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 **Asia Society  
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## Asia Rising and Our Shared Future



The 5th edition of Asia Society's Asia Rising and Our Shared Future dialogue in Seoul, hosted by **Mr. Dong-Bin Shin**, Chairman of the Asia Society Korea Center, could not have come at a more opportune time. It came in the wake of mounting tensions on the Korean Peninsula, owing to the recent nuclear tests and the launch of a long-range rocket. It also coincided with the day North Korea celebrated the birthday of Kim Jong Il, the father of the current North Korea leader, Kim Jong Un. As the Asia Rising dialogue was getting underway, South Korea's President Park Geun-hye was boldly declaring that her country will be taking the lead using "stronger and more effective" measures to prevent belligerent North Korea from realizing its nuclear ambitions.  
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## Conversation with Ronnie Chan on Philanthropy



February 17, 2016 - The Asia Society Korea Center held its first Monthly Luncheon of 2016 on Tuesday at the Lotte Hotel, Seoul. The event took on added significance as it coincided with the hosting of the Asia Rising Series and ASKC was pleased to welcome **Mr. Ronnie Chan**, Co-Chairman at the Global Asia Society, for a "Conversation on Philanthropy". Mr. Chan is the Chairman of Hang Lung Group Limited and was recently described in a South China Morning Post article as being "a positive volcano of energy, entrepreneurship and ideas". The conversation was moderated by **Mr. Mark Totto**, Asia Society Korea Center board member and local businessman.  
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## North Korea Coverage by Steven Borowiec

### The Sad but True Story of North Korea's Abduction Project



As he is adapting to a life he never wanted in North Korea, Kaoru Hasuike's minder tells him that having been abducted "is a very embarrassing thing."

Kaoru is surprised by the characterization. Why should he, a victim who along with his girlfriend was jumped, tied up and taken by boat to North Korea, be embarrassed? "If being kidnapped is something I should be embarrassed about, then what about the people who kidnapped me?" he thinks to himself, but does not say aloud.

Decades after Kaoru and dozens of other foreign nationals were kidnapped by North Korea, it still isn't clear if anyone in Pyongyang feels any shame or regret for upending innocent lives with a campaign of abductions. In "Invitation Only Zone" Robert S. Boynton, Director of Literary Reportage Concentration and Associate Professor at New York University's Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute, attempts to figure out why in the late 1970s North Korea created a department tasked with carrying out abductions abroad, how those abductions affected the victims and how the abduction issue can help us understand today's politics in Northeast Asia.

The book gets its name from the areas where Kaoru and other abductees lived in North Korea. The foreign abductees were kept under close surveillance and out of contact with North Koreans other than their minders.

Throughout his time in North Korea, Kaoru wondered why he was taken to a country he had no connection to. What really did North Korea want from him? How could he maintain some quality of life while not getting into trouble with the police state? Would he ever be able to return home?

North Korea was at that time and is still an exceptionally inaccessible country. The government in Pyongyang kept out foreign influences the way one packs food in plastic wrap. Exposure to the air outside risks contamination.

But North Korea wanted to be a strong and prosperous country, and needed skills possessed only by outsiders. There was also a dearth of skilled professionals after so many had fled South before the war.

The program of kidnapping and holding foreigners in North Korea against their will was to some extent an outcome of the state recognizing the limits of its reclusive policies. Many of the abductions were ostensibly meant to bring skills into the country: regular folks from Malaysia, Thailand, Romania, France and elsewhere were brought in to be language teachers, a famed South Korean director and actress couple were taken to make professional-standard propaganda films.

The book is the product of reporting trips Boynton made to Japan and South Korea over a period of eight years starting in 2008. He is not an Asia specialist and speaks neither Korean or Japanese (his previous book was a set of interviews about the craft of nonfiction writing), but is an informed guide who is skilled at showing readers the personalities on both sides of the abductions. Some of the most engaging chapters in "Invitation Only Zone" provide tick-tock of the 2002 negotiations between North Korea and Japan that sought to resolve the abduction issue, which garnered massive public interest in Japan and took place after nearly a year of secretive diplomacy over the timing and circumstances of a meeting.

The two countries have a history of antagonism anchored by Japan's 1910-45 occupation of the Korean peninsula. In 2002, then-Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi traveled to Pyongyang under public pressure to get a public apology for the abductions from late North Korean leader Kim Jong Il and information on who the abductees were and their current whereabouts.

Boynton argues that "the most plausible explanation is that the abductions were part of a bold plan to unify the two Koreas, spread Kim Il-sung's ideology throughout Asia, and humiliate Japan."

Occasionally in Seoul one still sees banners in public places calling on the South Korean government to hold its own investigation into the disappearances of South Korean nationals believed to have been abducted by the North. Civic groups that represent abductees' families put up the ads, which make standard Korean appeals to emotion, usually mentioning relatives' "tears." They suggest that getting to the bottom of the abductions might dry these tears.

This appeal echoes of what we often call "closure", achieving the sense that a traumatic episode is now over and the aggrieved party can "move on". In powerful column in the Wall Street Journal, a cancer doctor recently argued that the concept of a traumatized person finding "closure" is a myth and that people who lose loved ones experience feelings of pain and longing forever.

Though 'closure', in the form of dried tears or an end to sadness, may be a myth, bereaved people do need a clear factual record, an understanding of what specifically happened to their loved ones, before they can begin to heal. It would be in the interest of the South Korean and Japanese governments to commission new reports on the abductions and make their findings publicly available. It's impossible to know how many of these bereaved families will read Boynton's book (I'm not aware of any plans for a Japanese or Korean language translations), or whether the wounds of abductions episode can ever be healed, but "Invitation Only Zone" is a welcome contribution to the knowledge and understanding of a bizarre and tragic subplot of East Asian history.

