



The Argus

No. 544 SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

Since 1954

**Endless Questions Surrounding
South Korea's Military**

**Voices of Those Fighting for
Change Are Not Mere Complaints**

**Legislative Reform for Better
Information Flow**

**Time for Change of Military
Service Exemption System**

**Who Protects the Youth Serving
Their Country?**

The Argus

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Editorial

Questioning the Present

In a world that constantly changes, it is easy to become accustomed to and be indifferent about issues. However, the moments we choose to question and explore can reveal new perspectives and insights.

This September issue aims to closely examine the reality we live in, which seems to be rapidly changing and evolving around us. In our busy modern society, some people are indifferent to others and do not feel the need to learn and care about or understand stories about groups to which they do not belong. Some, with a complacent attitude of “It does not concern me; why should I care?” turn a blind eye to others’ situations, and some do not take the time or devote attention to deeply considering the reasons and meaning behind what they are now doing. While it seems like the treatment of soldiers has improved compared to the past, the resolution of chronic issues remains insufficient. By questioning why they are in the military, we can recognize that the problems they face should not just be dismissed as merely a normal part of military life. We need to create a more just and equitable environment for them, which is only right for those who dedicate their time and effort in service for the safety of the nation.

While there are problems that have remained unresolved for a long time, there are things that have become distorted over time. As Chuseok, the national holiday of South Korea, approaches, many families are getting ready for the traditional ritual, Charye. However, many people today are not well informed about the original significance of Charye and its evolution over time. By questioning the transformation, we can develop a correct understanding and establish values about our tradition beyond mere habit. While perceptions of animals have also improved, unethical farming practices for profit are still widespread. Some say that it does not matter since the animals are going to die anyway, but by questioning why unethical farming is an issue, we can realize that all parts of the ecosystem are connected and that eco-welfare is paramount. Culture also posits a question. When appreciating someone’s artwork, we keep questioning to understand the artist’s intentions and the message they aim to convey. Similarly, by questioning aspects of sign language, which is a part of someone’s identity, we can learn about their culture and community, fostering coexistence and mutual understanding.

When questioning the familiar reality surrounding us, many hidden aspects can be uncovered and lead to profound discoveries. Such questioning allows us to understand the origin of things, identify underlying problems, and gain deeper insights. These seemingly small acts of questioning can ultimately become steps that help yield significant improvements. 📖

By Kim Yi-eun
Editor-in-Chief

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>> Since its official establishment on September 5, 1948, the Republic of Korea (ROK) Armed Forces has been subject to continuous public scrutiny. Questions about the safety of those serving, the fairness of the conscription system, and the treatment of families of deceased soldiers have persisted. As the ROK Armed Forces approaches its 76th anniversary, it is time to address these longstanding concerns. If people continue to rely on temporary fixes, the same problems will resurface. Let's explore the government's efforts to tackle these issues and the steps necessary to establish a more just and equitable military.

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The 58th GSC YeoWoon Upgrades Its Website

The 58th General Student Council (GSC) of HUFS Seoul Campus, YeoWoon, announced the redesign of its official website on Aug. 6, 2024. This revamp aims to improve students' efficiency and enhance convenience by providing comprehensive information about YeoWoon, including its introduction, constitution, and activity reports.

To facilitate easier navigation, the website's categories have been reorganized. Additionally, the organization chart and member introductions have been updated to provide clear information about the current GSC members. New Q&A and suggestion boards have also been created to address students' inquiries and gather diverse opinions on future projects. YeoWoon has also adopted a responsive design to enhance accessibility in its mobile version for students. This change addresses previous inconveniences students encountered when accessing the website on mobile devices.

YeoWoon plans to utilize this platform to publicize various future projects. Oh Chang-hwa, the president of YeoWoon stated, "The recent upgrades to the university website not only enhance the user interface but also introduce interactive features to facilitate two-way communication between students and the administration." He also added, "YeoWoon expects this to serve as a democratic platform for students to easily raise issues and share their opinions." Furthermore, suggestion boxes and Q&A boards were available to students starting Aug. 19. "YeoWoon will carefully review all submissions and, if necessary, collaborate with relevant departments within the university to address issues," President Oh assured, promising to do their utmost to implement suggestions aimed at improving the convenience and welfare of Hufsans. 📧



▲ YeoWoon introduces the redesigned version of its website.

By Kim Si-yon
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The 58th GSC YeoWoon Enhances HUFS Wi-Fi Infrastructure

A Wi-Fi upgrade project was carried out by the 58th General Student Council (GSC), YeoWoon at the Seoul Campus of HUFS from July 15 to Aug. 23 and students can expect a significantly improved Wi-Fi experience from September onwards. This project focused solely on public Wi-Fi: Hufs_Seoul, Eduroam. The Wi-Fi upgrade involved the relocation and installation of new routers, and the Hufs_Seoul re-login process has been scrapped. Starting from September, when using the Hufs_Seoul public Wi-Fi, users only need to log in once, and subsequent use does not require re-login.

This Wi-Fi upgrade project was one of the promises of YeoWoon but had been delayed due to budget issues during the previous winter break. However, to prevent further delays during this summer break, YeoWoon continuously held meetings with the university president and the Information Technology infrastructure team to discuss the construction plan. As a result, the construction was completed in time for students to enjoy the improved Wi-Fi before the start of the fall semester.

Oh Chang-hwa, the president of GSC YeoWoon stated, "The current Wi-Fi enhancement project is being carried out to address the frequent disconnections and slow speeds that students experienced the most during the spring semester." He also promised that "We will do our utmost to ensure that students can fully concentrate on their studies in the fall semester through improved connectivity and speed of school Wi-Fi." With the completion of the Wi-Fi upgrade, students can anticipate a significant reduction in connectivity issues. 📧




▲ HUFS Wi-Fi with improved connectivity and speed enhances Hufsans' school life quality.

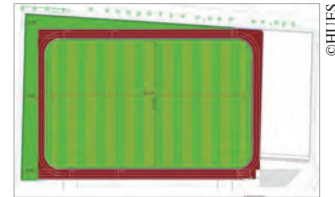
By Kim Si-yon
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HUFS Playfield Facilities Improve

The construction of the HUFS Seoul Campus playfield facility improvement project will be completed by Sep. 13, 2024. Work is underway to convert the existing dirt playfield into a grass playfield. Improvements include the installation of artificial turf, goal posts and fences, a jogging track and improvements to the outdoor toilets.

Four areas of improvements were made to facilities to enhance the previous playfield. Artificial turf will be installed, along with new goal posts and fences at both ends of the field. These are facilities for students who felt uncomfortable playing soccer on the dirt field. In addition, a jogging track will be installed around the artificial turf separate the soccer field from the running area. This is to lessen the inconvenience of students walking or jogging on the field. Lastly, the outdoor bathrooms were upgraded so that students at HUFS who use the playfield can enjoy a more comfortable environment.

The Construction Planning Team of HUFS said, “To ensure the safety of school members and for smooth construction management, entry and access around the construction site will be restricted during the construction period. Please understand if there is some inconvenience. It will be worth it for school events such as sports competitions and festivals to be held in a more pleasant and updated environment for students.” It is expected that students will be able to use the playfield with an improved environment starting from the Fall semester. 



▲ Students can view the playfield layout plan on the HUFS website.


By Park Se-eun

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HUFS SCC Provides CWCY Counseling Fees

The HUFS Student Counseling Center (SCC) provides partial support for counseling fees at the Seoul and Dongdaemun Ward Metropolitan Counseling and Welfare Centers for Youth (CWCY) for students attending the HUFS Seoul Campus. The application period is from July 1 to Dec. 31, and 30 applicants will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. Students can apply by filling out the Google form application through the announcements posted to SCC's website or Instagram account.

The counseling fee support project provides counseling fee support for eight out of a total of 12 sessions for one-on-one, face-to-face counseling services among the several personal counseling. The personal counseling service is a service that helps people relieve difficulties in their lives through psychological and mental counseling. Students can visit the counseling center in person and have a one-on-one conversation with a professional counselor to get help resolving their concerns.

The main goal of the SCC's counseling fee support project is to ensure the mental health of all students attending HUFS. HUFS SCC said, “As the waiting period at the Seoul Campus SCC became longer, a business agreement was signed with the CWCY so that students could receive counseling at a nearby location so that they could quickly receive counseling and improve their mental health.” The center also mentioned that they hope HUFS students who need help with their mental health will be able to relieve their anxieties and worries and live a healthy school life through this project. 



▲ The QR Code on the bottom right is linked to the Google form application for the CWCY personal counseling fee support project.

By Park Se-eun

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"Real Banksy- Banksy is NOWHERE"

: The Art of Peace Beyond Walls

By Park Se-eun

Staff Reporter of Culture Section

“Peace is not merely the absence of war. It is a state of justice and empathy.” These words from Martin Luther King Jr. describe Banksy’s concept of peace. King, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, expanded the concept of peace from simply being an exception to war to pertaining to a range of social justice and fairness issues. Likewise, Banksy does not limit peace to the absence of war; he pursues a state of justice and equality, visits places where social conflicts occur, delivers messages of peace, and seeks to bring social change through his works.

The exhibition, “Real Banksy: Banksy is NOWHERE,” was planned based on the research results of Banksy expert curators and consists only of works certified by the “Pest Control Office.”* In particular, it is characterized by capturing Banksy’s perspective on peace through his 25 years of work. Also, this exhibition demonstrates through his works, not just passive peace but active peace in a state where social justice and equality are achieved. Experience peace up close that seems so distant in our modern society rife with war, injustice, and inequality. The Argus takes a broad look at the value of peace through Banksy’s art, which calls for change in society through his unique style and seeks to clarify the attitude readers should take as global citizens in commemoration of the International Day of Peace on September 21.

*Pest Control Office: A company founded by Banksy that verifies whether Banksy’s works are genuine or fake

Before Reading Who is Banksy?



▲ Banksy is an artist who has never revealed his face.

Banksy is the British pseudonym of a graffiti artist who has been active since the 1990s. Graffiti is a method of drawing or leaving letters and other traces in public places. Banksy is also called an “unidentified artist” as he hides his identity and creates works on buildings and alley walls that satirize the contradictions of the global village and expose the absurdity of power. His works mainly

include themes such as criticism of systemic issues in pursuit of peace, non-violence, and environmental protection. He does not limit the role of art to simply aesthetic pleasure but seeks to bring about change in society through his works. Also, he crafted his works by carefully considering the political and social messages contained, their relationship with the place, and the period of his work. Through this, he made his intangible self “exist” as an artist, and the exhibition was titled “Real Banksy: Banksy is NOWHERE” to reflect this meaning.

Viewing Information

Location:

Ground Seoul Special Exhibition Hall (4-minute walk from Exit 3-1 of Jonggak Station)

Period:

2024.05.10 - 2024.10.20 / Closed on Chuseok (September 17)

Time:

10 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Last admission 6 p.m.)

Admission Fee:

Adults: 20,000 won (US\$14.64) / Teenagers and Children: 15,000 won (US\$10.98)

Section 1. Where is Real Banksy?

: *The Silence of War*

In the first section, Banksy captures scenes of global violence and discrimination. His works depict a peaceful society free from war and suffering, with a particular focus on the Israel-Palestine conflict, a territorial and political dispute that has persisted since the early 20th century. This ongoing conflict is marked by frequent violence and human rights abuses, threatening regional stability and peace. In response to the suffering caused by this conflict, Banksy began voicing his call for peace in the early 2000s. He emphasizes the pursuit of peace instead of violence, conveying a message that the hopes and dreams of future generations should not be crushed by war or conflicts.

Upon entering the first section of the exhibition, you can see a timeline of Banksy's activities displayed along the walls. Banksy has consistently been present in scenes of global violence and discrimination, depicting a peaceful society free from war and suffering. As you move further in and turn left, you encounter one of Banksy's representative works, "Flower Thrower" (2005). In this piece, a man assumes a stance as if to throw a bomb. But instead of a bomb, he holds a bouquet of flowers. The bouquet symbolizes the essential values of peace and love that are crucial for ending war. This artwork was created on the separation barrier, also known as the Palestinian wall, dividing Israel and Palestine. Banksy used this artwork to commemorate the lives lost due to the prolonged conflict, expressing peace and love amidst the violence and terrorism between the two nations.



▲ Flower Thrower (2005)



▲ Bomb Hugger (2003)

©Park Se-eun / The Argus

A young girl embraces something as big as herself with a loving smile. Upon closer inspection, the object she is holding is a powerful black bomb. The bright pink background conveys warmth, while the simple yet bold lines create a visual impact. The innocence of the girl

hugging the bomb without knowing its deadly power, gives a sense of unsettling dissonance. This is Banksy's artwork "Bomb Hugger" (2003), contrasting the frightening reality of war with the purity of a child. By highlighting the contrast between the girl's pure smile and the deadly bomb, Banksy suggests that peace and love can counteract the fear of war. The pink background symbolizes love and peace, while the girl's clear smile and warm embrace of the bomb demonstrate how these values should be put into practice. Through this, Banksy aims to encourage those who are not directly experiencing war to empathize with and understand the pain of those who are.

