



Window into Overseas Koreans



Special Article - 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards

Jang Hye-young (Poetry), Cho Seong-guk (Fiction), Lee Myung-ran (Essay/Memoir) win grand prizes

Special Feature - 121 years of Korean immigration to the U.S. marks new chapter in Korean American history

Current Issues & Topics - Korean American donates record 41.8 billion won to U.S. women's soccer

'Hometown of adoptees'; mural unveiling ceremony at Ummapoom Dongsan in Paju, Gyeonggi Province

Policy in Focus - 'Koryo youth in Korea should be recognized as 'greeters' of Korean unification'



‘If Koreans don’t learn Korean, we are ‘giving up our privilege’

Hangeul education is different from Korean language education; using English in U.S. is ‘everyday life,’ but Korean language is ‘roots’

In October 2018, the president of the Reno Korean Association in Nevada, United States, visited Korea to attend the World Korean Association Conference. When he realized that I had published the “Korean Language Inner Meaning Dictionary” (etymology) with corresponding English words, he purchased 50 copies, saying it was necessary for the education of second and third generations. My other works on Korean language include “Korean Hanja Inner Meaning Dictionary,” “Korean Language Inner Meaning Dictionary for Elementary School Students,” “Teachers’ Hanja Book,” “Textbook Hanja Inner Meaning Dictionary,” “Korean Language Inner Meaning Dictionary” (app) (Google & Apple) and “Classy Korean: Idioms and Common Proverbs.”

Seventy percent of the Korean language is made up of Hanja (Chinese characters), and in the case of learning the language, it would not be an exaggeration to say more than 95 percent. Chinese characters are categorized into character strokes (shape), character sound (pronunciation) and character signification (meaning), and it’s important to familiarize yourself with the character meaning of a large range of words when studying Korean.

I think the way to teach Korean should be different in Korea and abroad, and it should be different depending on the audience. First, we need to be clear about who the target audience is. You need to differentiate between foreigners who are new to Korean and second- or third-generation Koreans. For foreigners who have never been exposed to Korean, you should focus on the Korean alphabet, Hangeul.

On the other hand, Korean students should be taught separately so that they can learn more difficult words and expressions. This is because foreigners and Koreans may feel bored if they are taught together, and foreigners may find it difficult to take classes with Koreans who are familiar with Korean.



Jeon Kwang-jin,
professor emeritus, Sungkyunkwan University

It’s also important to provide every student with a Korean dictionary. Some people may think that they can just look things up on their mobile devices, but there are many advantages to using a Korean dictionary. When using a mobile device, the so-called QIQO (Quick In, Quick Out) phenomenon is a quick way to learn but a quick way to forget. However, with a paper dictionary, you can learn a lot of similar words and the Hanja they use, and absorb other information that you will remember for a longer period of time.

Many second- and third-generation Koreans are losing their Korean language. For Korean students living in the United States, English is their “everyday life.” However, I would like to emphasize that we shouldn’t forget that Korean is our “root” language. Nowadays, as Korea’s status is increasing, foreigners are trying to learn Korean. Korean is becoming a competitive advantage. If Korean students with Korean-speaking parents don’t learn Korean, they are giving up their privilege.

If you have students who are reluctant to learn Korean, it’s important for parents to help them realize how competitive it is to be able to speak the language in a globalized world. Especially in places like Los Angeles, New York City and Atlanta, where there are large Korean populations, and at Korean companies with a strong presence, the ability to speak Korean can also be a huge advantage in finding a job.

For a child to have Korean-speaking parents, it is like they have a “walking dictionary.” I hope that many Korean students will not forget the importance of Korean and will actively study Korean utilizing flexible resources, including their parents, Korean language schools and Korean dictionaries. 📖





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The Overseas Koreans Agency is an external agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that conducts various policies and projects to support the rights and interests of the overseas Koreans around the world and their integration into mainstream society in their countries of residence.

This magazine can also be viewed at <http://webzine.korean.net>

Jang Hye-young (Poetry), Cho Seong-guk (Fiction), Lee Myung-ran (Essay/Memoir) win grand prizes

OKA announces 13 winners in three categories: Poetry, Fiction, Essay & Memoir

Overseas Korean literature is a story of longing for the homeland communicated through the tip of a pen in Korean. It has the power to connect the lives of overseas Koreans who are separated from each other through works that capture their lives and culture.

The Overseas Koreans Literary Awards, now in their 26th cycle, are recognized for having a significant impact as a bridge between the 7 million overseas Koreans and domestic Koreans.

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) has selected “Moshi” by Jang Hye-young (United Arab Emirates) in the Poetry category, “I Will Be in Paradise” by Cho Seong-guk (United States) in the Short Story category and “Linda, the Woman Next Door” by Lee Myung-ran (New Zealand) in the Essay & Memoir category.

The OKA has announced the 13 winners of the 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards, including the Grand Prize winners. The announcement was made through the websites of the OKA (oka.go.kr), Korean Net (korean.net) and Sotong24 (sotong.go.kr).

The 13 winners will receive a total of 30 million won in cash prizes and certificates, and their works will be published in a book titled “A Window to Overseas Korean Literature,” which will be distributed, and the award ceremony will be held online in December.

The judges were Moon Tae-jun and Jung Ho-seung (Poetry category), Koo Hyo-seo and Eun Hee-kyung (Short Story category), and Park Sang-woo and Lee Kyung-ja (Essay and Memoir category), all of whom are leading figures in the Korean literary community.

“It was very meaningful to see the high level of submissions from overseas Koreans with diverse backgrounds and experiences,” the judges said in a joint statement.

The contest was held from June 1-30 in three categories: Poetry, Short Stories, and Essays and Memoirs, and 1,304 entries were submitted by 504 people from 53 countries around the world. Despite the reduced prize categories and prize money this year, the number of entries increased by 84 percent compared with last year, confirming the continued interest and willingness of overseas Koreans to create Korean literature.

The Overseas Koreans Literary Awards has established itself as a



Writer Cho Seong-guk, winner of the Grand Prize in the Short Story (Fiction) category of the 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards, receives his award at the 18th World Korean Day Celebration at Lotte Hotel World in Jamsil, Seoul, on Oct. 4.

gateway for overseas Korean literary students and has produced several literary figures, including Koryo writer Park Mikhail, who has won the Kadiev Literary Prize and the Kuprin Literary Award.

“With a long history of 26 years, the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards have steadily gained the attention and love of the overseas Korean community. This year, we received many excellent entries from around the world, confirming that the breadth and depth of overseas Korean literature is expanding,” OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. “We will continue to support overseas Koreans in their literary endeavors and expand cultural exchanges between overseas Koreans and their homeland.”

This November issue of *Window Into Overseas Koreans* also features written interviews with Lee Myung Ran (New Zealand), the winner of the Grand Prize in the Essay & Memoir category; Cho Seong-guk, the winner of the Grand Prize in the Short Story category (Fiction); and Lee Joon-sang, the winner of the Second Prize in the Essay & Memoir category, as well as reprints of the Poetry and Essay grand prize-winning works. 장

‘I want to write an old story that only I know’

Author Lee Myung-ran: ‘7 million overseas compatriots love Korea more than people in Korea’

“When I found out I had won the award, I laughed like an idiot. I had a lot of precious memories that I had saved over time, so I wrote the essay easily according to the memories of those feelings.”

Lee Myung-ran (60, resident in New Zealand), winner of the 2024 Overseas Korean Literary Awards for her essay “Linda, the Woman Next Door,” said she was thrilled to receive the award.

Born in Seoul in 1964 and a graduate of Sungshin Women’s University’s Department of Statistics, she immigrated to New Zealand in 2002 to raise her children. “Linda, the Woman Next Door” is her first official work, and she has loved reading novels since she was in middle school.

The following is an interview with Lee.