## North Korea Coverage by Steven Borowiec

### Harsher Tone Shows Public Patience with North Korea has Run Out

I like to compare the question of South Korea's North Korea policy to how a family might deal with a relative who can't get their life together.

Maybe someone you care about is stuck in a rut of sloth or selfishness or substance abuse or depression. Do you provide the wayward loved one with material support, maybe paying their rent or buying them food, with the hope that a boost will allow them to build the confidence needed to get back on their feet? Or do you pull away all assistance, hoping that only by hitting rock bottom will they accept the gravity of their situation and take a turn for the better?

In short, do they just need to feel like someone cares about them, or do they need a kick in the behind?

Since becoming a democracy in the late 1980s, South Korea has tried various approaches to dealing with its poor, nuclear-armed ethnic brethren in the North. Under liberal governments from 1998 to 2008, Seoul carried out what it called the Sunshine Policy, which mandated unconditional economic aid to North Korea and instituted projects of economic cooperation. The hope was that with shared interests, the two sides could build trust and work toward reunifying.

In 2008, the conservative government of President Lee Myung-bak changed course. Lee has a business background, and applied the cold thinking of cost-benefit analysis to North Korea policy: Pyongyang wasn't about to change, he believed, so no point in wasting money or energy hoping for improved behavior.

President Park Geun-hye took office in early 2013 pledging to balance these two approaches in a policy she christened "trustpolitick." She didn't promise any bold moves like the resumption of large-scale aid but left the door open to dialogue that could at least avoid military clashes.

Last week, in the wake of tests that confirmed North Korea's refusal to give up its nuclear weapons and long range missile programs, Park made a firebreathing speech in Parliament in which she voiced a shift in her approach, and the public acceptance of some uncomfortable truths.

The key point was Park's contention that Seoul can no longer wait with the expectation that North Korea will change on its own. She also said that Pyongyang's insistence on developing nuclear weapons would lead to the regime's collapse.

Her tone was noteworthy: Park didn't sound rueful, like she was delivering bad news. She came across more as one with a determination not to repeat past mistakes.

The domestic discussion about North Korea policy is often colored with flimsy optimism, the hope that with a few meetings North Korea may come around and play nice. North Korea's latest moves have apparently exhausted Park's patience.

And she isn't the only one. Let's not forget that Park is a politician and that South Korea is a democracy. This shift in tone wouldn't have occurred if it weren't in tune with evolution in South Korean public opinion. Poll data indicate that a majority of South Koreans support Park's recent decision to close the jointly run Kaesong Industrial Complex, the last vestige of the Sunshine Policy. Even more suggestive is a study by RealMeter that found that not a single age cohort believes aid to North Korea shouldn't be cut off if the North doesn't give up its nukes.

There is also noteworthy change in South Koreans' perception of what it takes to be a citizen of their country. A 2014 study by the Asan Institute found that to more South Koreans, civic concerns such as abiding by laws are of greater importance, while Korean ethnicity matters less. The South Korean public is less tied to the concept of ethnic nationalism; there are fewer voices contending that North Korea should be forgiven and catered to because the two Koreas form one ethnic group.

The harder line on North Korea is particularly pronounced among young people, who don't have memories of Korea as a unified country and who are trying to make their way in an unforgiving job market. To many of them, unification seems like a prohibitively costly undertaking.

Throughout her political career Park has shifted her policy stances with the spirit of the times. When she first sought the presidency in 2007, she cast herself as a Korean Margaret Thatcher, a champion of business and small government. When she ran in 2012, she skillfully incorporated into her platform public calls for increased social welfare and corporate regulation. In this most recent case, too, Park has melded her governance decision around public opinion.

Critics are already making fair criticisms of Seoul's decision to take a newly hardened stance toward North Korea, arguing that such moves play into Pyongyang's claims that the outside world wishes them ill, and only further isolate North Korea's people from the outside world.

Whether or not you agree with Park in her turn, it is important to note that the shift in policy is only possible alongside public fatigue with the estranged relative.

# North Korea Coverage by Steven Borowiec

## A Firefly in the Dark of North Korea



The words children sing at school don't normally make headlines, but flashes of the mundane in North Korea can be newsworthy. I found this out a few years ago when I came across a news story about a well-known tune that had been given an irreverent twist in North Korea.

The Daily NK, an online media outlet with sources in North Korea, reported that at a rural school a subversive take on the children's song "Three Bears" had been found. The normal lyrics to the giddy tune tell the story of a happy family, with short verses dedicated to dad, mom and baby, describing each bear with an adjective. Dad is portly, mom is slender and their baby is oh so cute.

In the altered version reportedly found at the school, the family members are switched out with the names of the three members of North Korea's hereditary succession, founding leader Kim Il Sung, his son Kim Jong Il, then grandson and current leader Kim Jong Un, calling them greedy or dimwitted. Daily NK translated the lyrics as, "'Three bears in a house, pocketing everything; grandpa bear, papa bear and baby bear. Grandpa Bear is fat, Papa Bear is fat, too, and Baby Bear is a doofus.'

The song was to me a heartening reminder that the North Korean regime hasn't managed to eradicate its subjects' senses of humor and irony. North Koreans are brought up to view their leaders as gods, constantly fed with myths about the Kim family's majesty. Without access to internet, print or broadcast media, North Koreans have little opportunity to check the veracity of these claims for themselves. Nevertheless, not everyone is convinced by the state narrative. It sounds like harmless fun, but in North Korea lambasting the country's ruling dynasty is treated as something between crime and blasphemy and can get one banished to a prison camp.

I thought of that case when I learned recently about a set of short stories smuggled out of North Korea. The Guardian reported that a collection of stories by a pseudonymous author known as Bandi (meaning "firefly") had been smuggled out of North Korea. The stories were published in South Korea in 2014 and are now drawing interest in the west. For all the ink that gets spilled analyzing the North Korean government's every move, we still know little about what life there is actually like, and what regular North Koreans think of their rulers. Bandi is therefore notable for being a writer that still lives in North Korea and can conjure the aroma of the place, as well as some indication of how the overbearing state sits in its subjects' psyches.