At the end of Section 1, the atmosphere changes dramatically from the earlier vibrant artworks. Simple drawings of guns are placed on a white canvas resembling an airport security checkpoint. Entering through this checkpoint reveals the world of Dismaland, a realm filled with ruins and bleakness. An old, creaky carousel and a dark, black castle appear before you, evoking a chilling atmosphere that seems ready to crumble at any moment. Dismaland, a blend of "Disneyland" and "dismal" was a theme park created by Banksy that operated from August 21 to September 27, 2015 in Somerset, England. Unlike the typical amusement park, which is often described as a "land of dreams" filled with cheerful sounds of children, colorful balloons, and hopeful expectations, Dismaland offers a stark contrast, recreating a gloomy, dystopian amusement park to satirize modern society. While typical amusement parks are spaces overflowing with dreams and hope, Dismaland exposes



▲ Dismaland (2015)

©Park Se-eun / The Argus

the contrast with our reality, which is not all about dreams and fantasy. Now, have you noticed that even the dreams and hopes of amusement parks are fabricated for profit? Through the contrast between reality and the amusement park, Banksy uses this satire to highlight the contradictions of amusement parks,

underscoring that our reality is not simply a world filled with dreams and illusions.

Section 2. Girl with Balloon

: *Voices of the Voiceless*

In Section 2, Banksy further expands the meaning of peace by addressing those suffering under capitalist systems, such as the impoverished, refugees, and the poor. Capitalism leads to significant disparities in resource distribution, disrupting peace and exacerbating social and economic divides. While the gap between the wealthy and the poor widens, concern for the impoverished diminishes, leaving them with fewer opportunities and a diminished ability to voice their struggles. Banksy speaks for these marginalized individuals who struggle to make their voices heard, critiquing a system where economic and social minorities are often sacrificed for profit.



▲ Girl with Balloon (2004)

©Park Se-eun / The Argus

As you ascend the stairs, you encounter Banksy's iconic work, "Girl with Balloon" (2004). In this piece, a small girl reaches out toward a heart-

shaped red balloon. The balloon represents precious hopes and dreams, while the girl symbolizes a Syrian refugee. The girl's outstretched hand suggests she may have either lost the balloon or is trying to catch it as it flies away. This image evokes a sense of longing and loss, illustrating the girl's desperate attempt to grasp her last hope in the face of adversity. The contrast between the girl's earnestness and the fleeting balloon highlights the impact of harsh realities on vulnerable individuals. The artwork calls viewers to reflect on their own responses to the suffering of refugees and to consider how hope and resilience manifest in the face of hardship. Meanwhile, there is an interesting story behind the successful bid for "Girl with Balloon" at Sotheby's auction in London in 2018. Immediately after the sale, Banksy performed a stunt where the lower half of the painting was shredded by a hidden device in the frame, critiquing the commodification of art. The fact that the shredded artwork increased in value shows a stark contrast between the pure hope embodied by the girl and the commercial exploitation of art.



▲ Love Rat (2004)

©Park Se-eun / The Argus



▲ Because I'm Worthless (2004)

©Park Se-eun / The Argus

Continuing along the walls, you can see works with a similar color scheme of black lines and red accents, but with a rougher tone. "They exist without permission. They are hated, chased, captured, and abused. They live in dirty, unsanitary conditions and silent despair. Yet, with determination, they could claim a complete civilization as their own. If you feel dirty, disrespected, or unloved, your ultimate role model is the rat." The rat serves as a model in Banksy's art and represents the socially disadvantaged within the capitalist system. By using the symbolism of rats, creatures that are dirty and despised yet persist, Banksy highlights the suffering and exclusion of

Section 3. Real Banksy, Real Me

: *Breaking Chains*

these marginalized individuals. In Banksy's works, several rats appear as protagonists, such as a rat drawing a heart with red paint, or a rat holding a sign that reads "Because I'm worthless" with a sullen expression. The artwork "Love Rat" (2004), which depicts a rat painting a heart on the wall with red paint, carries a dual message of love and rebellion. The heart, symbolizing love and hope, is painted on the wall, while the act of graffiti is an illegal act of resistance against the system. This juxtaposition suggests that love and resistance can coexist, or that love can be expressed as a form of resistance against the system. The determined expression of the rats, even in difficult circumstances, encourages viewers to join in efforts to change the vicious cycle of the capitalist system.



▲ Napalm (2004)

Further into the exhibition, works depicting the harsh realities faced by refugee children are showcased. One poignant piece features Mickey Mouse and Ronald McDonald pulling the arms of a young girl crying. This image contrasts the cheerful mascots symbolizing consumerism and capitalism, with the suffering of the child, illustrating the dissonance between corporate facades and the grim realities of war and exploitation. This is the artwork "Napalm" (2004), and the central figure of the girl is Phan Thi Kim Phuc, a Vietnamese girl who was burned by the napalm attack during the Vietnam War in 1972. Banksy's depiction of Kim Phuc, with the corporate mascots juxtaposed against her pain, critiques the exploitation of war for capitalist gain and the indifference of consumer culture toward the suffering it perpetuates. The piece highlights how economic interests and commercial exploitation often overshadow the human cost of conflict, accentuating the need to recognize and address these injustices.

"The great crime in this world lies not in breaking rules but in following them. A person who follows orders to drop bombs and massacre villagers is committing a great crime." Section 3 further expounds on the meaning of peace. Rather than limiting peace-harming beings to specific targets, the works expand and incorporate them into social structures that force people to obey authority. Banksy says that political leaders and authorities are indifferent to the suffering of society and



▲ I Fought the Law (2004)

exercising unconditional obedience to those in authority.

A person is lying on the floor with the phrase "I Fought the Law and I Won" written on the wall in red paint. At first glance, the red paint on his hand looks like blood. Three armed agents from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) surround the fallen man. The work "I Fought the Law" (2004) is taken from a movie about the assassination attempt by John Hinckley on U.S. President Ronald Reagan that occurred on March 30, 1981. In the eyes of the law, the street artist, who is considered a criminal who paints in public places without permission, is holding a brush rather than a gun, but the armed CIA agents strongly suppress him with the conferred authority that they have no choice but to obey. By reconstructing movie scenes, Banksy emphasizes his own hardships in confronting authorities and urges the public, who simply conform to the existing order, to resist injustice.

The Virgin Mary, draped in black, holds yellow poison and feeds it to a baby. Queen Elizabeth of England is transformed

pursue their own interests while exercising power. Banksy criticizes the public's lack of critical thinking and apparent indifference to social issues and urges them to live independent lives rather than



©Park Se-eun / The Argus

▲ Virgin Mary (Poison Mary) (2003)



©Park Se-eun / The Argus

▲ The Monkey Queen (2003)



©Park Se-eun / The Argus

▲ Tough War (2003)

into a monkey, and Winston Churchill, the 42nd Prime Minister of England, is transformed into a rock star with a rough expression and flashy hair. Seeing scenes of people who seemed so distant and untouchable with funny appearances, their authority feels irrelevant and perhaps even ridiculous. In “Virgin Mary (Poison Mary)” (2003), “The Monkey Queen” (2003), and “Tough War” (2003), Banksy depicts a person who is considered an authority figure committing evil deeds and making the world’s leading figures behave absurdly. Through this transformation, they show resistance to the authority and excessive control of social leaders.



©Park Se-eun / The Argus

▲ Pulp Fiction (2007)

If you go to the back of the large wall, you can see two men holding guns with stern expressions but holding bananas in their hands instead of guns. The tense atmosphere of the existing movie is nowhere to be found, and only the ridiculous appearances of the two characters appear. “Pulp Fiction” (2007) is a work adapted from the film “Pulp Fiction” (1994) by director Quentin Tarantino. By having the film’s main characters, Samuel Jackson and John Travolta, hold bananas instead of pistols, the violence of authority in the film is allegorically exaggerated and the static characteristics are

eliminated. In this exhibition, “Pulp Fiction” is recreated to fill a large wall, showing Banksy’s graffiti work method. In this work, the tense atmosphere of the existing film is nowhere to be found, and only comical scenes appear. Like this, Banksy focuses on conveying social messages by utilizing symbolic images of popular culture and films.

Section 4.

Banksy is Now Here

: Take Action! For a Better World

“I don’t think I can spend all that money alone while creating the art of poverty in the world. That’s too ironic for me, too.” In the final section, Banksy not only recognizes peace in his mind, but also urges the public to put peace into action. This section also sets a precedent for acting for peace first, from conveying the message to the work itself, showing the way for the public to walk along their own path.



©Park Se-eun / The Argus

▲ Game Changer (2020)

As soon as you enter the last area, you can see the work “Game Changer” (2020) on the left wall. The image shows a young boy sitting on the floor playing with a superhero toy. What is unusual at this juncture is that Batman and Spider-Man toys are lying on the floor, and the boy has a nurse toy in his hand. The nurse toy is wearing a cape like a superhero, reaching forward and taking a flying posture. “Game Changer” expresses respect and appreciation for dedicated health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. By portraying nurses as new heroes instead of traditional superheroes, it emphasizes that healthcare workers were the true heroes of

the pandemic. In addition to “Game Changer”, Banksy also created “Marine Assault” (2017), and “Civilian Drone Strike” (2017). The proceeds from these works have been donated to organizations such as National Health Service-supported charities, rehabilitation charities for the disabled, anti-arms trade movements and human rights organizations, and the Office of Refugee. Through the exhibition, Banksy goes beyond merely viewing his artwork as entertainment and urges viewers to take action based on the messages he conveys. Additionally, by donating the proceeds from his works to those in need, he demonstrates a path toward peace and encourages the audience to join him in this effort.

Passing through Banksy’s works, there is a video of smiling people wearing a T-shirt, which was created by Banksy in 2020, with the front of the T-shirt featuring Banksy’s hometown, along with the words “Bristol,” a message against racism. Bristol is a region that played an important role in the slave trade in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and it is a city where racist elements have taken root. Among the city’s historical heritage, there were elements that remind us of a racist past, such as the monument depicting the slave merchant ship “Colston’s Statue” which was toppled during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. Banksy sought to raise awareness of the current issue of racism by reminding Bristol of these regional features and its historical context through a T-shirt with Bristol on it. In addition, Banksy donated the proceeds from the T-shirts to anti-racist charities, allowing people who bought and wore the T-shirts to naturally contribute to anti-racism.



▲ A man is wearing a T-shirt with “Bristol” written on it.

A 21-year-old female viewer majoring in Architectural Art who attended the exhibition said, “I thought I knew a lot about Banksy but I was wrong. I came to see the exhibition, and it was amazing to see more diverse materials than I expected. I was even more surprised to learn that Banksy himself donated the proceeds from the artwork. It was an opportunity for me to promise to help people who are struggling in their daily lives a little more and to put charity into action.” Banksy suggests that the public abandon a contemplative and passive attitude and actively tackle social problems. His adherence to “unnamed,” “unrealistic,” “illegal,” and “temporary” forms of activity also rejects the existing order in which the public contemplates and only neglects social issues. “Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable.” Banksy is an artist who transforms society through his work, rather than limiting the role of art to aesthetic pleasure.

As global citizens, it is imperative for all of us to recognize the importance of peace and put it into practice. Peace is an essential value for resolving social and international conflicts and building harmonious communities. Banksy looks at peace from a variety of perspectives and, through his work, induces the public to follow the meaning of true peace that he has depicted. Take a look at Banksy’s “peace” and reflect on a sustainable and peaceful society. 🌱

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Artist Kim Geun-tae: “Brillons Ensemble, Shine Together” in Paris

By Park Gyeong-jin
Associate Editor of Culture Section



After the Olympics drew to a spectacular close, Paris was once again heated up with a festive mood to host the Paralympics.* Amidst this enthusiasm, some people have as fierce a challenge as sports stars. These are the artists with developmental disabilities featured in the exhibition “2024 Paris ArtPara.” From September 2 to 11, 2024, during the Paris Summer Paralympics, over 100 pieces by 80 artists with developmental disabilities from 30 countries were exhibited at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) headquarters in Paris. The exhibition, held under the name “ArtPara,” is the only event where artists with developmental disabilities from around the world gather for a joint exhibition, marking its fourth this summer. In commemoration of it, Artist Kim Geun-tae, who founded ArtPara, talks with The Argus. He sincerely hopes to share the inherent beauty of human beings he sees from people with developmental disabilities widely through ArtPara, dreaming of a world where “people with and without disabilities, art and healing, peace and freedom come together.” In an in-depth interview with Artist Kim, he will share the journey of holding ArtPara and show

how he opens new possibilities for artists with disabilities. The Argus aims to form a society that actively cares for and supports the international activities of artists with disabilities.

*Paralympics: According to the Paris 2024 Olympics, the Paralympic Games are the Olympic-style games for athletes with a disability. Taking place every four years in the same year as the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games have since grown into one of the world's biggest sports events, with a track record for driving social inclusion.

Before Reading **ArtPara**

ArtPara is an exhibition of artworks by artists with developmental disabilities worldwide, bringing people together through art. Initiated by People with Disabilities and Friends of Five Continents, a non-government organization of South Korea (hereafter Korea), which discovers the potential of artists with disabilities and supports their growth, ArtPara seeks to provide a special exhibition opportunity for these artists, following the Paralympic spirit of promoting non-discriminatory sports activities. ArtPara has been showcased at notable spaces and events including the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) in 2017, the PyeongChang Paralympics and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2018, and the Gangwon Winter Youth Olympics in 2024. The ArtPara held at the OECD headquarters in Paris in September 2024 continued its successful tradition.