How was Han Kang’s Nobel Prize in Literature received in New Zealand?

“The news of Han Kang’s Nobel Prize in Literature was a big deal here in the Auckland Korean community, and we are all surprised and proud. I read ‘The Vegetarian’ a few years ago and remembered the omnibus structure and the dreamy narrative and simplicity that permeated the whole book. I recently finished reading all of Han’s books and realized that I am simply envious of her powerful writing style.”

Are there any writers who have influenced you?

“I like almost all novels by Park Wan-seo, Shin Kyung-sook and Yang Gui-ja, and I especially like modern and contemporary novels, such as Oh Jung-hee’s ‘Chinese Street’ and Kim Seung-ok’s ‘The Inexhaustible Road.’ I also like the prose style of Kim Young-hyun’s ‘Portrait of a Winter Day’ and Hwang Kyung-shin’s ‘Library of the Border’ and ‘Eleven O’clock at Night.’”

What is your current job?

“I am a food creator. I give cooking classes (kimchi, bulgogi, kimbap, etc.) to locals in New Zealand whenever I am asked to do so, and I also teach paper crafts at the local high school’s evening class for adults with my 30 years of experience in paper crafts. It’s not easy to teach in English, but it’s meaningful to share our culture, and so I find it very fulfilling.”



What would you like to see from the Overseas Koreans Agency or your home country?

“Even though we are living in a foreign country, overseas compatriots are still Koreans. We love Korea even more than you do in Korea. I hope our feelings are not ignored, and that Korean can be a strong backdrop for the 7 million Koreans living abroad.”

What are your plans for the future?

“It’s embarrassing to say what I’m going to do after winning just one prize, but I recently read ‘Father’s Liberation Diary’ by Jeong Ji-Ah and ‘Father Submerged in Water’ by Han Seung-won. They really resonated with me. I’d like to write an old story that only I know, like those works.” 장

‘Overseas Koreans Literary Awards are like a water fountain during a marathon’

‘Winning Grand Prize is most celebratory event in my 31 years of immigrant life’

“Winning the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards is the most joyous event in my 31 years of immigrant life. I was surprised by the news, but suddenly I felt a sense of loss because the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards were a yearly festival for me. I felt a great sense of loss that I could no longer make a submission for the festivities that I had always spent the whole year preparing for.”

Cho Seong-guk (58, resident in Hawaii, United States), who won the Grand Prize in the Short Story category for “I Will Be in Paradise” in the 26th Overseas Koreans Literary Awards, said, “Year after year, the quality of the winners seems to be getting higher and higher.”

Born and raised in 1966 in Imun-dong, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul, Cho is an engineering student who graduated from Inha University’s Department of Polymer Engineering. After graduating, he worked at Doosan Industries before emigrating to Hawaii in 1993, where he attended business school and now runs a convenience store with his wife.

The following is an interview with Cho.

What inspired you to write the winning story?

“When I first learned about the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards, I suddenly felt like I wanted to write something, and it was like the emotions that were dormant in me came to life. So I just wrote anything. I don’t have any special skills or any novelistic techniques. I think literature for people can be achieved as long as it is supported by an understanding of people.”

Cho sees the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards as ‘a water fountain during a marathon, a festival like a carnival’

“When you live in a foreign country, you face a lot of practical problems, and you often forget about the emotional part of your life. Because I had to express everything in a limited language every day, my emotions were so dried up.”

He said that when he started writing in Korean, he was able to understand people’s lives. “It was like I woke up from a winter hibernation, and after four or five years of that, it became like a festival every year.”

The news of Han Kang’s Nobel Prize in Literature was as big a deal in Hawaii as it was back in Korea, he said.

“The Hawaii Literary Association is planning a special gathering



on Han’s work,” he said, adding he first learned about Han through “Mongolian Spot,” which won the Yi Sang Literary Award in the past, with the very unique style of writing staying in his memory for a long time and remaining so meaningful that he still has the full text of “Mongolian Spot” on his phone.

As for his future plans, he said, “I’m going to continue working at the convenience store with my wife and pay more attention to what’s going on around me, and if there’s something I want to write or say, I’m going to enjoy writing it as much as I do now.”

What would you say to the next generation of fellow writers?

“There is no special way. Just start writing now. Write about your life and what you want to say to the world around you, and the path will show itself. Writing is an activity where you can enter any literary contest, or you can just do it for fun. You don’t have to have any relevant experience or educational background, like in my case. I just want to tell you that you can get a lot of enjoyment from it if you let what is on the inside of you out.” 📖

‘The beauty of fiction is that it asks foolish questions’ Lee Joon-sang, ‘I will continue to make writing that reflects a part of me’

“I am especially pleased to have been selected for the Overseas Koreans Literary Awards. Mine is a story about the identity of a wanderer, and I think this fits best with overseas Koreans’ literature.”

The above is what Lee Joon-sang (31, resident of United Kingdom), a prize winner of the 26th Overseas Korean Literary Awards for his short story “Palma de Mallorca” said of his award.

Born in Seoul in 1992, he has lived abroad since high school, residing in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, and has been living in the U.K. for nine years through his university studies. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher majoring in materials engineering and physics. His major is quite different from literature.

“It can be overwhelming to juggle them both at the same time,” he said. “But they can also synergize and help each other.”

The following is an interview with Lee.

How did you get started as a novelist?

“I started out by writing movie scripts for making independent films with friends. Gradually, I became interested in various kinds of writing and started to write novels, which I have loved since I was a child. I wanted to observe the perspectives of the many people I met while living abroad through the characters in my novels. As I discovered myself and the many contradictions contained in being human, I wrote these observations down one by one. I write with pride from my perspective as an outsider in the midst of so many people.”

Tell us about your favorite novelists and works.

“I love Victor Hugo’s novel ‘The Laughing Man.’ I tend to read novels very slowly, and I like sentences that make me pause and think for a long time. I like to reread and think about sentences that are full of difficult questions. In that sense, I enjoy Victor Hugo or Somerset Maugham’s novels. I also like Aldous Huxley’s novel ‘Brave New World’ because I do engineering research on artificial intelligence.”

Have you won any past awards?

“My short story ‘Oui’ won the 17th Cultura Newcomer Prize in



2023, and in the same year, my short story ‘Hyena’ was selected for the ARKO Literary Creation Fund.”

What would you like to say to readers?

“I hope that after reading the novel, you will be left with at least one question in your mind. I think the beauty of fiction is not in giving precise answers but in asking foolish questions. I hope that sentiment comes across to readers.”

Tell us about your plans for the future.

“Someone once said that all creation begins when you juxtapose two seemingly unrelated words side by side. For me, Korean literature and engineering research are two completely different words. However, I believe that pursuing both of them simultaneously will help me develop both my literature and my research. In that sense, I hope to continue to write something that reflects a part of me.” 📖

“Moshi”

by Jang Hye-young

Oh, how hot it is
This weather like a furnace

Across the sea all year round
The plains of pure heat

To my family who worries about me
I have taken out my sleeveless moshi shirt and put it on
I reply that it's bearable weather
And fall deep into thought about my grandmother from Seocheon.

My grandmother, who joined the heavens and the Big Dipper
constellation at the beginning of the year.

In the summer, with her yellow and hard front teeth
Would bite and split the moshi to weave

In the dank side room of the country cottage
Where occasionally a centipede would crawl out
With her sewing box and moshi loom next to her
Lying by the pillow of her mother and father in her youth
She would have split and weaved the moshi


My family's bond being so eternally strong
Every year when the summer weather returns
The moshi wrapped around my flesh offers a refreshing relief

Growing up in these moshi clothes
Even under the hot sun sandy breeze sea breeze
Me, us, all standing healthy
She will be watching us from up in heaven.

