

Professor Greg Choy

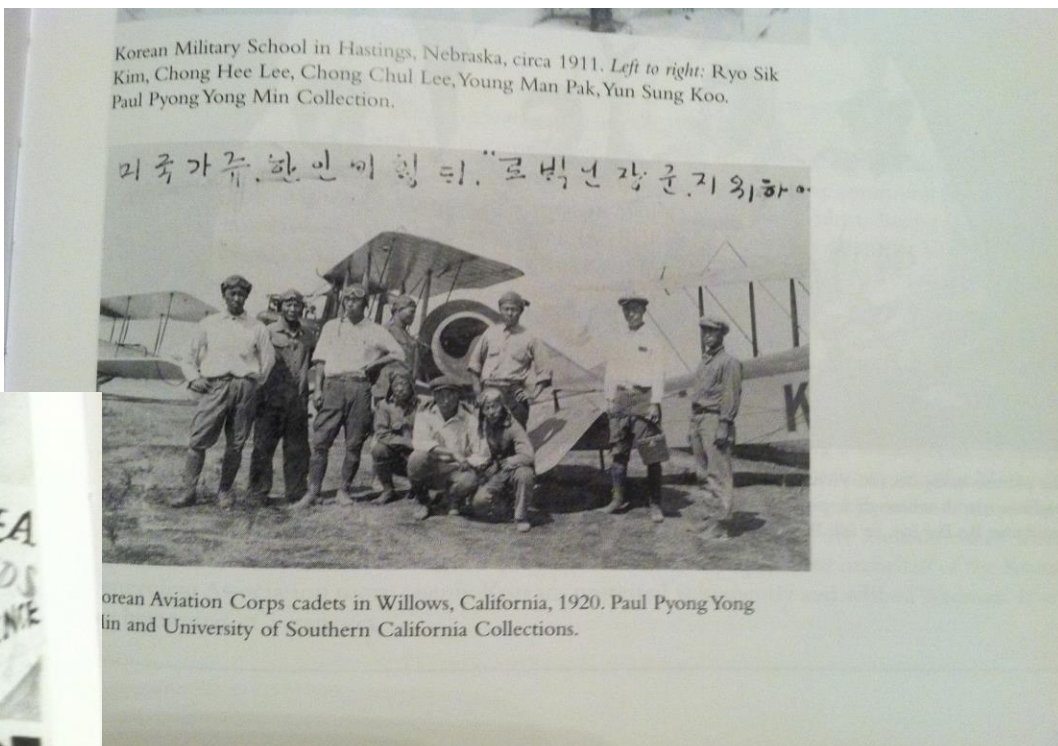
UC Berkeley, Dept. of Ethnic Studies

Home Away From Home...

- Who I Am
- Why I Went
- What We Learned



Grandson of Neung Ik Choy (1889-1976) Korean Patriot/Independence Fighter



Korean Military School in Hastings, Nebraska, circa 1911. Left to right: Ryo Sik Kim, Chong Hee Lee, Chong Chul Lee, Young Man Pak, Yun Sung Koo. Paul Pyong Yong Min Collection.

리국가주, 환인미형 티, 르백년 장군 지위하아

Korean Aviation Corps cadets in Willows, California, 1920. Paul Pyong Yong Min and University of Southern California Collections.



Left to right: Neung Yk Choy, Joon-Mo Pyon, Doo Sik Shin, unidentified. Koreans lead a demonstration protesting Japan's invasions in Asia, circa 1940. Sunda Hahn Collection, University of Southern California.



The "Revolutionary Men," circa 1944. Clockwise, from top: Kil Soo Haan, Neung Yk Choy, Sang Ryup Park. Park was the editor

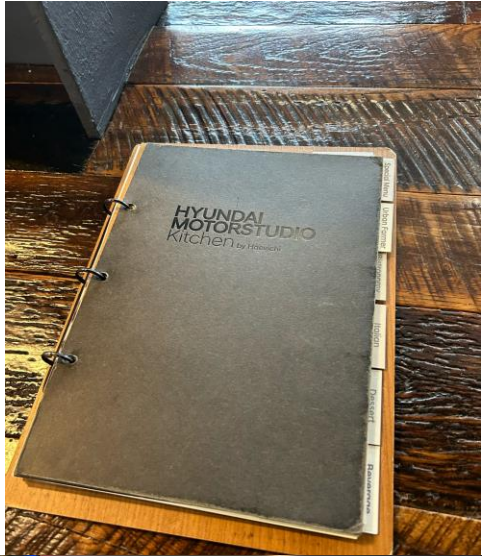
Family visitation to grandfather's gravesite where his remains were re-interred (from Los Angeles) at Patriots' Corner, Dajeon National Cemetery, South Korea, 2012.