The Guardian reported that publishers all over the world are seeking the rights to translations. There is therefore hope that Bandi could be to North Korea what Solzhenitsyn was to the USSR, a writer who draws global attention with unadorned accounts of everyday life under dictatorship.

Most accounts of North Korea come from escapees who have long since left the country. Most of them are similar. Adapted or written specifically for Western audiences, they are memoirs of triumph over hardship, of dogged, risky efforts to escape dictatorship and find freedom. Since Bandi's work is fiction, it won't face the questions over factual accuracy that some defector memoirs have been subject to.

Bandi's stories, which have already been published in South Korea, are set during the 1990s that ravaged North Korea, killing thousands. That is somewhat disappointing, as more recent stories about the turn to small-scale free markets North Korean society has taken since the famine-era collapse of the state distribution system would contribute more to the outside world's understanding.

Some in literary circles have happily described Bandi as a reminder of the inextinguishable human spirit, as the sarcastic three bears lyrics were for me years ago. Kim Jong Un's dictatorial control hasn't crushed the creative impulse in North Korea, that even without free access to literature, there are writers carrying out true explorations of their society on the page.

Thought I haven't yet read Bandi's work, I feel comfortable calling it a triumph, even if his book doesn't sell or isn't much fun to read. Bandi may shine fragments of light on all those North Korean lives suffering under dictatorship, but no single firefly is enough to illuminate the darkness that shrouds North Korea.

# North Korea Coverage by Steven Borowiec

## Escaping North Korea's Restaurants

One night in Yangon I sat eating kimchi amid a clatter of traditional Korean music. In a small performance area at the front of the restaurant, several young, slender North Korean women jubilated with South Korean businessmen. They struck an uneven harmony singing the Korean classic “Arirang.”

Every night, scenes such as this play out in cities across Asia, where North Korea operates restaurants that serve standard North Korean dishes alongside musical entertainment, with waitresses in traditional garb singing and dancing in unison. For the government in Pyongyang, the restaurants are a source of sorely needed foreign currency. For patrons, they are a way of experiencing a little bit of a reclusive country.

The young woman serving our table was clever and attentive. With her large eyes and narrow jawline, she embodied customary Korean standards of beauty. She was among the small minority of North Koreans who are fortunate enough to have an opportunity to see some of the world outside their country. The North Korean government ships thousands of workers overseas for what is effectively slave labor in restaurants or mines or construction sites. Though the North Korean government takes much of their wages, the jobs still confer a relatively high standard of living and a certain prestige once the workers return home.

But not all return. Some want more than a few years of overseas servitude and don't return home. Early in April, a group of 13 workers from a restaurant in the Chinese city of Ningbo defected en masse to South Korea. In an unusual move, the South Korean government held a Friday afternoon press conference to announce the arrival of the 13 defectors, who had left China in a hurry and arrived in South Korea via a country in southeast Asia.

The announcement came several days before South Koreans voted in parliamentary elections, and it didn't take long for cynics to point out the suspiciousness of the timing. The ruling Saenuri Party, perhaps sensing the electoral defeat that was to come, may have been groping for some news that might give them a boost at the ballot box.

The government implied that the defection was an outcome of sanctions Seoul had enacted on North Korea as punishment for Pyongyang's most recent nuclear and missile tests. Along with tightening restrictions on North Korea's ability to do business abroad, South Korea had urged its citizens to stay out of North Korean restaurants while overseas, arguing that the revenue from the restaurants goes to funding weapons that threaten South Korea's security. Mainstream South Korean media outlets ran stories with unnamed government sources whose comments suggested that the restaurant in Ningbo had been unable to meet its remittance target, and that's why the staff had fled. Other, more critical, media reports contended that South Korean intelligence agents had facilitated the group defection, so that it could be announced in time for the elections.

North Koreans are rarely able to speak for themselves, and for the time being, it isn't possible to determine why the restaurant workers fled. They will be interrogated by South Korea's intelligence service, then eventually settled somewhere in the country. It's unlikely that they'll ever come out and publicly tell their story.

The news of 13 restaurant workers skipping town at great personal risk made me think of our waitress in Yangon that night. At first she refused to make eye contact with me as I placed my order, saying I was the first white Korean speaker she had ever met. After a bit of small talk about her work at the restaurant, she appeared a little less weirded out by me so I asked her a couple of delicate questions. Where was her hometown? How did she like living in Yangon?

For her hometown, she simply said “North Korea”; she said living in Yangon was “OK.” She asked me how I'd learned to speak Korean. “I learned in Seoul,” I said. I wanted to ask her thoughts on South Korea, but held back after I realized I might be baiting her into saying something that could get her in trouble.

As we talked, her colleagues buzzed around the restaurant, singing and dancing, all the while wearing forced smiles. Uneasy with the spectacle, I stepped outside for some fresh air in the hot tropical night. I wondered what the woman serving me might have accomplished in her life had she been in a country where it was possible to reach her potential. I was saddened to think that this job was more desirable than her options back home.

At that moment, the restaurant struck me as a microcosm for North Korean society more generally, in that it was a group of grownups being forced to behave like children. The workers must eat and sleep when their handlers say to. They aren't allowed to come and go as they wish. When company come to dinner, they must smile and be hospitable.

North Korea is full of people living under similar strictures, most of whom will never be able to live according to their own wishes.

The woman who served me dinner and beers in Yangon is presumably back in North Korea now and probably won't ever enjoy the dignity afforded by life in a free country.