The womenfolk here also practice traditional handicrafts,
Embroidery Al-sadu and Talli to spend their days
But in this place away from home
Other grandmothers in front of the loom and embroidery table with
their bent backs and rough hands
Remind me of my grandmother weaving moshi.

Woven to the last end
One by one, one by one, piled up
The sorrows and pleasures of womenfolk

In that side room full of their complaints
They shake off the hardships of married life and the scolding like
brushing off moshi leaves
Their work songs like chirping

Countless grandmothers and mothers
That tough moshi they have used their lips and teeth to split and weave
The love that flows powerfully through their weaving
Can beat the dampest of weather 

“Linda, the Woman Next Door”

by Lee Myung-ran

My neighbor's house and mine are separated by a low fence.

This low fence, at about knee height, protects each of us.

One day after I unpacked my belongings, I saw the rhinoceros-like woman who was my neighbor. My first impression was so scary and bad I wanted to raise the fence immediately, but after many years, the low fence is still there.

And so the brown-haired woman who lives with her back to the world and a black-haired woman who has to live with it live side by side.

It's been a struggle to deal with the woman I first met 20 years ago; this harsh, blunt neighbor. I had wished for a friendly neighbor, but instead it was never easy to understand this prickly and eccentric heavyset woman.

Once I saw her flinging a letter over the low fence, perhaps because the letter had been wrongly delivered to her post box. There were many days when I was not sure what to do. But at the end of the day, the letter was delivered to the right person, even if the method of delivery was lousy. It was an important piece of mail, and I was grateful.

As we lived like this for a little over a year, I was reminded of a truth I had forgotten. I realized that time never stops flowing, and with that flow comes something that has changed and is different. Just like our skin, which cannot resist the flow of time.

One day, I happened to end up having coffee with my neighbor Linda. At her house, too. Even then, she beckoned me over rudely with her fingers. At this sudden occurrence, I didn't know what was going on so couldn't even welcome the situation. It was a short conversation, just a few words about herself.

It was a cautious and halting conversation, of course, but the look of concern in her eyes as she asked, “Are you OK?” several times was so familiar. I wondered if she had seen me crying at the kitchen table the night before after something upsetting. Because, if one were to be interested, we could easily peer in through each other's kitchen windows.

Since then, we've gotten to know each other in the same language but in our own different ways. For a long time, body language was the best form of communication for us.

I eventually learned that this rhino-like woman, with her thick armor and fearsome horn, was actually a deceptively docile herbivore.



The sun was high in the sky but still too cool for summer. I went out to check on the patch of sesame leaves growing in the corner of the yard. I looked over the fence and made eye contact with my neighbor, Linda. As if she's been waiting for me, she snaps her fingers again, beckoning me to come over. It seems she's finished a new puzzle she's started.

Linda is the queen of puzzles. Her chunky fingers deftly fit the tiny puzzle pieces together. She just started a 1,000-piece puzzle and is almost finished. At her triumphant look, I shoot her a "good job" by giving her a thumbs-up.

The picture was of Positano, Italy, with its sun-dappled, emerald waters and colorful, model-like houses perched along the ridge that framed the sea. It was beautiful. I wonder faintly if this is where Linda would have wanted to stay, even for a moment.

It would have been easier to fill in the edges, but Linda, in her set ways, starts with the center piece of the picture, inserting and removing it repeatedly. Even with this method, she sits in one place for a long time, like she is spending the day meditating, and completes the puzzle.

At the age of 17, she fell in love and became an adult without even graduating from high school. Becoming a mother at the same time as being betrayed, the death of her child and the bankruptcy that followed. So much fear that there were not even tears. At the bottom of that never-ending spiral, she leaned into the arms of another man, only to find violence, purple bruises and even worse despair waiting for her. It was surely a curse from the gods. In this world, she was not allowed to breathe. The only thing permitted to her was a moan that emanated from the caverns of her chest, deep and damp as pitch black.

Perhaps it was because of the first wrongly threaded button, but the constant misery, hurt, hatred, regret and utter loss resulting from these were bankrupting this woman of her life. And so Linda lived with the door to the world closed.

My neighbor Linda, whose shattered fragments of her life that resulted from impulsiveness and ignorance, left her trapped in the shackles of her unforgotten wounds. Compassion laps at me, thinking if she had grown up slowly as she should have, perhaps a spring would have bubbled up in her heart or at least she would not have had to live with the darkness of a deep, damp cave as her armor.

As for me, living on the other side of her fence, life in this new place was not easy. I feel deeply in my bones how English is not a simple language. Especially here in New Zealand, where idiomatic phrases (two or more words combined to create a new meaning) are commonplace, I needed a lot of time for my ears to open to the language. It wasn't just the language. For someone who had learned about every aspect of life here from books, learning to live life as an immigrant felt comparable to learning English from scratch.

With this constant physical and emotional struggle, I live every day with wounds. Sometimes I think of the Bangladeshi people I saw on the subway in Korea. Here, I am not a graduate of a prestigious university but just a foreigner who cannot speak well with a different skin color.

It was during one of these such days that my son's intermediate (middle school) graduation and my daughter's primary (elementary school) graduation were on the same day at the same time. It was a difficult situation. This was the new world that Linda's black-haired neighbor, who had just



immigrated to the country and had no one to turn to for help, lived in.

Faced with no choice, I dropped my son off at the school gate, said, "I'll hurry back" and headed for my daughter's school. A single tear stung my eye. Leaving behind my easeful life, I had crossed over the fence, my hair turning gray, trying to fathom the meaning of these times and circumstances.

Even though it was just an elementary school graduation day, it was slow. I rushed back to my son's school, but the graduation ceremony was over, and there were nothing but pockets of people joyfully getting their pictures taken. My heart dropped to the floor. My mind raced to find my son. At that moment, I saw some strangers beckoning me. In the distance, chubby Linda in a dress, Linda the rhinoceros, was walking toward me, holding my son's hand.

She must have heard in her heart my anxious sorrows from the last few days.

She had called a taxi to come here. Rejected by her own parents, in the end her mother had given the house to Linda as an apologetic gift and passed away. After nearly 20 years of living on welfare in government housing, Linda had become the owner of the house with a low fence. But there was no car in her garage. In this country where it's hard to even imagine life without a car, she had no need for one. This Linda came out of her cave in a taxi.

One day, not long after we first moved in, I needed to go to the doctor. In my desperation, I asked my neighbor Linda for help, but all I got was an irritated tone of voice and a reluctantly handed-over Yellow Book (a phone directory). Today, she's here in a taxi wearing a dress for my child. The past year has certainly

not gone by unnoticed.

It was enough joy and emotion to make up for my morning's sadness. I was still feeling sorry for my son, but I was grateful that both of my children had made it through their graduation ceremonies. And certainly there was a deeper joy there, too.

Linda later told me that one day, a black-haired Asian woman moved in, and the woman in the window was crying every evening and would sometimes try to talk or ask her for help even though she was useless, and although she found the Asian woman annoying and strange at first, she began to worry about what was going on.

My compassion for her was not unique. I must have been the object of her sympathy and compassion as well.

The sight of an Asian woman who didn't even speak proper English, struggling to raise two children alone, must have seemed to her through the window as a sign of deficiency. It was an ironic evening when I wondered if my deficiency was the first step in filling the heavy and empty deficiency of Linda, the woman with the purple bruises.

A woman who I would have never gone near me in Korea is now my neighbor and friend, but it doesn't matter because our deficiencies have fulfilled each other's lives, and that is enough.

The brown-haired woman who lived with her back to the world and the black-haired woman who wears her hard life here in New Zealand as a badge of honor are growing old together. With that low fence in between them.

