter Benjamin calls 'homogeneous empty time.'"[55] To this list I would add sigisangjo as an idiom that captures the logic of heteronormative temporality.

Connecting these discussions to Partha Chatterjee's postcolonial critique, especially in "The Nation in Heterogeneous Time," I suggest that the temporality of sigisangjo points to heteronormative national time.[56] Interestingly, the discontent rendered through the idiom of sigisangjo is not about "coming out of humanity's past, something people should have left behind but somehow haven't," as Chatterjee writes.[57] Instead, queer discontent springs prematurely from the future, a realm of aspirations that lies beyond the territory of the present. Sigisangjo posits, after all, that the anomaly is from the future elsewhere, that it has not existed in the past here, and that the present is not yet ready for it, all of which are claims disproven by the LGBTQ activisms and queer throughlines I have traced in this book.

Insofar as these temporal disturbances trouble the path of linear progress and create something of a jumbled mess—bodies and practices out of order, the past, present, and future entangled with one another—I am also reminded of Martin F. Manalansan's writing about the conjuring of "queerness through disorder, clutter, and the chaos of things gone awry."[58] He writes, "Queer as mess refers to material and affective conditions of impossible subjects as well as an analytical stance that negates, deflects, if not resists the 'cleaning up' function of the normative."[59] This applies well to the normative intention behind the deployment of the idiom of sigisangjo—to diagnose an anomaly, to deny its timeliness, and to attempt to remove the mess from the present by displacing it out of sight. Asserting chronological and spatiological scripts to arrange bodies through the regulation of time and space, the deployment of sigisangjo aims to "clean up" the timeline by designating a place in time deemed appropriate.

Conclusion

Concerns and desires—even identities and lives—that are deemed untimely or inconvenient by those in power become sidelined and postponed, and that is the political temporal logic and violence of sigisangjo. This can take place in a small and immediate way, such as when queer protesters speak out of turn and are told to wait as in the case of the najunge incident I recounted in this chapter, or it can involve a more far-reaching and long-term postponement, such as the refusal to include equal protection and rights for gender and sexual minorities as part of a broader platform for political change. To be subjected to sigisangjo is to be made to feel out of place—or denied a place to belong—and this likely elicits anger and despair, misery and discomfort, even great pain. All of this is a familiar affliction for anyone who has experienced marginalization and dismissal. But what is one to do? To be otherwise, to desire normal alignment with straight time would constitute what Lauren Berlant calls "stupid

optimism," by which she means "the faith that adjustment to certain forms or practices of living and thinking—for example, the prospect of class mobility, the romantic narrative, normalcy, nationality, or a better sexual identity—will secure one's happiness."[60] No matter the depth of one's faith or conviction in the possibility of actualizing this normalization or realignment, what Berlant describes as a "cruel optimism" is "a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic."[61]

As I have discussed in this chapter, sigisangjo reinforces the idea that minorities and anomalies are less important and perhaps even more significantly, the idiom feeds this cruel optimism that there can be a course of correction. It posits that change can and must take place in an orderly and nondisruptive manner in a liberal democracy; that queer and trans matters just need to wait. It dismisses being queer or wanting a queer futurity as premature. The term thus presents a dilemma for queer and trans troublemakers. One can accept the terms of sigisangjo and wait for their turn, even if they do not know when that would be and whether it might happen at all. Or one can reject the assumptions of sigisangjo and refuse to acquiesce. One can reject the notion that there is a singular historical timeline, that there is a straight linear path that allows no diversion, that no alternative pathways exist. Rejecting all this would stake a claim that we are not sigisangjo, that we must exist now.

I suggest there is another way of thinking about sigisangjo and this has to with what I have called queer throughlines in this book. Another way of thinking about sigisangjo—beyond acquiescence or rejection—is to reconceptualize the term not as a chrono-normative expulsion of queer bodies from the present but as an anti-normative idiom that gestures towards a "derangement of bodies and sequences," to borrow a phrase by Elizabeth Freeman.[62] The idiom of sigisangjo already imagines bodies and calendars as being at odds; it is already an idiom of queer temporality. I have discussed the many ways that queer and trans activists have challenged straight lines of time and space. The queer and trans critique surrounding the Candlelight Protests in 2016–17 in Seoul—but also the many decades of solidarity-making before and afterwards—raise questions that challenge the extent to which minorities are excluded from the ongoing projects for political empowerment and transformation. They have questioned the heteronormative logic of family and lineage by demonstrating how many of their families are already and in actuality queer and nonnormative. PFLAG activism is an example, especially when they question the boundaries of what constitutes family. The queer Left activists I have discussed, those joining anti-war protests in the 1990s and organizing with radical students on college campuses, pushed against what were often narrow and constricted

ideological spaces of activism by joining them, working with and alongside them, and sometimes by leaving them and forming others. Similarly, struggles around religious homophobia clearly show how individuals and groups have contested the status quo by troubling the lines of religious orthodoxy, even facing condemnations as heretical and *idan*, rather than simply abandoning or disavowing their religious ties. Queer activisms that I have examined in this book draw on queer feminist critiques to broaden the spaces they inhabit to be more open and capacious and seek more intersectional and relational ties, not simply as a strategic maneuver but as a matter of life and death.

I suggest we subvert sigisangjo as an enunciation of queer temporality, as an expression of disidentification with chrononormative aspirations. It would then embrace the unpragmatic and the radical, rather than disavow the mess they create, and celebrate lives out of order and a politics at odds with the times.[63] Reappropriated this way, sigisangjo would signal an opening to insist on discordant and unruly temporalities, to recognize the potentialities teetering on a narrow line. Sigisangjo would be read as a type of queer temporality that actually affirms the entanglements of past, present, and future, and derange and misalign time so that we can imagine a different tangle of the past, present, and future. It could certainly suggest temporal (dis)orientations as "effects of what we tend toward," to quote Sara Ahmed, where the word "toward" marks "a space and time that is almost, but not quite, available in the present."[64]

The queer throughlines examined in this book play with spatiality of lines—both the space within the lines themselves and the space that emerge through those lines. They question the conventional ideas associated with linearity, that they are straight, narrow, rigid, and congruous. Instead embracing notions of space that foreground multiplicity, contestation, and dissent, I have especially taken interest in events and dynamics that illustrate how queer and trans activisms have taken place amidst other spaces and in relation to other movements. There is no single story or singular history of queer and trans activisms in South Korea and the Korean diaspora; together they suggest throughlines that bend and encircle, forging intersections and interconnections with other agents of change. As Doreen Massey writes,

> Space can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, and in which everywhere is already linked with everywhere else. A space, then, which is neither a container for always-already constituted identities nor a completed closure of holism. This is a space of loose ends and missing links. For the future to be open, space must be open too.[65]

Epilogue

Whose Story?

> In the beginning was the story. Or rather: many stories, of many places, in many voices, pointing toward many ends.[1]
>
> —WILLIAM CRONON, "A PLACE FOR STORIES" (1992)

I have interwoven a variety of historical and political throughlines to narrate many stories, of many places, of queer and trans activism in South Korea and the Korean diaspora. They point toward many ends, as Cronon suggests in the epigraph above, but I did begin with an autobiographical voice. So let me end with another story, out of order, returning to the 1990s. On December 5, 1994, five queer-identified Korean Americans gathered at the San Francisco office of Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA) Community HIV Project (GCHP) to speak with a *Korea Times* reporter for a feature story on gay, lesbian, and bisexual Korean Americans. The interview was a fairly uncommon thing back then—to have a journalist from the ethnic Korean-language media show interest in doing an in-depth story. I remember thinking this was worthwhile, a small but meaningful part of community activism that was different from building LGBTQ spaces through political confrontations or Pride marches.

I was friends with three of the interviewees including Milyoung Cho and Yu-jin Yi (pseudonym), but I did not personally know Jae-hwan Lee, identified in the article as a gay man who had studied urban architecture and dance at Stanford and worked on staff at GCHIP. Lee wrote a lead article to the now defunct *KoreaAm Journal*, as part of a special issue headlined as "The Queer

Issue" (August 1993), in which he narrates his family history and writes that he has been out to his parents and sisters for nearly eight years, but that they have never discussed it since. Lee writes, "I thought that not being out was the main block in building meaningful relationships with family and friends—I was very wrong. Not being upfront about my sexuality was just a symptom of a much larger learned problematic behavior." He continues:

> Silence has been a survival behavior for me—defense against racism, lookism, heterosexism—inherited from family practices, passed down from generations of Korean ancestors, and learned as a U.S.-born Gay Korean male. The many uses of secrecy have, in many instances, helped me through difficult situations, just as silence, as a tool, probably helped my ancestors. Lately, though, I have come to realize that this tool called silence, called discretion, called privacy and rugged independence, is a double-edged sword that can slash me and hinder growth as easily as it can cut through problems.[2]

He applauds Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* and concludes the article, "The day such a film is made about Korean Americans, the richness and complexities of our lives, the joys and the sorrows, I will know that we of Korean descent are well on the road to bidding farewell to our *silent han elephants*. Come out; let's start telling our stories."[3]

Young Song, who turned twenty-nine just a few days after this interview, was an effervescent, quirky, dear friend who would die by suicide several years later in 2009. At the age of twenty-two and in my final year in college, I was the youngest participant in this roundtable discussion. I remember being both slightly nervous and somewhat skeptical about speaking with the Korean-language press. Having returned recently from a semester abroad in Seoul, where I had participated in some of the early 1990s lesbian community formations, I was familiar with sensationalistic news coverage that came at the expense of visibility. Wary of misrepresentation, Yu-jin and I declined to be photographed for the story.

When the article was published, I was surprised to find it was a new year's special feature story spread across the entire pages 2 and 3 of the newspaper with the headline, "I could not give up on myself" (나 자신을 포기할 수 없었다) (fig. 13). Underneath that headline were two subheadings. The first, "Korean homosexuals (gays and lesbians) talk about self, parents, surroundings, and again self" (한인동성애자들이 말하는 나, 부모, 주위 그리고 또 나), which I thought made us sound rather self-preoccupied, but a more generous translation would be that this was about identity, family, and community.

Fig. 22. New Year's feature story from 1995 on LGBTQ Korean/Americans and family. (*Korea Times*, San Francisco edition, January 1, 1995.)

It was a small feat that we got the paper to use the increasingly preferred and less pejorative term *tongsŏngaeja* instead of *tongsong yŏnaeja* (동성연애자), but the second subheading again gave the nuance that we were essentially selfish people with little concern for others: "Parents are shocked, disappointments abound, but I am simply who I am" (부모님의 충격, 주위의 失望 실망, 그래도 나는 나일 뿐이다). Me, myself, and I—that is all we seemed to care about.

The article covered frequently asked questions: How did you first know you were gay? How did your parents react when you came out to them? How have your identities affected your relationships with other family members or friends? How do you make sense of anti-Asian racism in the gay and lesbian community? How do you feel about the assumption that queer people are sexually promiscuous and that is why there is a higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS among gay men? And finally, how do you want the readers of *The Korea Times* view gays and lesbians like yourselves?

But what remains perhaps most memorable to me are the photographs—or lack thereof—on these pages from January 1, 1995. Out of the five profile photo boxes across the whole spread, two are left empty. They contain no image and only a text caption. Inside the empty box on the right reads the caption: "Yi Yu-jin (pseudonym): Bisexual woman, born in Japan, linguistics major at Stanford, currently a graduate student at UC Berkeley." Inside the empty box on the left side reads: "Judy (pseudonym): Lesbian woman, born in Seoul, immigrated to the U.S. in 84, currently a student at UC Berkeley." I suppose "Judy" was in fact a pseudonym at the time since it was not part of my legal name until much later when I became a U.S. citizen and claimed it as my middle name. In the article, I explain that I had come out to my parents four years prior but that I still chose to use a pseudonym because I did not want my parents to be subjected to gossip. Yi Yu-jin was the only one among us who had not come out to her parents, and her reason for not wanting her photograph shown was likewise to protect her parents from the secret that their daughter was bisexual. We chose to obscure our faces to the point of rendering ourselves invisible, our selves image-less and faceless. We were all in our twenties and early thirties, and none of us lived with our parents, and yet, for all that talk of asserting our identities and sense of self, we had apparently chosen a path of literal self-effacement to placate our parents, to vacate ourselves from public view in order to protect the feelings of our parents who, incidentally, were not much older than I am today.

