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PhD, In Progress



The recent impeachment of South Korean President Park Geunhye and the raising of the Seawol Ferry underscore the degree to which South Korea represents a remarkable success for democracy against enormous odds. Partnerships between indigenous and overseas churches have played a meaningful role in Korean nationalist and democratic movements since the nineteenth century. Through oral histories and archival work my PhD research seeks to describe that role and address the significance the Korean-Canadian church partnership had for the democratization movement of the 1970s.

While there are accessible, archived, written records of events within the democratization movement there are also large gaps in our source base. Much of this has to do with the restrictions placed on political movements within authoritarian countries. For safety sake, few records were made and many of those that were had to be destroyed. As a result, much of what there is still to learn about the Korean democratization movement resides in the living memory of the participants. These people are now quickly passing away, a fact that lends urgency to this research project.

Christian missions in themselves are historically significant for both Korea and Canada. Both nations have received missionaries from abroad and sent them to other nations. In the early twentieth century Canada had more missionaries in the field on a per capita basis than any other nation in the world.

I am seeking a PhD in history after 16 years in ministry for the United Church of Canada. During my career, I have focused on issues of gender and racial justice. In preparing for ministry I studied as an exchange student at HanShin Theological Institute in Seoul, a center for political activism during the 70s. Later I worked for three years as a chaplain at HanShin University's Osan campus. I have had congregations in Southwestern Ontario and Saskatoon. Following graduation, I hope to teach Korean history and mission history in Canada and Korea while continuing in ministry within the United Church of Canada.