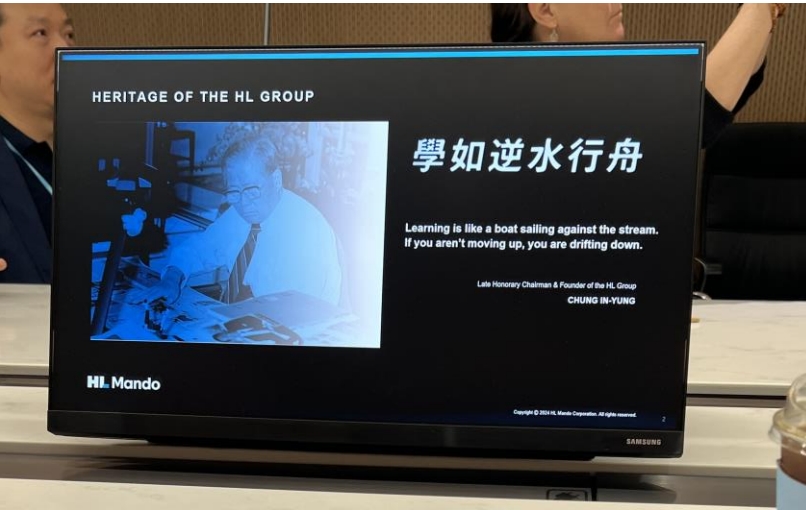
Cousin, Woosuk (Kenneth) Choi, Deputy Managing Editor *Chosun Ilbo*



Hyundai Motorstudio in Goyang



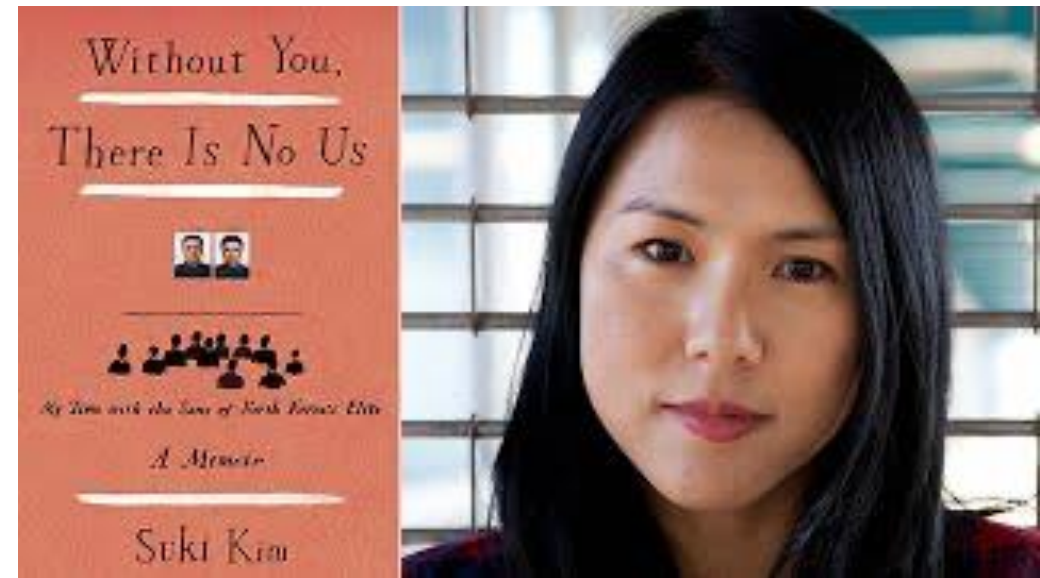
HL Mando



Examples of Recommended Readings (excerpted
from my earlier and longer PPt. show)

Without You There Is No Us: My Secret Life Teaching the Sons of North Korea's Elite (2014), Suki Kim

An important, though controversial, work given our brief visit to the DMZ. Kim serves as a kind of double-agent journalist, posing as a member of a Christian missionary group, themselves posing as headstrong teachers but with the secretive goal of converting the country after its presumed fall. Her observations about how delusional her students are about NK's status in the world and how seemingly hopeless is the mission of bringing any light of knowledge to them without risking the safety of the group of teachers as well as the students themselves is stunning. By her own admission, she cannot help "falling in love" with the bright-eyed innocence and youthful passion of her students as well as with the utmost respect with which they treat her. It's controversial bc of the previously mentioned risks to her students who are now fully fledged adults. What's happened to them (and their families) now that it's known to the leaders of the party that she was a western journalist who spent time among them? Also, her undercover colleagues complained that she had outed them (Kim used pseudonyms for all characters), thus subverting their mission to convert the communists and endangering their chances of accomplishing their greatest most heavenly task. It is eminently readable and a bracing narrative.

