



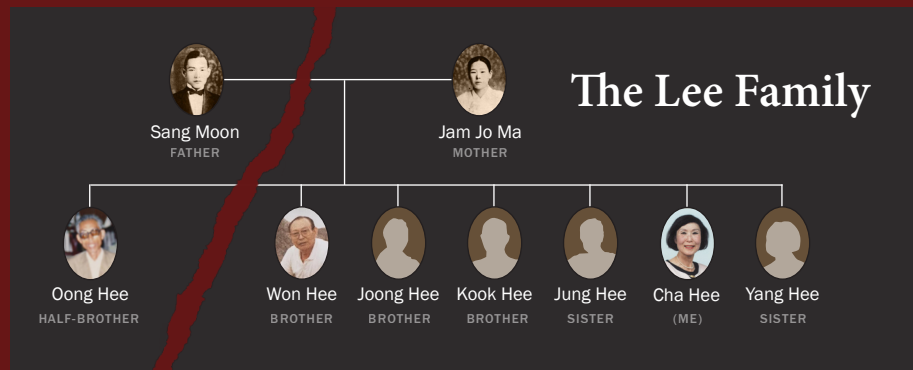
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Through Our Family's Eyes

THE 70-YEAR LEGACY OF WAR & SEPARATION IN KOREA

My name is Chahee Lee Stanfield.

This is a story of my family's struggle to reunite amidst war and more than 75 years of national division.



1945 I leave Manchuria for South Korea with my mother and siblings. My father and half-brother Oong Hee stay behind but hope to join us in a few weeks.

When the border between China and North Korea closes, we lose all communication with my father and Oong Hee.



1949 The Chinese government appoints my father as the commander of a battalion in the Sah Pyong Civil War. On August 30, after the war, he is awarded a certificate of appreciation and granted his wish to move to North Korea.

FEBRUARY, 1950 My father and Oong Hee move to North Korea.



JANUARY 1951-1953 Oong Hee joins the Chinese army as a translator and fights in the front lines of the Korean War. Three of my brothers fight for South Korea, including Kook Hee who is killed.



1953-1960s My father begins running marathons at the age of 54 and becomes well known not only as an athlete but also as an educator, inspirational speaker, and model citizen. He earns the nickname "Chollima Halaboji" ('Chollima' is a legendary horse that runs long distances and 'Halaboji' means 'grandpa').

DATES UNKNOWN (1960s?) Prime Minister Kim Il Sung requests a movie to be made about my father called "The 60-Year-Old Youth."

Our father tries very hard to reach us in South Korea through newspapers and magazines, as Oong Hee later shares.



1968 I move to the United States to continue my education. My mother and siblings join me in the years that follow.



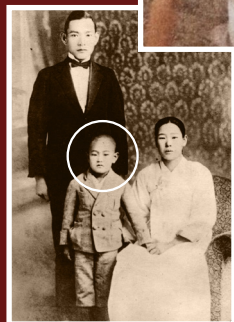
MARCH 1974 My father passes away. On his death bed he tells Oong Hee that one day, one of his siblings will come and find him.



AUGUST 1988 I visit my birthplace in Dapuchaihe, Manchuria, a former Korean guerilla hideout. I see the agricultural land my father and his men once cultivated and the road he built between Dунhua and Dapuchaihe.

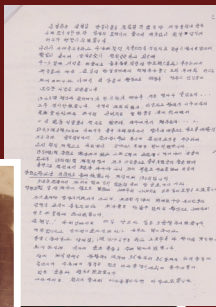


JULY 1988 My eldest brother, Won Hee, receives U.S. citizenship and goes to Manchuria to look for our father and Oong Hee. He learns that our father passed away and that Oong Hee moved to North Korea in 1950.



The following year, as branch manager of the Chicago Public Library, I create the Korean room, which becomes a major source of information for Korean-Americans from divided families like mine.

JUNE 1990 My mother passes away.



1992 Won Hee's son, Sunhyup Lee (Matt), a minister, visits North Korea on church business and mentions my father's name to an official. When he returns to the hotel the next day, he finds my brother, Oong Hee and his son awaiting him. Won Hee and I begin writing to Oong Hee.



2001 I work with then-Congressman Mark Kirk to introduce the divided family reunions issue in the U.S. government. An official policy on divided families is adopted in Sept. 2001.

2008-2016 My work continues with Senator Mark Kirk. Two bills are passed: one signed by President George W. Bush in Jan. 2008 and the other by President Barack Obama in Dec. 2009. Two resolutions are adopted in the House: one by Chairman Ed Royce and Congressman Gerry Connolly in 2015 and the other by Congressman Charles Rangel in December 2016.



2010 Jason Ahn, Leader of Divided Families USA, obtains a copy of my father's movie, "The 60-Year-Old Youth," from North Korea. He later uses parts of the movie in his documentary and features me as an advocate for divided families.