An anonymous contributor to August 1993 "The Queer Issue" of *The KoreAm Journal* likewise kept her identity hidden and explained, "I chose not to disclose my identity to respect my parents' wishes. My parents do not want me to identify myself because homophobia is very strong in the Korean American

community. Someday, I hope to be able to reveal myself because it is important that people understand I am an integral part of the community."

A similar sense of protectiveness and a commitment to caring for our parents but also of ourselves who must contend with our identification with their disappointment, grief, and suffering fueled efforts over the years. In 2001, a group of Korean-proficient queer women in the San Francisco Bay Area collaborated on an English-to-Korean translation of *Beloved Daughter*, a collection of fourteen stories by parents and siblings of Chinese American lesbians published by MAPLBN (Mandarin Asian Pacific Islander Lesbian/Bisexual Network), a group based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2013, *Wuri Dari* (우리다리) was published by the New York City-based Dari Project, described on the cover as "[a] collection of personal testimonials on the experiences of LGBTQ people of Korean descent." These collections sought to provide linguistically accessible and perhaps more culturally relevant stories than what little was available through spaces like PFLAG, an English-dominant American space that many of us could not imagine our parents joining.

What is curious, though, is that "parents" are not a monolithic group by any means. My own comments quoted in the 1995 newspaper article suggest that I was differently located from the others present at this interview because my family was more immigrant, having moved to California just over ten years prior, and that language gap was not an issue for me as we all spoke Korean as the primary language in my family. Unlike my working-class parents, some of the other Korean American interviewees in that news story had professional parents with college degrees, parents who spoke English at work and with their children at home, and they lived not only in immigrant enclaves in Los Angeles and Chicago but also in White suburbs on the East Coast or in Texas. "Our parents" were in actuality not a monolithic group in political orientation or class background, nor were they even all primarily Korean speaking, yet the figure of "our parents" became—by our doing and by the ethnic Korean media that relied on this frame—homogenized as immigrants, conservative, straight, and adult.

This bifurcation of "children" being queer and Korean American and "parents" being straight and immigrant have endured in spite of some important shifts in recent years. The 2015 "Family is Still Family" public service announcement video by Asian Pride Project and other organizing work by Asian American chapters of PFLAG are part of a transnational swell in queer and trans social movements that involve parents themselves taking an active role in changing the public discourse in Korean American communities.[4] Family activism for LGBTQ acceptance typically relies on the emotional performance and recounting of the parent's narratives of discovery, shock, and grief,

and their journey towards recovery through acceptance and advocacy. Once unaccepting but now accepting, once a stranger but now an empathetic ally in the fight against homophobia and transphobia, the parents of PFLAG reject parenthood as an inherently conservative position against which Korean/American queer and trans activism should be defined. Instead, from the vantage points of mothers and fathers in PFLAG—in which mothers far outnumber fathers both in the U.S. and in South Korea—parenthood is reclaimed as a potential site of protection from stigma and bigotry that would diminish the well-being of their offspring, and the family is reaffirmed as not only a site of personal growth and transformation but renewed and activated as a base of queer activism.

Nonetheless, it still holds true that for many LGBTQ individuals, for many queer and gender nonconforming folks, parents have historically operated as an oppressive and toxic force, shaping the family as the site of some of the most painful and hurtful dynamics in our lives, a fertile ground for heteropatriarchy, sexism, and misogyny. The immigrant Korean American family, typically characterized by an increased dependency on the local ethnic community and a heightened sense of isolation from a broader public, has further amplified vulnerabilities to harm and injury.

In the summer of 2018, I listened to a Korean American mother deliver a tearful testimony as an invited speaker at Hyanglin Church in Los Angeles, a progressive immigrant congregation that shares its name with the Hyanglin family of churches I discussed in chapter 3. This Korean American mother had recently emerged as a leading parent advocate for LGBTQ acceptance and embraced by many queer and transgender groups as a proxy for a much needed "accepting parent" figure, and invited by the congregation to speak about family acceptance, she spoke at length about her transgender son who had died by suicide a year prior. The overwhelmingly sympathetic audience members were gripped by her storytelling, as she recounted how her child hugged her goodbye in what turned out to be their final moment together. "When I think about that moment," she said, "I know he forgave me." There was not a dry eye in the room.

But I could not cry. In fact, I was furious. There was no evidence that her child had forgiven her before deciding to take his life. There was no evidence that her child gave his mother permission to disclose details about his mental health, even after his death. There was no evidence that he ever shared with his mother anything meaningful or consequential in his life. In fact, I later learned that there was another "child" in the family, a young adult who themselves also identified as queer nonbinary transgender, and they in fact named their mother and father as the two primary abusers who tormented

them and their brother who died by suicide. The two siblings had documented detailed accounts of devastating hardship and abuse, experiences of violent unacceptance and rejection, and published these accounts online. And yet, this woman, as a mother surviving her child's suicide, had turned herself into a recipient of sympathy and condolence, and emerged as a spokesperson for acceptance. I was enraged by how easily the lack of accountability was swept under the rug of mother's love and parent's grief, reclaimed in the name of advocacy and activism. And when this became more widely known, she was asked to step back and resign from leadership positions.

I return to the politics of PFLAG activism and the film *Coming to You* because there is tension here, at this site of the family, where LGBTQ activists meet parent activists sometimes as elders and sometimes as peers. Part of the tension, I think, is over the idea of the *tangsaja* (당사자), meaning those most directly impacted. It is a key term in minority rights discourse especially in disability politics in both Japan and South Korea since the 1970s when a range of social movements emerged with the aim of combating discrimination and defending minority rights.[5] The term, tangsaja, is most closely associated with legal studies where it refers to the "people or parties directly involved in the matter," and this often concerns the matter of a litigation/lawsuit. In legal proceedings, tangsaja parties are situated within an adversarial context where their perspective is privileged in relation to "third parties" or non-tangsaja (those not directly concerned). But more recently, the tangsaja discourse has shifted away from the relatively simple designation of determining who is directly impacted by a lawsuit but to debate the terms of articulating subjecthood and recognizing a "socially vulnerable party" or *sahoe yakja* (사회약자). Taking this further, *tangsaja ju-ŭi* (ism) is a kind of identity politics or strategic essentialism that insist on the centrality of the tangsaja subjectivity in activism, captured by the widely used slogan, "Nothing About Us, Without Us," a slogan with European roots that became popularized in the disability justice movements in the 1990s in the U.S. to assert that no policy should be decided without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy.

As a result, the deployment of the term tangsaja fundamentally relies on the question of who constitutes a tangsaja in discriminated or otherwise subordinated communities. Tangsaja politics operate in interesting ways in contemporary sexual minority or LGBTQ activism, as well as disability justice and anti-poverty, labor struggles as well. Despite the importance of this term and its widespread deployment across a range of minority rights discourse, though, there has not been a theoretically rigorous examination of the term's history as it has been used in queer and trans activism. Instead, influenced by the

movements in the U.S., the discourse of allyship in Korea has been adopted to expand the sphere of political agency to include the role of non-tangsaja in social movements, and parents of LGBTQ individuals are in many ways part of this *ally* politics in Korean LGBTQ activism.

But who is the tangsaja and is it always clear and uncontested? We are at a crossroads where these idioms of tangsaja and non-tangsaja, parents and children, and generational difference are woefully insufficient and require reconsideration. Such language infantilizes LGBTQ individuals—where we are and always will be children with parents to worry about—and it can overlook or invalidate messy entanglements and purposeful disentanglements that some of us have fought very hard for. Expecting the heteronormative family to serve as a source of unconditional love and support disregards evidence to the contrary and the longstanding queer feminist critique that has sought to decenter and denaturalize the nuclear family as a locus of power and a site of struggle. Especially as a childless—or childfree—lesbian now old enough to have children who might identify as queer or trans, I myself cannot help but wonder about all the LGBTQ youth and adults who have rejected family for one reason or another, folks who have fought to sever toxic and hurtful family ties, and LGBTQ folks in Korea who are not afforded the right to become parents to children of their own, to define a family of their choosing. How would these dynamics fit in the big family tent pitched by PFLAG activism?

During the weeklong series of *Coming to You* film screenings and discussions in Southern California, Nabi—who, by the way, is not only a fire fighter with thirty-six years on the job but also a fire station *chief*—repeated a powerful advice to a young queer Korean American audience member who asked a question about struggling with family acceptance. She said, "If your parents don't accept you, don't accept them. Leave them."[6] Speaking from the vantage point of a cisgender heterosexual mother with a trans nonbinary (adult) child, Nabi advised that instead of struggling to repair toxic and harmful ties with parents who continue to hurt them, queer and trans individuals could consider carving out an empowering space for themselves away from the family even if it that meant severing, temporarily or permanently, kinship ties that do not nourish them. This is radical advice from a Korean mother, especially a poster child—with pun intended—of an activist mother in PFLAG. What Nabi suggested is that heteronormative parenthood is not to be embraced intact but transformed into a potential site of change. What good is family, she said, if it doesn't nourish the members?

Once unaccepting but now accepting, once a stranger but now an empathetic ally in the fight against homophobia and transphobia, the parents of PFLAG reject parenthood as an inherently conservative position against which

Korean/American queer and trans activism should be defined. Instead, from the vantage points of mothers and fathers in PFLAG, parenthood is reclaimed as a protective zone, yes, to keep away stigma and bigotry that diminish the well-being of their offspring. But perhaps more importantly, they discuss the family and parenthood as contingent, recognize parents not as a static or timeless category of all-knowing and loving individuals but rather as flawed individuals with huge gaps of knowledge and political awareness. Like everyone else, it turns out, parents are full of faults and failures and capable of critical reflection and accountability. As the film *Coming to You* shows, parents are seen as having to work to find their way (back) to their children's adult lives. And for those who are willing to change, the child-parent relationship is reaffirmed as a potent site of personal growth and transformation and activated as a base of social change activism. The parents do not hold the same subject position as the LGBTQ tangsaja, but they are tangsaja as parent activists directly impacted by the effects of homophobia and transphobia in their lives.

PFLAG Korea is an intriguing chapter in LGBTQ activisms not because family is intrinsically important or because family acceptance is necessary for everyone, always and forever. Rather than simply repair kinship ties, the parental activism in PFLAG Korea actually allows ties to loosen, even break. At its core, it is part of a queer activism that dares to imagine kinships and assemblies to be more expansive, more capacious, and perhaps more unnatural and more contingent. It certainly aligns with queer activism's ethos, archive, and theory that shows that we are all both agents of change and sites of change, always in complex relation to one another.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Young-Jung Na, "Segyewa ŭi Pulhwa, P'ibu ŭi Yŏndae" [At odds with the world, solidarity through the skin], in *P'eminisŭt'ŭ Momŏnt'ŭ [Feminist Moment]*, by Hyŏn-yŏng Kwŏn Kim et al. (Kŭrinbi, 2017), 104–5.

2. Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (SAGE Publications, 2005), 9.

3. Rainer Lee, "Being My Mother's Son: A Review of Queer Korean Documentary 'Coming to You,'" *OutWrite*, June 16, 2023. https://outwritenewsmag.org/2023/06/being-my-mothers-son-a-review-of-queer-korean-documentary-coming-to-you/

4. Kyu-ri Pyŏn, "Nŏ e ge ganŭn gil, miguk ŭro ganŭn gil," *ACT!* 136 (August 3, 2023). https://actmediact.tistory.com/1815

5. This translation is from Sungyun Lim, *Rules of the House: Family Law and Domestic Disputes in Colonial Korea* (University of California Press, 2019), 74.

