

“Give Peace a Chance on the Korean Peninsula”

Lecture by Rev. Jesse Jackson

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“Give Peace a Chance on the Korean Peninsula Break down walls of hostility and division and build new bridges of hope and unity”

Lecture Korea International Peace Forum

Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. – President and Founder Rainbow PUSH Coalition

July 27, 2018 — 65th Anniversary of the Armistice Agreement

Introduction

I want to thank my gracious hosts, the Minjung Party, for inviting me to Korea this week, and the Council of Churches of Korea and National Assembly leaders for their kind welcome. It is an honor and privilege to be with you today.

Turning Crisis into Opportunity – A new zone of peace

The Korean Peninsula is undergoing a momentous period of historical transformation. And the prospects for winning sustainable enduring prosperity and unification – transforming the region into a Zone of Peace, have never been greater.

It is a moment in time to turn crisis into opportunity. To tear down historic walls of division and hostility and build new bridges of hope and unity.

Approaching 65 years since the signing of the cease fire armistice on July 27, Koreans still wait for a peace treaty to end the war. But the roar of peace on the peninsula and in the diaspora cannot be ignored, nor the hopes of 75 million people on the peninsula and the entire global community.

Hope is in the Air

65 years on, hope is in the air: HOPE, that the talks between North Korea and South Korea, between the US and North Korea will indeed lead to a unified Korea and normalized relations between the United States and North Korea. That they will lead to peace and unification of the Korean peninsula.

65 years on, hope is in the air:

Hope: that the summits will resolve the military tension between the two sides and open a path toward cross-border exchanges and cooperation that lead to unification.

Hope: to halt all hostile actions against each other. North Korea must honor its pledge to freeze its nuclear and missile tests while talks continue, and the United States must halt its U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises and lift its sanctions against North Korea.

From Armistice to Peace Treaty

Article IV-60 of the Armistice signed 65 years ago called for a conference to be held within 3 months to discuss the withdrawal of all foreign troops and a peaceful settlement. That conference never happened.

The Prophet Isaiah admonished us to beat our swords into plowshares, and turn our Swords into pruning hooks. To turn our weapons of mass destruction and killing into systems of development and healing.

In the 65th year of the armistice, ending the state of war on the Korean peninsula should be a priority for all peace-loving forces.

It is healing time. A time to turn our pain into power – a power to bring about family reunification. A power to end this decades-long conflict and bring peace to Korea. It's due time to step away from the brink of war and talks of nuclear strikes, and seize this opportunity to push for talk of peace.

This opportunity cannot be squandered.

Time is on our side but there are headwinds seek to turn back the clock, and keep the Cold War hot.

Cynics and conservative foreign policy pundits are out to continue the war and spoil the peace. There are specific forces that have aligned to create roadblocks because peace threatens their economic and/or political interests – i.e. the weapons lobby that has an economic interest in perpetuating the conflict to continue selling weapons, and political interests that see Korean peace as a partisan political issue to be exploited – and they must be exposed and defeated.

But we should know by now, there are no winners in war.

There can be no turning back – we must fight to turn the Armistice into a Peace Treaty as the key to a just and lasting peace.

Step by Step Approach to Denuclearization – The Panmunjom Declaration

What is required is a step by step phased approach to denuclearization whereby the US and NK take mutual steps to eliminate their nuclear weapons in/around the Korean peninsula and move towards normalization.

In the historic North/South Summit with President Moon and Chairman Kim on April 27, the two Koreas agreed on “complete denuclearization for a nuclear-free Korean peninsula.”

At the Singapore summit between North Korea and the U.S. that followed, the leaders of

North Korea and the United States agreed to work toward “complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.”

I commend South Korean President Moon Jae-in for seeking a new direction, for stepping into the gap and making peace negotiations a top priority. His words give the world comfort:

A great shift is currently taking place on the Korean Peninsula in world historical terms... If South and North Korea coexist in prosperity and restore their national community on a peaceful peninsula, the door to unification will swing open naturally...the goal of my administration is formally declaring the end of the Korean War this year.

And President Moon has put his words into action, working tirelessly to lessen tensions between North and South and to broker a meeting with U.S. and North Korean officials. He embraced North Korea’s participation in the winter Olympics, and dispatched envoys to North Korea to continue the talks and begin to arrange a summit.