JANUARY 2018 My eldest sister Jung Hee passes away in Illinois.



MAY 2019 My brother Won Hee passes away in Illinois.

JUNE 2019 I testify in front of Congress at the first-ever hearing on divided Korean-American families.



TODAY I live in Chicago and have family in... Oong Hee remains in North Korea. I have not seen him since 1945.

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

MAY 1945 Korea is divided into two countries by United States under President Truman.

1945-1950 Both Koreas formulate military plans to invade the other, military skirmishes at the border become common.

JUNE 25, 1950 Korean War breaks out—North Korea invades South Korea.

JUNE 27, 1950 US enters the war.

1950 US imposes sanctions on North Korea. Truman threatens use of atomic bomb.

SUMMER, 1950 "Summer of Terror" begins as South Korean President Syngman Rhee executes over 100,000 citizens suspected of "sympathizing" with the enemy.

OCTOBER 1950 China joins the war

FEBRUARY 1951 Peace talks to end the war begin.

JANUARY 1953 Dwight Eisenhower enters office.

JULY 27, 1953 United States on behalf of UN Command, North Korea, and China agree to armistice.

APRIL 1954 Talks at Geneva fail to unite Korea.

JANUARY 1961 John F. Kennedy enters office.

NOVEMBER 1963 Lyndon B. Johnson enters office when President Kennedy is assassinated.

1965 Third Wave of Korean Immigration to the US begins fueled by the military dictatorship, political insecurity, and high unemployment in South Korea.

JANUARY 1969 Richard Nixon enters office.

AUGUSTS 1972 "Red Cross Talks" - First official delegations from North and South Korea meet in bilateral talks.

JANUARY 1974 Gerald Ford enters office.

MID 1970S South Korean economy surpasses North Korean economy in terms of GDP.

JANUARY 1977 Jimmy Carter enters office and proposes withdrawing troops from South Korea.

JANUARY 1981 Ronald Reagan enters office.

JANUARY 1989 George Bush enters office.

JANUARY 1993 Bill Clinton enters office.

JULY 1994 Kim Jong il named Supreme Leader of North Korea.

OCTOBER 1994 Agreed Framework freezes North Korean nuclear weapons program.

1995 Famine in North Korea begins.

1998 South Korean government led by Kim Dae jung begins "Sunshine Policy" towards the north—a policy centered on engagement and economic cooperation.

2000 South Korean President Kim Dae jung and Chairman Kim Jong il met at first conference between leaders of the two countries since the 1953 armistice.

2000 South Korean President Kim Dae jung receives Nobel Peace Prize.

JANUARY 2001 George W. Bush enters office.

JANUARY 2002 President Bush labels North Korea as part of "Axis of Evil" in State of Union.

OCTOBER 2002 Bush Administration accuses North Korea of enriching uranium; North Korea denies claim.

END OF 2002 Agreed Framework collapses.

JANUARY 2003 North Korea withdraws from Nonproliferation Treaty.

2003-2005 "Six Party Talks" begin between US, North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia, and Japan produce joint statement; North Korea agrees in principle to give up its nuclear weapons program.

2006 North Korea tests nuclear weapon, citing US sanctions and stalling on the delivery of light water reactor.

2007 Disagreements on how to verify North Korea's actions bring "Six Party Talks" to stalemate.

2007 North Korea shuts down nuclear facilities at Yongbyon.

JANUARY, 2009 Barack Obama enters office. In May, North Korea tests nuclear weapon.

DECEMBER 2011 Kim Jong il dies and Kim Jong un assumes role as 3rd Supreme Leader of North Korea.

FEBRUARY 2012 Leap Day Deal between US and North Korea announced. Three days later, North Korea launches satellite; US pulls out of agreement.

2013 North Korea tests nuclear weapon.

2016 North Korea tests nuclear weapon, claimed to be a hydrogen bomb.

JANUARY 2017 Donald Trump enters office. Later in the year, North Korea tests ICBM and nuclear weapon, claimed to be a hydrogen bomb.

WINTER 2018 Olympic Truce; South and North Korea participate in Olympics as one team.

APRIL, 2018 First Summit between President Moon Jae in and Chairman Kim Jung un.

APRIL 20, 2018 North Korea announces it will voluntarily end nuclear and dismantle testing site.

JUNE 12, 2018 First Summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim produces 'Singapore Agreement'.

FEBRUARY 27, 2019 Second Summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim ends with no agreement.

THE KOREAN WAR IS ONE OF THE LONGEST ongoing conflicts in the world. Active fighting was suspended in 1953 with a ceasefire (armistice) agreement, but the unresolved war could restart at any moment.

As a result, millions of Korean and Korean American families have been separated for over seven decades.

A war that has not seen active fighting for almost three quarters of a century has brought military buildup, destroyed human connections, and traumatized several generations.

It's long past time to officially end the war, invest in peaceful means of resolving remaining tensions, and allow families to reconnect.



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Peace
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