Amid the bickering over the timing and announcement of the restaurant workers who recently defected to South Korea, I was heartened to know that 13 people in her position made it out, and won't be stuck in servitude forever.

# Healthy Food of Asia Part I

## Indonesian Cuisine



**By Matthew Fennell**

Now that the holiday season is well and truly behind us, we at the Asia Society Korea Center thought what better way to begin the New Year than by launching our new “Healthy Eating” food series! Each month we will preview food from around the world, discovering the history and culture behind the more unique dishes that different countries have to offer. We kick off our series by exploring Indonesian cuisine in January and each month a new region will be on the menu.

When people around the world think of Indonesian food, Nasi Goreng immediately springs to mind. The Asia Society Korea Center was invited to the Indonesian Ambassador Residence in Seoul by Madame Alexandra Prasetyo to show that the country’s cuisine goes far beyond this well-known dish. The ambassadorial dining room provided the perfect backdrop for the food tasting afternoon, with Indonesian artist Arin Dwihartanto Sunaryo’s elegant three-panel “Volcanic Ash” overlooking the dinner table and many other Indonesian art works on display. Madame Prasetyo served up 3 different kinds of cuisine to enjoy while giving a fascinating insight into healthy cooking and dining.

Ice lemon tea, the traditional welcoming beverage served in restaurants and homes in Indonesia, was the first delight that was offered, made even more refreshing by the home grown mint leaves that were added to the drink. Madam Prasetyo summed up Indonesian cuisine as varied and diverse, with spices, coconut milk and sweet black sauce all featuring prominently. The thick, sweet, rich, syrupy Indonesian sweet black sauce in particular was highlighted as being the key to Indonesian food, serving as a condiment or main ingredient in cooking. Although a lot of Indonesian food is fried, the country does have dishes that are great for those on a diet or for people who are under the weather with various soups playing a leading role. Madam Prasetyo especially recommended Sayur Asam, a vegetable sour soup and oxtail soup as being excellent foods carrying great health benefits. It was another of these soups, Soto Ayam, that provided the appetizer to our meal and it certainly did not disappoint.

Soto Ayam, more commonly known as chicken soup, is one of the most popular versions of soto (soup) commonly found in Indonesian cuisine. The fantastic kitchen at the residence used free range chicken, vermicelli noodles, hardboiled eggs and various herbs in providing what was a light yet hearty herbal broth. What was striking about the soup was the different flavors that came out with each spoonful while at the same time giving that healthy, fragrant taste. This appetizer led us nicely into the main dish; chicken satay in a sweet soy sauce with shallots served with steamed vegetables in a peanut dressing. Although chicken satay is more commonly accompanied by a peanut dressing, we were treated to satay with a twist with the dressing being a mix of soy and sweet black sauce that had a hint of spice. We were not to miss out of the peanut dressing however, with the steamed vegetables coated with a fresh tasting paste.

Throughout the meal, presentation and elegance added to the fantastic experience of trying these healthy, traditional Indonesian foods. Madam Prasetyo is passionate about her country’s cuisine and she has every right to be, one day hoping that restaurants will spring up all over Seoul, giving Koreans a traditional taste of Indonesia. Indonesia of course produces some of the world’s best coffee and we were given a cup to close out our meal, putting on the finishing touches to what was a wonderful afternoon. The Indonesian Ambassador Residence was the perfect host and the Asia Society looks forward to returning to experience other foods and drinks in the future.

# Healthy Food of Asia Part II

## Yusheng



By Matthew Fennell

With February marking Lunar New Year, the Korea Center decided to find out more about Yusheng, the traditional and symbolic dish associated with festivities in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Singaporean **Si Hui Chew**, a student at the National University of Singapore has this month helped write a short piece explaining some of the history and culture behind this meaningful cuisine.

Yusheng is a customary Lunar New Year dish, traditionally served on the 7th day of Chinese New Year, known locally in Singapore as renri. Renri means “every man’s birthday” with people becoming a year older on this day. In the past, yusheng was only eaten on renri, however these days it is normal for a family to eat yusheng numerous times throughout the New Year period and it is usually served at the start of every meal.

As the Chinese meaning of yusheng represents raw fish, salmon is the focal point of the dish and is served uncooked and cold alongside other ingredients. Arranged on a very large circular plate, an important feature of the dish, yusheng is one of the most colourful cuisines of all Chinese New Year food. It is made up of shredded carrot, green and white shredded radish, pickled ginger, crushed peanuts, pomelo, cinnamon, pepper, golden pillow crackers and is accompanied by a variety of condiments.

The present form of yusheng was developed by four master chefs from Singapore in the 1960s who were inspired by the Cantonese tradition of consuming raw fish strips during Chinese New Year. The chefs added new ingredients and entwined symbolic significance into the dish and presentation. Yusheng has become iconic in Singapore remaining unchanged for 5 decades, recently gaining popularity in Malaysia and other Chinese communities. For modern day convenience, many supermarkets have introduced ready-made yusheng kits to be brought home for consumption that strictly maintain the traditional ingredients.

At home, or even in restaurants, yusheng is not simply something you eat; behind yusheng lies a ritual that brings together family, colleagues, and friends. An important part of yusheng is the specific order that the ingredients must be added one by one, each accompanied by a different New Year wish. For example, salmon is the first to go in, with the server reciting the Chinese idiom “nian-nian-you-yu” which hopes for abundance throughout the year. The rest of the ingredients are added in order, all having their own wishes highlighting prosperity, good luck and success for the year ahead.

Once all of the ingredients have been prepared, everyone seated around the table will stand up to toss the yusheng using chopsticks, a ritual called “lo hei” (meaning to rise), for the person who tosses yusheng the highest is thought to achieve rising prosperity. This is why the big plate is necessary for the tossing of yusheng as the food can go everywhere with the ritual being filled with lots of energy; you can also expect people to yell “huat ah!”, meaning prosperity. Other New Year wishes are shouted loudly during the ritual, and although lo hei can cause disruption to other diners, it is always an extremely happy occasion with everyone participating.

