

From volume one, People in Purple. Root causes of homelessness

Jean Kim's Personal Stories/Testimonies

I begin each volume with my stories because many people have asked, what in the world motivated this little 5-foot-Korean immigrant woman to serve the poor/homeless in this country. At the outset, I will testify that we don't need to be chained to our life troubles, tragedies and illness forever, but can turn all of them into a motivation to do something good for others and society with the help from God.

When I stand before my audience, I usually start my talk by saying the followings: **I am standing before you** as your mission product from Korea. I met Jesus at Ewha Girl's Junior and Senior High School (1949-1955), which was founded by American Methodist missionaries. **I am standing before you** as one of million Koreans whose lives were saved in the Korean War by the sacrifice of American soldiers. **I am standing before you** as one who cannot take for granted for the abundant blessings I have received in this country. I am deeply grateful, and thus share my life with the poor/homeless around us. **I am standing before you** as a voice of our homeless sisters and brothers whom I love and serve because we reside in each other, and they go with me everywhere I go because I am one of them. Thus, they speak through my voice and I speak from their pain-stricken-hearts. Here are some of my stories:

My early life stories led me to who I am and what I do today:

In 1935, I was born as a last of three children in a materially wealthy family in North Korea and was raised like a little princess: eating special food, wearing beautiful clothes and living in a beautiful home. But emotionally, my childhood was filled with my mother's tears, grief and anguish: they were my daily food for she was severely abused by my father who had always sought after other women. When he came home sporadically he beat on my mother.

I remember my father as a wealthy, educated, but an abusive and threatening man who assaulted my mother and punished my two older brothers for unsatisfactory school reports. His expectations were very high, and if any one of us received a poor grade, my mother got punished for it. He would blame my mother for not disciplining us to get better grades at school. Ironically, our education was very important to her because she came from a highly educated family: my grandfather was a highly educated, noble scholar in North Korea who was also a teacher. During this period in Korea, the girls did not attend school. I remember my mother always grieving her lack of education. For this reason alone she would encourage us to do well in school without my father's threat to do so.

One nights that he came home, he would always check my brothers' report card. When he wasn't satisfied with them he would blame my mother. He'd start by beating her first, then would drag her by the hair from one room to the kitchen, all the while threatening to burn her in the oven. We would all scream in horror and try to stop him from burning our mom. It was most cruel, cold-blooded and hair-raising experience. Whenever I recall that incident, to this day I can still feel the chill, horror, and can hardly breathe.

At another time, while my mother was working on her vegetable garden he beat on her, kicked her back so hard that he broke her back.

At that time, as later I heard, she was determine to end her life by starving despite the neighbor's

help. So I got a bowl of gruel in a tightly closed container which our neighbor lady put on my back and tied it with a towel. I brought it to my mom to eat. Looking at me, she felt compassion for me and couldn't die leaving me behind; I was five years old then. So she began to eat the food I brought for her.

I remember from early on I thought I would never marry a man. I even regretted being born a girl, although I wasn't physically abused by him except for witnessing his abuse on my mother and brothers. Therefore, when he was not home with us we were happy and at peace. But when he came home, we were swallowed up by chaos and fear. I don't ever recall doing anything fun or memorable with my father as a family. We didn't want anything to do with him. He had never talked to us except for to punish us. Oddly, I was the only one he called out by my name and not physically abuse. Sometimes, even in hatred I thought he must have liked me. All of us were very angry with our father. Early on, I was ill with whatever my mother was sick with: such as indigestion, headaches, etc. At the age of 5, I had developed asthma, a condition that afflicts me to this day.

My mother was a bright, diligent, honest, strict, and a faithful woman who was very supportive of all of her three children. She taught herself how to read and write. She was a fair woman with a sound judgment. She would always say to me, "You don't have to get married; you don't have to learn how to cook, saw, clean the house or even bear children; first and foremost, the most important thing for you is getting all the education, become independent, stand on your own feet and never ever be abused by any man as I was." It is because of my mother's credo that set me out to be a student forever; I went to school up until I was 71.

When I was 7 or 8 years old, I was often sick with Malaria. I suffered from fever and chills, which were typical symptoms. This usually happened in the hot summer months. When the fever started at school, my teacher would send me home. I had to walk over two miles to come home. On the way home, I would sit on the roadside and rest under the hot sun which made me feel good. When I finally reached home, I'd nearly pass out from the fever. My mother would carry me on her back, and the feeling of comfort would make me sleep for several hours. When I'd wake up on her back, I'd feel better with the fever long gone. Whenever I was unhappy or would cry, she would carry me on her back. Her back was my warm bed and my comfort. A confession has born out of this experience that God carries me on Her back when my heart aches in a heavy grief or despair. This time I use a feminine noun for God because I feel my mother's warmth and comfort from God. I often confess that God has been carrying me on Her back when I was on a speaking tour on behalf of the Presbyterian. Otherwise how could I have boarded the plane 184 times and speak to 430 groups in 6 years. This means I boarded the plane 31 times per year and spoke to 71 churches/groups per year. My confession is that God flew me on Her back to so many places at God's speed. I give all my accomplishment to the grace and mercy of God. God carried me on Her back and placed me where I am today. . My father's abusive behavior ruined my masculine image of God. This means that many children who are abused by fathers or witness to their abuse find it hard to relate to God as the father God.

