

ICAS Liberty Award

19 June 2024

Adm/Ambassador Harris, Gen Gregson, and Sunny Park, thank you for your introductory remarks. Each of you have done so much for the ROK – U.S. Alliance and peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Your presence and remarks are greatly appreciated, and I thank you.

To President Synja Kim, Vice President Sang Joo Kim, and the ICAS Board whose leadership of the Institute for Corean-American Studies continues to enhance cooperation and to pursue peace and prosperity and multilateral relations between the United States and Asia-Pacific nations...thank you! Thru the many lectures, symposiums, conferences, Hill visits, youth programs, and articles, ICAS has and is making a huge contribution to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. Thank you for what each of you do and for this award.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” We all know this words from the **U.S. Declaration of Independence.**

The Republic of Korea Constitution is similar:

To consolidate national unity by justice, humanity, brotherly love and the elimination of all kinds of social evils, To offer equal opportunities to every person, Under the banner of Justice and Humanity.

To promote the welfare of the people, to maintain permanent international peace, to eliminate all aggressions, despotism and poverty, and thereby to assure Security, Liberty and Happiness of ourselves and our posterity, do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution.

Even the **UN Declaration of Human Rights**, signed 1948 states:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Yet as we look at the Korean Peninsula today, we see South Korea which practices freedom, human rights, democracy, education, freedom of religion and is prosperous, peace loving, and a global leader in many fields. We also see North Korea where citizens do not have basic human rights, where there is a tyrannical leader and regime who only worry about preserving their regime and their rule. As a result of decades of this type of leadership and oppression, North Korea is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a population unable to get sufficient food and has no rights of expression, movement, or religion.

Governmental beliefs and practices have produced the very different results we see on the Korean peninsula. The regard for Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness are the reasons that South Korea is a model for the world and the disregard for these values is why North Korea is dark hole.

I firmly believe we all need to continue to work to reunify the Korean Peninsula under a democratic and free government. Reunification is the only path to freedom and Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness for the North Korea.

I believe there are a couple tenants required to move toward reunification:

- First, we must continue to strengthen the ROK – U.S. Alliance to deter and be ready to defeat North Korean aggression. I do believe we have and are doing this in many ways. The ROK and the U.S. are building, buying, and fielding the systems needed to defeat the growing NK threat...to defeat missiles, drones, massive amounts of artillery, cyber, and nuclear capabilities. We also have the best, most professional militaries in the world. In Korea every male understands it is his duty to be

in the military and be ready to defend his country and to help other countries around the world. In the U.S. our all volunteer forces understands they will very likely go to war but even more so they understand the obligation to serve our nation and to help other nations fight for freedom. I am very confident in the ability both of our militaries to deter and defend and defeat if necessary.

- Second, we must expand our partnership to other like-minded nations and form stronger alliances of freedom loving nations. We talk a lot about the Great **Power** Competition....competition between China and the U.S. or Russia and the U.S but I believe the future will bring Great **Alliance** Competition...a competition with China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and others working together to try to destroy freedom and human rights around the world. Recent meetings and support among Russia, North Korea, and China show this is already started. We freedom loving nations and alliances (like the U.S., the ROK, Japan, those in UNC, NATO, etc) must work even closer together to counter this dictatorial alliance effort.

- Third, we must continue to work toward reunification of the Korean Peninsula. In order to do this, we must better define what a reunified peninsula means for the people of North Korea. What will their lives be like...what property rights will they have, what will happen to current NK military members and governmental leaders...we must show to the people of NK that their individual lives will be better. Currently, the people of NK have no real vision of a reunified peninsula and many believe they will be imprisoned and fired from their jobs or their homes and land taken from them. Until we can convince the NK people that they do have a great future in a reunified peninsula they will never work together to force a change in the Regime.
- And fourth, the ROK and U.S. governments must then work to get this vision of the future to the North Korean people. This is not just the job of NGOs...governments and international organizations must work together to this goal.

None of this is easy and there are dangers of North Korea aggression, but it is the only way to real life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness on the entire Korean Peninsula.

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness is a right of all peoples of the world. It is a cause we should all work towards. I am confident the ROK – U.S. can and eventually will achieve this vision for the Korean Peninsula.

ICAS and everyone in the room have been at this work for many decades and I applaud all you done.

I am deeply honored to receive the ICAS Annual Liberty Award. I promise to continue to work even harder for peace and security and Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness on the Korean Peninsula.

Katchi Kapshida!