Since Lunar New Year is the only time of the year when we eat yusheng, eating it during any other time would undermine the meaning and atmosphere of this celebratory occasion. When eating yusheng, the dish takes on the underlying idea of a happy family reunion, a gathering of wealth with colleagues, the ushering in of good luck with friends and the increasing prosperity for all Chinese who celebrate.

## Healthy Food of Asia Part III

### New Zealand Avocados



By Matthew Fennell

Avocados have recently established themselves as one of the world's health foods, carrying nutritional benefits through their array of vitamins and minerals. Although the avocado tree is native to Mexico and Central America, the fruit is cultivated in many countries throughout the world. The Korea Center caught up with New Zealand Avocado Growers' Association (NZAGA) to find out what makes New Zealand such an ideal environment for growing and for a simple recipe that we can all follow at home to get the best out of the fruit.

The New Zealand avocado industry may be the ninth largest exporter of avocados in the world, but it has a great reputation for its quality and systems. The country is famed for its natural beauty and clean environment and Jen Scouler, CEO of New Zealand Avocado, believes that this is why New Zealand avocados taste so good. "The growers take the extra time to nurture their avocados on the tree and only harvest when the

taste and quality of each avocado reaches its best. They are also produced in a pristine environment with clean air, fresh water and plenty of warm sunlight". Avocados are a healthy and versatile wholefood as you can eat them for breakfast, lunch and dinner or make snacks and desserts with them.

One popular use for the fruit is indulging in an avocado smoothie for breakfast as they are a great way to start each day; healthy and have the good fats our bodies need. When we are busy, healthy eating can be a challenge and the simplicity of the avocado is another reason why it has become so popular. Alongside the smoothie, a breakfast favorite for people living in New Zealand is avocado mashed on toasted grain bread and seasoned with salt and pepper – adding sliced tomato or crumbled feta cheese is also very popular and adds great flavor.

The New Zealand Avocado Growers' Association hopes that Koreans will learn about the health and taste of avocados so they can add the fruit into their daily diet. Avocados are the third-largest fresh fruit export from New Zealand with 1350 avocado growers, based mainly in the Bay of Plenty and Northland. The avocado is a nutrient dense fruit with potential health benefits for all age groups. From expectant mothers and babies to everyone interested in watching their weight and maintaining a healthy heart, avocados are an energy packed super food.

#### **RECIPE: Classic New Zealand Avocado on Toast**

Serves 1

Prep time: 5 minutes

Ingredients:

- 2 pieces of grain toast
- Flesh of ½ a soft ripe New Zealand avocado

• ½ a lemon

• Salt and pepper to taste

• Tomato - optional

Method

• Toast bread

• Lay toast on chopping board

• Cut avocado in half lengthways and twist to separate the two halves. Take the half of the avocado with the stone still in it.

Squeeze a little lemon juice over the flesh and store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for use by the next day.

• Take the half without the stone and cut in half lengthways and peel the skin off

• Place the two pieces of avocado onto the two pieces of toast, take a fork and mash the avocado onto the toast, spreading it to the edges with a knife.

• Season with a little lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste.

• If you enjoy tomato then add thin slides to the top.

## Ambassador Interviews

### Interview with H.E. Mohamed Ali Nafti, Ambassador of Tunisia to Korea



**H.E. Mohamed Ali Nafti, Ambassador of Tunisia**

Despite political turmoil and civil unrest in many parts of the Middle East, one shining light to arise from the Arab Spring is Tunisia, a country that has enjoyed 5 years of continued democracy. Yvonne Kim, Executive Director at the Asia Society Korea Center met with **H.E. Mohamed Ali Nafti**, Ambassador of Tunisia to Korea, to discuss the road to democracy, his hopes for the future and Korea-Tunisia relations.

He views democracy as a culture, as a practice and something that can be seen as innovative. He talks about his pride in having lived in a country that experienced the first steps of democracy in 2011 following the peaceful revolution that took the people of Tunisia into a new era. Although many revolutions can lead to difficult and turbulent times, and we have many examples of this throughout history, the revolution in Tunisia was led by people wanting more dignity, political freedom and expression. While the country did experience tough moments, He believes Tunisia's civil society helped it overcome these hardships and move towards peace and stability.

The influence of the National Quartet in 2013 was instrumental in this journey, set up to help resolve the conflict between various political factions during the establishment of the constitution. The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA), the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH) and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers were able to bring different political parties to the table for dialogue, and by the end of 2014, Tunisia was entering into a new stage of democracy. The Quartet was able to reach a common source of satisfaction which paved the way for elections recognized by observers to be transparent and fair, resulting in the first ever elected national assembly.

He likes to compare Tunisia with other countries that are beginning their journey of democracy. He acknowledges that there are difficult times ahead but said he was very pleased to see United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim recently visit Tunisia to give their support to the young democracy. This international support is crucial and can be compared to South Korea's recognition by the United Nations more than 60 years ago. H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ali Nafti sees parallels with South Korea in this journey and believes that Tunisia can learn a lot from Korea, especially in regards to the private sector.

Tunisia looks at Korea with great admiration and hopes through collaboration the geographical distance between the two can be shortened. He has expectations to develop partnerships, especially in the field of technology and science with the goal of generating new jobs and economic growth back in Tunisia. He also believes the two countries can learn from each other with security as both face a very real threat; terrorism in the Middle East and North Korea in the Asia Pacific. The Ambassador concluded by expressing his hopes for more Koreans to visit Tunisia and a cultural exchange between two countries that share a very long and distinguished history.