Paralleling the Footsteps of Artist Kim Geun-tae

1 Could you please give us a brief introduction about yourself?

Hello, The Argus readers. I am Kim Geun-tae, a Western-style artist who paints works featuring people with developmental disabilities as models. I plan and hold exhibitions such as ArtPara with the People with Disabilities and Friends of Five Continents.

2 In addition to the “2024 Paris ArtPara,” your other artistic endeavors have consistently been with people with developmental disabilities. In particular, you have captured their inherent beauty on canvas, such as in “Like Wildflowers, Like Stars” (2015), which portrays children with developmental disabilities. What inspired you to focus on this theme in your works?

©People with Disabilities and Friends of Five Continents



▲ “Like Wildflowers, Like Stars” (2015) is an artwork that was completed over three years, starting in July 2012 by Artist Kim. He expresses his desire to show the four seasons to children with developmental disabilities with the motif “Four Seasons” by Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi.

After engaging in the May 18 Democratic Uprising* in 1980 while in college, I went through a period where I struggled to find a direction in my personal life due to the trauma I experienced. Then in 1990, I encountered people with developmental disabilities at an institute for people with disabilities on Goha Island in the city of Mokpo, South Jeolla Province (313 kilometers southeast of Seoul). Immersing myself in their world, I began to draw as if I were freed from myself. The more I drew, the more I discovered the inherent purity and beautiful light in them. For me, people with disabilities were not just models but were beings that emanated in my eyes with complete personalities. I created my artistic world in the organic relationship between neighbors and the society they built. I wanted to indicate through my art that if the vulnerable are ignored in organic relationships, society remains immature.

*The May 18 Democratic Uprising: According to the Korea Heritage Service, on May 18, 1980, the people of Gwangju passionately protested against the nationwide imposition of martial law. The new military government responsible for the coup dispatched special force paratroopers to Gwangju to suppress a peaceful protest led by university students and citizens.

3 Have you ever felt limited while working as an artist with a disability? And what are some of the specific difficulties faced by artists with developmental disabilities you have worked with?

Even though I was blinded in one eye from a car accident, it has not been a big problem for me to work as a painter. My disability is just uncomfortable. Actually, my disability allowed me to develop a deep and broad perspective so that with only one eye I could create a large-scale work titled “Like Wildflowers, Like Stars” (2015), which measures 100 meters in length. However, the situation for some artists with developmental disabilities is different from mine. Mostly, they are shunned and neglected wherever they are in our society because of their lack of communication skills and different appearance from others. In the early stages of working and holding exhibitions with artists with developmental disabilities, there were many cynical attitudes and comments such as, “What kind of art can people with developmental disabilities create?” Although it is getting better gradually, this discriminatory treatment persists today. Therefore, creating art and holding exhibitions is not easy for them at all.

However, when I was invited to the United Nations (UN) exhibition in 2015, I learned that the UN Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that, “Recognizing that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” This realization shifted my perspective to understand that accepting the diversity of our society and sensitively encouraging each individual’s potential is fundamental to ensuring dignity and freedom for the future of humanity.

“Side by Side” in the 2024 Paris ArtPara

4 What is the meaning of the theme for the 2024 Paris ArtPara, “Brillons Ensemble, Shine Together”?

“Brillons Ensemble, Shine Together,” the theme of this year’s ArtPara, refers to the artists with developmental disabilities



©ArtPara

▲ More than 100 pieces are displayed at the 2024 Paris ArtPara, with 25 works and two media pieces by Artist Kim displayed separately.

who have pure beauty. At the same time, it signifies the light emanating from their works. ArtPara is a cultural Olympics bringing people together through artworks. “ArtPara” derives from the term “Para,” which means “next to, side by side, together.” In the summer of 2024 in Paris, alongside the global celebration of the Olympics and Paralympics, the beautiful light from the artists with pure spirit warmed up the whole of humanity.

5 “2024 Paris ArtPara,” led by you, recently brought down the final curtain. What motivated you to hold this kind of exhibition? Additionally, how does this ArtPara differ from the ones in years past?

Through over 30 years of artistic activities, I was led to a vision in my mind for a platform that could broadly share the most beautiful light found among people with developmental disabilities. So to provide them with an exhibition opportunity, I began collaborating with them from 2017 ArtPara in UNOG. The unprecedented pandemic era of COVID-19 imposed restrictions on human actions. Therefore, I felt that we needed to turn our attention to the inherent nature of humanity instead of focusing on actions to manage our lives. In this milieu, I wanted to declare this public agenda. When it comes to differences from the previous exhibitions, the number of participating countries and artists was small at first since it was less known, but now the scale has grown while retaining the same nature of ArtPara.

6 More than 100 pieces by 80 artists from 30 countries were exhibited in this ArtPara, and I am curious about the process and criteria of selecting these 100 among many works.

Finding artwork from each country was a big challenge for me. Since 2016, whenever I held a global exhibition, I expected that artists with developmental disabilities might come, but I never met any of them. I tried to find them like a thirsty deer wandering anxiously to search for water, but it was not easy. “How can I meet them,” I wondered. After much thought, I discussed it with the exhibition organizer, who subsequently collected a few pieces from five continents from all over the world through various connections. Also, I emailed ambassadors from over 100 countries to ask for help collecting more works from various countries, but only two or three countries responded with cooperation. For the Paris exhibition, I began reaching out with the help of coordinators from Europe, Eurasia, Asia, and France. They all worked diligently for several months. As a result, we collected 126 pieces, but unfortunately, due to the limited space at the OECD exhibition hall, we could only display 100 pieces. The criteria for selecting from the many works were originality and pureness of heart. In truth, each artwork has equal value, without judging one as better or worse than another. I ask the readers respectfully to appreciate their works. It will not be easy to choose one, as each has a unique feature.

7 Along the same vein, what kind of attitude and thoughts should the audience have when appreciating the artworks featured in ArtPara?

In my works, a French philosopher Michel Foucault’s significant philosophical question, “What’s normal and what’s abnormal,” is constantly being asked. I do not aim to evoke



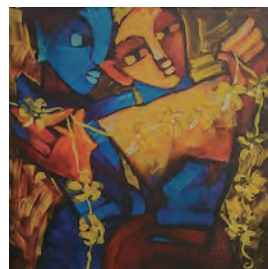
©People with Disabilities and Friends of Five Continents

▲ “Still Life” (2023) is a painting by Shamkhal Khalafli from Azerbaijan.



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▲ “A Beauty” (2023) is a painting by Mussa Issa from Tanzania.



©People with Disabilities and Friends of Five Continents

▲ “Dance of Hope” (2017) is a painting by Fatima Zahra FASKA from Morocco.



©People with Disabilities and Friends of Five Continents

▲ “Hello Sun” (2023) is a painting by Leong Si Jun from Singapore.

sympathy by emphasizing the disabled body, nor do my works glorify my subjects by only expressing their pure souls. Rather, artists with developmental disabilities show a new area that moves away from dichotomous thinking, communicating with uncomfortable bodies and infinitely free souls. My work addresses the issue of “physicality” in a tangible way but does not neglect the problems of “soul, rationality, and ego.” I would appreciate it if the audience could view the works from this perspective.

Beyond the Line of Nationality and Disability, “Together”

- 8** You founded the organization People with Disabilities and Friends of Five Continents and have been conducting various international activities. When did you feel that this organization was having a positive impact on society?



▲ Director-General Azoulay attends the 2018 UNESCO Invitational Exhibition to appreciate various works and talk to artists.

“Artists, like people with disabilities, introduce new perspectives and give us different ways of seeing

things, and we are grateful for that.” This is what Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of UNESCO, who actively supported the event, said, reflecting on her impressions of the 2018 UNESCO ArtPara. I think this statement captures the essence of ArtPara perfectly. People with disabilities are different from us, but they are simply different, not wrong. Something may be uncomfortable, but that does not mean it is abnormal. And of course, the reality is different from these truths. In this paradox, people with developmental disabilities see the most essential aspects of people and the world from their serene depths. They translate this vision into their artwork. Their paintings differ in color, composition,

and in endless other ways. Another hidden truth lies behind the surface of the world that others might miss. Director-General Azoulay captured it. Viewing the works of artists with developmental disabilities can widen our perspective. Just as ArtPara gifted her a new perspective, I hope more people will experience this precious insight.

- 9** We would like to hear your thoughts on the future of ArtPara. What role do you want this exhibition to play globally, and how do you want it to grow?


People with Disabilities and Friends of Five Continents and I plan to hold ArtPara every time the Summer and Winter Paralympics take place. Just as the Olympics brings the world together through sports, ArtPara aims to create a festival where people with and without disabilities unite through art. We also set a goal to hold the International Disability Arts and Culture Olympiad during the 2026 Winter Paralympics in Milan. For this, on September 3 during the 2024 Paris ArtPara, a forum was held at the OECD headquarters in Paris with representatives from eight countries, including Korea, France, and the United States. We will continue to expand our network of allied nations. My goal is for ArtPara to grow continually, like the Paralympics, into a cultural Olympics involving artists with developmental disabilities from more countries.

- 10** Do you have a message for The Argus readers who support you and ArtPara?

We will continue to work hard to promote ArtPara widely so that more people can enjoy the wonderful works of artists with developmental disabilities. Because it may not have been possible for readers to visit the exhibition in person at the OECD headquarters in Paris, we are running an online exhibition (<https://art-para.com/artpara-2024-paris-gallery/>). Please enjoy our works and support us with warm hearts and eyes. Thank you.

When Artist Kim was asked if there was a particular artwork that he favored, he answered, “Each piece is so precious in its own right,” due to the distinct originality of each work and the immeasurable effort of the artists. That was his firm yet warm answer based on his vast experience and understanding on why he could not choose a single work. The 2024 ArtPara has become an international platform that bridges the gap between societal limitations and endless possibilities for artists with developmental disabilities through their artworks. At the heart of this initiative, Artist Kim wholeheartedly captures and conveys individuals’ beauty, regardless of nationality and disability. After the memorable summer of Paris, why not immerse yourself deeply in the stories shared by Artist Kim and artists with developmental disabilities? 📷

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“Okja”:

Hidden Cruelty of Factory Farming

By Park Se-eun

Staff Reporter of Culture Section

“**H**er pain and fear will taint the meat.”

Mirando, the president of Mirando Corporation in the movie “Okja” (2017), looks at the super pigs who are trapped in a livestock field and howl in pain as if they are taken for granted. For Mirando, super pigs are not emotional, sentient creatures, they are just a corporate product. Director Bong Joon-ho’s movie “Okja” denounces the harsh realities of food production and corporate greed, showing how easily companies can abandon life and ethics for the sake of profit.

Currently, the discussion of animal rights issues has led to changes in many aspects of our society, such as law, consumption culture, and environmental protection. The new law to ban the breeding, butchering, distribution, and sale of dogs for meat which went into effect on August 7, was an opportunity to shift the existing ethical discussions that were previously limited to dogs. As the status of dogs improved, the social awareness that was limited to ethical discussions about dogs began to expand to livestock such as pigs and cows. But while the welfare of dogs has improved, awareness and improvement of the conditions for cows, pigs, or chickens, which are the center of unethical breeding, is still lacking. In the case of animals classified as livestock, not only is the policy on animal welfare* insufficient, but there are also people who do not even recognize that it is a problem. The Argus sequentially follows the messages presented by “Okja” beyond mere sympathy for animals and illuminates why these unethical breeding practices should be treated as a serious social problem, prompting readers to join in problem awareness and resolution.

* Animal Welfare: A veterinary commitment that encompasses all aspects of an animal’s wellbeing, both physical and mental

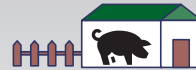


Summary of the Movie "Okja"



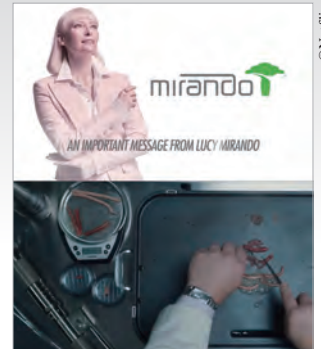
▲ Okja (L) and Mija (R) are having a peaceful day.

The movie "Okja" begins with the announcement of the super pig project a decade ago of Mirando Corporation, a global food company. The project is an experiment to create a super pig through genetic manipulation that can produce much more meat than conventional pigs. Mirando Corporation sends 26 super pigs from around the world to families in different countries to study the environmental conditions for optimal meat productivity, planning for the Super Pig Contest a decade later. Among them, Okja, a super pig who was sent to South Korea (hereafter Korea), grows up like a member of the family with a young girl named Mija who lives with her grandfather in the mountains. However, the peaceful lives of Okja and Mija are shattered by the Mirando Corporation's "Super Pig Contest." One peaceful day, a doctor from Mirando's U.S. corporate headquarters visits the mountain where Okja lives. Impressed by Okja's tremendous growth, he tells Mija that Okja should participate in the Super Pig Contest held in the United States. Okja then wins the contest and is taken to New York, and Mija heads there to save Okja. At the New York branch of the Mirando Corporation, Mija witnesses firsthand the unethical breeding practices and learns the shocking truth that Okja will be slaughtered and consumed as meat. In response, Mija begins her journey to rescue Okja from the Mirando Corporation in partnership with the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), an animal protection organization. In the end, Mija successfully negotiates with Mirando using the golden pig and rescues Okja, allowing them to return to their peaceful life. However, the movie ends with the stark reality that thousands of other super pigs remain trapped in Mirando's unethical farming facilities.