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9. Kim Hyun Mee, "The State and Migrant Women: Diverging Hopes in the Making of 'Multicultural Families' in Contemporary Korea," *Korea Journal* 47, no. 4 (2007): 101.

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15. Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Duke University Press, 2012), 21.

16. Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Beacon Press, 2012), 157.

17. Tari Young-Jung Na, "Chikŭm kajok kusŏngkwŏn ŭl iyakihanŭ iyu" [Why we are discussing family formation rights now], in *Pichŏngsang kajokdŭl ŭi pibŏmhan mirae* [Nonnormative families and their extraordinary future] (Ŏnni netŭwŏkŭ + Kajok kusŏngkwŏn yŏng'gu moim, 2012), 7.

18. Kim Sun-nam, "Isŏng'ae pihon yŏsŏnŭro saragagi" [Living as heterosexual unmarried women], *Hanguk yŏsŏnghak* [*Korean Women's Studies*] 32, no. 1 (2016): 211.

19. *Pijŏngsang kajokdŭl ŭi pibŏmhan mirae* [Nonnormative families and their extraordinary future] (Seoul: Ŏnni net'ŭwŏk'ŭ + Kajok Kusŏngkwŏn yŏn'gu moim, 2012), 88.

20. *Kajok kusŏngkwŏn yŏn'guso* (가족구성권 연구소; Institution for the Right to Found Family) website can be accessed at https://familyequalityrights.org/

21. In a remarkable (and admirable) demonstration of South Korean activist attention to documentation, Haengsŏngin has summarized and published the edited transcripts of every PFLAG Korea meeting starting from the first on April 1, 2014, to the twenty-second meeting on January 9, 2016. These conversations were later published as a book, Sŏngsosuja Pumomoim, ed., *K'ŏmingaut Sŭt'ori: Sŏng sosuja wa Kŭ Pumodŭl ŭi Iyagi* (Hant'ijae, 2018).

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25. Schulz, "How One Mother's Love for Her Gay Son Started a Revolution"; Wei and Yan, "Rainbow Parents and the Familial Model of Tongzhi (LGBT) Activism in Contemporary China"; Broad et al., "Activist Parenting and GLBTQ Families"; Zeininger, Holtzman, and Kraus, "The Reciprocal Relationship Between Religious Beliefs and Acceptance of One's Gay or Lesbian Family Member."

26. Sŏngsosuja Pumomoim, ed., Welk'ŏm t'u Reinbou: K'wiŏ ŭi Segye e Ch'odae Padŭn Pumodŭl Kwa Iut Ŭl Wihan Annaesŏ, Ch'op'an (Hant'ijae, 2023), 5.

27. See K. L. Broad et al., "Activist Parenting and GLBTQ Families," *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* 4, no. 4 (September 22, 2008): 499–520, https://doi.org/10.1080/15504280802191749

28. Raphael Rashid, "One Year After Hateful Attacks, Incheon Pride Regroups for Celebration of Love," *Medium* (blog), January 11, 2020. https://medium.com/@koryodynasty/one-year-after-hateful-attacks-incheon-pride-regroups-for-celebration-of-love-9f5cbb43ee68

29. Rashid, "One Year After Hateful Attacks, Incheon Pride Regroups for Celebration of Love."

30. Na, "Segyewa Ŭi Pulhwa, p'ibu Ŭi Yŏndae" [At odds with the world, solidarity through the skin], 104–5.

31. Massey, *For Space*, 9.

32. Massey, *For Space*, 141, 149–62.

33. Massey explains that this "event of place" is simply about "coming together of the previously unrelated" without necessitating coherence (141). For Massey, "thinking conjuncturally" refers to "a shuttling back and forth between different temporal frames or scales to capture the distinctive character of processes which appear to inhabit the 'same' moment in time" (141). Gillian Hart cites Jennifer Robinson's claim that Massey's work exhibits "a somewhat one-dimensional analysis of 'space' as the intersection of 'trajectories' and a sense of 'space as simultaneity'" (2022: 257), quoted in Hart (2023: 292). Gillian Hart, "Enabling Connections: Relational Comparison in a Global Conjunctural Frame," in *The Routledge Handbook of Comparative Global Urban Studies* (Routledge, 2023); Jennifer Robinson, *Comparative Urbanism: Tactics for Global Urban Studies* (Wiley, 2022). Hart offers an in-depth critical analysis of what she identifies as an ongoing tension between Antonio Gramsci's and Louis Althusser's approaches to "conjunctural analysis" and the implications for Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey. Gillian Hart, "Modalities of Conjunctural Analysis: 'Seeing the Present Differently' through Global Lenses," *Antipode* 56, no. 1 (2024): 135–64. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12975

34. Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 1.

35. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006), 14.

36. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 15.

37. Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (Routledge, 2007), 1.

38. Mary L. Dudziak and Leti Volpp, "Introduction Legal Borderlands: Law and the Construction of American Borders," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2005): 595.

39. Robert R. Alvarez, "Reconceptualizing the Space of the Mexico–US Borderline," in *A Companion to Border Studies* (John Wiley, 2012), 539. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118255223.ch31

40. Cherríe L. Moraga, "Preface," *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2nd ed. (Kitchen Table Press, 1983), xv.

41. Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 105–6.

42. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 3.

43. Eleana J. Kim, *Making Peace with Nature: Ecological Encounters along the Korean DMZ* (Duke University Press, 2022), 1.

44. Valérie Gelézeau, Koen de Ceuster, and Alain Delissen, eds., "Life on the Lines: People and Places of the Korean Border," in *De-Bordering Korea: Tangible and Intangible Legacies of the Sunshine Policy* (Routledge, 2013), 29.

45. Kim, *Making Peace with Nature*, 15.

46. Gelézeau, Ceuster, and Delissen, "Life on the Lines: People and Places of the Korean Border," 31.

47. Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 6.

48. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 6.

49. Eithne Luibhéid, "Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line Between Legal and Illegal Status," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14, no. 2–3 (June 1, 2008): 309. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2007-034

50. See Ju Hui Judy Han, "Our Past, Your Future: Evangelical Missionaries and the Script of Prosperity," in *Territories of Poverty: Rethinking North and South*, ed. Ananya Roy and Emma Shaw Crane (University of Georgia Press, 2015), 178–94.

51. Hŏ Yun, "Kŏbu Wa Kip'i Sai, Pi Kunin Ŭi Changso—1970 Nyŏndae Song Yŏng Sosŏrŭl Chungsimŭro" [Between rejection and evasion, the place of the non-soldier: Centering Song Yŏng's novel from the 1970s], *Hyŏndae Munhak Ŭi Yŏn'gu [Journal of Korean Modern Literature]* 80, no. 0 (2023): 361–90.

52. Youngoh Jung, "The Normalization of Universal Male Conscription in South Korean Society and the State Regulation of Draft Evasion and Conscientious Objection: 1950–1993," *Trans-Humanities Journal* 7, no. 3 (2014): 125–61, https://doi.org/10.1353/trh.2014.0006

53. Tari Young-Jung Na, "The South Korean Gender System: LGBTI in the Contexts of Family, Legal Identity, and the Military," trans. Ju Hui Judy Han and Se-Woong Koo, *Journal of Korean Studies* 19, no. 2 (2014): 357–77, https://doi.org/10.1353/jks.2014.0018

54. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 16.

55. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 16.

56. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 17.

57. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 170.

58. Anjali R. Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Duke University Press, 2009), 1.

59. Sappho Update, October 2, 1993. Author's archive. The letter from Ko and Chang was attached to Sappho's newsletter that was sent out to their mailing list. I later received a copy of this from Sappho members.

60. Another memorable event while I was in Seoul in 1993 was the sinking of the Sŏhae Ferry (서해 페리호) on October 10, 1993 when 292 passengers were killed. I was deeply moved by the senseless tragedy as well as the collective grief and outrage that followed.

61. Author's personal archive, unsent draft of letter, December 17, 1993.

62. After queer women split off and formed LAAPIS, A/PLG changed its name in 1997 to Asian/Pacific Gays and Friends. Tracing its history to the founding of A/PLG in 1980, A/PGF claims to be "one of the oldest continuously-existing gay Asian organizations in the United States." See Asian/Pacific Gays and Friends website, https://www.apgf.org/a/pgf-history

63. I have not been able to find a copy of a safe sex public service announcement video I made with the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance circa 1992. The video aired late night

on local television in the San Francisco Bay Area, from what I recall, but I have not been able to verify.

64. APLBN was pronounced as "apple bun."

65. Ju Hui Judy Han, "Incidents of Travel," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, ed. Alice Y. Hom and David L. Eng (Temple University Press, 1998), 398–404.

66. See Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Postcoloniality*.

67. JeeYeun Lee, "Toward a Queer Korean American Diaspora," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, ed. David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom (Temple University Press, 1998), 185–209.

68. Lee, "Toward a Queer Korean American Diaspora,"197.

69. Lee, "Toward a Queer Korean American Diaspora," 186.

70. Anthony Yooshin Kim and Margaret Rhee, "Toward Queer Korean American Horizons: Diaspora, History, and Belonging," in *A Companion to Korean American Studies* (Brill, 2018), 534–58.

71. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 1st American ed. (Hill and Wang, 1981), 87.

72. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Duke University Press, 1999).

73. Stuart Elden, Derek Gregory, and Álvaro Sevilla-Buitrago, "Spaces of the Past, Histories of the Present," *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 10, no. 2 (2011): 320.

74. See "Iban," *Han'guk sŏngjŏk sosuja sajŏn* (한국성적소수자사전) by Han'guk sŏngjŏk sosuja munhwa in'kwŏn sent'ŏ (한국성적소수자문화인권센터; Korean Sexual-Minority Culture & Rights Center). http://kscrc.org/xe/4767

CHAPTER 1

1. Legislative Analyst's Office, The California Legislature's Nonpartisan Fiscal and Policy Advisor. http://www.lao.ca.gov/ballot/1999/990642_INT.html

2. Judy Han, "Organizing Korean Americans against Homophobia," *Sojourner: The Women's Forum* 25, no. 10 (June 2000): 7–8; Myron Dean Quon, "Korean Americans for Civil Rights: A Model for Progressive Community Organizing," *UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal* 8 (2002): 202–46. According to Quon, attendees of the CDSRA organizing meeting included the former US Congressman William E. Dannemeyer, known for his position that homosexuality is a mental illness; former California Assemblymember Richard Mountjoy, author of the anti-immigrant California Proposition 187; State Senator Pete Knight, author of the anti-gay Proposition 22; and Miriam Archer, Director of the California Christian Coalition. Quon cites as his source a Korean-language article by Ku Sang-hun, "Korean and Mainstream Leaders Form Committee to Repeal Anti-discrimination Law for Gays and Lesbians," *Korea Times*, December 17, 1999, which I have not been able to find a copy to verify. Quon also cites Kai Ma, "Straight from the Church: How Korean American Churches in California Rallied against Gay Rights."

3. Jin Haritaworn, *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and Places* (Pluto Press, 2015), 9.

4. Catherine Connell, "Contesting Racialized Discourses of Homophobia," *Sociological Forum* 31, no. 3 (2016): 599–618, https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12265. Sometimes these ideas are perpetuated by individuals who identify as Korean and presume to

speak with authority about all things Korean. See also Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, ed. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Duke University Press, 2002), 175–94; Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Haritaworn, *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others*.