The evening breeze is nice. When I step out onto the deck, I see Linda leaning over the window next door. She is working on a puzzle again today. 🧩

121 years of Korean immigration to the U.S. marks new chapter in Korean American history

OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk congratulates Korean American politicians: 'They show the elevated status of Korean American society'



U.S. Senator-elect Andy Kim (D-N.J.) (L) and U.S. Representative-elect Dave Min (D-Calif.) (C) pose for a photo during the Council of Korean Americans (CKA) annual gala at a hotel in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 14.

Korean Americans have opened a new chapter in the 121-year history of their immigration to the United States, which started in 1903 with the arrival of the first immigrants in Hawaii.

Andy Kim (D-N.J., 42) became the first Korean American politician to be elected to the U.S. Senate with his victory in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives elections that were held in conjunction with the U.S. presidential election. Kim also broke new ground as the first Asian American congressman from New Jersey and the first Korean American U.S. senator.

Korean American Marilyn Strickland (D-Wash., 62), also known as Kim Soon-ja, and Young Kim (R-Calif., 62) were also elected to third terms in Congress. Dave Min (D-Calif., 48), who ran in California's 47th Congressional District, was also elected to Congress for the first time after a very close race.

In California's 45th Congressional District, votes are still being counted as of Nov. 20, more than two weeks after the election, with Michelle Park Steel (R-Calif., 69), a prominent member of Southern California's Korean American community, maintaining a razor-thin lead of fewer than 200 votes.

In the state legislative elections, more than 10 Korean Americans were elected, including Patty Kim, who won a seat in the Pennsylvania State Senate.

The success of Korean American politicians in the U.S. political arena is a demonstration of "Korean Power," and it is expected that their political influence in the U.S. will grow in the future.

On Nov. 20, Lee Sang-duk, commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency, sent congratulations to the Korean politicians who ran for and won their U.S. congressional and state legislative races.

"The election of our Korean politicians shows the elevated status of the overseas Korean community," Lee said. "Continue to work as a bridge between the two countries, not only to serve as a solid support for our compatriots in the United States but also to contribute to strengthening the U.S.-Korea alliance.

"We wish them all the best," Lee said of other Korean American candidates whose results have not yet been finalized, including Steel, who is running for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Lee also congratulated two Koryo MPs who were elected in Uzbekistan's recent parliamentary elections. Park Viktor (65), a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, who was the first person of Koryo heritage to be elected to the Uzbek parliament, won a third term in the election, and Aslonova Emma (50), who attended the Global Korean Politicians Forum last year, was reelected as a proportional representative. 🇰🇷



U.S. Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J.) speaks at a gala event of the Council of Korean Americans (CKA) at a hotel in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 14.

‘Show what is possible and achievable for Koreans’

‘It must not become ‘America First = American Only’; we must not turn our back on allies’

U.S. Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J., 42), the first Korean American elected to the U.S. Senate, expressed “concern” on Nov. 14 about President-elect Donald Trump’s recently announced diplomatic and security lines for the incoming administration.

Meeting with reporters after speaking at the Council of Korean Americans (CKA) annual gala at a hotel in Washington, D.C., Kim was asked for his assessment of Trump’s second-term diplomatic and security appointments and said, “I’m cautious because I have to vote for the confirmation (after being sworn in as a senator next January). I am concerned about some of the nominations.

“They will not respect the alliance with the coalition (of a group of like-minded countries), and they will not give the U.S.-South Korea relationship the respect it deserves,” he said, without naming any

specific individuals.

“We need to make it clear that we are not taking an isolationist policy,” Kim said. “I have concerns about what kind of foreign policy (the Trump administration) will pursue. We need to make sure that the ‘America First’ policy that they keep talking about doesn’t mean ‘America Only,’ and we need to make sure that it doesn’t mean turning our backs on our allies.”

“I hope to play a positive role in attempting to strengthen the relationship between the United States and South Korea,” Kim added of his future ambitions as a senator. Kim was elected to the U.S. Senate representing New Jersey in congressional elections held in conjunction with the presidential election on Nov. 5. Kim is the first Korean American to serve in the U.S. Senate.



Andy Kim, the first Korean American to be elected to the U.S. Senate, shares remarks on his election during a press conference at the Doubletree Hotel in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, on Nov. 5.

'Some appointments in Trump's incoming administration's diplomatic and security lines are worrisome'

Hundreds of Korean Americans packed the venue to celebrate and rejoice in unison over Kim's victory, which marks a new chapter in the 120-year history of Korean immigration to the United States.

Standing at the podium amid enthusiastic cheers, Kim explained that when he decided to run for the Senate, someone told him, "You're part of a minority that will make it hard to win a (Senate) race for the entire state of New Jersey.

"I can appeal not only to people who look like me but to others too, and I'm not just a Korean American, I'm an American," he said. "This is a pretty fundamental issue," referring to the racial bias that still exists in American society and politics.

"I believe the next 10 years will be the most dynamic and exciting decade for Koreans and Asians in American politics," he said. "I want to fight to continue to write the Korean American story and show what we can do and what we can achieve."

New York Times: 'Andy Kim's Senate win draws attention to New Jersey's Korean American community'

The election of U.S. Representative Andy Kim (D-NJ) as the first Korean American to serve in the U.S. Senate has drawn attention to the area in New Jersey with a high concentration of Korean Americans.

The New York Times (NYT) published an article on Nov. 15 highlighting the Korean American community in Bergen County in northern New Jersey.

"The momentous event came more than 100 years after the

first immigrants from the Korean Peninsula arrived in the United States," the newspaper said of Kim's election to the Senate, "shining a spotlight on a community that is not used to receiving attention."

Kim, a young Democrat and third-term congressman from New Jersey, was elected to represent the state in the U.S. Senate on Nov. 5 in an election that coincided with the U.S. presidential election, winning 53.5 percent of the vote and defeating his Republican opponent, Curtis Bashaw, by more than 9 percentage points.

The NYT noted that California and New York are the largest concentrations of Korean Americans in the U.S. "But nowhere in the country is the Korean American presence more pronounced than in northern New Jersey," the NYT wrote.

The NYT's reference to Korean Americans is to parts of Bergen County in northern New Jersey, which borders New York City.

The first generation of immigrants who came to New York City from Korea decades ago settled primarily in the Queens borough of New York City, which remains the largest concentration of Korean Americans in the eastern United States today.

However, in search of better educational and housing opportunities, some Koreans moved to Bergen County, New Jersey, which is directly across the Hudson River from New York City, and the Korean American community in New Jersey developed around this area.

In the city of Palisades Park, the center of New Jersey's Korean American community, about 52 percent of the city's 20,000 residents are of Korean descent, the highest percentage of any city in the United States, the NYT noted. 🇺🇸

'I will work hard to reauthorize North Korea Human Rights Act,' says 'successful three-term' lawmaker

Rep. Young Kim (R-Calif., 61), who became the first Korean American woman to win a third term in the U.S. House of Representatives, vowed on Nov. 7 to use the added political weight of her third term in Congress to give a stronger voice to issues related to Korea.

In a Yonhap News Agency interview after her victory was confirmed, Kim said she would work to resolve unfinished legislation, such as passing a bill to reauthorize the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2022, which she introduced, and to help the United States help its allies. She also vowed to urge the U.S. to show stronger leadership against North Korea and Russia to strengthen deterrence against war provocations.

Kim attributes her success as a female Korean American politician to the fact that she has consistently earned the trust of her constituents by delivering on her campaign promises and working tirelessly to solve their everyday problems.

The following is a Q&A with Rep. Kim.

What's next?

I will be returning to Washington, D.C., to finish this congressional session. As an active member of Congress, I still have a lot of work to do. The North Korea Human Rights Act reauthorization bill, which is of particular interest to the Korean American community, is currently on hold, and I will try to pass it in the House next week.

What are your aspirations as a three-term congresswoman?