During 1935-1945 the political climate I was born into in Korea at the time was during the Japanese invasion and occupation (1919-1945) of Korea. We were all given a Japanese name. We were forced to speak Japanese. We all lost our identity and nationality. We were forced to sing the Japanese national anthem. If we sang our own national anthem, we were arrested and punished. We couldn't own or fly our own flag. If we were found with one, we were arrested and punished. Early on I learned all about "oppression." I lived under such political system for the first ten years

of my life.

August 15, 1945 when the WWII ended, I was ten years old. Korea regained her independence from the Japanese occupation. We got our own name, language and flag back. However, all the while our joyful scream for the liberation was echoing throughout the heaven and earth, a Communist regime had settled in Northern part of Korea. As highly educated and wealthy class, my family was at risk of being punished on top having lost all of our land and crops. Except for our abusive father my family escaped to South Korea because my oldest brother was at risk of being arrested; we made the getaway two by two. Even though we owned vast land and orchards, we left North Korea with empty hands, with no cash in our pocket. We couldn't carry lands, orchards, or crops on our back. Each one of us had just one backpack on our back for we each faced many days of walking in hiding since crossing the border was illegal then by the Communist's policy. This policy still remains intact even up to this day. At the time we had no option but to risk our lives by seeking freedom in South Korea. An iron curtain was drawn between the two Koreas and we were separated from our relatives in North Korea forever since.

Somehow my second oldest brother and I were the last crew to leave the North Korea in the fall of 1946. He was 19 and I was 11. He and I were under the North Korean regime for one year before we made our escape to South Korea. In School, the Japanese national anthem was replaced by a song, "General Kim, Il Sung" of North Korea.

At the tender age of ten I went out to the labor field representing my family. I took on the responsibility sensing that no one else from my family would do it. Every family was forced to do labor work for the community –road work or sowing rice plants. My frail 10 year old frame carried a little basin on my head, which was filled with dirt, to a designated spot and dump it there. I also had to learn how to sow rice plant in the muddy field with my bare foot.

In 1946, it was in late fall, when my brother and I arrived in Seoul, South Korea, safely on foot. In Seoul, we no longer owned a home; we fell hard into poverty, moving around from different room to room as a refugee family. We began to experience cold and hunger. In North Korea, I was the wealthiest child in school. All of a sudden in South Korea however, I was the poorest child in the whole school. I was a fourth grade child who was displaced with a bunch of strangers.

In 1949, I signed up to go to a public junior highschool, which was cheaper and second class among schools at the time. But my home room teacher suggested on taking a test to Ewha Girls Jr. High School, which was the most prestigious private high school in Korea. The competition was as high as entering Harvard or Yale by today's standard. At the time I hadn't a clue about the sky-high-tuition to the institution. I took the entrance exam as the teacher suggested, and passed all the tests. I can still recall my mother and my eldest brother having mixed emotions; they were elated for me that I passed, but sad that they could not pay for my high tuition. They tried and tried but could not come up with the full amount of tuition. My eldest brother, an army officer then, went to see the school principal and told him how my family cannot pay the full tuition. To everyone's surprise, the school principal accepted my enrollment with half the amount of tuition. He was the first Christian I encountered, and my first taste of Christ's spirit. The school was a mission school built by American Methodist Missionaries. That school turned my life around from a life with no-Jesus to a life with Jesus. From that day on I was destined to live in the Spirit of God.

June 25, 1950, on a Sunday, a year after happily entering Ewha, the Korean War broke out. I

was fifteen then. It was an unfair price to pay for our deadly struggle to survive for the next four years. June 25 of 1950, a Sunday, when my eldest brother walked out the door to enjoy his day off, was going to be the last time I was to see him alive. I still remember vividly his last image; a well-groomed and neatly dressed 30 years old young man, a husband of a 26 years old wife, a father of two sons (4 and 2), a dearest son of my mother and a dear father figure for me. I still grieve and miss him all of my life!

In the third day of the War we were shocked to see the Communist army had already marched in to occupy Seoul, our Capital City. We had no chance to escape from Seoul. We had left the front and back door open to escape anytime when the enemy showed up. My second eldest brother tried to escape and was caught and arrested to be sent to the battle field. He pretended to go to the restroom and made his escape. On that very day, we had to leave our home because we were subjected to be arrested or even murdered since we defected North Korea. Moreover, not only were we a family of a South Korean military personnel but my brother was a fugitive running from the North Korean Military. So the six of us - my mother, second oldest brother (single), the wife and two toddlers of my eldest brother, and I - escaped to countryside, which was 50 miles from Seoul. We were going to stay with a friend of my eldest brother. It took two days on foot. We couldn't walk very fast because we had two toddlers and luggage/bags to carry on our back, head and arms. When we got there we found an old empty house. We dug a bomb shelter underneath the earthen kitchen floor and kept our brother in there covering up with fire woods. He was at a high risk of being rearrested and sent to battle field, and he was a fugitive now since he escaped once. My sister-in-law went back to Seoul to look for work, so my mother took care of the two toddlers. The younger one got so sick with dysentery that he was left with only skin and bones. I was 15 then. But I felt I was the one who must do something to make our ends meet. I joined a group of women who carried 25-50 pound of rice to Seoul market and bought something else back to barter for food in the countryside. In those days white rice was scarce in the cities. My mother sold some clothes and bought 20 pounds of rice for me to take to Seoul. They were so heavy that I had to alternate from carrying it on my head to shoulder. It took two days to get to Seoul. I sold them to merchants in the market, and bought over a dozen pairs of robber shoes, which farmers needed for farm work. It was a long and fast walk for a 15 years old to keep up with the grown women. I made 8 such round trips.