North Korea’s Kim has also made trust building gestures toward the U.S. He’s announced that North Korea would no longer insist on the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Korean Peninsula as part of any settlement. He’s announced the end to all nuclear and missile testing, and is taking action to shut down the country’s nuclear test site. He has agreed to return the remains of U.S. soldiers killed during the Korean War – as soon as this afternoon.

Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula must mean the eventual removal of all things that pose a nuclear threat to the peninsula — not only North Korea’s nuclear weapons but also U.S. strategic assets in the region and nuclear strike capability and exercises.

One thing is clear. War on the Korean peninsula would be catastrophic. Finding a way out peacefully is surely worth both time and effort.

Now perhaps like never before, the prospects and formula for peace is within grasp. The momentum is on our side.

A four-party summit between South and North Korea, the U.S. and China can go a long way to officially ending the war and advancing the peace process.

It will be a victory for President Moon. A victory for Chairman Kim. A victory for President Trump. A victory for President Xi. All of the parties have a mutual interest in negotiating peace on the peninsula.

Let’s open up trade and exchanges between North and South Korea: build a bullet train from Seoul to Pyongyang, not fire bullets across the DMZ. Feed the hungry. Build housing. Educate the children. Provide health care for all.

These are the shared aspirations of Koreans north and south.

We must move from confrontation to negotiation.

Let me also address for a moment the immigration and refugee issue.

In today’s world as we seek peace, we need to globalize democracy and human rights.

I was here in South Korea in 1986. I met with Kim Dae Jung on a dark and dreary night. But

like Mandela and Dr. King, Kim Dae Jung went from house arrest to head of state. He became a Nobel Peace Prize winner, a symbol of the people's yearning for Democracy. For freedom, equality and democracy. This week I met Lee Sook-ki, imprisoned now for five years for speaking out for reunification and peace between North and South. He must be freed.

All over the world, migrants/new immigrants are fleeing war torn homelands and looking for safety and security - much like the experiences of Koreans 65 years ago - and if threats of war last year turned into reality, Koreans again could face this same plight.

So, when we look in the eyes of Yemeni families, we must see our own. When we look at their children, we must see our own. We are all one human family.

Some want to build walls and barriers, to blame immigrants/migrants for their own economic insecurity. In the US, in Europe, even here in Korea with the plight of the Yemeni community - we must resist the wave of xenophobia and anti-immigrant reaction taking hold.

What is the mission of the Church? Not to do what is popular, or what is politic, but to do what is morally right, to stand up for the least of these. That is how our character is measured.

Dream of Peace - Hope abounds on the peninsula

Let me end by making this appeal today on Armistice Day.

For peace to happen, diplomacy, not provocation, is essential. It's time to break the cycle of fear that has gripped the peninsula since its division.

It's time to tear down past walls of division and fear, and build new bridges of hope and unity. Walls separate us. Bridges brings us together.

For peace to happen, diplomacy, not provocation, is essential. It's time to break the cycle of fear that has gripped the peninsula since its division.

Surely it is time to give peace a chance.

Today, hope abounds on the peninsula. Hope can prevail over hate. Hope can prevail over fear. Hope can overcome. Hope can be a mighty weapon for peace. Hope can and must prevail.

The Korean people need to lead the process of reconciliation and formally bring to an end the war that was waged more than 65 years ago. Let's Turn Armistice Day into a permanent Peace Day.

Clearly, peace is a process, not a single act, no matter how historic. It's been 70 years of bloodshed and bitterness.

We must dream of a world without war.

Dream of normalization of relations.

Dream family reunification, or cultural and economic cooperation.

Dream of peace, mutually shared security, where people north and south grow and learn together, live together to make a better world together, as one people.

You have that task and the opportunity to define and create this world. This is the imperative of our time.

“...if my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Thank you.

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[Reverend Jesse Jackson](#) gave this lecture as a part of his week-long visit to South Korea. Reverend Jackson is founder and president of the [Rainbow PUSH Coalition](#), and he is one of America’s foremost civil rights, religious and political figures. Over the past forty years, he has played a pivotal role in virtually every movement for empowerment, peace, civil rights, gender equality, and economic and social justice.

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