I see myself continuing to serve on the International Relations (Foreign Affairs) Committee, where I currently serve as chair of the Indo-Pacific Subcommittee. There are a lot of important issues right now, like the U.S.-South Korea relationship, the Korean Peninsula and China-Taiwan relations, and related areas where we need to build deterrence, and we need to show that American leadership is very strong. In that regard, there is a lot of work to be done on the Foreign Relations Committee right now.

North Korea has recently increased its threats to the international community, with missile launches and troop deployments to Russia. How do you think we




Rep. Young Kim is a three-term member of Congress

should respond?

I think some of my colleagues, especially Democrats, don't understand how scary Kim Jong-un (leader of North Korea) is, and that's why they're trying to pass a bill in Congress right now called the Korean Peninsula Peace Act, which would unilaterally declare that the war is over, and I think that's a very dangerous bill. It shouldn't pass, and it shouldn't be reintroduced either.

What do you think were the main factors that led to your successful third reelection?

Our team was very organized and worked hard. We had over 200 interns during the campaign, and together with them, we met with voters door-to-door, reaching a total of 210,000 households. We also spoke to almost 600,000 households over the phone. I explained to them what I had been doing for the past four years. In particular, nearly 6,000 issues from local residents were resolved through consultation sessions with us. I think it was recognized that I was able to make people realize that "Young Kim has not just talked about these things but has actually done these things" and emphasize this image. 

Born to black father and Korean mother, Soonja, 'I am a daughter of Korea'

For Democrat Marilyn Strickland, a Korean American who won a third term in the U.S. House of Representatives on Nov. 5, her name is always prefixed with "first."

Four years ago, she became the first African American congresswoman from the state of Washington when she won the 2020 election, and after being reelected in 2022, she was again victorious in this election, making her a three-term congresswoman. After working at the Northern Life Insurance Co. and Starbucks, she was elected to the Tacoma City Council. After two years on the council, she served as the mayor of Tacoma from 2010 to 2018.

She was the first Asian American and the first black woman to be elected the mayor of Tacoma. After her term as mayor, she served as president of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce.

Well-known by her Korean name, Soonja, Strickland was born in Seoul in September 1962 to a Korean mother and an African American father, a U.S. Army veteran of the Korean War. She came to the United States at 1 year old when her father was transferred for duty and attended Washington State University before earning a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from Clark Atlanta University, a historically black college.

She was sworn in to Congress on Jan. 3, 2021, at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., where she drew attention for wearing a hanbok.

"I wore the hanbok so that my mother, who was watching the inauguration on TV, would easily recognize me," she said at the time. "The hanbok not only symbolizes my cultural heritage and honors my mother but is also a greater testament to the importance of diversity in our nation's, state's and people's Congress." Her mother passed away at age 94 in June 2022, just before her reelection.

As a politician, she has been very interested in ending racism and reforming the justice system. This was likely influenced by her background of experiencing racism in the United States, growing up with Black and Asian parents.

Her website states that "Strickland's parents endured discrimination and hardships that she cannot imagine. They wanted her to have the opportunities they didn't have, and they taught her to work hard, fight for what's right, serve society and stand up for the weak."

"With a Black father and Korean mother, Marilyn grew up with a unique understanding of the structural inequities facing



U.S. Rep. Marilyn Strickland, better known by her Korean name, Soonja

communities of color. The American justice system has too often been unfair and has exacerbated, rather than addressed, the root causes of race and bias," it said, explaining her efforts to reform the justice system.

Recognizing that Black and Asian people are sometimes at odds in the U.S., Strickland is also interested in bridging racial tensions, saying, "I want to be a bridge between the Korean American community and the Black community."

Rep. Strickland has never forgotten her Korean heritage. When she was first elected in 2020, she told Northwest Asian Weekly that she identifies as "a half-Korean, half-Black woman," and she is proud of her Korean heritage, saying, "I'm proud of my Black heritage, but I'm forever a daughter of Korea." 🇰🇷

First term in U.S. House of Representatives, 'We need the advancement of more Korean Americans'

Dave Min (D-Calif., 48), a Korean American politician who was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives on Nov. 13, vowed to work harder for the Korean American community, the community of his roots and a major source of support for him.

Min, who served as a senator for the state of California before running for Congress in California's 47th Congressional District, won a close race against Scott Baugh, who was backed by the Republican Party. The district encompasses Irvine, which has a particularly large Korean American population, even for Orange County, and Laguna Beach, a wealthy coastal city.

"We need more (Korean American politicians)," he said, emphasizing the need to continue to increase the representation of the Korean American community in the United States, like Rep. Andy Kim (D-N.J., 42), who became the first Korean American to be elected to the U.S. Senate.

The following is a Q&A with Rep.-elect Min.

What do you think were the main factors that helped you win this election?

I campaigned hard, and I think I reflected the values of this district. Throughout my career in public service (as a state senator), I have fought hard for climate change, women's reproductive rights, gun safety and an economy that works for everyone. These are values that are important to voters here in Orange County. And they will be the same in Washington, D.C.

You're new to Congress; what are the things you most want to do in Congress?

I'd like to work on affordable housing and climate change, and I think it's important to strengthen our police force to keep our neighborhoods safe.

I also represent Korean Americans not only here in Irvine but across the country, and I know that's a very important role. I will continue to advocate for Korean and Asian American values, fight hate and ensure that our small businesses continue to have access to help and resources.

How much political power have Korean Americans gained in the United States?

We need more people to make it a reality. With Andy Kim's



Dave Min, a Korean American politician who was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives

election to the U.S. Senate, I look forward to continuing to fight for our values and representation as a Korean American Democratic politician. I have heard so many young Koreans talk about how important it is to have people who look like them and share their life experiences, and I take that very seriously.

You're new to Congress, so you're not known as a politician yet, but how would you describe yourself?

My parents grew up during the Korean War and came to the United States in 1970 and settled here. I was fortunate enough to attend Harvard Law School, and my younger brother studied at Stanford and became a doctor. My family embodies what America stands for in every way. 🇺🇸

Korean American donates record 41.8 billion won to U.S. women's soccer

Entrepreneur Michele Kang: 'I am committed to raising the standard of women's soccer on and off the field'

Michele Kang (65), a Korean American businesswoman who manages some of the top women's soccer teams in the United States and Europe, has made a major gift of US\$30 million (41.8 billion won) to help develop women's soccer in the United States.

"Michele Kang has pledged \$30 million over the next five years to support the Association's women's and girls' programs," the U.S. Soccer Federation (U.S. Soccer) announced Nov. 20. "This is the largest gift ever made to the U.S. Soccer Federation's women's and girls' programs and the largest gift ever made by a woman to U.S. Soccer."

U.S. Soccer will use Kang's gift to expand competitive opportunities for girls, identify and develop talented players, and promote the professional development of female players, coaches and referees.

"Michele Kang's gift will transform women's and girls' soccer in the United States. It will impact generations of women and girls in our sport, including players, coaches and referees," said U.S. Soccer President Cindy Parlow Cone. "Thanks to Michele, we will be able to provide more support and opportunities for women and girls."

"Women's sport has been underestimated and overlooked for far too long," Kang said. "I am committed to raising the standard of women's soccer on and off the pitch by giving female players the support they need to reach their full potential and the professional backing they deserve."

Kang is the daughter of former Korean MP Lee Yoon-ja, who served in the 11th and 13th National Assembly, where she contributed to the advancement of women's rights. She attended Sogang University and embarked to study abroad in 1981.

After serving as vice chair and general manager of Northrup Grumman Infotech, a global defense contractor, Kang founded Cognosant, a public sector health care consulting firm, in Falls Church, Virginia, in 2008.

More recently, she has focused on women's soccer. In February 2022, she acquired the Washington Spirit, a team in the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), and late last year, she became



U.S. Soccer's announcement of Michele Kang's donation on social media

the owner of the London City Lionesses of the English Women's Championship (Division 2).