Dark Reality of Corporate Factory Farming

The Mirando Corporation emphasizes keywords such as "Eco-friendly," "Natural" and "Non-Genetically Modified Organism." Also, they advertise that they provide the highest quality ethical pork through natural grazing and natural breeding. But this marketing and the reality were completely different. The Mirando Corporation's true goal was to mass-produce the optimal super pigs for maximum profit. The corporation placed super pigs in a narrow, dark livestock farm with inadequate ventilation, and completely ignored their health and safety. They were given experimental injections dozens of times a day, were forced to interbreed, and even had parts of their flesh cut out and cooked by the doctor of Mirando right in front of them.



▲ Mirando Corporation hides its unethical breeding practices and makes false advertisements.

Corporate Greed and It's Dire Consequences



▲ Numerous pigs are trapped in pig gestation crates.

The problems caused by the extreme profit-making of such companies do not just exist in movies. According to a report released in June 2024

by Animal Equality, a global animal protection organization, well-known fast-food chains such as KFC, Subway, and Papa John's use gestation crates that lock pregnant pigs in metal pens to prevent movement in order to reduce costs through ease of management and space-saving during the breeding process. This pen is usually about 0.61 meters wide and about 2.13 meters long, barely enough for a pig to fit in. A pig trapped in a gestation crate can only move one step forward or one step back and cannot even pull its legs free. Pigs suffer

severe physical and mental pain in these poor conditions reducing muscle strength and bone density and increasing leg injuries, infections and skin inflammation. High levels of stress also have a negative impact on the health of unborn piglets. Despite the controversy, restaurant companies such as First Watch and Texas Roadhouse did not respond to calls to stop the practice, while Dunkin' Donuts, Papa John's, Subway, and others displayed inconsistency by retracting their support after initially agreeing to it.

Breeding is not the only problem. The slaughter process, which does not protect the rights of animals, has a greater impact than unethical breeding. Article 10 of the Animal Protection Act states that no one should cause disgust or slaughter animals in a cruel way, and should not give unnecessary pain, fear, or stress during the slaughter process. According to the Korea Rural Research Institute's Study on the Establishment of Animal Welfare Evaluation Standards during Slaughtering, in October 2019, 12.3 percent of the 7,089 pigs who fainted from the slaughterhouse were slaughtered while regaining consciousness. Also, animals have to be butchered after they die, but the reality is that animals are being cut into pieces by cutting machines while still alive. In an interview with the Kyunghyang News Agency in 2021, Lee Dae-jin, who works in the slaughter industry, said that he does not look at the eyes of animals when blood proofing* during the slaughter process. "Cows know they are there to die, so even while waiting in line at the holding pen, they shed tears. People may not realize it, but pigs cry too. If you look at a fainted pig, you'll see tear stains under its eyes." Just like humans, pigs also experience emotions and feel fear in the face of death. However, companies disregard these characteristics of animals, ignoring their nature and rights, and continue to commit such atrocities solely for the sake of profit.

* Blood Proofing: The process of ensuring that all blood has been adequately drained from the carcass, typically to meet specific hygiene or religious standards

Interconnected Lives: Animal Welfare and Human Welfare

The reason why unethical animal farming should be avoided can be explained through philosophical arguments. Australian philosopher Peter Singer has highlighted that even on farms and in products where animal protection measures are implemented, chickens and pigs are raised in conditions that fall far short of true animal welfare. He argues that without

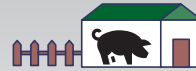
fundamentally changing the paradigm of animal farming, the problem will not be resolved. In other words, Singer calls for a shift in human consciousness as a way to address the root causes of animal exploitation. Singer points out that our habitual carnivorous culture and incorrect notions about animals, which have been ingrained in us from a young age, function as prejudices justifying the current system of animal exploitation. In his theory of animal liberation, Singer defines the prejudice or distorted attitude of defending the interests of one's own species, while excluding the interests of other species as speciesism,* and criticizes it. Just as past human-to-human domination, exploitation, discrimination, and marginalization cannot be justified today, human domination and exploitation of animals should also be seen as similar prejudices to past violence among humans. Therefore, if the justifications for past human societal discrimination are all fictitious, then the domination of animals by humans is also unjustifiable for the same reason, and the relationship between humans and animals should be more equitable and democratic, as exemplified by the relationship between Mija and Okja in the movie.

However, currently, many pigs suffer from unilateral abuse. According to the paper "Animal Liberation Theory and Global Ethics" (2006), by Jo Min-hwan, a professor at Yonsei University's Graduate School of Ethics Education, more than 100 million cattle, pigs, and sheep are raised and slaughtered annually in the U.S. alone. This paper exposes the cruel treatment of animals during their farming and slaughter processes and critiques the anthropocentric reasoning behind human domination of animals. It argues that both producers and consumers are unaware of the suffering caused to animals in the pursuit of human pleasure. Singer's book "Animal Liberation" (1975) emphasizes the principle of equal consideration of interests, which suggests that all beings with sentience* have the right to avoid suffering and pursue pleasure. This implies that it is a moral obligation for humans to strive to reduce animal suffering. Consequently, the suffering of animals is a significant issue that we must morally consider, and the practice of animal welfare should begin with efforts to minimize this suffering. According to the paper "Theoretical and Practical Extension Strategies for Peter Singer's Animal Liberation," (2020) by Kim Hang-chul, a researcher at the Institute of Humanities at Chungnam National University humans can empathize with the suffering

of others. If we make efforts to recognize and reduce the suffering of others, it is possible to argue that the suffering of animals should be considered. Humanity has continuously developed moral standards, and not only has social awareness but also welfare improved along with it. Respecting animal rights contributes to a more just and ethical advancement of human society.

Meanwhile, natural ecosystems consist of animals, plants, microorganisms, and the environments in which they interact, with humans being an integral part of this ecosystem. As a part of the ecosystem, humans interact with nature through resource use, environmental pollution, climate change, and other activities, maintaining a interdependent relationship. Therefore, ecological welfare is essential for the stability and sustainable development of ecosystems. Ecological welfare refers to environmentally friendly human welfare that harmonizes with the ecosystem. This concept is related to human rights and animal rights. Human rights refer to the universal rights that protect and respect human dignity and rights, while animal rights suggest that non-human animals, just like humans, possess the right to life, to avoid suffering, and not to be subjected to abuse. A healthy ecosystem ensures the fundamental rights and safety of both humans and animals. Since both animals and humans are part of the natural ecosystem, protecting animal rights and respecting life contribute to the sustainable development of the ecosystem and, consequently, to the improvement of human welfare. Therefore, achieving human and animal rights through ecological welfare is crucial. Jung Jin A, an activist from the Korean Animal Welfare Association (KAWA) stated, “I hope it becomes widely recognized that improving the lives of animals is not unrelated to our own lives. Everyone’s lives are interconnected, and in a society where the most vulnerable, including animals, live in better conditions and have their values respected, the likelihood of higher levels of human welfare is also increased.” Efforts for animal rights extend beyond the lives of animals to human lives as well. A better society is achieved by caring about the quality of life for both humans and animals, and by continuously working to improve situations and solve problems.

* Speciesism: Discrimination against the moral status of people and animals
* Sentience: Ability to feel pleasure and pain



Breaking the Vicious Cycle



▲ Mija takes Okja with her and leaves Mirando Corporation, leaving behind thousands of super pigs trapped in unethical breeding facilities.

In the movie “Okja,” the ALF has been steadily working for 40 years to rescue and protect animals where the rights of suffering animals are ignored. The ALF teams up with Mija to save Okja, and the ALF fights against

the Mirando Corporation to expose their ugly reality and save the trapped super pigs. The ALF attaches a camera to Okja’s ears to reveal Mirando Corporation’s unethical breeding methods to the public through the media. Mija also succeeds in rescuing Okja from the Mirando Corporation. But other super pigs are still trapped in unethical breeding facilities and doomed to be slaughtered. The scene of the super pigs still trapped in Mirando Corporation while Okja passes by them makes viewers feel uncomfortable. But the scene where the Mirando Corporation continues its unethical slaughter and operates normally without any sanctions, as if nothing happened, suggests that consumers are still buying super pork, and the animal welfare issue is still unresolved.

Activism Against Unethical Practices

Like the activities of the ALF, animal rights activists in society also accuse companies of unethical practices and set a precedent for society to move in a positive direction. They want all animals managed by humans to be treated ethically, and ultimately aim to ensure that humans and animals live in

ecological and ethical harmony. KAWA an animal protection organization, conducted a “Cage-Free Campaign” during the 2024 Paris Olympics. It is a campaign to persuade Paris Baguette, a company with high egg usage and social influence, to use cage-free eggs to alleviate the pain of hens. KAWA sent



▲ The poster above shows the Paris Baguette cage-free project conducted by KAWA.

©Korean Animal Welfare Association

a proposal to the company last June for Paris Baguette's cage-free conversion but has not received any response. Therefore, KAWA is encouraging consumers of the company's products to join in signing a petition requesting Paris Baguette to transition to a cage-free system. As such, animal protection groups strive to encourage citizen participation by conducting activities to ensure actions for animal protection against companies involved in unethical breeding. The aim is to encourage citizens to practice animal welfare by organizing initiatives that are challenging to accomplish through individual efforts alone.

Even If You Know the Truth, Will You Stay Silent?



▲ Mija (L) and Okja (R) communicate emotions through each other's eyes.

Although the unethical practices of the livestock industry are well known in modern society, the long-held

vicious cycle has yet to be completely broken. This is because there are many people who recognize unethical factory breeding and animal husbandry as a problem, but there are significantly fewer people who act to solve it. According to the "National Perception Survey on the Direction of Improving Animal Welfare Policy" (2021) conducted by Aware, 93.6 percent of respondents indicated that they considered farm animal welfare important. However, only 35.7 percent of the respondents supported expansion of consumer consumption of animal welfare livestock products as a measure to improve farm animal welfare. The others considered the role of consumers in improving the uncomfortable for animals to be negligible simply because "that's the way it has always been."

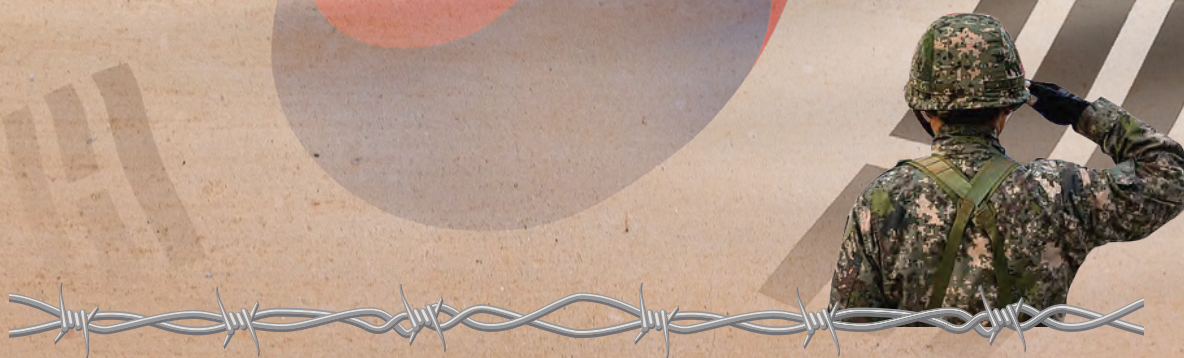
Animals are now recognized as beings with emotions and individuality, not just consumer goods, and interest in the welfare of other livestock as well as the emotional value of pets is spreading. However, efforts to improve the treatment of farm animals in the unethical livestock industry remain insufficient. Pigs and cows are also animals that are no different from dogs and cats, which are mainly raised by humans as pets. Even pigs have higher intelligence and social skills. The effort to protect the rights of dogs, while disregarding the rights of pigs, cows, and other animals that are not personal pets, reflects a contradiction in modern thinking. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that all animals are beings with their own individuality.

The issue of animal protection extends beyond the efforts of environmentalists and requires active participation from both individuals and society in safeguarding animal rights. In modern society, consumers can change corporate behavior by choosing fair and ethical products. In fact, citizens collaborated to propose policies on animal use regulation, reducing unnecessary animal suffering, and limiting animal use to candidates in the 22nd general election. The policy acceptance rate among the 31 candidates who responded to the inquiry was 97 percent. Additionally, the growing popularity of "cage-free" eggs, which ensures that eggs are not produced in cramped battery cages, reflects consumers' increasing willingness to make more ethical choices. Animal activist Jung Jin A said, "I often hear that there is nothing individuals can do when receiving reports, but I believe that if individuals trust in their own power and fully exert it, it can make a difference. The more citizens who find and implement the best actions they can for animals, the faster change will occur." Recognizing that each small action by individuals can collectively transform the lives of animals, let us move forward and take action.