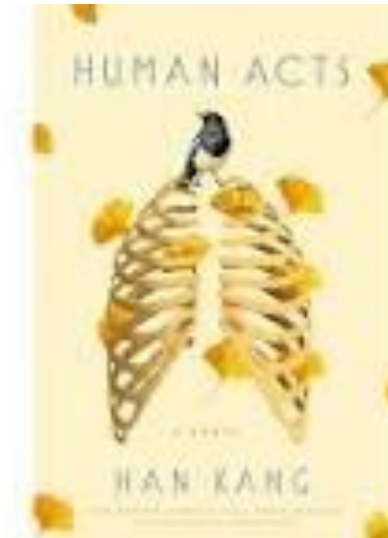


***The Vegetarian* (2007) and *Human Acts* (2014), Han Kang**

These are two of Han Kang's most discomfiting yet "heroic" works, if I might use that term ironically. Kang won the Man Booker Prize for *The Vegetarian*. Narrated by the protagonist's sister, it is an unstinting, deeply psychological foray into the mental health of a wife/daughter-in-law who must bear the violent, uncompassionate, merciless consequences/shame of simply not wanting to consume meat anymore. Oh, the embarrassment it brings to the men of the family! Must. Get. Her. In. Line! The more abusive they become, the deeper this gentle, artistically-minded protagonist recedes into a kind of post-human emotional refuge. A social statement about unquestioning/unquestionable consumption? Or a stark metaphor of shrinking social spaces for those who would dare question the patriarchy and its practices?

Human Acts is a historical novel/ghost story about the Korean gov't's massacre of its own citizens in Gwangju in 1980. It's less a retelling of that often told history than an attempt to rip the band-aid off the scar of historical memory and close the impersonal narrative distance created by journalistic reportage of the events (of which there wasn't much at the time). The victims were not, cannot, and must never be seen merely as historic casualties on a country's march toward democracy, especially when living relatives of those murdered are socially compelled to forget or remain silent. Kang brings a megaphone to her message through the subtly, beautifully dissembled narratives of those lost.

Protagonists are more than merely focal points in her novels. As distant as their lives might seem from our own, corporeally, spiritually, philosophically, readers live vicariously through their suffering because they exist in the rigors of that selfsame homogeneous society that has rendered these characters insufferably recognizable, which is to say, they challenge the codes and hierarchies of Korean normalcy.



Literature is History and History Takes Us Right Back to Story

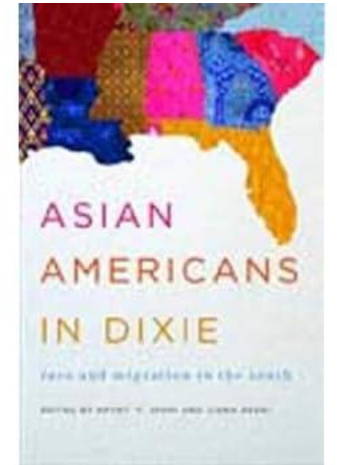
Becoming Asian American

Here is a useful comprehensive link to all things searchable about the Korean diaspora, from George Washington University:

<https://libguides.gwu.edu/korea/literature> Fun to navigate according to your interest(s). As you'll notice, there are multitudes, now, of works on the Korean diaspora that cover all disciplines. Couldn't have made that claim way back when I taught the first Korean American Literature course for UC Irvine back in 1998!

Pictured is an academic anthology about Asian American settlement in the US South, *Asian Americans in Dixie*, edited by friends, Professors Khyati Joshi and Jigna Desai.

Also pictured is an award-winning, eminently readable and deeply interesting recent history of Asian America: *Asian American Histories of the United States*, by Professor Catherine Ceniza Choy. How do Asians become Asian Americans? As in politics where we follow the money, in Ethnic Studies we follow the histories of legislation. Unique in Choy's work is that it is a history book that is not chronologically written but instead depicts how histories of Asians in America evolve around particularly significant years and events. These histories are interlinked. Just follow the movements and legislation surrounding the historic events. You'll find out a bit more about my own Korean history as it includes stories of my Korean grandfather and Korean American father. You might have surmised by now that the author happens to be my spouse!



Takeaways...

- The thrills and challenges of cultural immersion—language, food/drink, customs, gestures, geography, history...
- Understanding cultural and historical connections to home and homeland...
- Memories into desire...
- Upon returning, empathizing with the challenges of occupying the shoes of a newcomer...(see first bullet point)...
- To reciprocate hospitality at home, as opposed to xenophobia...
- To be a cultural ambassador.