In February of this year, she took control of Olympique Lyonnais Feminin, the prestigious eight-time UEFA Women's Champions League (UWCL) winners, by acquiring a majority stake. In July, she also founded Kynisca Sports International, the world's first multi-club global organization focused on the professionalization of women's soccer.

U.S. Soccer describes Kang as "a visionary business leader and investor dedicated to advancing women's sports around the world." 🇺🇸

‘Hometown of adoptees’; mural unveiling ceremony at Ummapoom Dongsan in Paju, Gyeonggi Province

OKA Commissioner Lee: ‘We will strive to strengthen the network among adopted Koreans’



Participants pose for a commemorative photo in front of the giant mural installed in front of the main entrance of Ummapoom Dongsan on Nov. 2.

The unveiling ceremony for the “bLOSSom” mural at the Ummapoom Dongsan (Mother’s Embrace Hill) in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, was held on the morning of Nov. 2 at Nwaejori, Jori-eup, in the border city.

More than 100 people attended the ceremony, including Lee Sang-duk, commissioner of the Overseas Koreans Agency; Yoon Hoo-duk, a National Assembly member (Democratic Party of Korea); Kim Jin-ki, deputy mayor of Paju; Kim Min-cheol, director of exchange and cooperation at the OKA; and Lee Young-geun, full-time director of the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center. Representing the adoptees were Estelle Cooke-Sampson, a medical director; Mark Kluk, a professor of medicine at the University of Michigan; and Yuh Ji-yeon, a professor of history at Northwestern University.

Ummapoom Dongsan is a home away from home for adoptees. Building was commenced in November 2017 on 2,224 square meters within the Camp House (610,808 square meters) for mixed-race and overseas adoptees born in the U.S. military base village formed in Paju during the Korean War, and was partially completed in September 2018. However, work was suspended due to COVID-

19. Construction has recently resumed and is expected to be completed next June.

At the event, adopted compatriots Leah Hye-joo Jeon and Karen Byung-sook Lee completed work on a giant mural at the main entrance of Ummapoom Dongsan, which began Oct. 29. The mural depicts a mother and encompasses the meaning of overcoming the sadness of loss and subsequent blossoming. Participants also discussed how to utilize Ummapoom Dongsan in the future.

“I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you who traveled all the way from all over the world to Ummapoom Dongsan, located in Paju, Korea,” OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said. “Thank you once again for your passionate and dedicated efforts in painting the ‘figure of the birth mother’ in the mural.

“The OKA will strive to promote the practical rights and interests of adopted Koreans,” Lee said. “In particular, we will endeavor to strengthen the bonds between adopted Koreans around the world and their home country, and to organize gatherings for adopted Koreans to strengthen networks among adopted Koreans.

“We look forward to seeing you all again next June at the official opening of Ummapoom Dongsan.” 장

‘Koryo youth in Korea should be recognized as ‘greeters’ of Korean unification’

Suggestion made at policy forum by Song Young-ho, research fellow at Institute of Globalization and Multicultural Studies, Hanyang University

The Migrant Youth Support Foundation (Director Yoo Ki-ok) held a policy discussion on “Koryo youth in Korea, practical support measures for communication and integration” at Fraser Place Namdaemun in Jung-gu, Seoul, on Nov. 1.

The event was organized to help Koryo youth prepare for the future with confidence as valuable members of Korean society, in the face of increasing family-unit migration and the growing concentration of Koryo people in Korea.

In his presentation, “Status of Koryo youth in Korea and proposed support measures,” Song Young-ho, a research fellow at Hanyang University’s Institute of Globalization and Multicultural Studies, introduced the current situation of Koryo compatriots and youth in Korea, and proposed key current issues and potential support measures.

Language barriers and academic maladjustment are top issues

Of the top three issues for Koryo youth, the first and largest is language barriers and academic maladjustment. Due to the low level of Korean language proficiency, Koryo youth in densely populated schools are less likely to acquire Korean language skills because they are more likely to be close to their peer groups and not being able to speak Korean right away does not cause much inconvenience in their daily lives.

Second, there is a lack of after-school programs for Koryo youth. Although local governments have enacted ordinances and run care support systems to help them, they are underutilized and the programs still lack infrastructure.

Third, there is a lack of career and advancement programs for stable social transition. While programs for migrant youth are mainly designed to support learning from elementary to high school, there is a need for programs to support young adults’ socioeconomic



Speakers and panelists pose for a photo during a policy discussion on “Practical support measures for communication and integration of Koryo youth in Korea.”

adaptation and self-reliance in later stages of their lives, from schooling and employment to marriage and family formation.

Support for Korean youth should include Korean language education conducted in Russian and after-school care services. It is necessary to establish a shared learning system between local governments, support organizations (Migrant Youth Support Foundation) and educational cooperation centers. It is important to design career advancement programs to work within the local education system. There is also an urgent need to produce administrative and survey statistics on the Koryo diaspora. It is necessary to produce statistics on the scale of the Koryo settlement in Korea and changes in residence status, as well as disaggregating the statistics by generation, age, length of residence and place of residence. In particular, it is necessary to identify the number of youth and young adults in and out of school.

Education should be customized by considering specific characteristics

Yoon Hyun-hee, a researcher at the Korea Educational Development Institute, presented an “Innovation plan for schools in Koryo population centers,” explaining the current situation of schools in areas with high

concentrations of Koryo migrants and presented innovation plans and challenges.

She argued that the recent steep increase in the number of Koryo students and the increasing number of densely populated schools means there are many issues that cannot be addressed by the current education system, so it is necessary to change the policy of multicultural education at the level of the Korean Ministry of Education.

Regarding the current situation of schools in migrant-dense areas (teacher perceptions), first, the number of students from foreign families with limited Korean language skills and mid-entry students is increasing (76.9 percent), resulting in teacher burnout (59.1 percent), while policy and institutional support is inadequate (44.4 percent) and cooperation between communities and members is very weak (27.8 percent). In addition, there is a lack of teacher expertise (24.3 percent), especially in Korean language education, and not many teachers are certified in Korean language teaching, which puts too much pressure on teachers.

The current situation of schools in migrant-dense areas (teacher perceptions) is, first, an increase in the number of students from foreign families with limited Korean language skills and an increased number of students joining in the middle of the school year (76.9 percent), resultant teacher burnout (59.1 percent), lack of policy and institutional support (44.4 percent), and very little cooperation between communities and members (27.8 percent). In addition, there is a lack of teacher expertise (24.3 percent), especially in Korean language teaching, and not many teachers have Korean language teaching certificates, which puts too much pressure on teachers.

There also appears to be segregation between immigrant and non-immigrant students (21.1 percent). Korean students end up being marginalized in school environments with majority Koryo populations. Therefore, there is a need for customized education. When we say that the ultimate purpose of educating students with migrant backgrounds is to allow them to learn together in our classrooms, Korean language and current support are the basis, but based on that, customized education should be made to consider their characteristics, environment and background to some extent.

There are heartbreaking stories, such as where Russian students were excellent students in Russia, but when they come to Korea, they feel invisible and useless, and there is a sense of sadness that these students are not being educated properly.

The meaning of innovation is to restore the dysfunctional school situation to normal educational activities where everyone can grow, and the school management plan for this is the innovation plan. Multicultural education is an education system for all students and promotes the growth of all, and therefore needs to be viewed from the perspective of civic education. Yoon emphasized the need to develop a curriculum for migrant students (bilingual curriculum, Korean language education content development) as a way to build a multicultural education system.

Need for education to strengthen unified Korean identity

Professor Song Seok-won of Kyunghee University gave a presentation on “Domestic Koryo Compatriot Policy and Support for the Next Generation,”



Speakers and panelists engage in a lively debate at a policy discussion on Nov. 1.

addressing the policy environment, challenges and next-generation support for Koryo compatriots living in Korea.