Bong Joon-ho's movie "Okja" vividly portrays the societal structures, corporate greed, and human carnivorous culture that led to the existence of the super pig "Okja," created solely to be consumed by humans. It not only exposes the harsh reality of animal exploitation but also prompts viewers to reflect on their own complicity in this system. Eating meat itself is not inherently wrong. However, we must not ignore the unethical practices of raising and slaughtering countless pigs, cows, and chickens in conditions that cause them immense suffering. The fact that humans are more intelligent or capable than animals does not justify manipulating them as we please. Remember that even small choices can significantly impact animal lives, so we should make our voices heard through small actions in our daily lives. At this very moment, you hold the power to initiate change. 🐷

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Time Marches On, Yet Questions Remain About South Korea's Military



By Kim Si-yon

Staff Reporter of Social Section

“Canteens haven’t changed, so why would the military?” The first season of the drama “D.P.” (2021), which sheds light on military abuses, encapsulates a sentiment that has persisted for decades within the armed forces of South Korea (hereafter Korea) with this single line. The canteen, unchanged since the Korean War* is just one example of the enduring practices within the military. Since its official establishment on September 5, 1948, the Republic of Korea Armed Forces has been dogged by issues such as military service exemption. The vague criteria surrounding military service exemption have ignited social discontent over perceived inequalities. As evidenced by the prevalence of violence within the military, the hierarchical structure designed to safeguard national security has been exploited by some individuals. Additionally, the limited information provided to bereaved families regarding the deaths of soldiers has caused deep wounds. The issues plaguing the military can no longer be considered isolated problems but rather societal ones demanding public attention. Marking the 76th anniversary of Korea’s military in September 2024, The Argus would like to delve deep into the controversies, conflicts, and issues surrounding the Korean military and to explore the path forward.

* Korean War: A conflict between North and South Korea, initiated by North Korea's invasion of the South in 1950, resulting in a three-year war involving major world powers aligned with each side



Military Exemption: A Double Standard That Raises Questions of Fairness

Phenomenon

Military Service Exemption System Failing to Meet Public Expectations

As the world's only divided nation, Korea mandates military service for all able-bodied men aged 18 and older under Article 3 of



▲ Korean wrestler Yang Jung-mo (C) is the first athlete to be exempted from military service after winning a gold medal at the 1976 Montreal Summer Olympics.

©X@KoreaEconInst

the Enforcement Decree of the Military Service Act, in preparation for a potential war. However, in 1973, the Park Chung-hee administration enacted the Military Service Exemption Regulation Act, granting military service exemption benefits to those engaged in arts and sports who met specific criteria. This was enacted after North Korea, Korea's ideological rival, surpassed Korea in the overall medal count at the 1972 Munich Olympics, with the aim of motivating Korean athletes. The law currently allows individuals serving in arts and sports to serve an alternative two years and 10 months by engaging in arts and sports activities in lieu of social work for the promotion of culture and national prestige. This was a national incentive to encourage individuals in the arts and sports to promote and enhance the nation's standing.

However, the criteria for enhancing national prestige have sparked controversy over fairness, particularly regarding the military service exemption of a K-pop artist, BTS. According to a Money Today news report on October 23, 2022, after BTS's third full-length album and English single topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 2018, becoming the first Korean artists to do so, some members of the public argued that they should be assigned to alternative service. Since their global popularity had enhanced Korea's brand image and made significant economic contributions, some argued that assigning them to alternative services was necessary to ensure their continued activities. The public voiced their discontent with the current military service exemption system, which only applies to classical music, traditional Korean music,

and other so-called "pure arts," arguing that it was unfair. In fact, a report titled "Economic Effects of K-Content Exports" released by the Export-Import Bank of Korea in May 2022 estimated that every US\$100 million in K-content exports generates US\$510 million in production-induced effects and creates 2,982 jobs. Furthermore, according to a 2020 national image survey conducted by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST), 78.1 percent of foreigners surveyed had a positive image of Korea in 2020, and 46.6 percent of them cited K-pop, movies, and other aspects of contemporary Korean culture as contributing factors. When the current military service exemption system was established several decades ago, public perception of popular culture artists was relatively low, and it was difficult to imagine the national and global contributions of popular culture. However, the situation has changed, and calls for revision to reflect the current times have grown louder.

Cause

Outdated Criteria for Military Service Exemption

The controversy surrounding the military service exemption system stems from its failure to reflect the changing public perception of national prestige. When comparing the criteria for alternative service in the arts and sports, which require placing second or higher in international or domestic competitions, with the economic impact and positive global image of K-pop artists like BTS, it is difficult to argue that one of them is superior to the other. K-content has become one of the most important factors in Korea's economic growth and increased recognition, yet the military service exemption system continues to exclude popular artists who contribute to the development and dissemination of K-content. However, the government has consistently failed to provide a convincing and rational justification for why popular culture is excluded from the current system, which has exacerbated the ongoing controversy surrounding exemptions.

The current system for arts and sports personnel grants alternative service benefits based on the achievements of individuals in the arts and sports. However, by solely relying on the outdated public perception of national prestige, the system has been criticized for being unfair, because it ignores the achievements of popular artists as opposed to those in "pure arts" or sports. Lee Hye-jeong, a research fellow at the Public

Law Research Center of Legal Research Institute of Korea University argued in her paper “The Legal Concept, Criteria, and Limitations of Enhancing National Prestige: Focusing on the BTS and Military Exemption Controversy” (2022) that the concept of national prestige is difficult to define and reflects the changing notion of national interest over time. Instead of focusing on defining national prestige legally, she argued that a more reasonable solution should be sought through a consensus among the public. However, the current system has not provided an answer as to how the level of national prestige achieved by popular artists differs from that of traditional artists or athletes.

Prospect

Military Service Exemption System: Time for a Change

The Enforcement Decree of the Military Service Act, once a bastion of tradition, is undergoing transformation. Key stakeholders such as the Military Manpower Administration (MMA) and MCST are now actively engaging in a discourse that was previously avoided. MMA is no longer shying away from the public controversy surrounding the military service exemption system, but is instead confronting it head-on. MCST has also been participating in forums to collaborate with the public in shaping the future of the military service exemption system. A Yonhap News report from May 3, 2024, highlighted former MMA Commissioner Lee Gi-sik’s acknowledgment of the significant changes in the societal environment, public consciousness, and manpower resources since the inception of the art and sports personnel system. He admitted that the current system has failed to adapt to these changes. Recognizing the ongoing public debate, former Commissioner Lee announced plans to conduct a comprehensive review of the arts and sports personnel system and develop a revised framework that resonates with the public by the end of the year.

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▲ Sports officials and experts from various fields who attended the 31st Sports Policy Forum on June 3, 2024, pose together for a group photo.

To ensure that the revised arts and sports personnel system accurately reflects public sentiment, the government is actively participating in public discussions.

In June, the 31st Sports Policy Forum was held, focusing on the “Current Issues and Challenges of the Athletic Duty Exemption System,” amidst the MMA’s review of military service exemptions. Lee Jung-woo, Director of Sports at the MCST, attended the forum and promised that the ministry would carefully consider the opinions expressed and work collaboratively with relevant ministries to implement them. Kim Han-beom, a professor at the School of Wellness Industry and Convergence at Hankyong National University, who gave a presentation on the “Current Status and Diagnosis of the Military Service Exemption System” at the forum, shed light on the forum’s significance. He stated, “We were able to address common misconceptions about the military exemption system, understand its value, and explore the reasons why athletes should be included in the current system.” Professor Kim further proposed that “establishing a credible committee and implementing objective verification procedures could pave the way for expanding the military service exemption system to include popular arts.” It is evident that ongoing dialogue with the public is crucial to establish criteria that are acceptable to the contemporary populace.



Who Guards the Youth Serving Their Country?



Recurring Acts of Violence and Abuse in the Military

On April 7, 2014, Private First Class (PFC) Yoon Seung-ju, stationed at the 28th Infantry Division in Yeoncheon County, Gyeonggi Province, died after enduring four months of physical abuse and hazing by senior soldiers. According to investigation records released by the Center for Military Human Rights Korea (CMHRK), Yoon began to be beaten two weeks after his assignment to the unit. Initially, the autopsy conducted by the Republic of Korea



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▲ A mother pins a private’s rank on her son, Private First Class Yoon Seung-ju (R), at his 28th Infantry Division graduation on Jan. 15, 2014.

Army (ROKA) attributed the cause of death to brain damage caused by airway obstruction from food. However, this was later revised to “exhaustion syndrome and secondary shock caused by prolonged and continuous violence and hazing,” sparking further controversy. Subsequent investigations by CMHRK revealed the horrific nature of the hazing endured by PFC Yoon, as well as allegations of the military’s cover-up of the incident. This led to calls for an independent body to address military human rights issues. Following the suicide of Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) Sergeant Lee Ye-rim in May 2021, stemming from a sexual assault incident at an air force base, demand for the eradication of human rights abuses within the military intensified. In response, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRC) established the position of military human rights protection officer in July 2022, tasked with investigating military human rights violations and discrimination, as well as implementing corrective measures and protecting victims. However, despite the establishment of this position, reports of human rights abuses within the military continue to surface.

A System That Silences Victims

Cause



▲ Trainees perform push-ups at the Nonsan Army Training Center drill ground, following their superior’s orders.

A 2022 survey conducted by the NHRC on the human rights situation in military training camps revealed that 44.9 percent of respondents, who had experienced human rights abuses did not report them, citing the belief that such incidents were commonplace in the military. What has caused these individuals to remain silent? Representative attorney at A-Part law firm, Kim Tae-yong explained that “the military’s hierarchical structure, characterized by a

strict chain of command and a clear distinction between superior and subordinate ranks, creates an inherently unequal relationship. This makes it difficult for victims of violence to come forward.” Moreover, although the ROKA has regulations that stipulate the scope and intensity of disciplinary training, many service members are unaware of these regulations and unknowingly endure unauthorized forms of hazing. To address this, the Ministry of National Defense revised the Enforcement Decree of the Military Service Act in 2020 to specify the types and methods of disciplinary training and to mandate oral instruction on training regulations within the military. However, while regulations are in place, their adherence is not effectively monitored. In the ROKA, commanders who order disciplinary training are required to submit a report on the results to their superior commanders once or twice a year. Corps-level commands then compile these reports and submit them to the Army Headquarters in late January. This is the sole method of monitoring compliance with the regulations. The fact that the same commander who orders disciplinary training is also responsible for managing any incidents that arise raises questions about the effectiveness of this system.

The military human rights protection officer was implemented to address these issues but has faced criticism for failing to fulfill its role. As an independent body under the jurisdiction of NHRC, the officer is supposed to be free from interference from the military. According to the revised National Human Rights Commission Act of 2021, the Minister of National Defense must notify the military human rights protection officer of all incidents reported by corps-level commands to Army Headquarters. The officer is also authorized to observe investigations into fatal incidents and conduct preliminary investigations through phone calls and documents. However, in practice, the officer has not fully functioned as an independent body. While the position was intended to actively investigate military human rights abuses and make persuasive recommendations based on moral authority, it has fallen short of these expectations. This was evident in the case of a trainee who died during disciplinary training in June 2024, when the officer concluded that a general monitoring visit was sufficient rather than launching a full-scale investigation, despite the incident being deemed socially significant and involving a high likelihood of human rights violations.

Prospect

From Individual Culpability to Systemic Overhaul

The military needs to shift its perspective on internal violence, recognizing it as a systemic issue rather than isolated incidents, and strive for systemic improvements. While basic violence prevention, human rights, and sexual harassment prevention education are already in place, the anonymity of whistleblowers was not fully guaranteed when the anonymous reporting system, introduced in 2016, was managed by internal military organizations. To address this, the system was outsourced to external organizations in 2021. Additionally, a military version of the anonymous social media platform, Blind, was introduced in 2023. In March 2023, an anonymous mobile community app called “Mapyon” was launched, providing a platform for military personnel and their families to ask questions, share experiences, and seek advice.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain. Kim Hyung-nam, the director of CMHRK, pointed out that “service members have low trust in the reporting system, fearing retaliation.” He also noted that “while the military has established various manuals and regulations, the understanding of their necessity within the organization is often lacking.” Director Kim emphasized the need for the military to recognize the importance of education and preventive measures. To further protect victims of military hazing, he suggested strengthening external oversight. This includes increasing the number of military human rights protection officers and their investigators, granting them authority to conduct unannounced inspections, and transferring the military’s non-wartime judicial investigation functions to civilian authorities.



The Never-Ending Fight: Seeking Truth in Military Deaths

Phenomenon

Families Demand Transparency in Investigations into Military Fatalities

A soldier who was serving in 2021 collapsed due to respiratory distress while on duty and was subsequently transported to a hospital, where he passed away. The Korean military’s General Committee for Examination of Killed or Wounded in Action and Death or Injury in the Line of Duty determined that his death was service-related. However, when the soldier’s mother

applied for national merit recognition, the government denied her request, stating that there was no objective evidence to prove that his death was directly related to his duties in safeguarding the nation or protecting the lives and property of citizens. The mother filed a lawsuit, arguing that the lack of adequate medical facilities near the base and the delay in transporting her son to the hospital were the decisive factors in his death. Many other bereaved families are fighting for the recognition of their loved ones’ deaths as service-related. Despite this, some people have a negative perception that these families are only seeking such recognition for the benefits associated with it. However, Moon Geon-il, a representative attorney at Illo Law Firm, explained that “families are fighting for recognition to clarify the circumstances surrounding their loved ones’ deaths. Due to the military’s classification as an organization subject to the Official Information Disclosure Act, families may not have access to all relevant documents or information.” By requesting service-related death recognition, families are seeking answers about how their loved ones died.

