

Reparation! North Korea, what happened to Hwang In-cheol's father?

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On Friday evening, October 19th, 2018, in the Hae Bang Chon district of Seoul, a special event was held in the trendy hole-in-the-wall venue, The Hidden Cellar. We celebrated the 51st birthday of Hwang In-cheol.

On December 11th of 1969 Mr. Hwang's father boarded a plane in Seoul for a business trip. Ten minutes after take off the plane was hijacked by a North Korean sleeper agent and was forced to fly to Pyongyang with its crew of four and forty six passengers. Hwang In-cheol was two years old at the time and has not seen his father since.

Eventually North Korea returned thirty nine passengers but eleven, including the flight crew and Mr. Hwang's father, were never returned or accounted for. This situation remains unchanged until today, forty nine years later.

With no answers from North Korea and no action from the South Korean government or the international community, Mr. Hwang has mounted his own one man campaign to bring his father home. For many years he campaigned alone. Two years ago he met Casey Lartigue, founder of Teach North Korean Refugees (TNKR), and gained a passionate advocate. Since then he is not alone in his quest but is

supported by TNKR, Casey Lartigue, Youngmin Kwon, and other volunteers.

Friday night's event was a show of support for Mr. Hwang's efforts to bring his father home, an awareness raising of the issue, and a fundraiser. There was musical entertainment by three local expats, raffles of donated prizes, and words of support, thanks, and the cutting of a birthday cake.

The evening began with a fine set of guitar works by TNKR volunteer Mr. Peter Daley. He was followed by a couple of hard rocking sets that attempted to blow the lights out. At the appropriate moment, MC Mr. Youngmin Kwon introduced the guest of honor and invited him up to say a few words to the partying crowd.

Mr. Hwang briefly related his father's story. He told about working for sixteen years alone to bring his father home and that alone he suffered a lot. Then after sixteen years

he met Casey Lartigue and TNKR. They are now standing with him to bring awareness of this issue to the world. Now he is not alone and has greater hope than ever before that he can succeed. In conclusion he asked the international community and the South Korean government not to forget the plight of his father and the others who have been abducted by North Korea. He asked everyone to repeat the word 'reparation!' several times.

In closing, Casey Lartigue mentioned that after meeting Hwang In-cheol he learned that he was single minded in the pursuit of bringing his father home. Every morning after waking up, Hwang thinks only about what more he can do to reach the goal.

Of course there was a cake with candles and photos were taken all around. This is the first time that I have meet Mr. Hwang in person and I was impressed by his huge smile and infectious spirit when meeting and greeting everyone. He took it upon himself to personally slice and serve cake to all the TNKR staff and volunteers who were present. His last words were "REPARATION, REPARATION, REPARATION!"

