

Introduction

My experience in early wealthy life—escape from Communist North Korea as a child, devastation, poverty, housing problems and heart-piercing grief in the post-Korean war era—prepared me to understand those who suffer from similar situations.¹ Several decades of experience working with the homeless mentally ill population in the United States have opened my eyes to the circumstances of poverty and homelessness in the U.S. Above all, the life and teaching of Jesus recorded in Scripture has disturbed and motivated me to serve, and to stand with and be the voice for the suffering voiceless.

While I was on my speaking tour, I saw rapidly increasing homelessness in every city of the United States, despite the great generous charity work done by Christian Church and other faith groups and secular agencies. I found myself digging into the root causes of homelessness, public policy, in particular, that seems to create and perpetuate poverty and homelessness. That consciousness motivated me to enroll at San Francisco Theological Seminary, not just for the degree at my age of 70, but to write a good resource for the church under good faculty guidance. Because I have already written a how-to Manual for the Church's direct service, this time I wanted to deal with the root causes of homelessness. I interviewed about 150 people, professionals, the public and homeless people on the homeless issue. The major concern of them all was the public policy issue. Their input became the base, flesh and bone for my dissertation.

My dissertation is limited to the homeless issues in the United States, painfully leaving out concerns for the global homelessness issue due to the limited space.

I have used "Christian Church," and "congregations" alternately to address the homeless issue to religious people, Christians in particular. I based my theology of mission heavily on the teachings of the Old and New Testament, Jesus in particular because he is the base of my faith and ethics. That doesn't mean I ignore other faiths.

What I gained from reading, interviews and consultation is integrated in two parts: The Part I is the dissertation and Part II is the projects.

Part I, the dissertation includes: 1) a social analysis of the society we live in; 2) a review of God's policies for the poor in the Old Testament and Jesus' policies for the poor in the New Testament, presenting them as the ground/guide and principle for the Church mission; and 3) the last chapter of the dissertation addresses a theological and ethical perspective of Christian Mission, based on Biblical teachings plus the diagnosis and prescription suggested by scholars to develop mission for a healthy society.

¹ I was born and raised in a wealthy family and lived until I was ten in the northern part of Korea. My father was the owner of a vast acreage and an orchard, and for whom many poor peasants labored. We ate high quality food, wore fancy clothes and lived in comfortable, roomy homes. When the Communists came and occupied the North Korea, they took away all of my father's land (about two and half square miles), but left us our life, our orchards and three houses, while some other rich men were beaten to death. My family escaped to South Korea seeking freedom in 1946. Suddenly, we had to live a life of poverty because we had escaped with our empty hands and the few pieces of clothes we could walk with. After a few years of a nearly deadly struggle to survive, the Korean war broke out. My oldest brother enlisted in the South Korean army for free housing after experiencing our housing difficulties. A year later he was killed in the Korean war. This taught me the injustice of violence and the terror of war, and that the poor die for war.

Part II includes four projects: Project 1 is the interview result of 150 people. Project 2 is the result of a survey on the Myth and Facts on Homelessness, obtained by interviewing 60 people. Project 3 is my recommendation for five public policy advocacy areas that are significantly related to homelessness, including some guidelines on how to be involved in public policy advocacy. Project 4 is an introduction to examples of public policy advocacy now in use by ecumenical and interfaith groups in the nation.