5. See Susan Harding, "Representing Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Cultural Other," *Social Research* 58, no. 2 (1991): 373–93; Ju Hui Judy Han, "Neither Friends nor Foes: Thoughts on Ethnographic Distance," *Geoforum* 41, no. 1 (2010): 11–14, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.09.007; Simon Coleman, "Borderlands: Ethics, Ethnography and 'Repugnant' Christianity," *HAU: Journal of Ethnography Theory* 5, no. 2 (2015): 275–300, http://dx.doi.org/10.14318/hau5.2.016

6. Images of Korean Americans as predominantly Christian appear in mainstream media as well. Popular cultural references to the Christian stronghold among Korean Americans can be found in a number of representations including the recurring Kim family in the American TV comedy-drama series *Gilmore Girls* (2000–2007), the Korean church scene in the 2012 American film, *21 Jump Street*, and most recently, in the Netflix series *Beef* (2023) starring Steven Yeun in which the Korean American church figures prominently. On Korean American conservatism, sociologist Angie Chung attributes the "conservative bent of the Korean immigrant leadership" to the "entrepreneurial, Christian, and Seoul elitist roots" of the elite groups that make up business owners, church leaders, and first-generation organizations. Chung, "'Politics Without the Politics,'" 919.

7. Besheer Mohamed and Michael Rotolo, "Religion Among Asian Americans" (Pew Research Center, October 11, 2023). https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/10/11/religion-among-asian-americans/

8. For a related critique of progress, see Tim McCaskell, *Queer Progress: From Homophobia to Homonationalism* (Between the Lines, 2016).

9. Myung Mi Kim, *Under Flag* (Kelsey Street Press, 1991), 31.

10. See Steve Brouwer, Paul Gifford, and Susan D. Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism* (Routledge, 1996); Janet R Jakobsen and Elizabeth Bernstein, "Religion, Politics and Gender Equality—Country Report: USA" (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, September 2009); Janet R Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance* (Beacon Press, 2004); Erin Runions, "Theologico-Political Resonance: Carl Schmitt between the Neocons and the Theonomists," *Differences* 18, no. 3 (January 1, 2007): 43–80, https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2007-010; Erin Runions, "Religion, Identity, and Political Engagement in the United States," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1–2 (2010): 297–307, https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2009-024

11. See Susheela Singh, Jacqueline E. Darroch, and Akinrinola Bankole, "A, B and C in Uganda: The Roles of Abstinence, Monogamy and Condom Use in HIV Decline," *Reproductive Health Matters* 12, no. 23 (2004): 129–31.

12. Marc Hofer, "Americans' Role Seen in Uganda Anti-Gay Push," *New York Times*, January 3, 2010; Waymon Hudson, "American Evangelical Lou Engle Promotes 'Kill the Gays' Bill at Sunday's Rally in Uganda," *Huffington Post*, May 4, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/waymon-hudson/american-evangelical-lou_b_560819.html; Chris Rovzar, "Link between American Evangelicals and Ugandan Gay-Execution

Movement Scrutinized," *New York Magazine*, January 4, 2010; Jeff Sharlet, *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power* (HarperCollins, 2008).

13. David A. B Murray, "Introduction," in *Homophobias: Lust and Loathing across Time and Space*, ed. David A. B. Murray (Duke University Press, 2009), 5.

14. Kapya Kaoma, "Exporting the Anti-Gay Movement," *The American Prospect*, April 24, 2012, http://prospect.org/article/exporting-anti-gay-movement

15. Kaoma, "Exporting the Anti-Gay Movement."

16. The denomination's name changed in 2012 from the Korean Presbyterian Church in America. It was founded in 1976 and is aligned with the mainline T'onghap branch of the Presbyterian Church of Korea. See chapter 3 for more discussion of T'onghap and other Presbyterian denominational politics concerning queer theology and heresy.

17. The Presbyterian Church (USA), "The Presbyterian Panel: Listening to Presbyterians, 1997–1999 Background Report." https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/research-services/presbyterian-panel/

18. The Presbyterian Church (USA), my italics.

19. Shim and Lee, "An Open Letter to PCUSA" (author's copy, no longer available online). The PC(USA) long held the definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, but after much debate in 2000, the denomination's highest judicial body issued a decision allowing Presbyterian ministers to bless same-sex unions as long as those ceremonies do not equate same-sex unions with marriage. After many repeated attempts to revise the denomination's Book of Order—its constitution—in 2012 they came close to redefining marriage as a union between "two people," rather than between "a man and a woman" but failed after a 338–308 vote. In 2014 by a vote of 371–238 the 221st General Assembly of the PC(USA) permitted ministers to conduct same-sex marriages, a policy that would become effective in June 2015. This is along the similar timeline as U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2015 that gave same-sex couples in all fifty states the legal right to get married. Positions range among Christian denominations whether Protestant or Catholic, and even for Presbyterians among which the PC(USA) is currently the largest in the U.S.

20. The Presbyterian Church (USA), "The Presbyterian Panel: Listening to Presbyterians, 1997–1999 Background Report."

21. Helen Lee, "Silent Exodus," *Christianity Today*, August 12, 1996, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1996/august12/6t9050.html; Vivian S. Toy, "Working to Prevent a 'Silent Exodus,'" *New York Times*, April 11, 1999.

22. One of the key constitutive features of the 1.5-generation is that they would have attended primary school in South Korea, and some middle school as well.

23. See June Hee Kwon, "Rhythms of 'Free' Movement: Migrants' Bodies and Time under South Korean Visa Regime," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 15 (2019): 2953–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1482740; Caren Freeman, *Making and Faking Kinship: Marriage and Labor Migration Between China and South Korea* (Cornell University Press, 2011).

24. Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, eds., "Introduction: Thinking through the Minor, Transnationally," in *Minor Transnationalism* (Duke University Press, 2005), 7.

25. Lionnet and Shih, *Minor Transnationalism*, 1.

26. Lionnet and Shih, *Minor Transnationalism*, 7.

27. Lionnet and Shih, *Minor Transnationalism*, 5.

28. Han, "Organizing Korean Americans against Homophobia."

29. Charles Kim is married to the California Assemblymember Young O. Kim, an Orange County Republican who has aligned herself with Trump's policies. In office, she has voted against a series of anti-discrimination bills and became notorious in 2013 for sending out anti-transgender campaign mailers to oppose transgender students' access to public restrooms. Kim is the first Korean American Republican woman elected to the California legislature and nearly became the first Korean American woman in U.S. Congress when she narrowly lost the 2018 election. In 2020, she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives along with Orange County Republican Michelle Park Steel and Democrat Marilyn Strickland, and the three women are known as the first Korean American women elected to U.S. Congress.

30. Elizabeth Castelli, "Persecution Complexes: Identity Politics and the 'War on Christians,'" *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 152–80; Gary Mucciaroni, "Are Debates about 'Morality Policy' Really about Morality? Framing Opposition to Gay and Lesbian Rights," *Policy Studies Journal* 39, no. 2 (May 2011): 187–216, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2011.00404.x; Peter J. Rubin, "Equal Rights, Special Rights, and the Nature of Antidiscrimination Law," *Michigan Law Review* 97, no. 2 (November 1998): 564, https://doi.org/10.2307/1290292; Erin Runions, "The Bible as Biopolitics in *Obergefell v. Hodges*: Theopolitical Subtexts and the Economic Management of Democracy," *Political Theology*, August 18, 2016, 1–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2016.1211297

31. Samuel A. Marcosson, "The Special Rights Canard in the Debate over Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Symposium on Sexual Orientation," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy* 9, no. 1 (1995): 144.

32. Wang is quoted in Doug Koop, "Mobilizing for the Millennium: 4,000 Leaders Gather in South Korea," *Christianity Today*, 1995; also see Luis Bush, "A Brief Historical Overview of the AD2000 & Beyond Movement and Joshua Project 2000," *North East Asia AD2000/Joshua Project 2000 Consultation* (1996).

33. Mary Anne Ostrom, "Clergy Members Protest Gay Vows: About 200 Rally in S.F.; Some Meet with Mayor."

34. Torassa, "Thousands Protest Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage. Asian Americans, Christians Rally in Sunset District."

35. Gerry Shih, "Chinese Christians Are the Focus of Same-Sex Marriage Case," *New York Times*, January 22, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/22/us/22sftam.html

36. See Daniel Martinez HoSang, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California* (University of California Press, 2010).

37. Quon, "Korean Americans for Civil Rights."

38. Quon, "Korean Americans for Civil Rights," 203. The executive director of the Briggs initiative organizing was Lou Sheldon, who later founded the Traditional Values Coalition (TVC) based in Orange County. TVC was a key group in the U.S. Christian Right along with Moral Majority, which was founded by Jerry Falwell in 1979.

39. HoSang, *Racial Propositions*; Laura Y. Liu, "The Place of Immigration in Studies of Geography and Race," *Social & Cultural Geography* 1, no. 2 (2000): 169–82, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360020010185; Jenna M. Loyd and Andrew Burridge, "La Gran Marcha: AntiRacism and Immigrants Rights in Southern California," *ResearchGate* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 1–35.

40. HoSang, *Racial Propositions*, 3–4.

41. Ma, "To Have and to Hold."

42. Wu, "Namgaju Han'in Kyogye, Tongsŏngae Tŭk'kwŏnbŏp Pandae Wundong Pŏrinda" [Southern California Korean Christians Launch Campaign against Homosexual Special Rights Legislations].

43. Ma, "Straight from the Church: How Korean American Churches in California Rallied against Gay Rights."

44. Lee, "Toward a Queer Korean American Diaspora"; Eric C. Wat, *Love Your Asian Body: AIDS Activism in Los Angeles* (University of Washington Press, 2021).

45. See the premiere issue of *Tto darŭn sesang* (*Another World*) in Spring 1996. The complete set of *Buddy* is archived at UCLA as part of the Korean Studies collection at the East Asian Library. https://guides.library.ucla.edu/korean

46. *The Grace Lee Project*, Documentary, 2005.

47. Anonymous interview, 2017.

48. The landscape of human rights activism in South Korea continues to change. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, progressive Protestant and Catholic groups were heavily involved in human rights activism, especially around demands for the release of political prisoners and exposing police torture under authoritarian rule. In the 1980s, confrontational opposition against state power through issues of political prisoners and the National Security Law sparked the start of what is known as inkwŏn activism. After the financial crisis and IMF bailout in 1998, neoliberal globalization and its effect on social rights became a major issue, as well as minority and citizenship rights activism. Today, human rights activism in South Korea broadly encompasses progressive movements for social justice across social, economic, and political arenas. Influential human rights groups like Sarangbang (사랑방), Dasan In'kwŏn Sangdamso (다산 인권상담소; Dasan Human Rights Counseling Center), and the Catholic Human Rights Committee were established in 1993 and 1994, and it was also around this time that LGBTQ groups Chingusai and Kirikiri formed. The year 1995 is also when a group of fourteen Nepalese migrant workers staged an occupation protest at Myungdong Cathedral in what is known as the first direction action waged by migrant workers in Korea. Some of these protest histories and social movement dynamics are discussed in the forthcoming book by Jennifer Chun and Ju Hui Judy Han, *Against Abandonment: Repertoires of Solidarity in South Korean Protest* (Stanford University Press, 2025).

49. See Valentine et al., "Transnational Religious Networks."

CHAPTER 2

1. For their work, *Urinŭn nongdam i (ani)ya* (우리는 농담이 (아니)야; *We are (not) a joke*), Yi was posthumously awarded the best theater prize for the prestigious Baeksang Arts Awards in 2021. Kim Ki-hong was actively involved in Green Party and on the organizing committee of the Jeju Queer Culture Festival.

2. Lim Borah's work and legacy are discussed in depth in chapter 3 of this book.

3. See Kyŏng-ae Choi, "S. Korean Transgender Soldier Pleads to Serve after Military Orders Discharge," Yonhap News Agency, January 22, 2020. https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20200122010551320

4. Josh MacPhee, ed., *Celebrate People's History: The Poster Book of Resistance and Revolution* (Feminist Press, 2010), 162.

5. Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (Routledge, 1999), 68.

