

Forgotten Pain: An Untold Story of the Korean War (Won Kwang Paik & Hope Elizabeth May)

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Hope: To introduce the project and briefly discuss its importance
 - 2) Won: To discuss the importance of the tragedy at No Gun Ri, an incident where refugees were sacrificed by U.S. soldiers, an untold story related to the Korean War
- I. HOPE: Introduction to the Cora di Brazzà Foundation (established 2019) and “Forgotten Pain” (Released last year (June 2025, the 75th anniversary of the Korean War). Book that launched the “No Gun Ri Movement” (a peace and human rights movement emerging from the Korean War). How I learned about the story (100th anniversary of the Peace Palace in The Hague). “Peace and Justice History and Philosophy”
- II. Select timeline of the No Gun Ri Movement (for more detailed timeline visit): <https://www.coradibrazza.com/timelineNOGUNRI.pdf>
- 1950** – June 25 (Beginning of the Korean War)
1950 – July 25-29 (No Gun Ri Incident, Korean War, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Army)
1955 – August 2 (U.S. ratifies 4th Geneva Convention (*Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*)
1960 – Chung Eun Yong files petition for fact finding & compensation with the Seoul Requisition Office (U.S. Claims office)
1994 – Chung Eun Yong publishes “*Do you know our pain?*” memoir about Korean War/No Gun Ri
1999 – AP Report released. Major media outlets (CNN, BBC, etc.) report on the No Gun Ri massacre
1999 – Reconciliation and forgiveness ceremonies held between soldiers and victims in both Seoul and Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.; National Council of Churches (NCC) arranges press conference at National Press Club.
2001 – US and ROK fact issue finding reports issued following a 15 month long investigation, President Clinton offers statement of regret
2011 – No Gun Ri Peace Park is completed. Many visitors, educational camps, peace academies, etc. occur at the Park.
- III. Some reasons why the English translation is important:
1. An anti-war/peace memoir - Personal account of the Korean War from the experience of a young family which contributes to “Peace and Justice History and Philosophy”



- a. **History** of the development of the Geneva Conventions, Humanitarian Law, International Criminal Law (emerging protections for civilians and the concept of human dignity). Fact: U.S. did not ratify the 4th Geneva Convention (protecting civilians until 1955)
- b. **Philosophy:** Ethics (Right Action); Epistemology (Knowledge and Truth) - When things are complicated (mixed targets, perfidy, threat perception), to what extent we can/should we scrutinize this perception? “Reasonable belief” (some evidence) vs. “Justified True Belief” (unassailable evidence). The importance of nuance.

I. WON KWANG PAIK

1. Significance of title. WKP explains both Korean and English titles - the original title in Korean more accurately means "**You, know our pain** (*Geudae, uriui apeumeul aneunga*).
2. WKP briefly discusses why the English translation is important. The incident was concealed and unacknowledged for nearly half a century and we only seek to 1) tell the truth about the incident to ensure that such tragedies are not repeated in human history and 2) highlight the courage and justice seeking activity of the Chung family.
3. WKP explains the basis for the belief that U.S. soldiers were in a threat situation
4. Time lines.

June 25, 1950 Beginning of Korean War:

July 16-20, 1950: Battle of Daejeon (around 3500+ US Casualties)

July 22-25, 1950: Battle of YeongDong ((around 2000 US Casualties)

July 25-29, 1950: No Gun Ri incident (Korean Casualties disputed – 50-250)

5. Background facts

Things progressed rapidly, in 13 days, like falling dominos, North Korean People's Army (KPA) swiftly defeated the U.S. troops causing high casualties (about 2,000 killed, wounded and missing) who were unprepared, under armed, and chaos in retreats.

Refugees with KPA infiltrators, in civilian clad who were fueled by the Bodo League Massacre at the Daejeon prison (3,000 South Korean leftist prisoners were shot), would form roadblocks in the US troops rear area and use hidden communication equipment to inform their higher commands. Chung (2025:181) notes "*These disguised soldiers from the People's Army disguised as evacuees entered the battlefield, inflicted heavy losses on American soldiers, and contributed to the fall of Daejeon.*" This continued in Yongdong, as noted by Appleman (1998:199) "*The large number of refugees crowding the Yongdong area helped KPA infiltrate the 1st Cavalry Division position.*"

Order to shoot refugees: Shoot first, order came down to fire on approaching refugees. Hanley (2012:83) wrote; "*No refugees to cross the frontline. Fire everyone trying to cross the line. Use discretion in case of women and children.*" Chung (2025:181) wrote "*Since PKA had inflicted so much damage on fellow American soldiers, I wondered if it might have triggered resentment and a desire for revenge against the enemy.*" Furthermore, Commanding General Walker told Major General Gay of 1st Cavalry Division, "*Protect Yongdong. Remember there are no friendly troops behind you. You must keep your own back door open.*"

Consider this exchange from the 2001 U.S. Press Conference on the U.S. Report on the No Gun Ri Incident (see video at <http://www.coradibrazza.com/forgottenpain>):

Q: In the executive summary, it says on the issue of firing on civilians, it says, "the deaths and injuries of civilians, wherever they occurred, were **an unfortunate tragedy inherent to war** and not a deliberate killing." How can you say these were not deliberate killings?

Cragin: I think the intent of that statement is that the soldiers were not aiming at innocent civilians for the purpose of killing innocent civilians. What they perceived was a threat to themselves. And **believing a threat situation**, recalling again the environment that these young men were dealing with infiltrators coming in through refugee columns et cetera, that they believed they were in a threat situation. That is not the deliberate and intentional determination to kill an innocent non-combatant. And I think that's the distinction that's being drawn.

Q: If a person is pulling a trigger at people in civilian clothes, and the bullet goes out and hit these people, isn't that a deliberate act by definition? How can that be a non-deliberate act?

Cragin: I think if they're pulling a trigger at people in civilian clothes and they believe, for example, that people in civilian clothes have been firing at them, and they have a very substantial history in the early period of the war of having North Korean People's Army personnel pose as civilians... that's a different distinction than saying here is somebody who is clearly an innocent, noncombatant civilian.