

Seven-Day Fasters at the United Nations Plead for Human Rights in North Korea

Susan Reinbold
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Unexpectedly, Rev. Moon arrived with his translator Mr. David Kim to give words of encouragement and to express his appreciation for our sacrifice

After sharing the earth's blunders as well as blessings some people take a pessimistic or apathetic perspective. Today as the morning sun begins to lighten the horizon the words of Thoreau linger in my mind and my spirit brightens. It is 6:00 a.m. and I have been sitting on a chair for the past two hours. You could say I'm on vigil. For me this has been a time to reflect on why we are here.



All relatives of the Japanese wives flew to New York City from different parts of Japan to join us in our effort of appealing to the United Nations

Geographically, we are in New York City at Isaiah Park across from the United Nations buildings. It is the fifth day of a seven-day fast, and all 600 participants are faring well. In back of me is a sea of blankets, and even though these fasters are asleep, their vitality has not diminished. Their spirit projects all around the city. Although the media has not covered us in great detail thousands have been contacted by the fasters who go out leafleting during the three rush-hour periods. The atmosphere surrounding our demonstration site seems to have been revitalized. Taxis stop at all times of the day and night to inquire.

Speakers from the NAACP, Estonian Club, and many other organizations have come. Senator Charles Percy has come to shake hands and to commend us for our dedication, and former Congressman Hamilton Fish gave us words of encouragement emphasizing especially America's role in the world. Ambassadors chatted with us, and even Reverend Sun Myung Moon arrived unexpectedly one evening.



I have been thinking: "What are we fighting for?" And the answer comes in a resounding vibrato "for humanity." In the other numerous demonstrations that I have participated in-whether the cause be civil rights, rent reform, anti-war, etc.-I have never failed to leave without a pang of guilt or remorse. This is different. It is the first time I can unequivocally state that my conscience is clear. In fact, a profound calm has come over me. I am realizing, as I'm sure so many of the others are, that we exist not for ourselves alone but for the world. America has been especially gifted with an abundance of resources, manpower, and wealth, but what good are they if we keep them for ourselves and a half million die of starvation in Africa or India? We here have stood up for what is right and just.

Although our cause seems co center on two nations, namely Japan and North Korea, a basic tenet of human rights is being violated. The 6,000 Japanese women who traveled to North Korea some 15 years ago, with husbands of Korean descent have not been heard from since, although they were guaranteed a safe return to Japan in two or three years if they wished. Only 2,000 of these

women can be located, and only a handful of the relatives of those 2,000 have received any letters. The letters do not depict a "people's paradise" as it was described before they left. Their cry echoes, "If I had wings like a bird, I would fly across the sea to Japan."

We who are from America, Austria, Germany, France, Brazil, Japan and the United Kingdom symbolize the world community speaking for its brothers and sisters who are unable to do so themselves. We are fortunate enough to have freedom of speech; therefore, we must exercise our right when and where it can be most effective -- for the cause of goodness, the cause of God. Political leaders now speak more and more about a world community. An article in the November 6, 1974 Washington Post quoted Henry Kissinger as saying, "We are stranded between old conceptions of political conduct and a wholly new environment, between the inadequacy of the nation-state and the emerging imperative of a global community."

I am wondering. What will the next day bring? We are asking that this world government body, the United Nations, send an inquiry commission to North Korea. Because the ideal of the U.N. is a world of equality and harmony among peoples and nations, we make our appeal to these men of conscience. As of yesterday, nothing has been decided one way or the other. Soon these same members will be asked whether or not to allow North Korea to be seated.

We have fulfilled our portion of responsibility. We have demonstrated our determination to fight for what we believe to be right. They are the judges; they must investigate and upon their findings, act wisely.

I am worrying. Are we the silent majority coming forth? News commentators, politicians, and statisticians have referred to us as the latent conscience of the American people. If this is one of our first nonviolent, moral demonstrations, how much further do we have to go to awaken the conscience of the world? The task is not small, and our fortitude must be unwavering.

The troops are rising now, and as their heads emerge, I feel the expectation of accomplishment nearing. The half-way point has been passed. As the cooperative effort begins to clear the area, I have the impression that God must be smiling. These men and women are His champions.

Their lives and their parents' lives have not seen uninterrupted peace. They are products of the two world wars and the depression, and are now asking to share the hearts of the suffering Japanese women through this seven-day fast. They have felt the blunders of the past in their day-to-day lives, but are working at the mountainous task of setting them straight. Why are they doing it? The voice of a young Jewish woman spoke for us in the past; let us bring it to fruition in the present.