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## Innovative Minds Series

# A Decade of Freelancing in Korea: Jason Strother



By Matthew Fennell

**Jason Strother** first visited South Korea as an exchange student in 2002, so when he decided in 2006 to make the move from working as a producer for an American 24-hour cable news channel into the world of freelancing, Seoul was the obvious choice. Fast forward 10 years and he has now established himself as one of the top freelancing journalists on the Peninsula. A regular at many Asia Society events, the Korea Center caught up with Mr. Strother to look back on what has been a memorable decade during which he has seen South Korea undergo major political and social changes.

**You had a stable and interesting job working as a producer in America. What made you want to make the transition in freelance journalism?**

I was working in local news in NYC. I was tired of writing about triple homicides and exploding manholes. In short, I wanted more exciting life experiences. Since the time I was an undergrad in New Jersey I had wanted a media career that would allow me to live overseas and dive into a completely different society. My limited work experience as well as newsroom cutbacks in foreign reporting made it highly unlikely that I could

land a correspondent's job at that time, so freelancing was really the only way for me to report for the international press. In 2006, there were not many foreign reporters here and no one stringing for American public radio, so I found a niche. My career as a freelancer has gotten better every year. I still do radio, but have written for international newspapers, magazines and frequently appear on television.

**During your time here, South Korea has changed dramatically politically and socially. What are some of the biggest changes you have seen?**

When I arrived here, editors back in the US were mainly interested in stories that involved North Korea. Now, South Korea is much more on the map and I find it easier to sell stories that have nothing to do with the folks above the border. I think South Korea has become more globally confident since I first came here. The world now knows about Korean popular culture, cuisine, products and people. It's really evident in the busloads of foreign visitors you see here - something that didn't exist a decade ago.

**South Korea has experienced many global news issues over the past 10 years. What story stands out as your most memorable?**

Sadly, maybe because it's the most fresh in my mind, is the sinking of the Sewol ferry. I was able to interview one of the survivors of the disaster the day after it happened - it really made an impact on me. I went on to meet relatives of some of those who did not make it off the ship as well. It was an incident that revealed so much about South Korea, for better or worse. It's a shame that it's still not completely resolved two years later.

**Having worked in the media industry in both America and South Korea, how different are the press in the two countries?**

Well, I think international surveys will show that there is less press freedom here in Korea than in the US. I also find that some newspapers here are sometimes shameless about showing their political bias. Strong libel and defamation laws also limit a journalist's ability to do their job. South Korea is a young democracy with limited experience with media independence. It takes time to build this type of institution.

**As a foreigner, have you experienced any resistance or had difficulties in accessing stories here in Korea? Or are more people willing to talk to you because you are a non-Korean?**

I think whether you are a foreign or local reporter here, there is difficulty getting subjects to go on the record or completely open up. There is a strong sense of public shame in Korea that is much stronger than in western cultures. There are both benefits and disadvantages of reporting for the international press. In some cases, Korean sources feel it's better to speak to international media because there is a feeling that what they say will have a broader impact. On the other hand, I have been told by sources that they do not want to say anything too critical, because they don't want to bring shame onto their country. "That's a sensitive issue" might be the most common response I've heard in Korea.

**What piece of advice would you give to the next generation of freelance journalists?**

First, it helps to have one if not a few interests that he or she can focus on as a reporter. Broaden your skill set as widely as you can. The way the industry is going, an up and coming freelancer should not only be a competent writer, but also be able to produce multimedia reports. More practically speaking, a journalist who wants to go rogue and give freelancing a shot, should also prioritize how important things like income, family and professional flexibility are to them.



## Asia Rising and Our Shared Future Seoul Dialogue



(Continued from Page 1) February 16, 2016 - The 5th edition of Asia Society's Asia Rising and Our Shared Future dialogue in Seoul, hosted by **Mr. Dong-Bin Shin**, Chairman of the Asia Society Korea Center, could not have come at a more opportune time. It came in the wake of mounting tensions on the Korean Peninsula, owing to the recent nuclear tests and the launch of a long-range rocket. It also coincided with the day North Korea celebrated the birthday of Kim Jong Il, the father of the current North Korea leader, Kim Jong Un. As the Asia Rising dialogue was getting underway, South Korea's President Park Geun-hye was boldly declaring that her country will be taking the lead using "stronger and more effective" measures to prevent belligerent North Korea from realizing its nuclear ambitions.

The gathering brought together leading thought leaders, including some of the world's top experts on North Korea, who had in varying capacities influenced the course of relations between the uneasy neighbors that make up the Korean Peninsula. The robust, often candid, discussions focused on the challenges and frustrations of dealing with a hostile North Korea and how its actions and the reactions of neighboring countries continue to shape the geopolitical landscape of Northeast Asia. There was a general consensus that the level of misperceptions and miscalculation on the part of the major stakeholders—South Korea, China, Japan and the US—continue to run high, which has a direct bearing on their sense of urgency and degree of responsibility. Moreover, with regard to regional security, there is a pronounced lack of strategic thinking on the part of China and the US, and both are currently employing megaphone diplomacy. Both East and Southeast Asia are subsets of the US-China relationship.

The dialogue also covered the promises and limitations of both the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) through economic opportunities and domestic reform and where each fit into the strategic geopolitical make-up of the region. The TPP, in particular, has to be a balance between high standards and inclusiveness, and most wonder if the US congress will support the TPP post-Obama and the implications of its survival. The dialogue closed with the recognition that the region as a whole needs positive security cooperation which would help balance the long-term security culture and promote economic advances in the region.