6. Interview with Father Zacchaeus, 2017.

7. Anonymous interview, 2016.

8. James Hyams and Tae-hoon Lee, "Police Reject LGBT Application for Pride Parade," *Korea Observer* (blog), June 1, 2015, http://www.koreaobserver.com/police-reject-lgbt-application-for-pride-parade-29447/

9. See Woori Han, "Proud of Myself as LGBTQ."

10. See the joint statement published on the website of SHARE (Center for Sexual Rights and Reproductive Justice), signed by twelve LGBTQ activist organizations including HIV/AIDS advocacy groups. "Ch'ogukchŏk cheyakhoesa ŭi huwonŭl k'wiŏ k'ŏmyunit'iga kyŏnggyehaeya hanŭn iyu" [The reason the queer community should be wary of the sponsorship of transnational pharmaceutical companies]. https://srhr.kr/statements/?idx=12150570&bmode=view

11. Violet Glaser, "No Rainbow Capitalism: The Five Worst Corporations to Kick Out of Pride," *Left Voice*, June 29, 2019, https://www.leftvoice.org/no-rainbow-capitalism-five-corporations-to-kick-out-of-pride

12. Glaser, "No Rainbow Capitalism."

13. No Pride 2023 website. https://nopride2023.my.canva.site. See also Wŏn Yu, "No p'ŭraidŭ p'at'i Kihoekdan Chung Han Myŏng Ŭi Kaeinjŏk Ikodo Chŏngch'ijŏkin No p'ŭraidŭ p'at'i Huki" [Personal and political reflections on the No Pride Party as an individual member of the planning team of the No Pride Party], *Yŏ/Sŏng'iron [Feminist Theory]*, no. 49 (2024): 278–91.

14. Facebook post, May 30, 2024. https://www.facebook.com/rainbowsnail.chang/posts/pfbid01MxAESGdSbPu7KwkuqPA5KsmcwJ9Epcx4zoCbP69xGgrf2ahYjCfXpL5xZfYzoLZl

15. These numbers were last updated on September 3, 2019. From the QUV website. https://quvkorea.tistory.com/10?category=316133

16. Lee, *The Making of Minjung*; Lee, "The South Korean Student Movement."

17. Cho, "Sŏngsosuja lidŏ intŏbyu—Sarangbadŭl Yonggi" [Sexual minority interview—courage to be loved].

18. Han Sŏngjin, the thirty-first Vice President of undergraduate students at KAIST; Ma Taeyŏng, the twenty-eighth President of the Women Student Government at Yonsei University; Jang Hyemin, the twenty-fourth President of the student government at Kaywon University of Art & Design.

19. Gwak, "Sŏngkonghoedae chŏnghaksaenghoejang huboga malhanŭn 'naega k'ŏming aut'an iyu' (intŏbyu)" ["The reason I came out" according to the candidate for president of the student government at Sungkonghoe University (interview)].

20. For a critique of the gender and sexual normativity implicit in this idea of "able-bodied" in military conscription, see Na, "The South Korean Gender System." For an in-depth and insightful critique of ableism and discussion of disability activism in South Korea, see Kim, *Curative Violence*.

21. Pak, "Presidential Candidates Evasive on Issue of LGBT Rights."

22. Kim, "Yukgun, Tongsŏngaeja Hyŏnyŏk Kun'in Saekch'ul, Chŏbŏl Ŭihok" [Army, Suspected of Singling out and Prosecuting Gay Soldiers]; Pak, "Taehakga e 'nado chabagara' taejabo rilei" ["Arrest me, too" poster relay on university campuses].

23. Pak, "Taehakga e 'nado chabagara' taejabo rilei."

24. Yi, Nae Irŭm ŭn Kundae, 379–80.

25. Best known is the case of Yi Yeda who in 2013 was officially recognized as a refugee in France. More stories can be found in Pak, "P'yŏngbŏmhan Han'guk

Ch'ŏngnyŏn, p'ŭrangsŭ Sŏ Nanmin Injŏngdoen Iyu" [Ordinary Korean youth, the reason for his recognition as a refugee in France].

26. These timelines are based on my own notes and interviews, but it is also verified by Na-yŏng, "1990 Nyŏntae Ŭi Taehak Sŏnsosuj Undong" [1990s College Sexual Minority Movement], (P'eminisŭtŭ, mannada [Meeting Feminist Symposium], Pusan National University, 2018).

27. Reported in Kirikiri's newsmagazine, *Tto tarŭn sesang, no.2* (Summer 1996), 47–48.

28. See "Han'guk Tongsŏngaeja tanch'e hyŏpŭihoe" (한국동성애자단체협의회) in Han'guk sŏngjŏk sosuja sajŏn (한국성적소수자사전) by Han'guk sŏngjŏk sosuja munhwa in'kwŏn sent'ŏ (한국성적소수자문화인권센터; Korean Sexual-Minority Culture & Rights Center). http://kscrc.org/xe/4763

29. *Dyke* issue 2, March 15, 1998, 8.

30. Interview in Seoul, June 2017.

31. Chun, *Organizing at the Margins: The Symbolic Politics of Labor in South Korea and the United States* (Cornell University Press, 2009), 187n16.

32. Chun, *Organizing at the Margins.*

33. Editorial, "Ghosts of Dictatorship in South Korea."

34. Editorial.

35. National Security Act, Article 2.

36. Park, "National Security and Constitutional Rights in Korea."

37. Kim, "The Fight to End South Korea's 'Blood-Stained' National-Security Act."

38. Kraft, "South Korea's National Security Law."

39. West and Baker, "The Constitutional Reforms in South Korea 1987," 138–39.

40. Cho, "Tension between the National Security Law and Constitutionalism in South Korea," 138, n65. Two of the leaders associated with Sanomaeng, Park No-hae and Baik Tae-ung, served long sentences under the National Security Law. Park No-hae, a well-known dissident poet, was arrested on April 3, 1991 and first faced the death penalty but was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released after seven years and six months in prison. Baik Tae-ung, then a law student and now a human rights law professor at the University of Hawaii, was arrested on April 29, 1992 and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment. He was released on August 15, 1998 after seven years. Baik stated at his first trial, "I aspire to build a country of true equality and peace in which the oppressed earn freedom and the deprived earn joy. I want to build a society in which labour ceases to be mechanical physical wringing of tears and sighs and instead becomes a creative process for self-realization . . . As long as legal and institutional improvement provides us with the legal right to engage ourselves in socialist activities, we will promote our socialism by expressing our ideas peacefully through legally-sanctioned democratic channels such as laws, institutions, parliament and social associations." Quoted in Amnesty International, "Long-Term Prisoners Still Held under the National Security Law." Eun Su-mi, an activist and politician who was a member of the National Assembly from 2012 to 2016 and is now the Mayor of Sŏngnam City, was arrested in April 1992 and served six years in prison. Cho Kuk, a legal scholar who has written critically about the National Security Law and in favor of allowing conscientious objection to the military service was himself also associated with Sanomaeng and served a six month prison sentence after being arrested in June 1993 for violating the NSL. As discussed in chapter 4, Cho Kuk was a close aide to President Moon Jae-in who appointed him as Minister of Justice in September 2019 and became

mired in a great deal of controversy that led to widespread right-wing and conservative protests against his appointment. He resigned from the position six weeks later, on October 14, 2019.

41. Amnesty International, "Amnesty International Report 1997—South Korea."

42. Even after the election of Kim Dae Jung, former dissident and political prisoner and later the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000 who was described by the U.S. Embassy in Seoul described Kim as "South Korea's first left-wing president," the number of political prisoners grew.

43. Marronnier Park is named after the large marronnier chestnut tree growing in the center of the park. The area was named Taehangno or "College Street" because Seoul National University used to be located there before it moved to the current location in 1975.

44. *Dyke* issue 1, November 2, 1997.

45. *Dyke* issue 2, May 15, 1998, 1.

46. *Dyke* issue 2, May 15, 1998, 2.

47. Interview in Seoul, June 1, 2017.

48. Interview in Seoul, July 26, 2017.

49. The tradition of the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia began as a way to commemorate the 1990 decision of the World Health Organization to remove homosexuality from its International Classification of Diseases. Originally referencing just homophobia, transphobia was added to the name in 2009, and biphobia was officially added in 2015. In Korea it is also the day of annual commemoration for O Se-in and Yook Woo-Dang as well as others whose lives have prematurely ended.

50. Interview in Seoul, July 26, 2017.

51. "Tongsŏngaejadŭlbun Oich'inda STOP THE WAR" [Gays and lesbians shout, STOP THE WAR], *LGBT Paper*, March/April 2003, 2–3.

52. Excerpt (my translation) from Yook Woo-dang's suicide note. Archived at the Hangsŏngin office in Seoul.

53. Chŏngbo t'ongsin Yulliwiwŏnhoe is the predecessor to the current Pangsongt'ongsin Simŭi wiwŏnhoe.

54. Kwon Kim and Cho, "The Korean Gay and Lesbian Movement 1993–2008: From 'identity' and 'Community' to 'Human Rights'"; Yi, "Tongsŏngaejaeui Komindo 'EUmlanmul'Ideon Keuttae."

55. The Korean name is Chŏngsonyŏn pohowiwonhoe.

56. Juvenile Protection Act, Article 7. https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng_service/lawView.do?hseq=38401&lang=ENG

57. Ivancity was first started with the name Hwarang in May, 1999, and changed its name to Ivancity in November, 2000. It is considered South Korea's largest online community for gay men, offering everything from news portals, publishing, and online shopping. As of January 2017, Ivancity claimed 220,000 members and 50,000 to 60,000 users logging in on a daily basis. See "Ivancity," *Han'guk sŏngjŏk sosuja sajŏn* (한국성적소수자사전) by Han'guk sŏngjŏk sosuja munhwa in'kwŏn sent'ŏ (한국성적소수자문화인권센터; Korean Sexual-Minority Culture & Rights Center). http://kscrc.org/xe/16001

58. Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 28.

59. Hong, *Death Beyond Disavowal*, 5–6.

60. Resources database of the Korean Sexual-Minority Culture & Rights Center

website. http://kscrc.org/xe/board_yNWI74/4890?ckattempt=1. Also see the Constitution of the Republic of Korea. https://elaw.klri.re.kr/eng_service/lawView.do?lang=ENG&hseq=1

61. Christian Council of Korea (CCK)'s position is discussed here on the Korean Sexual Minority Culture and Rights Center website. http://kscrc.org/xe/board_hWwy34/770

62. This letter dated June 3, 2003 and is discussed and reprinted in Yang Jeong Ji-geon, "Han'giyŏn, Han'gich'onge 'tongsŏngaeja jugeum' sajoe yogu" [Han'giyŏn demands apology from Han'gich'ong for the death of a homosexual], News N Joy, May 31, 2003. http://www.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=4544

63. Im Kim Oju, "'Tangsindŭldo da tongsŏngaeja anya? Pukk˘rŏun jul alla'" [Aren't you all homosexuals, too? You should be ashamed of yourselves], *Cham Sesang*, July 30, 2003. http://www.newscham.net/news/view.php?board=news&nid=22462&page=1998&category2=1

64. *The Hankyoreh*, April 24, 2013. http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/rights/584469.html

65. The Korean Society of Law and Policy on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity 2016, 56–58.

66. Kwon Kim and Cho, "The Korean Gay and Lesbian Movement 1993–2008: From 'Identity' and 'Community' to 'Human Rights,'" 219.

67. Kwon Kim and Cho, "The Korean Gay and Lesbian Movement 1993–2008," 219.

68. The Ordinance was officially proclaimed on January 24, 2012. It protects student's freedom of conscience and religion as well as their freedom of expression, including an ability to engage in demonstrations and forms of protest on school grounds. The ordinance also offers protective guidelines against discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation, physical violence (corporal punishment), and compulsory studying after school hours.

69. Tori, "Chŏdŭlege agŭi ch'uk ŭn ppalgaengi wa tongsŏngae inga?" [Is their "axis of evil" "ppalgaengi" and homosexuality?].

70. See Christian Council Network Korea, "Kuggain'kwŏnhoenŭn Kundae Nae Tongsŏngaerŭl Injŏnghajanŭn Kŏshin'ga?" [Is the National Human Rights Commission of Korea suggesting we accept homosexuality in the military?].

