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The PCI News



Annual Award Dinner Honoring: Ambassador Ton Nu Thi Ninh



On the evening of February 22, 2007 at the InterContinental Los Angeles in Century City the Pacific Century Institute presented its annual Building Bridges Award to Ambassador Ton Nu Thi Ninh for her distinguished service as a senior diplomat and as Vice Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee, National Assembly of Vietnam, recognizing her vital role in strengthen Vietnam's external relations and her constructive efforts to build a new U.S.-Vietnam relationship.

In his introduction of Ambassador Ton Nu Thi Ninh, Ambassador Raymond Burghardt of the East-West Center described her as "an extraordinary representative of her country". He stated that "she represents her country with great eloquence in a very convincing way". Madam Ninh's speech topic for the night's address was entitled "The Place and Role of Vietnam Today".

In her talk, Madam Ninh gave an expansive historical summary of Vietnam's geopolitical and geoeconomic relationships with the rest of the world, and stated her view concerning the future of Vietnam and the positive global relationships that it wishes and plans to establish. She remarked that Vietnam has "moved from a troubled past to another kind of battle, that is the battle for development and fulfillment of peoples' potential". She was happy to say that Vietnam is "at last a full player in the international and global economy" and stated that Vietnam is not only "confined to economic interaction but plans to move more boldly to the political agenda".

Madam Ninh acknowledged that Vietnam needs to make up for the time taken up by hardships and difficult times, and assured "Vietnam today is perceived neither as a threat...or a risk in terms of security and stability...we do not have any other agenda other than stability and [the] happiness of our people." Ambassador Ninh concluded her talk with an expression of hope that in 2007 we would see the birth of a new entity, the Vietnam Society, with friendships and engagement between the Vietnamese and American peoples. Her hope and desire was to "continue building positive bridges between the U.S. and Asia".

Many have commented that no other Vietnamese official has worked harder or more effectively since normalization to advance U.S.-Vietnam relations. The Building Bridges Award honors Ambassador Ninh's distinguished efforts to achieve understanding and reconciliation between the governments and peoples of America and Vietnam.

The Pacific Century Institute's annual award dinner is one of the highlights of the year for PCI and its partners. This event serves as an opportunity to honor an individual who has through his life and work exemplified the core principles of PCI. It is also a time for the members and supporters for PCI to gather and strengthen relationships. Lastly the dinner is an occasion to introduce PCI to the broader public.

PCI is grateful to and wishes to thank all the participants and supporters of this year's dinner. Especially, we would like to recognize the generous contributions of the following sponsors: CBOL Corporation, Celtron Incorporated, Reed Smith LLC, Solafide Incorporated, and the Wells Fargo Foundation.



Keynote address by Amb. Ninh



Project Bridge Students 2006-2007



Project Bridge is an annual collaboration between the Korea Society and PCI. Participants are high school juniors and seniors from New York and Los Angeles. The primary goal is to create relationships between Americans of diverse ethnic backgrounds and foster mutual understanding between different cultures. Activities during the year-

long program include: monthly workshops on multicultural youth leadership issues and relations; seminars covering history, language and culture; field trips; community service; and, for those who successfully complete the program, a ten day educational study tour of Korea.



Project Bridge 2006-2007 Youth Ambassadors at the annual PCI dinner (left to right; Marilu Venegas, Jessica Boyd, Marissa Chew, Jeffery Lopez, Spenser Hua, Andrew Han, and Angie Kim)

The following are articles by the 2006-2007 Youth Ambassadors. In their writings they reflect upon their experiences on their recent study tour of Korea.

I am a seventeen year-old 2006-2007 Project Bridge Youth Ambassador. Project Bridge is a several months long program that teaches youth from Los Angeles about prejudice, cultural misunderstandings, and stereotypes throughout the world. It started in the wake of the Los

Angeles riots and includes seven students from Los Angeles and seven from New York. Before the program, I hardly knew anything about the Korean culture and the many others Asian cultures represented in California, or even about the Los Angeles riots. I certainly learned more about the effects of prejudice, and the extent of the prejudice still remaining in America.

Our meetings and especially our trip to Korea have given me a desire to learn more about the world and foreign cultures. We traveled to a place where the children were more excited to see a foreign face than I would be to get a car! They valued the opportunity to interact with foreigners the way that we should value our privilege to interact with different people daily. We learned all about traditional dance and customs in Korea, and ate foods that we had never heard of before. Everything seemed so different until our home stay when we each got to spend the night with Korean students from Banpo. My host watched American Idol and knew the latest news on Britney Spears; we had many things in common. The trip made me realize that the world has so much to offer, I only have to be willing to explore it.