Cause

Secrecy Shields Bereaved Families

The request for service-related death recognition is closely linked to clarifying the responsibility for a military member’s death. Moon explained the process of how the family is notified by saying,

“when a death occurs within the military, a death investigation team is formed. Then upon completion of the investigation, the family is informed about the findings. If the family requests a service-related death determination, the General Committee for Examination of Killed or Wounded in Action and Death or Injury in the Line of Duty reviews the case.” However, not all information from the investigation is provided to the family, as classified information such as training conditions is withheld. He further explained that: “After the investigative agency conducts its inquiry, the documents are forwarded to the review committee. Subsequently, the committee for the review of meritorious service and casualties determines the level of



▲ The Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs offers support services, including information provision, to the families of fallen soldiers.

©megaphone

disclosure of the investigative materials. At this stage, not all information is provided to the bereaved families, but only the information that meets their interests is disclosed.”

To determine if a deceased soldier qualifies for service-related death benefits, a more in-depth investigation is conducted. Deaths in the military are categorized into three types: death in combat, service-related death, and general death. Service-related deaths are further divided into three subcategories based on the level of risk involved in the duty being performed. When a family requests service-related death recognition, the committee examines the relationship between the cause of death and the deceased’s duties in more detail. This often involves a more thorough investigation than the initial inquiry, which primarily focused on determining if the death was a homicide. By seeking service-related death recognition, families can gain access to more detailed information about the circumstances surrounding their loved one’s death and potentially hold the military accountable.

Prospect

Legislative Reform for Better Information Flow

It is understandable that the military, as a guardian of national security, must restrict the dissemination of information regarding internal training exercises. However, the families of military personnel who have died while on duty should have easier access to information about how and when their loved ones passed away. While the details of highly classified training exercises may need to be protected, the military should strive to provide bereaved families with as much information as possible while still maintaining security. Currently, the families of deceased military personnel are only provided with basic information about the

incident, and additional information is only provided upon request for service-related death recognition. Even then, the process for families to obtain information is complex. Attorney Moon argued that, “There is a need for systemic improvements to make it easier for bereaved families to access relevant documents. Presently, families must go through a complex administrative process to obtain these documents. Determining the scope of information that can be disclosed regarding training matters, given national security concerns, is a time-consuming process. Additionally, due to security restrictions, the military uses an intranet system* rather than the Internet, meaning that families must request physical copies of documents. These systemic issues cause significant inconvenience to bereaved families.” To address the concerns and doubts of bereaved families, it is imperative to establish a system that allows them to access information about their deceased loved ones more quickly and easily.

* Intranet System: A restricted network that leverages Internet technologies to connect employees within an organization



▲ Soldiers pay their respects in front of the graves at the National Seoul Cemetery in Dongjak Ward, Seoul.

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While recent changes such as shorter enlistment periods and the allowance of cell phone use have led to assessments that military life has “improved,” persistent issues such as inadequate incident resolution due to the military’s rigid hierarchy, outdated military service exemption criteria, and limited disclosure of information to the families of deceased soldiers remain unresolved. The voices of those fighting for change are not mere complaints, but rather essential signals for structural reform within the military to address these longstanding problems. Rather than relying on temporary improvements, Korea should strive to create an environment where soldiers, who dedicate themselves to national service, can serve with fairness and respect. 🇰🇷

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Beyond Rituals: Are We Losing the True Meaning of Ancestral Rites?

By Lee Seeun

Associate Editor of Theory & Critique Section

The morning of Chuseok, a national holiday in South Korea (hereafter Korea), is always a hustle and bustle. Families scramble to prepare a variety of foods such as songpyeon,* apples, thinly sliced fish or meat, and jeon.* All of these processes are part of the traditional Korean ritual, Charye, as a way to repay the favor of our ancestors. However, the process can take a toll on many people, both financially and psychologically. In addition, Korean Confucianism's influence on gender roles, which holds that men should not enter the kitchen and that women should prepare food, can lead to conflict even on the most harmonious of days.

However, the financial strain and the conflict caused by Charye, did not originate from the original Korean tradition, but is the result of distortion over time. It is worth examining how the practice has changed over the years to become what it is today, and whether the current practice still reflects its original meaning. The Argus will explore the definition, history, and transformation of Charye in depth through two books to give readers a chance to recall the original meaning and help develop a proper understanding and appreciate the value of Korean tradition.

*Songpyeon: Half-moon-shaped rice cake which is a traditional Korean food

*Jeon: Korean traditional pancake

Before Reading "Chuseok"

Chuseok is Korea's national holiday, celebrated on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month when the biggest full moon of the year rises. As agricultural people, Koreans traditionally celebrated the harvest season and expressed gratitude for a bountiful year by offering rice, rice cakes, and alcohol made from new grains to their ancestors during Charye and grave visits. Koreans exchanged food and engaged in traditional folk customs such as tug-of-war, wrestling, and archery during this leisurely period after the harvest, praying for a prosperous year to come.



1. Charye and Jesa

Lee Young-chun's book, "Charye and Jesa" (2002), introduces the practical preparation and procedures of Korean rituals, based on the spirit and form of traditional Korean Confucian rituals. To make the rituals feel less rigid, the book includes various stories related to Jesa, a traditional ceremony to honor ancestors, allowing readers to grasp the meaning and the spirit. Based on this book, the readers will be able to explore the origins of Jesa in Korea.

1) The Origins of Jesa

Jesa, the traditional Korean ancestral rites, is a form of religious ritual that involves the worship of ancestral spirits. While many countries around the world, such as China and Indonesia, still conduct memorial services, Korea is one of the few nations that holds ancestral rites. When did this tradition begin, and how did it evolve into the distinct ritual known today? Unfortunately, due to a lack of detailed records, it is difficult to ascertain the exact origins of Jesa prior to the Three Kingdoms period (first century BCE to seventh century CE), which encompassed Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla. The sparse Chinese historical documents available suggest that these early rituals were primarily focused on natural worship, seeking blessings and protection from divine powers. During the Three Kingdoms period, these nature-based rituals gradually transformed into spiritual rites. Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla all established tombs for their progenitor, and during the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), Jongmyo, the royal shrine, was constructed to house the ancestral tablets of deceased kings and queens. These historical records clearly demonstrate that royal families performed spiritual rites for their founding ancestors.

2) The Origin of Ancestral Rites in Korea

When did the Korean tradition shift from spiritual to ancestral rites? It is believed that these rituals were introduced to Korea during the Goryeo Dynasty when Neo-Confucianism spread from China. Subsequently, the first king of the Joseon Dynasty,* Yi Seonggye, who adopted Confucianism as the state religion, actively promoted ancestral rites among the common people, leading to the establishment of these rituals among yangban, the ruling class of Joseon. Amidst this atmosphere, following the teachings of Zhu Xi, a Confucian

scholar of the Southern Song Dynasty,* whose works were compiled into the "Jujagarye," a reference book on etiquette and rituals for gentries during the Goryeo and Joseon Dynasties, the Joseon Dynasty saw a surge in the construction of ancestral shrines, Gamyo, among the yangban class. These shrines housed the spirit tablets of ancestors, Sinju, believed to be the dwelling place of the deceased's soul. Thus, the unique Korean tradition of honoring ancestors, which differs from those of other countries, originated in the late Goryeo Dynasty and became firmly established during the Joseon Dynasty.



▲ Gamyo is an ancestral shrine built during the Joseon Dynasty.

Why did the custom of ancestor worship become so widespread during the Joseon Dynasty? While it is commonly understood that the primary purpose of these rituals was to honor and remember deceased ancestors, there is another perspective suggesting that Yi Seonggye had a more strategic reason for promoting this practice among the common people. Having seized power through a coup, Yi Seonggye sought to legitimize his rule and strengthen the foundation of his new dynasty. One way he achieved this was by encouraging ancestral worship. The specific items included in ancestral offerings, dates, chestnuts, and dried persimmons, are seen as symbolic of this strategy. The single seed in a date represented a single king, the three seeds in a chestnut signified the three prime ministers, and the six seeds in a persimmon symbolized the six ministers. By making these items essential for Jesa, Yi Seonggye was subtly reinforcing the Confucian values of loyalty to the king and filial piety toward parents, even while ostensibly honoring ancestors. This practice effectively spread among the populace due to the deep-rooted belief in the connection between the living and the dead. Ancestral worship served as a moral framework for unity and cohesion within families and communities, while also providing a means for individuals to secure their social status and access to resources. In the Joseon Dynasty, one's ancestors were seen as a form of social capital that could be leveraged to gain political advantage.

*Joseon Dynasty: A Korean dynasty that existed on the Korean Peninsula from 1392 to 1910, following the Goryeo Dynasty

*Southern Song Dynasty: A Chinese dynasty that existed from 1127 to 1279



▲ Dates, chestnuts, and dried persimmons were made essential for Jesa by Yi Seonggye.



2. Charye During the Joseon Dynasty

Cheon Byeong-jun's book, "Understanding Korean Traditional Customs Derived from Zhu Xi's Rituals" (2012), examines the process by which Zhu Xi's rituals from China's Song Dynasty were introduced to Korea and the subsequent impact they had. The author aims to re-examine Korea's Confucian views on propriety from a modern perspective and to explore the desirable direction of the academic study of etiquette. Through this book, this article examines Korea's proper rituals through the lens of Zhu Xi's rituals, which had a significant influence on Korea.

1) The Meanings of "Charye" and "Cha"

Charye have been greatly influenced by the Jujagarye. However, the current practice of setting up a table for Charye differs significantly from the practices of the past. What caused this tradition to change over time? First, Jesa can be broadly categorized into three types: Gije, Charye, and Myoje. Gije is a ritual performed on the anniversary of the deceased's passing, Charye is a ritual performed on Seollal* and Chuseok, and Myoje is a ritual held at a gravesite, usually on Hansik* or Chuseok, where food is placed at the site. There is Tteokguk Charye, where ancestral respects are paid on Seollal's morning, and Chuseok Charye, where newly harvested rice is offered in gratitude for a bountiful year along with the making of songpyeon. Therefore, Jesa performed during Seollal or Chuseok are referred to as Charye. The term "Charye" literally means "the ritual of offering tea (Cha)." Cha and Cha culture were introduced to Korea during the Three Kingdoms period through China, and the Cha culture flourished greatly during the Goryeo Dynasty when Buddhism was at its peak. During this time,

influenced by Buddhism, Cha culture became deeply rooted, and Cha was not only enjoyed by the royal court but also in the everyday lives of common people. When offering Jesa, Cha was brewed and offered instead of alcohol. As this Cha culture was integrated into the rituals, the term "Charye" was born.

However, in most modern Korean households, alcohol is offered on the table for Charye instead of Cha. Charye is now a simplified ritual in which only a single offering of alcohol is made along with fruit, dried fish, and other foods. This change began during the reign of King Yeongjo* of the Joseon Dynasty due to social and economic reasons. After enduring long wars, such as the Japanese Invasion of Korea and the Manchu Invasion of Korea, the nation's economy was devastated. During the Japanese Invasion of Korea, many Korean potters were taken to Japan, leading King Yeongjo to issue a royal decree out of concern for his people's livelihood. He decreed that instead of the expensive tea, cheaper alternatives like alcohol or hot water could be used. This is how alcohol came to be included in Charye. According to The Kukmin Daily news on May 28, 2010, unlike in China or Japan, Korean Cha culture has a strong ceremonial aspect, and offering Cha during Charye has significance in reaffirming the spirit and identity of Korean Cha. By brewing Cha with care and offering it to ancestors during Seollal or Chuseok, families can honor their ancestors' hidden virtues and be reminded of the importance of these rituals.

*Seollal: Lunar New Year in Korea

*Hansik: One of Korea's traditional holidays, celebrated on the 105th day after the winter solstice, usually around April 5 or 6. During this time, people visit their ancestors' graves to perform rites, tend to the gravesites, and pay respects.

*King Yeongjo: The 21st king of the Joseon Dynasty

2) The Modern Table of Charye

What does the modern Charye look like? On the morning of Chuseok, everyone becomes busy preparing the food that will be placed on the Charye table. "Eo-dong-yuk-seo, Jwa-po-u-hye, Jo-yul-i-si, Hong-dong-baek-seo..." These are common Korean terms used in the "rules for setting the table of Charye." They refer to placing fish on the east side, meat on the west, dried fish on the left, sweet rice punch on the right, fruits in the order of dates, chestnuts, pears, and persimmons, with red fruits on the east and white fruits on the west. This way of setting the Charye table during

Chuseok is considered traditional. However, this method is actually the result of a distortion of Korean tradition. During the Joseon Dynasty, the preparation of food for ancestral rites was much simpler, and there were no specific guidelines like those seen today. According to the Jujagarye, which outlines the basic principles of Charye, the only instructions were to use seasonal fruits and to set the table with dried fish, fruit, and vegetables. However, as the social hierarchy in Korea dissolved in the late Joseon period, Charye that was once



▲ This Charye table setting is considered traditional.

exclusive to yangban became widespread among commoners. As a result, the once simple Charye table grew more elaborate, with a greater variety of dishes being added to showcase wealth.