It happened on my 4th trip to Seoul on foot. I faced the 9.28 (September 28, 1950), the time for the U.N and the South Korean military to recover Seoul from the Communist occupation. On that night there was a fierce fight between them. I remember the heavy bombing in the Inchon harbor by the UN to chase the Communist army out of Seoul. The retreating North Korean military set the city on fire and was shooting people down. On that night, the little of all that we accumulated burnt down to ashes.

In the middle of January 1951, our South Korean military was defeating and retreating from the front line again and Seoul was going to be taken again by the Communists. This time all military families were told to leave Seoul by train. When we got to the train station, all the cabins were so full that we had to crawl in through the windows. Each cabin looked like canned sardines or bean sprouts. So that day we escaped to Pusan, the most southward port in Korea, away from the battle field.

The winter night that we got off the train in Pusan, there was no room in the inn for us because hundreds of people had already fill the inns. We slept in the parking lot of the train station for four nights until an old man invited us to sleep in his yard. Throughout the three years of our exilic life,

the five of us lived in a small one room-shag in his yard with no heat. Looking back it was a miracle that we had survived the circumstance. I continued attending my Jr. High school in exile which was established in a tent on Young Do Island, in Pusan. At home, a wooden apple box covered with a newspaper was my desk. I helped my mother's small peddling business on the street and continued to study on that small desk. I studied English grammar diligently and memorized English vocabularies day and night, even in my sleep.

It still makes me grieve with aching heartache to remember the War; the sounds of the gun fire, the killing, bombing, fire, chaos of running and hiding for life, the hunger, homelessness, displacement, exiling and most importantly the emotional anguish of losing my eldest brother. I have never grieved from separating with my scary father but I grieved for my deeply caring and highly supportive eldest brother all my life. I saw him in my dreams often asking him every time, "Where have you been? We waited for you every day." I longed for and missed him all my life because he was my father figure who supported me and gave me all the strokes and encouragement. When I was very young, he'd lift me up with both hands and say, "do you see Seoul? I am going to send you to school in Seoul when you grow up." And when we finally got to Seoul, he'd promise to send me to the United States to study. It still breaks my heart that he never got to see me study and live in the United States. At the time, going away to attend school in Seoul, the Capital City of Korea, was a huge privilege not only in the Northern part of Korea where I was from, but all of Korea. And going to the United States for education was the highest aspiration of Korean people. He himself studied at Bosung High school in Seoul and Waseda University in Japan. He didn't look like or act like a son of my scary and abusive father. His caring and loving personality came from my maternal side of the family. But my second eldest brother turned out to be a lot like my father, who often abused his wife and didn't know how to verbalize his love and support. But I knew he loved me dearly too. Both brothers always introduced me affectionately to their friends by saying, "This is my little sister." They were 15 and 8 years older than me.

In 1953 the armistice was signed between the two Koreas. Ever since the cease fire of 1953, we lived in fear of yet another war, even to the present day(2014). In the winter of 1953, we were able to return to Seoul from our three year exile. We didn't have our home in Seoul anymore because it was burned in the war. We lived temporarily in someone's empty house with no heat, in the dead winter. The winter in Pusan was mild but it was bitter cold in Seoul. Living in a house with no heat left all of my ten fingers were frostbitten.

Once back in Seoul, I went back to my studies at the Ewha Girls High School, in the original campus in Cheong Dong, Seoul. Again, I was the poorest child in the whole school. I never had a regular winter Ewha uniform of high quality fabric in a navy blue color. Mine was a woman soldier's uniform top dyed in dark navy color with white Ewha collar. I only had one winter school uniform and one summer uniform. I had to wash and dry it overnight to wear it the next morning. I never wore shiny leather shoes as the other Ewha girls did. Mine was old sneakers with holes but I was never ashamed. I only concentrated in studying hard.

All of my early troubled life makes me consider myself as one of the poor/homeless I serve today because my story is their story and their story is my story.

1954-1955: In exile in Pusan, I didn't go to church at all. I wasn't interested in it. And I was too busy helping my mother's peddler business and studying in between any free time. However back in Seoul, my faith in Jesus was reignited. I liked the Bible class taught by then Bishop of the Methodist Church. I faithfully attend the morning service at the school chapel. I ended up joining

a Christian group in school, and quickly became a leader of my class. I was even baptized by the same bishop at the school chapel. That was the first time God came into my life, at 17.

