



Cultural Center Confronts Sexual Violence (Liz)

So in the summer of 2006 we invited a teacher to the Korean Youth Culture Center—KYCC—to come and provide Korean traditional drumming classes for us. And, one night when we were drinking, it's been a tradition for KYCC that if you do drink and feel like you can't drive home or don't wanna drive home, that you should be able to and stay there very safely. So, three of the females, adult females, went upstairs and the teacher then proceeded upstairs later that evening and then sexually assaulted her. And she then stopped him and told him to leave, which he did, he got up and then, proceeded downstairs where people were still remaining. And um, the woman didn't know what to do, and she woke up one of the other women in the room. She said, "you know, we have to confront him now." And they went downstairs and they proceeded to confront him and he did not deny it.

So The next day I called the victim and I talked to her, and I said, because this happened at KYCC, I feel, I want to go with her direction, but because it happened within KYCC limits, I have to talk to the board members about it, like I can't pretend this didn't happen, but of course I wanted to make sure she felt safe with that and comfortable with that. I then told her what plan of action I would take, which is I would call one of our board members Sunjung Cho who is a therapist in the community, who also has done a lot of work with Shimtuh Domestic Violence Program, and sexual assault, and I contacted her first. And then I proceeded to contact Helen Kim, who um is very active on our board but also has worked with so many different organizations and wanted to be able to proceed forward really quickly. And they were awesome, pulled folks together, agreed that Sunjung, myself, and another board member, a male board member, would come to the meeting with the teacher and two of the members that were there that evening.

And we confronted him. And when we got there, then he got on his knees and knelt in front of us, which is, I guess, the deepest sign of respect. And then asked us, not asked, but begged us, to not tell his organization back home. And the network that he is a part of, or the school that he is a part of, is really large, it's an intangible cultural asset in Korea. And this is his livelihood, his teaching, and he begged us not to tell them, and we said we couldn't do that, and he was like, "please," you know, "I'll tell my wife, I'll, I'll do whatever you want, but just don't tell." And we said, "we're not here for your apology. We're here to just you tell you what happened, what we're going to do, and um that's it." You know he, he made a big giant sign of his remorse, which he took a, a instrument stick and broke it, his *kwaengari ch'ae*, and like put it on the ground like, "I'll give up Pung'mul for this." Most of us were kind of disgusted. And so then we called an immediate meeting. We consulted with the members that were there at the time, like what should we do, what did we think was the course of action t we should do? We felt we needed to notify and tell other Pung'mul drumming group, 'cause it—KYCC is a hub to many of that, those groups. And so, it was my task to then call all of those organizations and tell.

Some people asked us later why didn't we call the police. And, it was not even a thought in anybody's mind. I know that a couple folks in the community that—her close friends when they found out, they tried to break into KYCC, to kick his ass, but they couldn't find him. They luckily didn't. I don't know if it's luckily. Luckily for *him*, um, and luckily for KYCC too, 'cause I think if they did that we would have just been in a whole world of fucking mess. Well I don't want to say luckily, because she even felt at some point, the victim felt, "maybe we should've just kicked his





ass. And now— I feel like I've got nothing. I don't have the police report, we couldn't—we didn't throw him in jail, we didn't kick his ass, we didn't do nothing." And—

MK: So she didn't feel like, um, the steps you took after that were anything?

Liz: She did, but she did feel at some point, that we were moving forward as an organization. And we talked to her and said, "we didn't move forward on anything without your consent. And, we don't—what can we offer you?" We offered her to go to counseling and therapy. We offered her whatever we could do at that time. In retrospect I wish we could have spent more time to just embrace her and brought her in closer.

...we decided...to take certain steps. So the first being, Helen Kim called Pil'bong,... the organization, and told the, the director there, he was immediately apologetic: "I can't believe this happened, I'm so sorry, how's your victim, how's KYCC." And then he called me directly, and said, "As president, I wanted to call—contact you directly and to say we're sorry and we'll do whatever KYCC says, they would like us to do." And then so, we had this meeting and we came up with certain demands. And then we get these demands and then we presented it to the victim saying, "What did you think of these?" And she said, "Well, not that I think it, it's gonna make much of a difference, in terms of making a dent or change for Pil'bong or for this man." Our demands were for an apology, a formal apology from Pil'bong and from Mr. Lee. We requested of Pil'bong organization that they... they have all of their teachers go through sexual assault training, and that if we resume any type of relationship with them-- which means brining and sending teachers—that one of them must be female, and they make a public statement about it—that this had happened. And that, their responsibility is that they demand that he go—Mr. Lee go to at least three months of therapy, *feminist* therapy, and he stop teaching for at least six months, completely. Pil'bong responded and said, "We, we got the letter, we took it, we called all of our, our board of directors," which is like old school, traditional folks. Basically they agreed that what they would do is, they would not make a public statement. They wouldn't put it on their website like we had requested, but what they would do then is, they revoked his teaching certificate saying he could no longer say he was a Pil'bong teacher. And that, that group of folks are pretty small, so it's pretty hard to... for people not to know what had happened. And that they would require that he do the therapy, but that they would call a national, at their big meeting a few months later, they would make decisions there about him.

When the whole room comes together and is like very adamant about, "This is wrong, and we got to do the right thing about it," collectively, was very powerful to see.

As a community response, we did really great. We pulled the right people into the room, and people had a say. We took steps, we didn't... we made demands and... But it felt really lonely. For myself and then for the members that were there, who did have to continue on, who did have the friendships cut out, it felt really lonely.