## Monthly Luncheon Series

### Conversation with Ronnie Chan on Philanthropy



**Mark Tetto (left), Ronnie Chan (right)**

(Continued from Page 1) February 17, 2016 - The Asia Society Korea Center held its first Monthly Luncheon of 2016 on Tuesday at the Lotte Hotel, Seoul. The event took on added significance as it coincided with the hosting of the Asia Rising Series and ASKC was pleased to welcome **Ronnie Chan**, Co-Chairman at the Global Asia Society, for a "Conversation on Philanthropy". Mr. Chan is the Chairman of Hang Lung Group Limited and was recently described in a South China Morning Post article as being "a positive volcano of energy, entrepreneurship and ideas". The conversation was moderated by **Mark Tetto**, Asia Society Korea Center member and local businessman.

The opening remarks were given by Josette Sheeran, the seventh president and CEO of Asia Society, who spoke about how Mr. Chan has helped transform Asia Society to an updated vision of what John D. Rockefeller would have wanted if he were still alive. Ms. Sheeran went on to comment on how Mr. Chan is a leader in philanthropy with education, youth, public health and occupational therapy especially

important to him. In 2014, his family gave the biggest gift ever recorded to Harvard University which helped fund the \$350 million Harvard Chan School of public health. Ms. Sheeran is now spending a third of her time in Asia having moved to Hong Kong in order to have more time at all of the centers in the region. This stemmed from an idea from Mr. Chan who also insisted that the Asia Society board should be made up of 50% of people who are actually living in Asia, making it one of the most unique in the world with business leaders and thought leaders from throughout Asia and United States.

Mr. Chan then spoke about how he became involved in the Asia Society following his attendance at the very first dinner held in Hong Kong in 1990. He became interested in the programs offered by the Asia Society as a way of continuing his education and he saw it as a place where he could really learn. He was a regular at these programs until Sir Q.W Lee, the founding Chairman of the Hong Kong Center, asked Mr. Chan to succeed him as Chairman. Mr. Chan explained how he served as Chairman from 1994 until 1999 before forming an advisory body which would help establish a permanent home for the Hong Kong Center with the erection of a new building. In 2011 he became the first ever Co-Chair on both sides of the Pacific Ocean which reflected the rise of global interdependence and growing regional partnerships.

As the conversation continued, Mr. Chan was asked to describe his ethos or philosophy towards philanthropy. Outside of his philanthropy towards the Asia Society, Mr. Chan does many things and gives across many spheres and he talked about how he chose the spheres in which he participates. Mr. Chan explained how he was just a lucky guy who was just born into a wealthy family who wanted to follow in the legacy of his father in terms of growing the business and in relation to philanthropy. The dialogue provided a fascinating insight into philanthropy and was thoroughly enjoyed by all those in attendance.

### Asia Society Opens First Center in Europe



ZURICH, December 9, 2015 - Asia Society announced today that it is opening a center in Switzerland, extending the Society's footprint into Europe for the first time.

"This is a landmark moment for the Asia Society," said the Society's President and CEO **Josette Sheeran**. "The center in Switzerland is an acknowledgement that Europe is critical to building bridges of deeper understanding between the west and Asia. This affirms John D. Rockefeller 3rd's founding vision of 60 years ago, which recognized the compelling importance of Asia's rise to the United States and indeed the entire world."

Founding board members of Asia Society Switzerland expressed their enthusiasm and reflected on the new center:

"We are honored to become a member of the Asia Society family and establish the first European center in Switzerland. Our mission is to build bridges, inspire curiosity and foster mutual understanding," said **Adrian T. Keller**, Chairman of DKSH, who will serve as chair of the new center.

"Asia Society Switzerland is looking forward to learning from the vast network and knowledge that has been built by Asia Society in the past 60 years. As the first chapter in Europe we add a new perspective in the transcontinental dialogue about arts, culture, education, policy and business," said **Raymond J. Baer**, Honorary Chairman, Julius Baer Group and Vice Chair, Asia Society Switzerland.

Read the full article at <http://asiasociety.org/asia-society-switzerland>

## Monthly Luncheon Series

### Graduating into a Tough Job Market: What Korean Employers Want



March 15, 2016 – The Asia Society Korea Center's March Luncheon provided those in attendance with valuable career lessons on Tuesday as **Mark Sungrae Kim** talked about "Graduating into a Tough Job Market: What Korean Employers Want". Mr. Kim is Partner-in-Charge of Heidrick & Struggles' Korea office, and an expert in the recruitment and employment industry. He has more than 24 years of experience in the field having worked with both Korean and multinational companies, successfully placing more than 100 CEOs, country managers and senior executives in sectors including sales, marketing, finance, human resources, supply chain, medical, legal, regulatory affairs and public affairs. Student participation in the event was high and they were able to take away expert advice on what employers are looking for in a candidate and how to give yourself the best chance of being hired.

Mr. Kim started his presentation by emphasizing the importance of self-promotion in order to differentiate yourself from others. Even having all of the necessary qualifications and "specifications" does not guarantee success with many HR managers actually hiring based on if they like a person, rather than what is on the C.V of the candidate. Mr. Kim highlighted the issue of youth unemployment and how many industries and chaebols are currently restructuring and reducing their workforce, making the competition even fiercer.

What companies are looking for now are people who are trustworthy, have integrity with C.V.'s that are honest and truthful. Other important qualities that employers are looking for are confidence and diverse experience. Mr. Kim believes that in Korea, there are too many specialists and people with very similar experiences. Rather than going abroad to study English, taking up volunteering or unpaid work in unique countries such as the Czech Republic or Mongolia would be far more beneficial in the long run. Global experience is so important for this generation and companies would rather hire someone who has worked in a global environment than someone who has a 4.0 GPA from a top university. Regardless of family ties or education experience, Mr. Kim believes that you should be confident and not hide any part of your background. Mr. Kim concluded his talk by encouraging job candidates to ask who will be interviewing them and to research that person in addition to finding out as much as possible about the company. One interview question that is likely to be asked is "why should be hire you?", and it is crucial to have a well thought out answer that shows passion and motivation. His final piece of advice was for people to worry less about what is on their C.V and think more about their values and goals, and what they really want out of their career. Following his presentation, Mr. Kim took questions from the audience providing a very practical event for student members of the Korea Center.