In my late teen years, I became profoundly attracted to the image of Jesus; who himself was poor and homeless and walked among the poor/homeless, sick and outcasts in his days. I began to attend a local Presbyterian Church in my neighborhood with another a girlfriend of mine. I was actively involved in the youth group at the church. I didn't know really know or understand the difference between a Methodist and Presbyterian Church; so I grew up with both tradition.

For our graduation picture, all the other girls chose fancy place to take their class picture, such as a park or a palace, but I led my group to take a picture of us singing from a hymnal and holding the Bible. The picture below shows just how very old fashion and odd it was to do that, even in that period. (See photo below taken from my yearbook).



(I am the second one from the left, kneeling on my knees). The one in the center was the girl who used to take me to Church from when I started Jr. High, but I wasn't interested in church at the time.

In winter of 1954, I experienced my first mysterious calling: in the last quarter of my last year in high school, in the

winter of 1954, our home church started a 100 day dawn prayer service. My prayer at the time was asking God what college I should attend. The answer to my prayer didn't come until towards the end of the 100 day prayer meeting. One early morning while I was praying, my heart was telling me to go to a theological seminary. All along, my family had been urging me to go to either a medical or law school. They had a distorted idea that I was a brilliant girl. Studying theology was completely contrary to their wish for me. When they learned about my vision, they were all shocked and grieved as if I were dead. This was my first awakening to the calling by God at 18. The church leaders, however loved to hearing the news, and guided me to go to a seminary.

In 1955, as soon as I graduated from High School, I passed the exam to enter Han Kuk Theological Seminary (Today's Han Shin), which was a Presbyterian Seminary. I remember the Holy Spirit was especially strong in presence in my life at this period, and have been ever since.

In 1959, four years later, I graduated with the highest honor in a co-ed class, which was very unusual in South Korea. In those days, a woman coming out of seminary became a Jeon Do Sa, which roughly translates to a "missionary"; a lower and non ordained position that serves ordained male pastor and church members. It didn't matter how bright the student was, female graduates were not ordained. Since I was at the top in my Seminary class, my pride didn't allow me to accept the inferior position in the Church. Out of my protest to the church's discrimination against

women, I decided to get a MA in social work in order to work with the poor, just as Jesus had done in his days. And I got another BA degree in order to go to the United States to study theology, as two BAs were required to study M. Div. course.

In 1960, I took an exam to study abroad. Passing the National Exam was like passing the Bar in today's standard. I passed once again, and was able to attend the University of Chicago Divinity School for one year. Unfortunately, however, I had to return to Korea because my scholarship ended. I promised myself I would return some day. I can still remember Dr. Marcus Barth who was the son of Karl Barth.

So three events – Getting into Ewha Girls Jr. High School, graduating with the highest honor from Seminary and passing the National Exam to study abroad were the highlights for me in those days. I had achieved my mother's credo for me.

1960-1969: Back in Korea, I got married and had two sons (1961 and 1964). 1961-1964, I worked at the 8th U.S. Army accounting office.

1965-1970, I joined CARE-Korea and worked as a social worker to develop a rehabilitation program for 12 leper colonies (refer to Volume 3 for the detail). My team also helped various orphanage, war widows and elderly people who lost their children in the War. Working for these people was an eye-opening experience to the great need by the poor. And because I myself was poor, I was able to understand and relate to the people I was helping. In 9 years of my married life, my husband and I were so poor that we moved every year from one rented room to another. All the moving around was very difficult with two young children. I remember this time to be the most difficult and unbearable.

All through the rest of 50s and 60s, we suffered the aftermath of the devastation of the war. I didn't have proper food for nourishment, clothing or housing all through my teen years up to my twenty's. This is a primary reason why I am so short; I didn't have a chance to grow physically.

April 18, 1970, after suffering so much for all of my thirty-five years, in two Koreas from 1930s - 1960s, finally a change had to come; I immigrated to the United States, and a year later my husband and children joined me in later in October of 1971, all to pursue the American Dream which was an aspiration for the rest of the world in those days. Thus, the United States became a country of refuge for us.

However, my life journey in the United States have been a series of God-led vision for me: 1) From the American dream to Jesus dream; 2) Pursuing social work degree. 3) Despair/hopelessness to surrender. 4) My second vision from God: 5) Move to Seattle. 6) wake-up call through Kwangju massacre. 7) Ordination. 8) God's speaking out of fire; 9) a birth of the homeless women's church; 10) 6 years of speaking tour: 11) D. of Min from SFTS. 12) God's mysterious and systematic disciplining. 13) Organizing homeless missions; 14) writing 5 books.

1) 1970- 1973: From American Dream to Jesus Dream: When I got here everything was beautiful, abundant and comfortable. It was entirely a different world. There was a promise of this American Dream for any person if he/she wanted it. However, at my surprise, my pursuance of the American dream gradually faded away from me. Because following the American dream scared me that I may distance myself farther and farther away from Jesus; who was born, lived, loved, served and died homeless and left his legacy for us to follow. I did not want to forget or let go of the image of Jesus had inspired me profoundly in my teen years. Therefore, somehow the pursuance of the American Dream made me feel as if I were betraying Jesus. To pursue the

American Dream, rather to survive, my husband engaged in a small business. Whenever I step in to help, the sales went up. If I partnered in the business, we could have achieved the American Dream faster. But I remember I was scared of making lots of money in fear that it could take me away from the Jesus' dream. I was equating the American Dream back then with the wealth like everyone else around me.