71. See Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*.

72. Cho, "Kŭdaedŭlŭi 'Saek,' 'Kye': Ch'abyŏlgŭmjibŏp Bandae t'ujaenggwa 'chongbuk gay'ŭi t'ansaengŭl t'onhae Ponŭn Kidokgyo up'adŭlŭi t'aja Mandŭlgi" [Their color and lineage: The Christian Right's construction of the other, seen through their opposition against anti-discrimination legislation and the birth of "Chongbuk gay"].

73. Na, "Segyewa Ŭi Pulhwa, p'ibu Ŭi Yŏndae" [At odds with the world, solidarity through the skin], 111.

CHAPTER 3

1. Haptong is short for Taehan Yesukyo Changnohoe (Presbyterian Church of Korea), or Yejang Haptong. The complex denominational landscape of Presbyterians in Korea is characterized by the existence of the smaller and ecumenical Kijang (PROK) denomination on the one hand and other Presbyterian denominations that

have branched out from the evangelical and more conservative Yejang (PCK) tradition. The Presbyterians have shown remarkable disunity: out of total 374 Protestant denominations in South Korea in 2018, over two-thirds or 286 Protestant denominations had the phrase "Presbyterian church" in their title. While Presbyterians collectively make up the majority of Protestants in Korea, Haptong is widely considered to be the largest. It is also notorious for refusing to ordain women and mired in controversy for standing by male pastors accused of sexual misconduct. See "2018 nyŏn Han'gukŭi Chongkyohyŏnhwang" [Status of religion in South Korea in 2018] published by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Kang, "Yejang Haptong, yŏsŏng moksa ansu hŏhara" [Yejang Haptong, allow the ordination of women].

2. I am inclined to translate *pantongsŏngae* (반동성애) in this article not narrowly and literally as "anti-homosexuality" but as "anti-LGBTQ" or homophobia. Though the pantongsŏngae Protestant rhetoric simplifies "homosexuality" as the primary locus of sin, their discourse usually conflates an objection to male homosexuality, repulsion to non-binary or variant gender bodies, and consternation over non-normative family forms. Pantongsŏngae should therefore be understood in a capacious sense to include objections and opposition to a variety of non-normative gender and sexual identities and practices including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, asexual, nonbinary, and agender. Nonetheless, that the primary target of this pantongsŏngae or anti-LGBTQ imagination remains fixated on cisgender gay men and transgender women can be seen in the prevalent use of the rhetoric that "homosexuality" will condone anal sex and invite "men dressed as women" into the family as monstrous daughters-in-law. I use "anti-LGBTQ" in this chapter not to imply that it stands in mirror opposition to something that might be construed as simply "pro-LGBTQ" but rather to describe a constellation of political actors and social forces that have stressed the rhetoric of "opposing homosexuality," which is the literal meaning of pantongsŏngae. Also see Dawne Moon, "Beyond the Dichotomy: Six Religious Views of Homosexuality," *Journal of Homosexuality* 61, no. 9 (May 28, 2014): 1215–41, https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.926762

3. SaRang Community Church undertook a $186 million construction project to build the SaRang Global Ministry Center in 2010 amidst controversy that has been ongoing ever since. See Han, "Urban Megachurches and Contentious Religious Politics in Seoul."

4. See Pyŏng-wang Yi, "'Mujigae p'ŏp'omŏnsŭ' haksaengdŭl tashi chingyehara' moksori [Voices call to discipline again 'rainbow performance' students]," *News N Net*, July 24, 2019, http://www.newsnnet.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=6677; Yong-p'il Yi, "Mujigae p'ŏp'omŏnsŭ chingyebadŭn changshindae shinhaksaeng 'chat'oisŏ' chech'ul" [PUTS student disciplined for "rainbow performance" formally withdraws from school], *News & Joy*, August 1, 2018, http://www.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=218936; Ŭn-hye Yi, "Yejangt'onghap Koshiwi, mujigae pŏp'omŏnsŭ shinhaksaengdŭl moksa koshi 'pulhapgyŏk' kyŏljŏng 'ch'onghoi chŏngch'esŏng wihae'" [Yejangt'onghap Exam Committee decides to disqualify "rainbow protest" seminary students' pastoral exam to "maintain denominational identity"], *News & Joy,* September 6, 2019, http://www.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=225062

5. While "heteropatriarchy" refers to "social systems in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are perceived as normal and natural, and in which other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant, and abhorrent," "cisgenderism" refers to cultural and ideological systems that deny, denigrate, or pathologize "self-identified gender identities that do not align with assigned gender at birth as well as resulting behavior,

expression, and community." See Erica Lennon and Brian J. Mistler, "Cisgenderism," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2014): 63, https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2399623; Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (2013): 13, https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0006

6. Lester R. Kurtz, "The Politics of Heresy," *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 6 (1983): 1085.

7. Thomas M. Lessl, "Heresy, Orthodoxy, and the Politics of Science," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74, no. 1 (February 1, 1988): 19, https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638809383826

8. Ju Hui Judy Han, "The Politics of Homophobia in South Korea," *East Asia Forum Quarterly*, June 2016. Some of these competitions involve questions of who has the authority to make and unmake heresy declarations. In 2012, the two largest Presbyterian denominations Haptong and T'onghap led an exodus of several major denominations that left the Christian Council of Korea (CCK or Han'gich'ong), formerly the national flagship organization for evangelical Christians. This took place in part after a rift over the new CCK leadership's reversal of heresy rulings and embrace of leaders formerly deemed heretical. Haptong and T'onghap denominations subsequently formed a rival national group, the Communion of Churches in Korea (CCIK or Han'gyoyŏn), which now surpasses Han'gich'ong in number of member denominations and churches as well as political power. Haptong Presbyterian declared in 2016 that they would lead the fight against heresy. In the meantime, the beleaguered leaders of Han'gich'ong attempted to restore its legitimacy by launching its own competing committee on heresy. Kwŏn-hyo Ku, "Yejang Haptong ch'onghoe, 'idan saibi kyujŏng chich'imsŏ' palgan" [Hapdong PCK general assembly publishes "heresy policy guideline"], *News & Joy*, April 19, 2012, http://m.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=37530; Chuyŏl Song, "8-Kae Kyodan Idan Taech'aegwi, Idan Kubun Chejae Tan'gye t'ong'il Kyŏrŭi" [Eight denominations' heresy committee resolves to unify heresy classification and sanctions], *K'ŭrisŭch'ŏn Nokŏt Nyusŭ* [*Christian No Cut News*], June 5, 2018, http://cbs.kr/mFBTFM

9. For example, in a 2017 opinion survey of individuals without religious affiliation, the majority of respondents expressed a high degree of distrust toward the Protestant church. Conducted by the reform-minded Christian Ethics Movement of Korea (CEMK), the survey found that only 20.2% of individuals without religious affiliation expressed that they trust the Protestant church, while 51.2% responded that they do not. Critics usually point to the excess of affluent megachurches and the numerous scandals of financial corruption and sexual misconduct among Protestant leaders as contributing to the negative opinion of Christianity. See Christian Ethics Movement of Korea (CEMK), "2017 nyŏn Han'guk kyohoe ŭi sahoejŏk silloedo yŏron chosa kyŏlgwa palp'yo semina" [2017 opinion survey of levels of social trust in Korean churches]. cemk.org/resource/2699/

10. Kurtz, "The Politics of Heresy," 1085.

11. Kurtz, "The Politics of Heresy," 1087, 1088.

12. Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 99.

13. See also Qadir, "When Heterodoxy Becomes Heresy"; Qadir, "How Heresy Makes Orthodoxy."

14. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1:95.

15. "New queer vitalities" is a phrase used in Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco, eds., *Queer Necropolitics* (Routledge, 2014).

16. Chŏng, "Han'guk Kyohoesa e Nat'anan Idan Nonjaeng" [The war of words concerning heresies in the history of the Korean church]; Suh, "An Understanding of Orthodoxy and Heresy in Korean Church History"; Han'guk Kidokkyo Ch'ongyŏnhaphoe, "Han'guk Kyohoe Idan Nonjaeng Kŭ Silch'e Rŭl Palk'inda; Hŏ, Han'guk Ŭi Idan Kidokkyo."

17. The International Korean Christian Coalition Against Heresy is a group founded in 2011 by South Korean and diasporic Korean Christians. At their annual meeting in 2018, they announced that the top eight heretical groups in South Korea are: Sinch'ŏnji (신천지), also known as Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony; World Mission Society Church of God (하나님의교회 세계복음선교협회); Salvation Sect (구원파); Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (often known as the LDS or Mormon Church); Jehovah's Witnesses; and Christian Gospel Mission, more commonly known as Jesus Morning Star. Their website (ikccah.org) also lists Catholicism, Islam, the Unification Church, and Christian Science as heretical. Also deemed gravely heretical are Paul Choi of the controversial missionary organization InterCP and Reverend Pyŏn Sŭng-wu of Beloved Church (formerly Great Faith Church). Pyŏn reportedly set a record in 2009 as the first clergy to be deemed heretical by five major denominations in the same year (T'onghap, Hapshin, Haptong, Koshin, and Paeksŏk) and the first clergy to be excommunicated from his own denomination (Paeksŏk). However, in a sudden turn of events in March 2019, Pyŏn and the denomination he newly founded (Puhŭng) received redemption from the new leadership of the national flagship evangelical organization, Han'gich'ong. Though he is still considered dangerously heretical by many, Pyŏn has since taken an active part in Han'gich'ong's national leadership, participating in right-wing and conservative Christian mass protest rallies against the liberal government. In 2018, he was quoted as stating in his speech, "Moon Jae-in's government puts Chŏlla Province, homosexuality, and North Korea first. Moon is making a world that does not prioritize people but communism." Similarly, the controversial missionary Paul Choi has been embraced by the new leadership of Han'gich'ong despite concerns for his theological outlooks previously deemed heretical. Yi, "Chŏnkwanghun Pyŏnsŭngwu, 'Munjaein t'oijin ch'ongkwŏlgi kyoin ch'ongdongwollyŏng" [Chŏn Kwanghun and Pyŏn Sŭngwu mobilize church members to demand Moon Jae-in's resignation]. See also Beloved Church, www.belovedc.com; InterCP, www.intercp.net

18. Yi In-kyu of IKCCAH was essentially accused of making heresy determinations without formal training or license. Kim, "Yejang Haptong, Seiyŏn Yi In'gyu Kwŏnsa Idan Kyŏlŭi" [Yejang Haptong determines Deacon Yi In-Kyu of Seiyŏn to be heretical].

19. Haengŏp Chŏng, *Han'guk Kyohoesa e Nat'anan Idan Nonjaeng* [*The War of Words Concerning Heresies in the History of the Korean Church*] (Han'guk Changnogyo Ch'ulp'ansa, 1999); Jeong-Min Suh, "An Understanding of Orthodoxy and Heresy in Korean Church History," *Ecumenical Review* 57, no. 4 (October 1, 2005): 451–62, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2005.tb00566.x; Han'guk Kidokkyo Ch'ongyŏnhaphoe, ed., *Han'guk Kyohoe Idan Nonjaeng Kŭ Silch'e Rŭl Palk'inda: Idan Sibi Taesangjadŭl Ŭl Chungsim Ŭro* [*Revealing the Truth behind the Heresy Controversy of the Korean Church: With a Focus on the Objects of Heresy Disputes*] (Han'guk Kyohoe Idan Saibi Taech'aek Hyŏbŭihoe, 2007); Hoik Hŏ, *Han'guk Ŭi Idan Kidokgyo: Chuyo Idan Ŭi Kyebo Wa Kyori Pip'an* [*Heresy*

in Korea and Christianity: Genealogy of Major Heresies and Theological Criticism] (Tongyŏn, 2016).

20. The so-called BITE model draws mostly from anti-cultist activism in the U.S. Tark, "Kyohoe Wa Idan"; Hassan, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*.