Jessica Boyd

Growing up in America and rarely venturing far from home, this trip was both a unique and eye-opening experience. I am sure I am not the only one to have been spoon-fed this image of how America is the best and how America is always right. I never stopped to question these ideas, at least not until I found myself leaving the comfort of my own country. This image shattered and I learned that America has a lot to learn. America, though great, is not perfect. The journey to come to that realization began as soon as we got off the plane and were ushered into an environment that accepted us with open arms. The streets were clean, and one of the first things to catch my eye was an average bystander leaning down to pick up trash, though it was not hers. What makes Korea such a special place that the people there care enough to keep it beautiful? Tall buildings, bright signs, South Korea definitely has its own lure and charm which has caused me to fall in love with this small but powerful place.

As youth ambassadors, we are expected to be leaders and good representatives of the United States, but we are also there to learn. We learned about Korea's economy from a visit to KITA (Korean International Trade Association), their history from visiting historical sites, their culture and beliefs from visiting temples. We not only learned about these things but also understood it. Originally, all this information and statistics were head knowledge, but getting to see it first hand and how it affects the people of Korea has allowed us to see things from their point of view.

One of my favorite parts of the trip was being able

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Project Bridge

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to stay in the household of a Korean student. For one day, we had a chance to experience life in their shoes. I expected to be placed into an extremely different lifestyle but instead I felt the familiar comfort of life back at home. My homestay partner took me to a mall and out to dinner, the exact same thing I would do with friends at home. I was surprised at how easy it was for me to connect with my partner and how natural it was speaking with her. I guess no matter where you are, my mom's right when she says "teenagers will be teenagers."

Lifelong lessons were taught in Korea as the youth ambassadors were forced to work as one team. Each member of the team was different, with our own beliefs and talents to bring to the table. With such diversity, we were forced to work together and overcome our differences, a skill that comes in handy everyday. We also gained valuable skills in presenting ourselves, introducing ourselves, and interacting with people different from us. I would say these three things were the hardest part of the trip for me. I tended to be the last to speak up and did not hold the same confidence many others possessed.

It wasn't until the tail end of the trip that I was able to break out of my shell and learn that I have a voice and insight that should be shared. I began to talk to sponsors and thoroughly enjoyed our conversations. Through Project Bridge, I have been able to stretch myself and broaden my understanding of the world. I have obtained so many lessons from my experience in Korea and I know they will help shape me and equip me presently as well as in the future.

Marrisa Chew

Who would have guessed that a Korean-American would be subject to culture shock during the study tour?

Being in constant contact with both immigrant Koreans and Korean-Americans within my community, I thought I knew enough about Koreans and their customs. From day one, however, I could not get my fabricated perception of Korea to fit the real Korea. The food and the language was the same, but everything else refused to flow together, and I ended up ripping out the old pages and rewriting my view of Korea with my fellow youth ambassadors.

Going to Korea with Project Bridge allowed me to see and feel things that I never would have been able to experience had I gone during some other time with another group. Nowhere else will I be able to see the local people so excited about seeing foreigners ("Hi! I love you! How are you! Do you know *kimchi*?"). Nowhere else will I see people willingly going out in the streets to pick up trash and clean the streets. Nowhere else will I see and meet people devoted not only to themselves but also to their family, friends, community, and nation. Nowhere else will I be able

to see and experience a place as dynamic and lively as Seoul. Nowhere else will I be able to meet people so eager to preserve their culture, both traditional and contemporary, and share it with the world. Nowhere else would I experience the joy of making connections with others across cultural barriers as much as I did in Korea.

Throughout the numerous workshop meetings, seminars, dinners, sponsors, the walkathon, and the trip itself, I noticed so many changes that had occurred within me. I know it sounds like a cliché, but there's no other way to put it: Project Bridge has really transformed me. Project Bridge gave me an opportunity to gain skills in building connections, change the way I think and look at things, and find and pursue new interests (mainly regarding civil rights and inter-cultural and international relations). The program has shown me how important these bridges and connections between everyone, and not just Koreans and Americans, are to us. I have a feeling I'm going to be making a lot more trips to Koreatown in the future.

Andrew Han

A pivotal part of the program was for us youth ambassadors to travel on a ten-day study program in South Korea. There I learned about Korea from the inside out. My fellow youth ambassadors and I went to explore the roots of Korean tradition when we visited the many palaces and temples of South Korea. What I learned from the remnants of their past gave me insight as to how their social etiquette developed. A prime example would be the children of Korea. As they are brought up, they are constantly pushed to study harder and harder. The reason for this is because the religion of Korea used to be that of Confucianism, which stressed the importance of education. Long story short, I was able to connect things with what I learned. I also learned about Korea from an economic standpoint, especially since I was there at the time of the Free Trade Agreement. For the first time in my life, I began to understand the business world on a global scale.