What is the American Dream anyway? Why did it scare me?

According to scholars, the term "American Dream" first was used by the American writer and popular historian James Truslow Adams (1878-1949) in his book "The Epic of America" published in 1931. At that time the United States were suffering under the Great Depression. Adams used the term to describe the complex beliefs, religious promises and political and social expectations. He stated that the American dream is "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement."¹ Originally, the idea of the American Dream is rooted in the United States Declaration of Independence of [July 4, 1776].² However, in his essay John E. Nestler reflects "Whereas the American Dream was once equated with certain principles of freedom, it is now equated with things. The American Dream has undergone a metamorphosis from principles to materialism. ... When people are concerned more with the attainment of things than with the maintenance of principles, it is a sign of moral decay. And it is through such decay that loss of freedom occurs."³

What is Jesus' dream then? For me, he came to the most lowly place as the poor/homeless, lived homeless, served and loved the most poor/sick/abandoned homeless as a homeless himself by entirely emptying all of himself and died the most lonely death of the homeless (although God raised and vindicated him). I see my homeless friends in the homeless life and death of Jesus; one who died an unfair and premature death on the cross. Spong helps me to express who he was much better:

When his disciples forsook him, he loved his forsakers. When one of them denied him and another betrayed him, he loved the denier and betrayer. When his enemies abused him, he loved his abusers. When they killed him, he loved his killers. He was the one condemned to die, but he gave his life away even as they took it from him. He gave forgiveness to the soldiers (Luke 23:34). He gave assurance to the penitent thief (Luke 23:43). Here was a whole human being who lived fully, who loved wastefully, and who had the courage to be himself under every set of circumstances. He was thus a human portrait of the meaning of God, understood as the source of life, the source of love, and the ground of being.⁴

For me, learning the footsteps of this Jesus is following Jesus' Dream. The American Dream would have kept me away from this image of complete love, and a sacrificial sharing.

2) 1977: Pursing MSW degree: Instead of pursuing the American Dream, I enrolled in Social Work School at St Louis University in St. Louis, Mo in order to train myself to be an efficient social worker to help the poor. With my English as a second language, it wasn't easy but I made it and got a MSW degree in May of 1977, focusing on mental health.

3) April 30, 1978, Despair and hopelessness: By immigrating to the United States, I lost my native country, culture, relatives and friends. But my husband, I and the two sons were happy and hopeful to build our life anew. For the first seven years, we were working so hard to survive that

¹ James Truslow Adams. *The Epic of America* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1931). 214-215.

² David Kamp. *Rethinking the American Dream*. April 2009. Posted online. 12/17/14

³ John E. Nestler. *The American Dream*. Published, October 1973 issue of *The Freeman*, John E. Nestler

⁴ John Shelby Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 128.

we didn't realize when the flowery spring came and went. The seven years had gone by like 7 days. In the eighth year, on April 30, 1978, I lost my oldest, 17 years old son when we lived in St. Louis. Of all losses, my mother, eldest brother, my second nephew, some relatives in the War, the loss of a child was most devastating. My pain was heart-piercing and was like a piece of bombshell stuck in my heart. I woke up weeping, cooked weeping, ate weeping, went to work weeping, went to bed weeping, worshipped weeping and sang weeping. I even experienced child delivery pain for one whole year from severity to gradual mild pain. I was hallucinating; sensing some invisible movement moving along with me whenever I was moving around in the house. I was hearing movements and sound out of the closet from my son's room. I was delusional that some men in black suits were hiding behind every door in the house. I felt someone's presence behind me all the time. I was so scared that I had to sit leaning on the wall so that nothing was behind me. All this led me to active suicidal ideation; I didn't want to live any more. I had enough pain and anguish in my life. I told God, "This is IT! I can't take any more pain. My life must end here. You take my life away. Cancel my existence and blot me out of this world. Let the earth next to my son's grave open its mouth and swallow me. Don't love me, or forgive me, or feel sorry for me or comfort me, or save me. I don't want to live any longer in this world unless you bring my son back. I am not worthy as a woman, as a mother or even as a human being after burying my dear child under the ground. Please kill me, take me away, O God." I became emotionally and spiritually homeless. Kierkegaard would name such a profound despair "sickness unto death." Yes, I was sick unto death!

One late afternoon I was crying my heart out at my son's grave site. I sensed someone touching my shoulder. I lifted my tear-running face and saw a gentleman sitting next to me. His face, too, was covered with his tears. He asked me why I was crying like that and I answered that I buried my child there. I asked him why he was crying. He said his father was buried right next to my son. He then asked if I went to church. I told him "Yes, I go to an English speaking and Korean speaking church." He asked again, "Then how come you are alone like this?" I told him "Today I feel all alone under the sun." That afternoon, his tears appeared to be Jesus' tears as if he was crying with me. Ever since this experience, it became my confession that I had seen the weeping Jesus. Truly I felt that Jesus was crying with me. Yes, I felt his heart ache whenever my heart was broken and pierced.

