

GO BACK TO KOREA!

Sung Chul Park

The Rev. Sung Chul Park is an honorably retired member of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area who also continues to direct the Korean Adoptees Ministry Center (www.kamcenter.org). For the Rev. Park, the recent rhetoric on immigration was not a political or ideological talking point; it was deeply personal. His reflections are printed here with his permission.

July 18 was my 80th birthday. I couldn't believe I am already over 80 years old.

My wife my son's couple and niece provided a celebration party with fantastic food, including my second daughter's favorite New York Cheese cake that was delivered yesterday. After dinner, I was so happy and looked at my three grandchildren's happily jumping and laughing. I felt so blessed and happy.

At the same time, I have concern about the current President Donald Trump's racial comment to four congresswomen (known as) "The Squad": GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY!

I have heard this chant, too, personally: "Go back to Korea!" This episode was happened in 1997 during my study at the McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. I was fortunate to be one of the 40 scholarships recipients to study in Israel for three months with two professors: one New Testament and one Old Testaments of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago (a neighboring seminary to McCormick, our Presbyterian Church USA seminary). Thirty-nine of the 40 persons on that tour were Catholic priests or nuns; I was only one non-Catholic and married.

One day I was invited to preach one of their daily services. I shared my struggle with racial injustice in Minnesota, what I have to cope with. After the service, two priests approached to me and began to criticize/condemn my preaching about racial injustice. One of them was a former president of a

major Catholic seminary in America, angrily shouting to me: "IF YOU DID NOT HAPPY HERE, GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY, KOREA!"

He continued that Korea had a lot of social injustices so he encouraged me to go back to Korea and fix the problems there. And he said, "We already have Jessie Jackson (a presidential candidate that time). We don't need another Jessie."

I was speechless.

Under such a situation, I'd like the Washington State Senator, Dr. Paul Shin's wisdom. I heard his story in 2000 when he was the keynote speaker of the KIM (Korean Institute of Minnesota) 25th Anniversary Celebration in Minneapolis. Dr. Shin said that when he campaigned door-to-door for his state representative, one European gentleman opened the door, looked down him, and said, "There are too many Orientals around here. Why don't you go back to your own country?"

Senator Shin was mad and about to punch the man on his nose, but he calmed down and told him as follows: I have lived here over 30 years, served as a missionary in Japan for 3 years, then his long list of volunteer works, taught at a university as professor for over 20 years, pay tax over 30 years. I married and raised children. This is my home and my country. Since your family came here first as an immigrant, why don't you go back to your country, and then I'll follow you.

The angry gentleman lost his words and stared at Dr. Shin for a while. Finally, he grabbed Sen. Shin's shoulder and said, I'll help you. He helped Mr. Shin's campaign to be elected.

What A wisdom!!

I encouraged my son to equip such wisdom with my little grandchildren.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

HOW DO YOU EQUIP YOUR CHILDREN TO COPE WITH SUCH RACIAL SLUR?