First, he presented equity in legal treatment as a policy issue for Koryo compatriots living in Korea. His suggestions included recognition as settled residents (compatriots) rather than temporary residents (foreigners), compatriot human resources (abolish the visiting employment system), and a reduction in discrimination between the countries of origin of foreign national compatriots living in Korea.

The professor also argued that in addition to the basic education that Koreans need to learn as human beings, education that strengthens their identity as one people should be added, and that global citizenship education should be provided to both students and parents. He also suggested that the competitiveness of the next generation of the Koryo community should be strengthened. He said that it is necessary to adjust the perception of Koryo people from foreigners to compatriots, and at the same time, to support them from the perspective that they are not just workers in the so-called 3D industries (dirty, dangerous and difficult) in our society but as people of talent who can develop with us.

In particular, Koryo youth in South Korea are the “greeters” of the reunification of the Korean Peninsula and have experienced the transition from a socialist system to a capitalist system. In that sense, they can generate know-how that can alleviate some of the confusion that North Koreans may experience during the transition if Korea is reunified in the future.

In addition, it was explained that domestic Koryo organizations and individuals, migrant youth support organizations and groups, school teachers and other such stakeholders working on the ground will also discuss various ways to support Koryo youth in Korea. [\[3\]](#)

OKA provides generator to Hangeul school in Cuba after massive ‘power outage damage’

First case after enactment of ‘Guidelines on Assistance to Overseas Koreans in Crisis’

The Overseas Koreans Agency announced on Nov. 14 that it is donating a generator to a Hangeul school in Cuba that has been affected by a massive power outage.

The Cuban Hangeul School, located in the capital Havana, also serves as an emergency evacuation facility for the Korean diaspora community, which has been using rainwater for drinking water and struggling to store food due to the recent prolonged power outage.

Cuba has been experiencing a nationwide blackout since Nov. 18 due to the failure of an aging thermal power plant. On top of this, an earthquake, coupled with the typhoons Oscar and Rafael, has made restoration difficult despite the government’s recovery efforts.

The OKA established the “Guidelines for Supporting Overseas Koreans in Crisis” in March.

As the first case of support following the implementation of the guidelines, OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said: “It is meaningful



A Korean language class at the Cuban Hangeul School in Havana

to support the Cuban Korean community, which has a special historical significance, for the first time. We will continue to seek practical ways to provide support to places suffering from various disasters.”

‘We will remember roots of overseas Koreans and paths they walked’

OKA hosts screening of ‘Songs of Love from Hawaii,’ movie about early Korean immigration to Hawaii

The Overseas Koreans Agency held a screening of the documentary music film “Songs of Love from Hawaii,” directed by Lee Jin-young, which chronicles the 121-year history of Korean immigration to Hawaii, at the CGV movie theater in Yeonsu Station, Incheon, on Nov. 13.

The film is a musical about immigrants who left Korea for Hawaii in 1902 and their descendants, and sheds light on the lives of the early overseas Koreans who worked in harsh conditions but never forgot their homeland and contributed funds for the independence movement.

The recently released film was also notable for inspiring Grammy Award-winning violinist Richard Yongjae O’Neill, world-renowned



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (R) meets with Lee Jin-young, the director of “Songs of Love from Hawaii,” on Nov. 6.

violinist Kim Ji-yeon and world-class vocalist Jo Sumi to participate with minimal guarantees, moved by its mission to highlight the story of Korean immigration.

“The film is significant because it shows the roots of the present-day Korean community that has developed so brilliantly, as well as their love and contributions to their homeland,” said OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, who met with director Lee before the screening.

After the screening, production member Bang Kyung-eun, head of public relations at Now Productions, explained the meaning of the film and exchanged opinions with the OKA’s staff about the history of the Korean diaspora and the lives of overseas Koreans.

OKA and Seoul National University collaborate to spread domestic citizens' awareness of overseas Koreans and foster education on overseas Korean identity

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Seoul National University (Dean Jang Shin-ho) on Nov. 11 to spread awareness of overseas Koreans among domestic citizens and strengthen education to foster their identity.

Under the agreement, the two organizations will cooperate on ▲ Hangeul education to strengthen the capacity of overseas Hangeul schools, ▲ Educational cooperation and program development to improve the public's understanding of overseas Koreans, and ▲ Other activities to promote bonding between overseas Koreans and domestic Koreans.

Through the agreement, the OKA plans to strengthen the



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (L) and Jang Shin-ho, dean of Seoul National University, sign an agreement at Seoul National University on Nov. 11.

capacity of Hangeul schools, as well as include education on understanding overseas Koreans in domestic textbooks, and strengthen projects to spread awareness among domestic Koreans in elementary, middle, high schools and universities, such as the "Visiting Overseas Koreans" awareness-raising education program.

"We look forward to enhancing understanding of overseas Koreans through

domestic textbooks, as well as strengthening practical cooperation in various fields, such as Hangeul schools and programs for visiting the homeland," said OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk at the signing ceremony held at Seoul National University in Seocho Ward, Seoul.

OKA and Cultural Heritage Administration sign MOU to strengthen education on identity of next generation of overseas compatriots

Cooperation to enhance understanding of national heritage and strengthen ties through education on history, culture and national heritage

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) will work closely with the Cultural Heritage Administration (Commissioner Choi Eung-chun) to strengthen identity education for the next generation of overseas Koreans and increase their understanding of national heritage.

The two organizations signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to this effect at the National Palace Museum in Jongno-gu, Seoul, on Nov. 1, in the presence of Commissioner Lee Sang-duk and Commissioner Choi Eung-chun.

The main contents of the agreement include ▲ Mutual cooperation on history, culture and national heritage education to foster the identity of the next generation of overseas Koreans,



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (R) and National Heritage Administration Commissioner Choi Eung-chun sign an MOU at the National Palace Museum.

including cooperation on overseas Hangeul schools; ▲ Mutual cooperation to improve the awareness and understanding of national heritage among overseas Koreans and locals; and ▲ Cooperation to enhance the bonds between the domestic Korean and overseas Korean communities.

"Cultivating the identity of the next generation of overseas Koreans is one of the core policy goals of the OKA, and through cooperation with the Cultural

Heritage Administration, we expect to revitalize identity education and expand and diversify its content," Commissioner Lee said. "We will strive to ensure that the cooperation between the two organizations is felt by the Korean community through tangible achievements."



OKA to establish new overseas posts in field of overseas Koreans next year

Commissioner Lee: 'We are in talks with the Ministry of Interior and Safety and Ministry of Foreign Affairs ... to increase the budget'



In his first interview with the media after taking office, Lee Sang-duk, the new OKA commissioner, tells Yonhap News Agency, "It is urgent to deploy dedicated personnel to major overseas Korean missions to realize the purpose of the office's establishment, which is the joint development of overseas Koreans and Korea."

The Overseas Koreans Agency, which was launched in June last year, will establish new overseas attaches in the field of overseas Koreans next year.

"We are continuously consulting with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to secure the number of attaches," said OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, when asked by Democratic Party lawmaker Choi Joong-sik about the dispatching of staff overseas during a comprehensive audit by the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee on Oct. 24. "We have concluded the discussions by agreeing to dispatch full-time employees to fulfill the work demand. We have not secured the budget for next year, so I requested that the National Assembly support an increase."

In the OKA's previous days as the Overseas Koreans Foundation, it dispatched seven overseas Korean attaches to seven overseas diplomatic missions to expand contact with the Korean community, including businesses, and to improve the efficient implementation of government projects and policies. The seven embassies were Beijing, China; New York and Los Angeles, USA; Tokyo, Japan; Almaty, Kazakhstan; Sydney, Australia; and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

However, since the establishment of the OKA, the post has

remained vacant since the end of the previous consul general's term due to budgetary issues. Currently, there is one attache at the Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City, whose posting will expire at the end of this year.