All along God didn't want to hear me out and do what I was requesting. God confronted me with a message, "You are denying my existence by your insensible request." I said, "No, that's not true. Hadn't I recognized your being how could I have requested you do these things for me?" I kept wrestling with God pushing God away from me with all my strength. The Bible says Jacob wrestled with God one night to be blessed, but I wrestled with God for 365 days and nights to be condemned to death. However, God grabbed me tight, wouldn't let me go and confronted me with a message, "Yes, you are denying me because love, compassion, mercy and forgiveness are the very essence of me. If you deny to accept these you deny my existence." This challenging message awakened me. In the end, God's steadfastness and perseverance won the fight over me. I finally surrendered allowing "God to do anything with me because this life of mine I didn't want and even dogs wouldn't eat it." Ever since, God has been dictating my life and I didn't have anything to do except for an absolute obedience as an absolute loser. God possessed and enslaved me. If God says "go" I went. If God says "do" I did. Therefore, I no longer existed but only for God. If I lived, I live for God. If I must die, I would die for God. I didn't know where this confession would lead me.

- 4) July 1979: A second vision from God: The night before our departure from St. Louis– I called it the dead city- because I lost a son there – for Seattle, I had a dream: A tall tree (refer to photo) with full branches was set on fire. This burning tree looked exactly like the one behind my son’s grave site. Next minute, the tree turned into ashes and then out of the ashes flowers were blooming – fire to ashes to flowers. It was awesome. All the way to Seattle, in my mind, I carried a vision of having a church in the living room of our new home in Seattle. But I kept it to myself.



내 꿈에 불이 붙던 나무는 형이의 무덤앞에 서있는 나무
The tree on fire in my dream was the one
standing in front of Hyoung's tomb in St. Louis

5) July 1979 we moved into our new home; my husband went to Seattle ahead of me to find a new house, and after finding one, came back to St. Louis to get me: We took time to travel to Seattle in our Toyota wagon because it was the time when the nation suffered from the gas shortage. We couldn't buy gas at night. So we drove only during the day. It took seven days from St. Louis to Seattle.

After our arrival in Seattle, my visions faded away because we were too busy setting up our small business. So were all of my hallucinations in a new environment, although I kept crying as ever!

However, some power was forcing me to read the Bible day and night for a couple of years. I had never read the Bible that much in my entire life: I read the whole Good News Bible, the whole Living Bible, the whole Revised Standard Bible, the whole International Version Bible, and the whole New Revised Standard Bible plus a few Korean versions. I ended up exclaiming “Now I see the light, I see the light!” In the past I felt I had no vision except for the darkness. A few years had gone by without anything else happening after that awesome dream I had in St. Louis. Quite often God spoke to me but I did not understand what the message was! It took much longer to understand the meaning of this vision.

6) In May 1980, the third vision came; a wake-up call to ordination. It was May of 1980 when many young people in Kwang Ju, Korea took to the streets their protest against the dictatorship of Chun Doo Hwan, then President. He sent paratroops to Kwang Ju to mercilessly butcher demonstrators as the photo shows. The dead kids in the photo looked just like my own deceased son. My husband and I were so devastated that we organized the Korean-American Human Rights Council in order to support and stand in solidarity with the grieving people of Kwangju for the loss of their precious children. We also planned a memorial service for the victims. Although my



Newsweek 1980년 5월호에 실렸던 광주사태 희생자들
Photos published in May '80 Issue of Newsweek
- Kwang Ju Korea Massacre victims -

husband and I could officiate the service as theology graduates, we invited Seattle area Korean pastors to officiate the service. None of them showed up. Probably they were fearful of being accused of being sympathizers to communists. Kwangju victims were so condemned by then Korean President and his administration. So my husband and I led the memorial service. Of course our efforts to support the struggle of Kwangju people brought us a harsh

accusation that we were sympathizers of communists and therefore were harassed by Korean immigrants who were supporting Korean government blindly. We ended up losing everything including our home and our small business to bankruptcy. In grave disappointment with the Korean pastors, a vision for my own ordination was creeping in to my heart.

On the conscious level, I was thinking that I might have to do what ordinary pastors wouldn't or couldn't do without any concrete idea what that could be. It was just mysteriously invading thoughts rising in my heart. And up until then, I had never dreamed of being ordained. In the past there were several occasions to be ordained in St. Louis, but I had no interest in it at all. But this time, I let Rev. Jack Wilson, then pastor of my church (Maplewood) know about this mysterious vision. He supported it wholeheartedly. Before I knew it, the ordination process had already begun. He then had the Maplewood Presbyterian Church session to take me under care and began to work with the Committee on Ministry (COM) of the North Puget Sound Presbytery. Now it is being changed to Northwest Sound Presbytery.

7) 1986, on the day that the North Puget Sound Presbytery took me in as an inquirer, my confession to the whole Presbytery in ever-running tears was that "if I live, I live for the Lord, and if I die I die for the Lord; whether I live or die, I am the Lord's." I had already gone through and lost a lot, and nothing seemed to be left for me any more except to serve the Lord and die for Lord Jesus. On that day, there was no dry eye in the Presbytery gathering.