My heartfelt thanks go to God who held me up in good health, conviction, excitement and patience in the long hard process of schooling, reading, writing and revising the dissertation; to Rev. Dr. Warren Lee who accepted me in the school unconditionally and provides on-going support and encouragement and supervision; to the SFTS faculty members who kept me so stimulated and guided me to so many right resources along with their open-minded theology; to Rev. Dr. William B. Cate for supervision of my dissertation writing offering wholehearted support and approval for my theology; to Rev. Mary E. N. Hanke for editing my manuscript while she has her own busy work schedule along with her support and encouragement; to Rev. Jack Wilson who read my script with ongoing mentoring and encouragement; to a couple of hundred people including my colleagues and homeless friends who participated in my interview and survey, and reinforced, encouraged and motivated me to deal with public policy issue; to SFTS students who helped me with rides and chores while I was in summer session with a broken ankle; to churches and individual friends who picked up the rest of tuition of the last quarter for me; to my husband who has been quite ill but still continues to motivate me to and pay for the schooling and who has tolerated the frequent absence of his wife in these crucial days of his life; to other family members who stood with me all along with their prayers; and special thanks to my sister-in-law who nursed my husband while I was in the last quarter of school and helped me to finish my course work. Without their help, encouragement and prayer, I couldn't have completed the course. Therefore, this dissertation is a product of the whole local and national community of concerned people.

I used Kate L. Turabian's book, published by the University of Chicago, as guidance in writing this dissertation. When I quote Scripture, I have used the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

One might ask, "Why in the world a person like me, who is an immigrant and enjoys a decent life in the U. S., takes such a critical stance on our federal economic policy and system?" The question is the exact answer why I must do so. Every one deserves to have the decent life that an immigrant is enjoying. I am going to quote what I wrote in one of the classes at San Francisco Theological Seminary.²

"I had resided in Korea for the first 35 years of my life and lived another 35 years of the second half of my life in the United States. I had lived a life of wealth and life of poverty. I had lived through peaceful times and war times. I had lived in a whole home

² This little article was written after reading the three required texts books – American Empire, When Corporations Rule the World and God the Economist. Those resource books on the area of economy, political science, and religion / theology helped me to see who I am and where I am and the whole stomach of the United States (unjust political and economic policies) which I have citizenship in as if I see it through X-Ray. It also opened my eyes and ears to perceive the truth and compassion of Jesus once again for the poor and afflicted. Intentionally I used the term "empire" for the U.S.

and a broken home. Ethnically, I am Korean. Culturally, I am Korean-American. Legally, I am an American. I chose to come to the United States seeking better opportunities. I am a beneficiary of American democracy. I liked getting my advanced education in the empire. I liked my jobs in the empire. I enjoy my little place to live. I benefit from my computer, television and cell phone. I enjoy driving a car that takes me anywhere I want to go. I love the decent treatment as an Asian-American woman in this country's culture of diversity. I laugh and weep in this empire. I love the freedom here. I can wear anything I want to. I can go anywhere and any time I want to. I have all the food I want to eat. I am living on social security and a pension. Medicare helps me when I am sick, although it is limited. I enjoy the status of this empire's citizenship. I love my empire friends. They love me. This empire loves me. I love to make a home here. I love to sleep in the complacency of freedom. I am in it. But I am a prisoner in this empire, to use Soelle's term. I love Korea as my first native home and also love this country as my second permanent home.

However, above all, I am a Christian who loves Jesus. For him, I will do anything. Without him I have no meaning in life. He is the cause of my living and base of my ethics. My rich, blessed, and grief-stricken life wraps my perspectives in a rainbow blanket. I can cry with the suffering in two-thirds world (the third world) and with the homeless in the third world within this country. I share also perspectives with the empire's citizens who, like me, benefit from living here. I can see the world from the perspective of my Lord Jesus. I admire Jesus' love for the poor and downtrodden in this empire. This empire is my world and the context of my ministry and my theology. I learned to see this empire from the critical eyes of Jesus. I can't help but hear the voice of Jesus who keeps awakening me and calling me to work on the streets and to become a voice of those voiceless who cry out against the unjust policies that create poverty and homelessness. Jesus won't let me sleep long hours in my empire's prison. If I have a decent life so should everyone else. That is the voice of Jesus. He always wakes me up to resist the injustice in the empire. And therefore, I will always, always, love and resist the evil in this empire! I will love the empire! But I will resist the injustice of this empire just as my Lord, Jesus would!