21. The word *minjung* literally means "the people" in political-popular sense, referring to the politically oppressed and economically exploited, socially disenfranchised and culturally devalued people who suffer from unjust systems of gender, class, nation, citizenship, status. Minjung theology developed alongside its political ideological equivalent that animated the heart of the democratization movement. See Lee, *The Making of Minjung*; Kim, "The Problem of Poverty in Post-War Korean Christianity"; Chang, "Carrying the Torch in the Darkest Hours: The Socio-Political Origins of Minjung Protestant Movements"; Lee, "A Political Reception of the Bible: Korean Minjung Theological Interpretation of the Bible"; Ching Louie, "Minjung Feminism"; Suh, *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*.

22. This article was published in an online newsletter of Chingusai, a long-established gay men's organization. Pora Im, "Sŏng Sosuja Wa Hamkke Kŏnnŭn Kil, Kŭrigo 'k'wiŏ Sŏngsŏ Chusŏk'-Ŭi Ŭimi" [Walking together with sexual minorities, and the meaning of the *Queer Bible Commentary*]," *Chingusai Newsletter*, September 23, 2016, https://chingusai.net/xe/newsletter/481344?category=593886

23. While *idan* denotes heresy, the word *iban* is a neologism first coined in the 1990s as a Korean equivalent to "queer" in that it stresses non-normativity. Though it is not the most commonly used or preferred term currently in use, iban represents an important sociolinguistic effort to articulate a non-English idiom of difference.

24. Im, "Sŏng Sosuja Wa Hamkke Kŏnnŭn Kil" (Walking together with sexual minorities).

25. Im. The excerpt appears in Bohache, "Matthew," 501.

26. Linn Marie Tonstad, *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* (Cascade Books, 2018), 17.

27. Guest et al., *The Queer Bible Commentary*, 1; Tonstad, *Queer Theology*, 17.

28. From Guest et al., eds., *The Queer Bible Commentary*, preface.

29. The forum was held at Hyanglin Church on May 17, 2017, which was the annual International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT).

30. Yi, "Sŏngsosujarŭl chŏngjwehaji annŭn sinhakjŏk kanŭngsŏng" [Theological possibility of not condemning sexual minorities].

31. Benedetto, Guder, and McKim, *Historical Dictionary of the Reformed Churches*, 199–200.

32. Lee, "A Political Reception of the Bible: Korean Minjung Theological Interpretation of the Bible."

33. Mujigae Yesu's map can be found on the website for Korea Institute of Rainbow Theology, last accessed on January 2, 2020. http://www.Rainbowtheology.co.kr

34. See Siu, *K'wiŏ Ap'okalipsŭ*; Syum P'ŭrojekt'ŭ [Shyum Project], *Hanŭnimkwa Mannan Tongsŏngae*.

35. Han, "Becoming Visible, Becoming Political."

36. Han, "Urban Megachurches and Contentious Religious Politics in Seoul"; Yi, "Hyanglinkyhoe, tŏ k'ŭn hana wihae jjogaego tto jjogaenda."

37. Patrick S. Cheng, "Contributions from Queer Theory," *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality, and Gender* (2014), 1, 11. Cheng's idea of "radical love," concerns

both queerness and Christian theology, constituting a "love so extreme that it dissolves our existing boundaries." The Korean translation of radical love was translated into Korean and published in 2019 by the Korea Institute of Rainbow Theology. Patrick Cheng, *Kŭpjinjŏk'in sarang: kwiŏshinhak kaeron*, trans. Yu-kyŏng Im and Ju-wŏn Kang (Seoul: Mujigae Shinhak Yŏn'guso [Korea Institute of Rainbow Theology], 2019).

38. Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (Seabury Books, 2011), 3–4.

39. Cheng, *Radical Love*, 2.

40. See Elizabeth Stuart, *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference* (Ashgate, 2003); Tonstad, *Queer Theology*.

41. Robert E. Shore-Goss, "Gay and Lesbian Theologies," in *Liberation Theologies in the United States: An Introduction*, ed. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Anthony B. Pinn (New York University Press, 2010), 189, 200.

42. Tonstad, *Queer Theology*, 3.

43. Bohache, "Matthew," 488.

44. Schüssler Fiorenza discusses the hermeneutics of suspicion as a hermeneutical strategy that prioritizes suspicion over trust, caution, and questions over a "hermeneutics of appreciation and consent." Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 175. The term "hermeneutics of suspicion" is most often attributed to philosopher Paul Ricoeur who described Marx, Nietzche, and Freud as the three "masters of suspicion" in his *Freud and Philosophy* (1979).

45. Author's field notes. Also see Ŭn-hye Yi, "Imbora idan sibi, chŏkp'ye kamch'uryŏnŭn hyŏndaep'an manyŏsanyang'" [Lim Borah heresy charges, modern-day witch hunt to hide issues], *News & Joy*, July 7, 2017, http://www.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=212029

46. Chŏn'guk Yŏ Kyoyŏkjahoe, "Im Pora Moksa e taehan idansŏng sibi rŭl chŭkkak chungdan hal kot ŭl ch'okku hamnida" [We urge an immediate stop of heresy dispute regarding Reverend Lim Borah].

47. Chŏn'guk Yŏ Kyoyŏkjahoe.

48. Hŏ, Han'guk Ŭi Idan Kidokkyo. Its English title is *Korean Christian Heterodoxy*.

49. Tark, *Kyohoe Wa Idan*, 179.

50. Han, "Becoming Visible, Becoming Political." Quoting Ro, "WCC General Assembly Aftermath."

51. Benedetto, Guder, and McKim, *Historical Dictionary of the Reformed Churches*, 158–59.

52. For a letter of support from the women's group in Kijang, see Yi, "Imbora moksa idansŏng shibi chŭkkak chungdanhara." For English-language open letter and petition, see Affirming Ministries in Action, "Witnessing Courage: Our Korean Partner, Sumdol Hyanglin Church," Affirm United (blog), accessed October 30, 2017, http://affirmunited.ause.ca/witnessing-courage-our-korean-partner-sumdol-hyanglin-church/; and "Action to Support Rev LIM Borah and the Sumdol Hyanglin Congregation, South Korea," Affirm United (blog), accessed October 30, 2017, http://affirmunited.ause.ca/action-to-support-rev-lim-borah-and-the-sumdol-hyanglin-congregation-south-korea/. Also see Craig Bartlett, "'Embrace Your Heresy!'—An Open Letter to My Friend and Colleague, the Rev Lim Bora," *My Hue in the Rainbow* (blog), July 1, 2017, https://myhueintherainbow.wordpress.com/2017/07/01/embrace-your-heresy-an-open-letter-to-my-friend-and-colleague-the-rev-lim-bora/

53. Five Presbyterian denominations (Haptong, T'onghap, Koshin, Hapshin, and

Paeksŏk Taeshin) were joined by three other Protestant denominations (the Korean Methodist Church, Korea Baptist Convention, and the Baptist Korea Evangelical Holiness Church). Kwŏn, "Kyodanbyŏl ch'onghoe rŭl tora pomyŏ" [Looking back at denominational general assemblies]; "8-kae Kyodan Idanwi" [Eight denominations' committee on heresy]; "Im Pora Moksa Ŭi Idanjŏk Kyŏnghyang e Kwanhan Pogosŏ" [Report on the Heretical Tendencies of Reverend Lim Borah].

54. Im, "Kŭrŏtch'i mothal ttae enŭn yŏrŏbun to challyŏ nagal kŏt imnida: Mainŏrit'I wa Han'guk kyohoe" [Otherwise, you also will be cut off: Minority and the Korean church], 48.

55. Im, "Kŭrŏtch'i mothal ttae enŭn yŏrŏbun to challyŏ nagal kŏt imnida," 48.

56. Syum P'ŭrojekt'ŭ [Shyum Project], *Hanŭnimkwa Mannan Tongsŏngae*.

57. "8-kae Kyodan Idanwi" [Eight denominations' committee on heresy]; "Im Pora Moksa Ŭi Idanjŏk Kyŏnghyang e Kwanhan Pogosŏ" [Report on the Heretical Tendencies of Reverend Lim Borah].

58. "8-kae Kyodan Idanwi" [Eight denominations' committee on heresy].

59. Ch'oe, "Im Pora Moksa 'idan' mandŭn kŭn'gŏnŭn?"

60. On gender, patriarchy, and Christianity, see Chong, *Deliverance and Submission: Evangelical Women and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in South Korea*; Kim, "'Lord, I Am a Father!' The Transnational Evangelical Men's Movement and the Advent of 'Benevolent' Patriarchy."

61. "204ch'a wŏllye p'orŏm (Im Po-ra, Kim Nami)" [204차 월례포럼(임보라,김나미)] [204th Monthly Forum (Im Po-ra, Kim Nami)] (Forum, July 31, 2017), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DM1qaAZFpp0. Particularly illuminating is the well-informed and nuanced discussion of contradictions and internal differences among antiqueer forces in Siu, *K'wiŏ Ap'okalipsŭ*.

62. Lessl, "Heresy, Orthodoxy, and the Politics of Science," 20.

63. Ali Qadir, "How Heresy Makes Orthodoxy: The Sedimentation of Sunnism in the Ahmadi Cases of South Africa," *Sociology of Islam* 4, no. 4 (October 21, 2016): 345–67, https://doi.org/10.1163/22131418-00404001

64. Saba Mahmood, "Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 4 (January 1, 2009): 836–62, https://doi.org/10.1086/599592

65. I am grateful to Steven Chung, Erin Huang, and Franz Prichard at Princeton University for organizing the "Asia Theory Visuality" conference in May 2018 featuring the keyword, "thresholds." They invited inquiry into "the intervals, pathways, and openings that illuminate new aesthetic-political configurations" (from the conference program text). Going beyond the idea of thresholds as the logic of a line or a discrete boundary, the conference organizers suggested an imagination of thresholds as dynamic and three-dimensional, as "pathway, opening, and framing, one that discloses ways of seeing, relating, or traversing such boundaries and limits."

CHAPTER 4

1. A previous version of this chapter was published as "Out of Place in Time: Queer Discontents and *Sigisangjo*," *Journal of Asian Studies* 81 (2022): 119–29. The *najunge* protest and the politics of postponement were also discussed in "The Politics of Postponement and Sexual Minority Rights in South Korea," in *Rights Claiming in*

South Korea (2021), edited by Celeste L. Arrington and Patricia Goedde, Cambridge University Press.

2. As with all translations in this book, the translation is mine. I thank Jennifer Jihye Chun for passing on this example to me. Textbook Compilation Committee, Korean Language Institute, Yonsei University, *Yŏnse Han'gugŏ hwaryong yŏnsŭp* [Yonsei Korean workbook] 5–2, 2013.

3. Some *sajasŏng'ŏ* are more esoteric than others, but many are considered a standard part of everyday Korean language in use. High school students, for instance, are generally expected to know at least a hundred of these idioms by the time they graduate. Some of the most common *sajasŏng'ŏ* include *noshim ch'osa* (노심초사 勞心焦思), *sasaeng gyŏldan* (사생결단 死生決斷), and *sŏng'gyŏn jimyŏng* (성견지명 先見之明). Political sociologist Hyun Ok Park's 2005 book, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution in Manchuria*, is titled after *tongsang imong* (동상이몽 同床異夢), which means "bedfellows sleep in the same bed but have different dreams" (2005, 1), an apt reference to colonialism and nationalism sleeping together on the bed of capitalism.

4. Baik, *Reencounters*, 131.

5. Fassin, *When Bodies Remember*, 115. In Fassin's discussion, denialism is the "most morally sanctioned forms of denial, in particular those that concern genocide." Given the fact that what is being denied in the logic of queer-as-sigisangjo is the dignity, humanity, and the very existence of LGBTQ lives, the genocidal implication in the term "denialism" is not entirely far-fetched.