After taking some courses on M. Div. level and passing the oral and written ordination exams, the ordination became a reality on April 12, 1987 at the tender age of 52.

The photo was taken on the day it be the answer to the dream in blooming out of ashes? Some of as “a resurrection from my death.” experienced absolute peace of morphine. I had never experienced mind before or after this event. It outcome of complete laying-down, only let Jesus Christ live in me.

My first call came from the Ministry at the University of ministry with the international and served for seven years.



of the ordination. Could which flowers were my friends interpreted it After the ordination I mind as if I was on such a peaceful state of could have been the or emptying all of me to

Campus Christian Washington to start a students, which I created

8) April 3, 1988, the fourth vision: God was speaking out of huge fire. It was exactly a year after my ordination, while I was serving students at University of Washington: In my sleep, it was 1988 Easter morning (April 3, 1988) I had a dream. It was so crystal clear and awesome that I still remember it vividly. In a dream, out of huge fire, a size of a dining table, God was speaking. This experience resembled Moses’ burning bush in Mount Sinai. Next moment God took me to a tiny one room church. I was standing inside the front door of the church. God commanded me to “plant a cross” on the floor where I was standing and said “it will grow through the roof.” It was so awesome and I was deeply moved and trembled. In response to the dream, although not fully understanding the meaning of it, I added more spiritual programs at Campus Ministry. I did not know how else to respond to the dream. Dreams are usually very symbolic for me and I treated them very seriously. But I kept that dream deep in my heart and kept wondering what God could have been saying to me.

9) January 19, 1991, the fifth vision: Birth of the homeless women’s church: One day I was admitted to the Stevens Hospital with a blood



pressure of 220 and a severe chest pain. In the hospital bed, I mumbled to God that I didn’t have time to lay in a hospital bed, and also what exactly was the meaning behind planting a cross. In a dozing state, the whole room turned snow white and the meaning of the dream became crystal clear; that I must do ministry with the homeless women. I thought to myself, had God taken my life last night, what good is it to have a well-paying job with good benefits. Then I surrendered to God responding, “Yes, yes, I will do it.” I thanked God for clarifying the meaning of the awesome vision. This vision meant that God picked me up from the ashes and revived me to full life. Because when I lost my child, I pushed God away refusing to be comforted and only

demanding to be let go, to be abandoned and nullify my existence. Therefore, this was a moment I was welcoming God to come into my life and back into my life. After I came home from the hospital I developed the Church of Mary Magdalene, a homeless women's church (1991) in Seattle, on weekends because I was working full time. All the ministry programs and activities had one solid goal of freeing homeless women from their sufferings, abuse and homelessness and leading them to a joyful dancing as the logo clearly displays. (Refer to volume 4 for more details).

My amazing experience with this church is a clear witness to the fact that God transformed all my losses and traumas into compassion to serve the homeless people who were profoundly injured by losing everything- homes, jobs, families, friends, hopes, health including their own mind - just as I had. They were all sick in despair unto death just as I was. Therefore, I would say, all the wounds, hurts, pain, tragedy, illness and loss can never bind us to a chain of despair forever, but they can become a strong foundation to do something good for others – we must serve other hurting people because we know how all that pain feels like. If we surrender to God everything becomes possible.

At the Church of Mary Magdalene, I highlighted worship service and singing with the homeless women. I brought singing from my own experience. When I lost my 17 year old boy and I hit rock bottom of my life, I didn't want to live any more. Whenever grief, guilt and pain crushed, choked me and I could not breathe, I would sit down with a hymnal and began to sing from the first page on. My singing at that time meant crying out, screaming, groaning and mourning, and praying. By the time I reached the last page of the hymnal, I experienced relief and was able to breathe, get up to go cook or go to work or go to bed to sleep. From this experience I learned that music can be a powerful instrument of God's healing power.

Therefore, I used the same power of healing through singing. So I encouraged my congregation to sing. Even a woman who was sick with catatonic schizophrenia and never talked to anyone was shaking her head and body along with music and melody. We shook scarves, tambourines, banged on drums, and whatever we could grab along with our singing. We even danced while singing. We sang emotionally, physically and spiritually. Healthy women, sick women, angry women, depressed women all sang together. Women experienced relief, joy and peace after singing out all of their frustrations, anger and depressive feelings. Women also witnessed that they could not be angry and sing at the same time. In singing time there was no room for anger to creep in. It was a very joyful experience. We experienced the presence of the Spirit and built a cohesive community among ourselves. An hour long singing prepared the congregation to get ready spiritually to worship God. It was an amazing songfest! They enjoyed it so much that no one wanted to stop singing even after an hour. I had to stop them in order to proceed with the worship service or to meet the lunch schedule. (To find out more about this church, read volume 4).