3. The Fading Tradition of Holidays

1) The Rise of Patriarchy

The Charye table is not only difficult to prepare but also causes conflicts that strain family relationships. In many modern households, there is a clear gender role division, which is a result of the distortion of Korean tradition. According to the Sungkyunkwan Confucian Association Headquarters, Confucian-style Charye emerged in the early Joseon period as Neo-Confucianism became the state's governing ideology, following the rise of the new scholarly elite, gentry, at the end of the Goryeo Dynasty. In the early days, Jesa was conducted without distinguishing between sons and daughters. However, in the late Joseon period, with the introduction of the Chinese patriarchal system, men began to preside over Jesa. In the case of Gije, until the mid or late Joseon period, siblings took turns hosting it. However, Charye had to be performed on a specific day, so it was held only in



▲ Gender inequalities in Charye table preparation are a distorted tradition shaped by patriarchy.

the eldest son's house. Joo Young-ha, a professor of Folklife Studies at the Graduate School of Korean Studies, explained, "Until the late Joseon period and early 20th century, Gije was considered more important than Charye, and both male and female siblings took turns hosting it. However, Charye was only hosted in the eldest son's house. The division of gender roles emerged as patriarchal systems and perceptions remained strong until recently."

Then why did the patriarchal system take root during the Joseon Dynasty? The Joseon Dynasty adopted Neo-Confucianism as the founding ideology which influenced the cultural practices. The Joseon Dynasty and its ruling class sought to establish Confucian rituals in all aspects of culture, including daily life, marriage, and funerary rites, through the practice of the clan system, "Jongbeop." Jongbeop, which Zhu Xi advocated as a concrete method for practicing filial piety, led to the creation of a patriarchal culture that discriminated between men and women in Joseon. Additionally, in the late Joseon period, farmers who had accumulated wealth acquired noble status by purchasing or forging family registers, leading to an increase in the yangban population and contributing to the spread of patriarchal culture. This patriarchal culture was actively embraced by social classes seeking upward mobility. Consequently, a dominant culture of patriarchal rule was formed, based on the voluntary consent of the lower classes.

The Jongbeop of the 17th century, which was significantly expanded in the late Joseon period, was an adaptation of Zhu Xi's Jongbeop to fit the realities of Joseon society. The Jongbeop system implemented in Joseon played a crucial role in consolidating patrilineal kinship. The family order under Jongbeop assumed a patrilineal kinship structure, which bore similarities to the patriarchal system. The establishment of such a family order in late Joseon period was influenced not only by ideological and value-based factors but also by practical considerations. Specifically, the wealth and social prestige of the local gentry were important in creating a family order centered on patrilineal kinship. The yangban needed to respond in some way to the gradual diminishment of their wealth and status in the local community. To efficiently allocate resources and strategically address the practical challenges they faced, the yangban found it necessary to consolidate around the primary heir. However, while these practical factors help explain how the Jongbeop system spread throughout society, they do not fully address

why the gentries of Joseon were so committed to pursuing the Jongbeop system.

The fundamental reason the gentries of Joseon pursued the Jongbeop system is related to the worldview embedded in Zhu Xi's Confucianism. The ideal society that Zhu Xi envisioned was one in which all members of society, organized systematically under the son of heaven at the pinnacle, aspired to realize the principles of the universe. Zhu Xi believed that to achieve such an ideal society, a connecting medium was needed to link individuals who pursued the principles of the universe with the son of heaven as the ultimate authority. He saw the family as capable of fulfilling this role. The family as conceived by Zhu Xi was not entirely within the personal domain, unlike the modern concept of the family. Zhu Xi believed that by infinitely extending the love that arises within the family, the family-state could be realized. In this sense, the family also belonged to the public sphere. To structure such a family, a central figure was necessary, and Zhu Xi saw the heir as capable of accomplishing that. Thus, Jongbeop was not merely about consolidating patrilineal kinship but was also a prerequisite for realizing the concept of the family-state.

2) Distortion of Korean Traditional Rites


The Joseon Dynasty can be said to be the period when Jesa was performed the most. Numerous forms of rituals were performed both in the royal court and among the common people. The standard of etiquette for the royal court was outlined in the “Gukjo Oryeui,” the five rites of the state, while the “Jujagarye” held absolute authority among commoners. However, in the early Joseon period, the strong presence of Buddhist rituals meant that Confucian rites from Jujagarye were not easily disseminated throughout society. It was only from the mid-16th century, when Neo-Confucianism began to spread widely, that Jujagarye became

prevalent among the yangban society. However, in 1910, with the Japanese colonial era, significant changes took place. The fall of the Joseon Dynasty and the collapse of the yangban-centered rituals, led to a loss of social value and meaning for Confucian-style ancestral rites. Moreover, after the Japanese occupation authorities confiscated most of the ritual implements in their efforts to erase Korean identity, traditional rites centered around the family shrines began to disappear.

In particular, the Ritual Guidelines for the Family promulgated in 1973 significantly altered the appearance of traditional rites. The current customs for Charye became widespread after the mid-1960s. Professor Joo explains, “The proclamation of the Ritual Guidelines for the Family by the Park Chung-hee administration actually expanded the belief that Charye should be performed in every household. Consequently, rituals such as placing red fruits on the east and white fruits on the west originated during that time.” In May of 1973, the Park Chung-hee administration enacted Presidential Decree No. 6680, which established the Ritual Guidelines for the Family, outlining the procedures and requirements for various family rites, including weddings, funerals, and ancestral rites. This has been confirmed and is still in effect today after several revisions and re-enactments.



▲ Park Chung-hee administration proclaims the Ritual Guidelines for the Family.

Korea's Charye and ritual culture has evolved over a long history, establishing itself as an important tradition that emphasizes ancestor veneration and familial bonds. However, in modern times, this tradition bears little of its original meaning and tends to focus more on formality. To revive the original spirit of Charye and preserve it correctly, it is necessary to understand the origins of the tradition and reinterpret its values in a contemporary context. With the arrival of this Chuseok, The Argus hopes the readers can reflect on the meaning of the traditions Korea should uphold and revive a Charye culture that stays true to its essence rather than merely its form. 

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Sailing Through a Sea of Sound: The Deaf Community's Journey



By Cho Subin

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As the content on the streaming platform starts, subtitles describing the background music appear on the screen. [solemn music]. This is a closed caption* for the deaf. If hearing people, who have always relied on spoken language and familiar sounds, saw the caption, they would probably think of gravely or somberly impressive music based on music heard before. But how do deaf individuals those who are deaf, who have never experienced sound and communicate primarily through sign language, understand the concept of solemn music? Deaf individuals may have a completely different understanding of this concept, shaped by their unique Deaf culture. However, although Korean Sign Language (KSL) was designated as an official language in 2016, opportunities to encounter it remain limited, primarily restricted to television news broadcasts. To celebrate the International Day of the Deaf on September 23, an understanding of Deaf culture can be achieved by examining the linguistic features of sign language, which reflect their unique cultural values and experiences. In doing so, the article analyzes the education of deaf students in South Korea (hereafter Korea) and compares it to that of deaf students around the world to further understand the Deaf community. The Argus aims to enable readers to recognize the status of sign language as a legitimate language through an in-depth understanding, and it encourages them to consider the direction of coexistence between the Deaf and hearing communities.

*Closed Caption: This refers to a service that displays voice or audio signals in a video as subtitles on the TV screen, which users can choose to display or hide, unlike open captions that are always visible.



Language, Not Gesture

(1) The Beginning of the Linguistic Study of Sign Languages

Korea officially adopted KSL in 2016 with the enactment of the Korean Sign Language Act, acknowledging it as a language alongside Korean. This marked a significant shift from the past, where sign language was often dismissed as mere “gestures.” The linguistic status of sign language gained global

recognition in 1960 when American linguist William Stokoe analyzed the structure of American Sign Language (ASL). Why is sign language considered a language?

For a certain language to function as a language, it must have all of the components of language: form, content, and use, as well as the interaction between these components. Form refers to language structure, including phonemes, morphemes, and syntax. Content represents meaning, while use focuses on appropriate language choice in context. For example, consider



the English sentence “I am deaf.” First, in terms of form, the sentence is composed of the composition of words, starting with the smallest unit, the phoneme. This sentence has phonemes /aɪ/ (I), /æm/ (am), and /dɛf/ (deaf), which are the units of speech. These phonemes combine to form the morphemes “I,” “am,” and “deaf,” the smallest units of meaning. These morphemes then form the sentence components: “I” as the subject, “am” as the predicate, and “deaf” as the complement, following the subject-verb-complement word order. Second, the meaning of words and sentences can be analyzed as a content component. “I” is a pronoun representing the speaker or writer, and “am” is a verb indicating present state. “Deaf” is an adjective describing the speaker’s hearing ability. Finally, use considers how language functions in context. “I am deaf” can share information about the speaker or request accommodation. For instance, if someone is speaking to a deaf person in spoken language, they may be expressing their desire to communicate in written or sign language.

Deaf individuals in the United States might use ASL to express “I am deaf.” This involves pointing to themselves, then folding down all their fingers except the index and middle fingers of their one hand and placing the back of their hands against the sides of their cheeks. These hand movements are the building blocks of the linguistic components of ASL. The direction of the finger pointing at the speaker, the shape of the hand with the fingers folded, and the position of the hand are cheremes, which correspond to phonemes in spoken language. Similar to how phonemes combine to create morphemes in English, cheremes form the basis of words in sign languages. Signs consist of two main types: hand signs, which are represented by the hands, and non-hand signs, which are elements other than the hands, such as facial expressions. The hand signs include the handshapes, the location, the movement, and the orientation of the hand. This system creates a vocabulary equivalent to spoken language. However, unlike English, adjectives and nouns can serve as predicates in ASL, as the sign language example uses only two hand gestures, one for “I” and one for “deaf.” Although these two words rely solely on static handshapes, sign languages including ASL use either a static segment or a motion to express words.

(2) Korean Sign Language

So, is sign language a universal language? As you might notice from ASL, each country has its own sign language. Although each language shares the common basic characteristics, such as the three components, there are differences between the

languages. To express the sentence “I am deaf,” KSL users will point to themselves, cover their right ear with their right palm, and bring their palm to their lips with their left palm. Then, they will put their hands together with only their little fingers and thumbs extended, and blow into a trumpet, with their thumbs toward their body and their little fingers in front of them. Although the content and use components are in place, there are differences in the form, that is, the structure of the language.

Therefore, just as English and Korean speakers struggle to communicate, so do ASL and KSL users. While the expressions for “I,” pointing to oneself are the same, expressing “deaf” differs. First of all, the hand shapes and positions are different to express the characteristics of the Deaf. In addition, unlike ASL, which uses “deaf” to describe one’s characteristics, KSL connects “deaf” and “people.” Also, a moving portion for sign language words can be found in this sentence, as the motion of attaching and detaching each thumb is used to express the word “people.”

(3) Linguistic Features of Sign Languages

Although there are some differences, sign languages share common characteristics like arbitrariness, segmentability, sociality, historicity, and iconicity. Iconicity, a unique feature of sign language, involves language structures resembling their meanings. Sign language vocabulary often mimics objects, leveraging visual symbols. In KSL, a palace is represented by forming a triangular roof shape with the index fingers of both hands and then moving the fingers downward in a wave-like motion, symbolizing a decorative roof. This visual-based system allows for rich and nuanced communication.

Also, if you need to express a literal shape, you can use fingerspelling. These hand signs represent written language using handshapes or gestures to compensate for words that can not be expressed in sign language. For example, for proper nouns such as names and place names, ASL expresses each alphabet through fingerspelling.



▲ Sign languages use fingerspelling to express exact spelling for proper nouns such as place names.



▲ Place names like “Seoul” can be spelled out using fingerspelling.



Although fingerspelling shares the characteristic of representing visual symbols, in that fingerspelling is temporary while written language is permanent, they differ.

People Who See Well, Rather than People Who Cannot Hear

How would you express your excitement and joy after watching an enjoyable performance? If you are the Deaf, you would raise your hands in the air and wave them. On the other hand, if you are a hearing person, you might clap and cheer. Since the Deaf and hearing people use their first language through sight and sound respectively, their perspectives differ, influencing their thoughts, beliefs, and ultimately, their identity. In Deaf communities, the Deaf form their identity based on sign language, a visual language. Based on their Deaf identity, they enjoy Deaf culture.

Deaf culture, which is visual-centered, often involves a unique form of self-introductions. When explaining their names, the Deaf often use “sign names” based on the distinctive facial features. These names, commonly used within the Deaf community, are often more practical. The name registered in the civil registration system is expressed with fingerspelling in sign language, but this is not only time-consuming but also difficult to recognize features at a glance. A person might be named “Left Dimple Woman,” combining gender and a facial feature such as dark eyebrows or a dimple. These names can also reflect personal traits, like “Eyebrow Raiser-woman,” given due to a habit of raising her eyebrows due to poor eyesight.