6. See Kim, "Queer Times: Aesthetics, Performance, and Social Movements in South Korea."

7. Han, "The Politics of Postponement and Sexual Minority Rights in South Korea."

8. Freeman, *Time Binds*, 3.

9. Hesford and Diedrich, *Feminist Time against Nation Time*, 5.

10. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Feminist Encounters: Locating the Politics of Experience," in *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson and Steven Seidman (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 81.

11. See, for instance, Kwŏn Kim et al., "P'eminisŭt'ŭ Momŏnt'ŭ" [Feminist moment]; "Chŏn, Ru-in, and To-gyun, K'wiŏ p'eminisŭt'ŭ, kyoch'asŏng ŭl sayu hada" [Queer feminist, thinking intersectionality]; Han et al., "Kyoch'asŏng x p'eminijŭm" [Intersectionality x feminism].

12. I define minority coalitional solidarity as an intentionally crafted and affectively relational model of movement building that prioritizes showing up for each other in times of need. Especially for stigmatized minority groups—LGBTQ, disabled, undocumented, etc.—such solidarity activism builds on mutual recognition of one another as constituting a community of social change agents.

13. *Ajŏssi* is a somewhat pejorative word that refers to middle-aged men. Ajŏssi culture in this case is a shorthand for a certain masculinist militancy commonly found in trade labor unions, a culture that often accompanies a great deal of drinking and smoking; propensity for physical altercations in mass assembly; as well as practices rooted in sexism, misogyny, and heteropatriarchy.

14. Kim, "The Color of Dissent and a Vital Politics of Fragility in South Korea."

15. O-ri, quoted in reflections by Tal-kkum, "Sŏngsosujadŭlŭn Woe Kangjŏngmaŭle Katsŭlkka?" [Why did sexual minorities go to Kangjŏng Village?].

16. Anonymous interview in Seoul, Summer 2017.

17. The Miryang struggle against the transmission tower points to the historic collusion between the state—national and local governments—and the Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO) in implementing widespread usurpation of land. In Miryang, the plan was to construct a fifty-six-mile overhead power line and nearly two hundred transmission towers to deliver the electricity produced at the New Gori Nuclear Reactor to a power plant further north. The activists claimed that these plans were pursued in secrecy between 2000 and 2005, without consulting the affected communities and residents or considering the environment impact. Though the clear financial interest of the construction and energy industries were aptly represented by the former Hyundai Construction executive President Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013), it should be noted that the initial plans were drafted during the liberal administrations of Kim Daejung (1998–2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2008). Given the modern history of the state's lawful dispossession of agricultural lands for the purpose of "public good," both Kangjŏng and Miryang join a long list of land-based struggles.

18. Choe, "As Power Line Grows, So Does Fight Between Ancient and Modern Korea." It is interesting that in both Miryang and Sŏngju, the figure of elderly women became the very embodiment of the old and traditional that was being sacrificed for the sake of the new and modern. Ironically, this meant that in conservative rural areas like Sŏngju and the vicinity, the protagonists in the protests were also likely to have supported conservative politicians in the past, with a long history of electing staunchly conservative politicians.

19. Tŏk-hyŏn, "Miryang Hŭimangbŏsŭ Hugi" [Reflections on the Miryang Hope Bus].

20. Tŏk-hyŏn, "Miryang Hŭimangbŏsŭ Hugi" [Reflections on the Miryang Hope Bus].

21. Interview in Seoul, July 26, 2017. Also quoted in Kim, "Queer Politics as World-Making—'Our' Stories, the Processes That Have Been Changing 'Us,'" 11.

22. Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," 558. Quoted in Kim, "Queer Politics as World-Making—'Our' Stories, the Processes That Have Been Changing 'Us,'" 11.

23. Kim, "Queer Politics as World-Making—'Our' Stories, the Processes That Have Been Changing 'Us,'" 11.

24. Anonymous Facebook post in February 2015. Cited in Han, "K'wiŏ Chŏngch'iwa k'wiŏ Chichŏnghak" [Queer politics and queer geopolitics].

25. This reminds me of two social movement traditions that flow in opposition direction: first the rural-to-capitol mobilization known as *sang'gyŏng t'ujaeng* where workers and peasants gather in Seoul to make appeals at the national scale, and secondly *nonghwal*, the once customary practice of dispatching university students to help with farmwork during harvest season as a way to build student–peasant solidarity. Most interviewees I talked to about nonghwal readily admitted that they were useless as farmhands and that the farmers often bemoaned how the student volunteers often managed to damage the crops.

26. Chŏng, "Ch'abyŏle matsŏn chŏhang'i kŏdun t'ongk'waehan sŭngri" [A satisfying victory achieved through resistance against discrimination].

27. Siu, K'wiŏ Ap'okalipsŭ.

28. Other landmark cases include the struggles of KTX train attendants, Ssangyong Auto workers, Yoosung workers, Asahi Glass manufacturing workers, Cort and Cortek Guitar manufacturing workers, Sejong Hotel service workers, and many, many others.

Some of them have concluded with positive results. KTX train attendants concluded their historic 4,526-day struggle (12 years, 4 months, and 22 days) on July 21, 2018 after reaching an agreement to return to work at KORAIL, though not to their previously held positions.

29. Chun, "Protesting Precarity"; Kim, "Candlelight and the Yellow Ribbon: Catalyzing Re-Democratization in South Korea."

30. Kim Il-rhan's tour de force critical investigation of anti-eviction struggles in Yongsan and state violence in *Tukae-ŭi Mun* (두개의 문; *Two Doors*) in 2012 and the discussion of the aftermath that continues to haunt the activists in *Kong'gong Chŏngbŏm* (공공정범; *The Remnants*) in 2016 are a marked departure from her previous works that more directly addressed queer and trans concerns. She is a core member of Yŏnbunhong ch'ima.

31. On season 5, episode 9 of the popular feminist podcast series Ŭldŭl-ŭi Tangnagwi gwi [Donkey ears of the powerless] produced by the Korean Women Workers Association (KWWA) on July 30, 2019, Kim Il-rhan was joined in conversation by a panel of activists including the prolific writer and feminist cultural critic Son Hŭi-jung [Sohn Hee-jeong]. When asked whether she was particularly fond of any one of her works, Kim Il-rhan answered by describing a video she produced as a media activist, an identity she had repeatedly emphasized throughout the podcast. The video was credited to Yŏnbunhong Ch'ima (PINKS) in a short article in *The Hankyoreh* on March 13, 2017, which also linked to the video on Youtube. https://youtu.be/pHowaIlBFjg. Pak, "5-bun yŏngsangŭro tasibonŭn sŭmubŏnŭi ch'otbul [20 Candlelights reviewed in a 5-minute video]."

32. Hong, *Death beyond Disavowal*, 8.

33. On the antibase struggle in P'yŏngtaek (Pyeongtaek) in 2003–7, see Moon, "Protesting the Expansion of US Military Bases in Pyeongtaek," October 1, 2012.

34. O, "20bŏn-Ŭi Ch'otbuljiphoe, Sŏngsosujado Hamkkeyŏtda" [20 Candlelight Protests, sexual minorities were also there].

35. The Declaration was announced on March 11, 2017, and can be found online. T'oejin Haengdong [Emergency National People's Action for the dismissal of Park Geun-Hye], "2017 Ch'otbulgwŏlli Sŏnŏn" [2017 Candlelight declaration of rights].

36. O, "20bŏn-Ŭi Ch'otbuljiphoe, Sŏngsosujado Hamkkeyŏtda" [20 Candlelight Protests, sexual minorities were also there].

37. O, "20bŏn-Ŭi Ch'otbuljiphoe, Sŏngsosujado Hamkkeyŏtda" [20 Candlelight Protests, sexual minorities were also there].

38. Choi, "Cho Kuk 'Tongsŏngae, hŏyonghago malgo hal sa'an anijiman tongsŏnghonŭn sigisangjo'"; Heo, "'Tongsŏnghon sigisangjo . . . Ch'abyŏlkŭmjibŏp tan'kyejejŏng' Cho Kuk-ŭi t'oebo."

39. Nam, "Najungŭn Kyŏlk'o Oji Annŭnda" [Later will never come].

40. Posted on transliberationfront.com and on Facebook. Also quoted in Heo, "'Tongsŏnghon sigisangjo . . . Ch'abyŏlkŭmjibŏp tan'kyejejŏng' Cho Kuk-ŭi t'oebo."

41. The infamous "Najung-e, Najung-e" [Later, later] video taken on February 16, 2017, was edited and distributed by Dot Face (.Face). It is available on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=393722574318236 and on YouTube, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fV5jfZSE3OA

42. Moon Jae-in reportedly visited the leaders of the Christian Council of Korea

(Han'gich'ong), Communion of Churches in Korea (Han'gyoyŏn), and the National Council of Churches in Korea (Han'gyohyŏp or NCCK)—in that order—immediately after officially registering his candidacy with his Party. See Yi, "Mun Jae-in 'Tongsŏngae chijihaji anch'iman, ch'abyŏl badasŏn antoe'"; Yi, "'P'eminisŭt'ŭ taet'ongnyŏng' toegetdanŭn Mun Jae-in, sŏngsosuja inkwŏnŭn 'najunge'?"

43. Yi, "'P'eminisŭt'ŭ Taet'ongnyŏng' toegetdanŭn Mun Jae-in, sŏngsosuja inkwŏnŭn 'najunge'?"; Yun, "Pan'gimun Tŏkt'aek-e Mutgedoetda . . . Tongsŏng Kyŏlhon-e Ch'ansŏnghasinayo?" [Thanks to Ban Ki Mun, we can ask . . . do you support same-sex marriage?].

44. Kwak uses the word *tongsŏngaeja* in her protest. Rather than translating it literally as "homosexual," I translated the first instance as "lesbian" because it referred to herself—and she identifies as a lesbian—and the second instance as "sexual minority" because that is the term that best captures the political subjectivity in question. When asked why she chose to use the outdated word *tongsŏngaeja*, Kwak told me that "it just came out," out of habit from the early days of her gay and lesbian activism.

45. Getting arrested was apparently not part of the group's plan. For most of the LGBTQ activists that day, it was the first time they were ever arrested or taken to jail, reflecting how few queer and trans activists today come from activist traditions outside of university student government and trade union labor activism context. They come instead from cultural activism, volunteer service, and participation in nongovernmental civil society groups. Also see http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/792512.html and http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?art_id=201704261425021 and http://www.newdaily.co.kr/site/data/html/2017/04/26/2017042600047.html

46. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*.

47. Nyong'o, "School Daze"; Puar, "In the Wake of It Gets Better"; Puar, "Coda."

48. Brintnall, Marchal, and Moore, *Sexual Disorientations*, 2; italics in original.

49. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 187.

50. Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*.

51. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 124.

52. Edelman, *No Future*; Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*; Love, *Feeling Backward*; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; Freeman, *Time Binds*; Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures*.

53. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 2.

54. Freeman, *Time Binds*, xxii.

55. Freeman, *Time Binds*, xxii.

56. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Chatterjee, "The Nation in Heterogeneous Time."

57. Chatterjee, "The Nation in Heterogeneous Time," 33.

58. Manalansan IV, "The Messy Itineraries of Queerness."

59. Manalansan IV, "The Messy Itineraries of Queerness."

60. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 126.

61. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 24.

62. Freeman, *Time Binds*, 3.

63. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia the Then and There of Queer Futurity*.

64. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, 16.

65. Massey, *For Space*, 11–12.

EPILOGUE

1. William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (1992): 1347, https://doi.org/10.2307/2079346

2. James Jaehwan Lee, "Silent Han Elephants," *KoreAm Journal*, August 1993.

3. Lee, "Silent Han Elephants."

4. Family Is Still Family.

5. *Tangsaja* is *tojisha* in Japanese. See Celeste L. Arrington, "Disabled People's Fight for Rights in South Korea and Japan," *Current History* 120, no. 827 (September 1, 2021): 233–39, https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2021.120.827.233

6. Nabi sometimes said it differently in other discussions: "Instead of worrying about being abandoned by your parents, abandon them first." *Coming to You* screening event in Los Angeles, May 6, 2023.

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