10) 1998-2004, as I was getting ready to retire (Feb'98) to prepare for my death, as I was suffering from severe asthma, my unexpected and unscheduled speaking tour came. Rev. Barbara Dua, then Director of the [national] Women's Ministries Program Area of the Presbyterian Church (USA), had a dream; in it she had a vision of God telling her to talk to me. Her department, after having a vision by God in her dream to talk to me. Upon hearing about this vision and dream, her department hired me and commissioned me out to the whole nation to raise consciousness among the Presbyterians and urge them to open rooms in the church to welcome the homeless women and children. Later we added to wear purple homeless shirts to spread the message "End Homelessness for all women and children," and later we changed to "All people." Two years later the Hunger Program of (PC, USA) inherited me and the project and kept me on for four more years. The whole

process seemed to be the result of being pushed by the irresistible power of the Spirit. In a six year period, I boarded the plane 184 times and spoke to 450 churches/groups. (Detail may be found in Volume 3).

In May 2000, my handout for my audience grew from one page to 300 pages. The (national) Hunger Program of the Presbyterian Church (USA) printed one thousand copies of it. My supervisor made me talk in a form of report of two years speaking tour and developed 18 minute video with many slide shows included. The Hunger Program published both resources and distributed to the whole Presbyterian Church in the nation. So the speaking tour lasted for six years. After my retirement from the speaking tour, we organized the national Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness. I served as an interim Director for it one year.

11) 2004-2006, D. Min from SFTS. I was 70 years old. My husband saved up \$10,000 to buy a car but his Dr. told him he couldn't drive any more due to his full blown diabetes. He told me if I worked on a doctorate degree he would give me that money. So I said, "Ok, I will do it." That's how I enrolled in a D. Min program at San Francisco Theological Seminary. I drove from Seattle to San Francisco. It took me two full days. I worked laboriously on the theme, "Root Causes of the Homelessness in the U.S. and the Church's Response." I had great fun writing this dissertation. Many people seemed to have enrolled in the classes for a degree per se, but at my age I didn't need another degree. I wanted to write a good resource book for the church. I read through hundreds of books which was unnecessary for the D. Min course. In my second year, I fell in a parking lot, and broke my ankle. But I went back to SFTS with a cast on my leg. I couldn't sit on the chair too long so I used to sit on the floor of my classroom, leaning my back to the wall and the laptop on my lap. That's how I wrote my papers until my ankle healed.

It was difficult, but joyful and I was grateful for the opportunity. I know I made it through with God's Grace and help.

My whole family, my son, daughter-in-law and the three grandchildren came to my graduation at the San Francisco Theological Seminary. I wanted them to witness the fact that regardless of one's age, one can pursue any level of education if one so desires. God will help. I thanked my husband and God for opening up this opportunity for me. I was 71 when I got the Doctor of Ministry degree. I was very glad that I did it.

12) 1980-2005: Reflecting upon my past experience, I confess that my life journey was in God's mysterious planning: First, in 1980, I was hired by Harborview Community Mental Health Center's inpatient unit where each of us – social worker or nurse – was assigned to treat 2-3 severe patients. A year after, I was transferred to the "Intensive Community Support Treatment Program," – an outpatient program – which was a pioneer case management program for the chronically mentally ill and most non-compliant patients in the same community. We had 6 teams of Psychiatric nurses and social workers on the Master level. Both were referred to as a "Mental Health Practitioner" by the Washington State Health Department. In the program, each counselor carried a case load of 12-13 patients. Five years later, I was transferred to Health Care for the Homeless program. I was assigned to three homeless women's shelters to treat the mentally ill. My case load expanded to 30-40 mentally ill women per week. Five years after that, when I founded a homeless women's church, my case grew to 100 per week. And 7 years later when the General Assembly put me on a speaking tour for 6 years, the whole country (several hundred churches) became my responsibility to motivate to end homelessness. My **confession** is that God had disciplined and trained me systematically, raising my case load from small to huge crowd.

God's plan to walk with me through this journey has been amazing! In God's careful plan I became who I am today. Everything has been and will be in God's hands. Therefore, "Amazing Grace" became my song ever since.

13) 2006- 2010: Organizing the homeless mission: Serving on a national Network to End Homelessness, I kept organizing a local mission within the church community to end homelessness. The longest years I have served is at the Nest Mission in Seattle (detail will be found in volume 3 and 4).

14) 2008-present (2015) I continued to serve the homeless brothers and sisters through Nest Mission I co-founded with my colleagues in Seattle, Washington.

I can conclude that God transformed all my toils and troubles into motivation to serve the Lord by serving the poor/homeless. It is my turn to share some of the abundant blessings I have received in this country with the poor and homeless around me. Thus, I have been serving the mentally ill homeless and substance addicted people for the past 4+ decades as a mental health counselor/social worker/case manager and a Presbyterian minister up to this date (2015). It was my way of following my Jesus' Dream. I will go on until my last breath because following the Jesus Dream is the core purpose of my life. Finally "Here I am Lord" in the Presbyterian Hymnal became my life-long song: "Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart."

15. In 2014-2015, Writing the five volumes: After four+ decade I recognize my painful stories are the homeless' story. With so many of my stories behind me, I am now ready to move onto **their** story. **Their stories are so many that they are compiled in five volumes.** I started volume one with the most frequent question raised, "why and who are the homeless." That is the title of volume one. I answered that question with another question and answer, what is "homelessness"? While many people look at the homelessness only from a physical standpoint, I added emotional, social and spiritual perspective of the homelessness. Homelessness is quite complex and multidimensional.