Deaf culture is built on shared experiences, values, and a common language: sign language. Deaf individuals often form strong bonds based on these shared aspects rather than the degree of hearing loss. Just as in immigrant societies, the Deaf gather in peer groups with those sharing the same identity. Since hearing people typically have a limited understanding of sign language, the Deaf want to fully engage in social interaction with sign language. The visual-based aspect of sign language is also reflected in their behavior. The Deaf sign above their waist to make it easier for others to see. Also, sign language interpreters often care about what color clothes they wear considering their skin colors, to ensure clear visibility of hand movements, as shiny materials or colorful patterns may interrupt conveying accurate information.

The Deaf also prefer to travel in a way that is pleasing to the eye and often have a keen eye for aesthetics, many excelling in

visual arts. They enjoy taking trips to beautiful landscapes, such as for snorkeling. Compensating for their hearing loss with heightened visual perception, some Deaf pursue careers in fields like ceramics or fine arts. Similar to written poetry, the Deaf community has developed sign language poetry, which can now be shared through video recordings.



▲ Ian Sanborn, a deaf poet, performs his renowned sign language poetry “Caterpillar.”

© YouTube @ Ian Sanborn

Big D-Deaf, Life with the Deaf and Hearing People

Cheong-ah, a deaf protagonist, narrowly avoids being hit by a car in a narrow alleyway because she could not hear the honking. Yi-chan, another protagonist who was unaware of Cheong-ah’s deafness,



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▲ “Deaf” with a capital “D” refers to individuals who are deaf from birth, primarily use sign language, and identify with Deaf culture.

angrily shouted, “Are you deaf and dumb?” This scene is from the Korean drama “Twinkling Watermelon” (2023), which focuses on deaf individuals, their families, and CODA, children of deaf adults. This portrayal of deaf individuals, is common in most Korean media, often presenting them in a pity light. However, the pitying perspective restricts the deaf’s potential, despite their right to equal respect.

Of course, since the majority of society is hearing people, some deaf individuals may prefer to communicate by lip-reading. However, the current problem is that some deaf people choose not to use sign language in order to avoid identifying as the deaf. This perspective often stems from viewing deafness as a medical disorder, rather than a distinct cultural identity. Consequently, this atmosphere leads to a decline in the Deaf community and deaf schools. According to “Special Education Statistics” (2022) published by the Korean Ministry of Education, about 80 percent of students with hearing impairments attend mainstream schools. Only 20 percent of deaf students receive special education in deaf schools. “Most hearing parents of deaf children hope for their children to have cochlear implants and attend mainstream schools,” explains Kim MiSil, director of the National Education Support Center for the Hearing Impaired. The increasing availability of cochlear implants and hearing aids has led to more



deaf students attending mainstream schools. Particularly, deaf students at the kindergarten and elementary levels in deaf schools are undergoing rehabilitation to integrate into mainstream schools. This trend is causing a decline in enrollment at deaf schools and jeopardizing their future. As a result, deaf students requiring specialized education may face limited options.

Despite cochlear implants and hearing aids, many deaf individuals face communication challenges due to limitations of the devices like side effects and poor performance in noisy conditions. As a result, deaf students in mainstream schools often face challenges in academic and psychological development due to limited communication support, such as sign language interpreters. The journal article “A Study on the Problems and Improvement Direction of Current Inclusion Education for Students with Hearing Impaired” (2019) by Park Mi-hye, a doctoral student, and Kwon Soon-woo, a professor in the Department of Special Education at Daegu University, found that most deaf students are struggling in an inclusive education environment. Despite their desire to connect with hearing peers, deaf students often feel isolated due to communication barriers. These challenges, coupled with difficulties in comprehending academic content, can result in social and emotional difficulties, sometimes leading to feelings of confusion. Students struggling to adapt to mainstream schools may find it difficult to fully connect with the hearing world until adulthood and may turn to the Deaf community.

Meanwhile, deaf schools face challenges due to a lack of tailored education policies and teacher shortages. “People often assume that learning of the deaf is the same with people without disabilities, but since deaf individuals hardly use spoken language, they have difficulty understanding language, which is an abstract concept,” said a 30-year veteran deaf school teacher, pointing out the importance of adapting teaching methods to their characteristics of the deaf. However, the Korean Ministry of Education requires deaf and blind students to follow the standard curriculum, failing to acknowledge

the specialized instruction they often require due to their language-based learning differences, said the veteran teacher. It is a challenge for most deaf students to reach the vocabulary and sentence levels of hearing 11-year-olds. The educational changes in standard curriculum, including the implementation of Artificial Intelligence textbooks are further straining deaf schools. This is particularly disruptive as these schools focus on individualized instruction and are struggling due to a teacher shortage. Their crucial roles including decisions about using sign or spoken language and other roles regarding regular curriculum force educators to take on multiple responsibilities, including individualized support, making it difficult to provide the necessary support for students. For instance, one deaf school had to partner with a mainstream school to offer biotechnology classes.

On the other side of the world in the U.S., however, most mainstream schools provide sign language interpreters for deaf students in regular classrooms. This is in contrast to Korea, where deaf students in mainstream schools focus on spoken language and are taught in the same way as mainstream students. In the U.S., ASL is recognized as a language and is included as a second language subject option alongside Spanish, French, and Korean. Additionally, support systems for special education differ. While Korea relies on school administrators, countries like Britain and Japan have SENCOs, special education needs coordinators, or inclusion managers to support teachers and develop inclusive practices in the field. They are professionals who provide support to schools in developing special education policies and improving the achievement of children with special needs. They work with school officials, parents, and community members to evaluate the implementation of inclusive education and consult with relevant professionals. As such, changes must begin from the education so that the Deaf and hearing people can live together. In order to achieve true coexistence, the changes must be accompanied by a shift in social attitudes towards acceptance of differences.

Language is the system people use to represent and communicate their thoughts to others, and it is the framework through which they view the world. Therefore, the Deaf shape their worldview and identity through their first language: sign language. In our hearing-oriented society, it is time to recognize deafness as one of the identities of the Deaf, just like personality or nationality, and to think about the coexistence of the Deaf and hearing societies. For readers who are studying languages from around the world, how about learning sign language? 🗣️

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On the Path to Equality



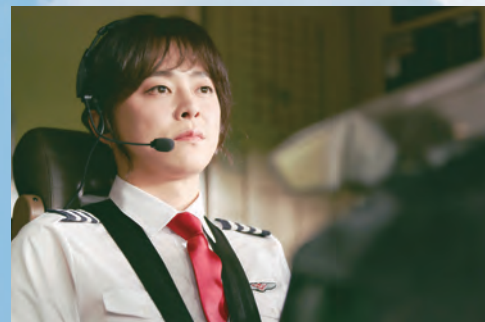
By Kim Su-yeon
Editorial Consultant

Han Jung-woo, once a rising star in the aviation industry, found himself abruptly fired after an inappropriate comment at a company drinking party. His offhand remark referring to female crew members as “a bunch of flowers” cost him his job. Desperate to get back in the air, he turned his attention to Han Airline. However, the airline had a strict hiring quota for women. Thus, Han Jung-woo, planned a drastic transformation, adopting a female identity, and mastering the expected demeanor. Though he was biologically “male,” he pretends to be a woman with the aid of a corset. A comedy film “Pilot” (2024) offers a unique perspective on gender discrimination in the workplace, as seen through the eyes of a man masquerading as a woman. Indeed, the film serves as a gentle introduction to feminist concepts, illuminating the harmful nature of objectifying women under the guise of compliments.



Man Dressed Up as a Woman

Han, a man disguised as a woman, begins his career as a co-pilot, successfully deceiving colleagues. His new identity exposes him firsthand to the realities of gender discrimination and sexual harassment that women face daily. He had to tolerate the male pilot's offensive sexual comments, such as "What do you think our (sexual) compatibility is like?" A crisis arises when the plane Han is piloting encounters trouble. The male captain, Seo Hyun-seok, refuses to relinquish control, prejudiced by Han's gender, even as the situation deteriorates. The captain's actions are compounded by sexually suggestive remarks directed at Han. While Han struggles with the physical challenges of adhering to traditional female attire — short skirts and high heels — his female counterpart, Yoon Seul-gi, comfortably navigates the workplace in pants and flats. Though the film aims to foster empathy for women's experiences, its reliance on gender stereotypes limits its impact. Male viewers may find it difficult to fully comprehend the depth of women's struggles, as they cannot authentically experience the challenges of being biologically female. A more effective approach might involve exploring gender discrimination from a male perspective, allowing for a broader understanding of the issue.



▲ Han Jung-woo begins his career as a female co-pilot at Han Airlines.


Real Women Still Marginalized

Throughout the film, Han shared his difficulties derived from sexual discrimination with his coworker Yoon. However, in the end, Yoon was revealed to be the person who reported Han's inappropriate remark, leading to his dismissal. The film has faced criticism in the Korean online manosphere, with many accusing it of promoting feminism. However, critics argue that the film's feminist credentials are questionable. While Han experiences a taste of the discrimination faced by female flight attendants and ultimately apologizes, the true impact falls on Yoon, the actual woman who suffers job loss and is forced to seek employment abroad. For the film to truly embody feminism, Yoon Seul-gi should have been the protagonist of the film, not Han Jung-woo. Given the intense and often irrational backlash against feminism in South Korea, exemplified by incidents like the "Nexon pinching motion controversy,"* the film appears to have tiptoed around gender issues to avoid controversy, rather than boldly addressing them.



▲ Yoon Seul-gi, Han's colleague, is the one who reported Han's inappropriate remark from his previous job.

*Nexon Pinching Motion Controversy: An animator at Nexon has been accused of drawing a "pinching finger," a derogatory depiction of male genitalia, in a promotional video for one of the company's games.

Gender inequality has been a contentious issue in Korea for a long time. The ongoing debate between men and women over feminism has hindered progress towards a truly equitable society. While women have rightfully demanded systemic changes, some men continue to objectify women, as portrayed in the film. The manosphere's criticism of the film as "feminist propaganda" is just another example of their long-standing opposition to gender equality. Ultimately, this film underscores the importance of empathy, encouraging viewers to see the world through another person's eyes. Given our inability to physically experience life as another gender, fostering empathy is essential for building a more just society. 

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Growth amid the Unexpected Challenges

Kim Yi-eun

This year seems to be a series of challenges for me. I am learning a lot, experiencing various things, and sometimes stumbling over difficulties. At first, I was afraid of challenges and worried about everything ahead of me. However, now I decided to put my worries aside and focus on what I could do to the best of my ability so I would not have any regrets in the future. I hope that when I look back on this year, I can see it as a great opportunity for learning and significant growth.

Park Gyeong-jin

In Kuwait, people are generally more lenient about being late. Once, I went to a party that was supposed to start at 8 p.m. The second guest, besides me, arrived at 9 p.m., and the party began at 10 p.m. At first, I was a bit frustrated waiting for people to show up for several minutes or even hours, but eventually, I decided not to wait passively. Instead, I used that time for myself, doing homework and reading a book. It was a process of adapting to a cultural aspect that I couldn't change.

Lee Seeun

Making arrangements with my high school friends was one of the hardest things this year. With each of us having a hectic life, it was very difficult to coordinate a meet-up. However, we realized that while our individual responsibilities are important, the time spent with friends becomes increasingly precious as time goes by. So, we made some compromises and managed to come together for a trip. Given how challenging it was to align our schedules, this trip was especially meaningful.

Cho Subin

During my time at The Argus, I struggled to consistently produce in-depth articles due to physical exhaustion and time management challenges. To address these issues, I have been building stamina by regularly playing squash. In a squash match, even a momentary lapse in focus can result in the ball returning right to me at surprising speed. Similarly, in both squash and life, I have learned that it is crucial to continuously improve and exercise, so I can avoid getting hit by my own shots.

Kim Si-yon

As this was my first time as a staff reporter for The Argus, I often found myself discouraged by my lack of writing skills. I often beat myself up over my inability to think logically and would stay up all night wondering if readers would understand what I was trying to say. However, whenever I felt like giving up, my older sister always stood by me. After long editorial meetings, I would call her on my way home and vent out all my frustrations. Thanks to her unwavering support, I could finish this month's magazine on a high note.

Park Se-eun

As soon as I became a staff reporter for The Argus, I had to write my first article. From the day I wrote my first editorial plan to the moment I finished the article, nothing went as I had planned. Every step of the process—selecting the topic, developing the narrative, and arranging interviews—required a significant amount of time and effort. Repeatedly writing and revising, and exchanging feedback with other reporters at The Argus, I was able to objectively identify the problems in my writing. Moreover, it helped me to develop insight and improve my writing skills.

Kim Su-yeon

The past semester was a whirlwind of unfamiliar challenges. From navigating new social circles and grappling with diverse perspectives to confronting my own insecurity and contradictions, I found myself in uncharted emotional territory. Instead of clinging to rigidity, I now try to embrace the chaos and look forward to stretching my limits.

Lee Jue-hyun

Germany is notorious for its slow administrative processes. In Korea, the ease of quickly completing tasks without much preparation led to a habit of procrastination. However, living in Germany, where appointments must be scheduled and delays are common, made me realize the importance of preparing in advance. Although I was forced to change my habits, it was a valuable experience that helped me correct them and better manage my time.

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