### Understanding North Korea through Pictures



April 19, 2016 – The Asia Society Korea Center welcomed a well-known figure in Korea to its April 2016 Monthly Luncheon lecture with **Dr. John Alderman Linton** giving a talk on "Understanding North Korea through Pictures". The Linton family has enjoyed a long and distinguished history on the Peninsular ever since Eugene Bell arrived here in 1895 as an American missionary, and are well known for their contributions to Korean society, especially in the fields of medicine and education. Dr. Linton spoke about his visits to North Korea, of which there have been over 20, giving those in attendance a unique insight into life in the secretive state through his collection of photographs that he has amassed over the years. The 80 slides that Dr. Linton showed included images of medical facilities, the demilitarized zone, Geumgang Mountain and the North Korean countryside. Dr. Linton is President of the Korea Foundation for International Healthcare and is also Chairman of the Department of Family Medicine at Yonsei University College of Medicine.

Dr. Linton started his talk by giving some history on Yonsei Severance Hospital, explaining how it became the first modern medical facility in Korea following the work of American missionary Horace Allen in 1884. Linton himself was accepted into Yonsei University's medical school as a student before becoming the youngest director of the Severance Hospital International Health Care Center in 1991.

Following the death of his father in a road traffic accident, Dr. Linton helped design customized ambulances in 1993 to improve the medical services in Korea. His role in medicine is not only limited to the South as he has been involved in the Eugene Bell Foundation that was set up in 1995 to tackle the problem of tuberculosis in North Korea. Having visited the DPRK on many occasions, Dr. Linton's collection of photographs gave us a first-hand view inside the country. The first images that were shown were of Pyongyang and in particular the 105 Building that dominates the skyline. Dr. Linton commented on the beauty of the capital city and how on his more recent visits he has seen evidence of Kim Jong-un's reforms. North Koreans are now allowed partial ownership of land, consumer goods are becoming more prevalent and women are now permitted to have plastic surgery or wear pants. Other interesting pictures included those taken at the DMZ where anti American slogans are prominent and the South Korean flag can be seen where the armistice agreement was signed. Some of the most striking images that Dr. Linton showed were of Wonsan Hospital where the medical equipment is old and dilapidated, highlighting the biggest challenge that North Korea faces; the problem with tuberculosis. The Eugene Bell Foundation has helped x-ray over 7 million people and treated 350,000 people against the disease, investing over \$30 million in the fight against TB. Although at times direct, Dr. Linton was able to show a very real side of North Korea and his commentary on the country was both honest and eye opening.

## Special Discussion

### Nuclear North Korea: An Assessment



*From left: Eddie Allen, Chairman of the Asia Society Texas Center; H.E. Sung-joo Han; and H.E. Ju-Hyun Baik, Korean Consul General in Houston, Texas*

March 8, 2016 – **H.E. Han Sung-Joo**, Former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea and Asia Society's Global Council member was in Texas on Tuesday, March 8, for a special discussion on Nuclear North Korea. The event was a collaboration between the Asia Society and the University of Houston Center for International and Comparative Studies with the goal of exploring the questions that surround an armed North Korea. Despite huge changes in Asia over the last 10 years, one element that has remained constant is the threat of a nuclear DPRK; recent events in 2016, a 4th nuclear test on January 6 and the ballistic missile launching on February 7, continue to undermine peace and security in the region. Minister Han Sung-Joo, chairman of the International Policy Studies Institute of Korea and professor emeritus at Korea University gave an insider's perspective into these issues.

Professor Han believed that in conducting the recent nuclear bomb test, North Korea was asserting that it can defend itself from a U.S. threat while sending a message to China that it would not buckle under pressure from Beijing. He believes that Kim Jong-Un probably had other objectives related to domestic politics. The test, coming only two days before his birthday celebration, was intended to demonstrate his bravado and achievement to the population, who still have much reservation about his leadership qualities. While the international community has almost uniformly condemned North Korea for its actions, countries in Northeast Asia are still divided about how to respond.

Beijing is reluctant to impose strongest possible sanctions for fear that it would cause the collapse of the regime in Pyongyang or at a minimum, deprive China of whatever influence it has over North Korea. Russia has also been ambivalent about harsher sanctions, wanting to maintain reasonably good relations with North Korea and thereby retain its leverage to enlarge moving room in its relations vis-a-vis North Korea. Such a situation has left the remaining trio of Six Party Talks members--the United States, South Korea and Japan--to seek separate measures responding to the North Korean nuclear challenge.

In 2012, after nearly 10 years of on-again-and-off again negotiations, North Korea became a self-declared nuclear weapons state. Experts now believe that North Korea will possess anywhere between 50 to 100 nuclear weapons by the year 2020. Combined with its ballistic missile capability, Professor Han fears that North Korea's nuclear weapons will pose a threat not only to its neighbors but also to the United States. To address the North Korean threat, the strategies of the powers seem to center around the use of military force, South Korea possessing nuclear weapons, the reintroduction of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to Korea, comprehensive sanctions, concluding a "U.S.-North Korea Peace Agreement", and regime change in North Korea. Professor Han explained how none of these measures have shown to be working in reducing, much less stopping North Korean nuclear activities. Past lessons demonstrate that policies need to be more pragmatic, focusing on an effective mix of both carrot and stick.

Professor Han concluded his analysis by stating that one overall strategy should incorporate discussions for achieving peaceful Korean unification. A sure way to achieve denuclearization of the entire Korean Peninsula, including North Korea, is reunification under the South Korean auspices. Although this is a long-term prospect, the ultimate resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem is one good reason why all the neighboring countries of Korea and the United States should welcome Korean unification and support its realization.

# Asia Society Korea Center

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