"We are prioritizing the dispatch of agency staff to respond to immediate work demands," the OKA said. "We are prioritizing the dispatch of dedicated personnel to major countries with a large number of overseas Koreans."

Rep. Lee Yong-sun of the Democratic Party asked Lee to expand support for Koryo compatriots who have evacuated to South Korea due to the war in Russia and Ukraine, and to strengthen counseling services for Koryo people who do not speak Korean.

Lee responded by saying he would take a closer look at the difficulties felt by people in the field.

"In order to realize the purpose of the OKA's establishment, which is the joint development of overseas Koreans and the Republic of Korea, it is urgent to deploy dedicated personnel to major overseas Korean missions," he said in an interview with Yonhap News Agency ahead of the National Assembly's comprehensive audit.

"In particular, it is essential to dispatch dedicated staff to areas where a large number of compatriots live and maintain close communication with them to formulate policies that reflect the voices of the field. We have been working to dispatch dedicated compatriot staff to major missions, and we are in talks with relevant ministries to dispatch staff to areas with strong compatriot communities as soon as possible."

Meanwhile, the OKA has a budget of 167 billion won this year. There has been criticism that the OKA, which oversees 7 million overseas Koreans around the world, has been underfunded. It is a mere 0.016 percent of the government's 2024 budget of 656.7 trillion won. North Gyeongsang Province, with a population of 2.6 million, similar to the number of overseas Korean voters, has a budget of about 34 trillion won. Compared with this year's budget of 756.6 billion won in Yecheon-gun, North Gyeongsang Province, which has a population of 54,000, overseas Koreans are calling for a significant increase in the budget of the OKA. 

Passing on Korean cultural heritage to next generation of compatriots

“My motion to recognize October as ‘Korean Heritage Month’ in Canada from this year was unanimously adopted by the Canadian Senate. October is chosen because Oct. 9 is Hangeul Day.”

On June 8, Sen. Yeon-ah Martin, the first Korean Canadian senator, shared the good news in clear Korean at the closing ceremony and arts recital of the Surrey Korean Language School in Vancouver, Canada. The students, parents and teachers of the school applauded and celebrated, and the video, which was featured on KBS1’s documentary “On Power of Korean,” spread across the world.

Canada is a mosaic of cultures, with people from more than 150 countries immigrating and living together there, with each country bringing its own unique culture. While many immigrants from large countries, such as China and India, have formed their own cultures, ethnic minorities from smaller countries, such as Korea, are also trying to preserve their own cultures.

It’s been more than 20 years since I left Korea and established a Korean language school in Canada, teaching Hangeul to children of overseas Koreans and sharing Korean history and culture with the local community. My story of bringing a “janggu” drum from Korea to teach my students about it was featured on KBS AM Plaza.

During the difficult time of COVID-19, I continued to teach Hangeul through virtual classes, holding the belief that “Hangeul education cannot be stopped under any circumstances.” In addition, during summer vacations, I have held online history camps for three weeks, where students can virtually follow a teacher as they visit the Gongju National Museum and cultural sites in Gyeongju, providing fun and beneficial learning by allowing students to immerse themselves in the video as if they were experiencing the visit firsthand.



Song Sung-boon,
principal of Surrey Hangeul School, Canada

Canada is a country with a short history, so when I tell people that Korea is 5,000 years old, not only the overseas Korean children but also the locals are surprised. Many people are very interested in Korean culture and history and participate in the History and Culture Camps together, and the number is increasing every year. Nowadays, the interest in K-pop and K-culture is growing even more.

Our school has been organizing a traditional cultural experience every year, but at first, I was sad that the students didn’t have “hanbok.” One year, I heard that the Daegu Office of Education was organizing a campaign to send hanbok kept

in closets after becoming too small for their wearers to overseas friends, so I inquired to them, and they sent me a lot of hanbok that they had collected.

Feeling the “jeong” (affection, attachment) of Koreans, the entire school wore hanbok and offered their respects for the new year, then enjoyed traditional games and culture, such as playing “yut” and “jegi chagi.” Local foreigners were also invited to try on hanbok to share the joyful Lunar New Year culture. The hanbok we received were lent to neighboring schools and sent to the Hangeul School Federation in Toronto and the Oman Hangeul School in the Middle East, spreading Korean culture far and wide.

All overseas Koreans living outside of Korea invariably become patriots. Among them, I proudly declare that Hangeul school teachers go beyond patriots; they are independence fighters.

As a principal of a Hangeul school, I strive to generously convey the glorious cultural heritage of Korea through Hangeul education to my students, their parents and the locals in Canada. In particular, I want to instill Korean culture as a deeply rooted and solid heritage in the next generation of our compatriots living in Canada. 🇰🇷

* The contributor’s claims or opinions may differ from the position of the Overseas Koreans Agency.



OKA Upcoming Events

OKA and Cultural Heritage Administration's MOU signing ceremony (Nov. 1)
OKA and Seoul National University of Education's MOU signing ceremony (Nov. 11)
Overseas Korean Certification Center Service launch ceremony (Nov. 28)

OKA Commissioner's Activities in November

Nov. 1: OKA and Cultural Heritage Administration's MOU signing ceremony
2: Mural unveiling ceremony at Ummapoom Dongsan, Paju
6: Meeting with filmmaker Lee Jin-young
6: Report on major current issues to chair of Nat'l Assembly Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee
7~8: National Assembly Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee / Special Committee on Budget and Appropriations
11: OKA and Seoul National University of Education's MOU signing ceremony
12: Workshop for OKA staff
15: Meeting with director of Taekwondo Promotion Foundation
18: Meeting with secretary general of National Election Commission
20: National Assembly Special Committee on Budget and Appropriations
28: Launch ceremony for Overseas Korean Certification Center Service

OKA Announcements

Incheon branch of OKA Unified Civil Service Support Center moves to Incheon International Airport Terminal 2

Open for business Dec. 2

The Overseas Koreans Agency has announced it will relocate its Incheon branch to the Integrated Government Center on the second floor of Terminal 2 at Incheon International Airport, west of Seoul, on Dec. 2.

The Incheon branch, which was located on the first floor of the OKA offices in Songdo, has been closed since Nov. 22. From Nov. 25 to Dec. 1, while preparations for the new Incheon branch at Incheon International Airport are under way, citizens will have to use the branch in Gwanghwamun, Seoul.

The relocation of the Incheon branch to Incheon International Airport will make it more convenient for overseas Koreans traveling in and out of the country. In the past, overseas Koreans had to travel from Incheon International Airport to Songdo to visit the Incheon branch of the support center, which was inconvenient, resulting in a drop in usage. However, with the relocation to Incheon International Airport, more overseas Koreans will be able to process their requests more conveniently.

At the Unified Civil Service Support Center, you can get a copy of your overseas residence registration, reissue your overseas migration notification certificate, report your return to Korea, find information and make an appointment for a consultation with the center (telephone and video).

You can also consult on administrative services related to legal matters (nationality, compatriot visa, immigration), military service, family relations, national taxes, customs, veterans' affairs, employment, the national pension, health insurance and driver's licenses, among other areas.

In particular, the Integrated Government Center on the second floor of Incheon International Airport Terminal 2, where the new Incheon branch will be relocated, is expected to have a synergistic effect in helping overseas Koreans with various civil affairs, as it is home to the integrated civil affairs offices of various government ministries.

The Immigration Service Center of the Ministry of Justice can easily issue various certificates, as well as process registrations for automatic immigration screening. The Passport Service Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides year-round emergency passport issuance, issues passport issuance record certificates, and processes passport acquisition and loss reports.

In addition, the Military Service Administration provides overseas travel permits for those completing their military service, and checks and manages the military service status of those leaving and entering the country, as well as enlistment applications for those with permanent resident status.



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