I believe that Korea changed me as a whole person, maturity-wise. I never realized until the trip started that I would be in Korea with fourteen strangers, with whom I would have to work, sleep, and eat with for the next ten days. The strangers I met at the beginning are now my lifelong friends. At the beginning of the trip, we all gave handshakes but by the end of the trip, hugs were given and tears were shed. Besides making lifelong friends, I was given the opportunity to interact with the people in Korea, whether they are citizens or foreigners. Ever since the trip ended, I now look at the world from a different perspective, a better perspective.

Spencer Hua

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Project Bridge

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As a Korean-American, I thought I held a firm idea on the Korean people by observing the first generation here in my community. I fell victim to how the media portrays Koreans in films as arrogant and greedy, and came to believe the stereotypes that followed the Korean people as those who cheat customers in their liquor stores and dry cleaners. I came to the point where when I talk about Korea with others, I prepare to guard myself for insults to a country where I'm proud to be from, simply because of what I deemed from a population in Southern California. Basically, my impressions on the Korean people, just by seeing those in my community, were not what anyone would really call positive impressions.

So, when I entered the Project Bridge interview room in a law office somewhere in downtown Los Angeles, I was surprised to see that many of those interested in the program were not Koreans or Korean-Americans. Even if my peers in that room had no idea of what Korea is, they at least showed an interest to learn more about it. With years believing that only Koreans liked Koreans, I realized that maybe I had underestimated Korea's reputation too much. Throughout the meetings, I heard positive comments about Korea from people other than Koreans for the first time. Even in the New York group, I met a Greek male student who loves Korea and speaks Korean as much as I do. Lastly, the people in Korea, stranger or sponsor, were much kinder and compassionate than anyone I had met back home in the United States.

With a fresher and more credible perception of Korea from the study trip and with new knowledge of Korea's great accomplishments, especially economically, these past 10 years, I reconstructed the crumbling bridge between my heritage and myself into a stronger and more secure one. I emerge from Project Bridge as a much more confident person, not only in my heritage but also in presentation through days of interaction with sponsors and giving presentations, and much more understanding of the world around me. I understood the stereotypes we need to break down in order to rebuild the collapsing bridges between others and build strong and durable bridges where none existed before.

Angie Kim

The four months before our trip to Korea seemed like an eternity to me. I longed to travel to a different world, unlike any place I had ever seen. When that day finally arrived I experienced a series of unexplainable emotions. Excitement, anxious, and uneasiness surged through my body as the plane departed to Korea, a country in which I would spend ten days learning about the fascinating Korean culture. At that time I was oblivious to the many things I would learn.

Upon our arrival, we met the eight youth

ambassadors from New York. Our large team consisted of 22 people who ventured throughout Korea. We were able to go to many wonderful places which were both educational and fun. We visited large corporations, museums, high schools, and many other places. However, my favorite part of the trip was when we had our own Project Bridge Survivor Competition. We formed groups of four and five people and were given the task of finding a certain place in Seoul, taking a picture in front of it and then making our way back to the hotel. My team consisted of Mr. Johnson, George Vourderis, and Donna Martinez. I could not have had such an exciting time without these three people on my group. We were the first group to start so we ran through the streets of Korea looking for a landmark. When we were not running we were asking people for directions. George, who knew how to speak Korean, asked people who lived in the area for directions and at first they did not know what we were looking for. Then we made gestures with our hands to signal that we were looking for "SOUTH GATE", and they understood what we were saying. We finally arrived at the landmark and asked a young man who did not speak Korean to take a picture of us in front of the gate.

We now had to find our way back to the hotel by means of subway or bus and we chose to take the subway. When we changed subway lines I could not find my ticket and a friendly man passing by told us to crawl under the ticket machines and keep going. We laughed so much at the fact that we had to crawl on our hands and knees to get to the second subway. When we reached our stop we got off and had to walk more than a mile to our hotel. As we approached the hotel, we saw one of the groups we were competing with and we ran as fast as we could to get there first. We were the last team to get to the hotel but that did not matter to us. We had lived through an evening of adventure, full of laughs and thrills, one that I would never forget!

Marilu Venegas



United States and Korea Conclude Historic Trade Agreement: KOR-US FTA

The United States concluded an historic agreement with the Republic of Korea on April 1, 2007. This trade agreement will eliminate tariffs and other barriers to trade goods and services, promote economic growth, and strengthen economic ties between the United States and Korea. The KOR-US FTA represents the United States' most commercially significant FTA in over a decade. The Republic of Korea is the world's tenth largest economy, with a GDP of nearly \$1 trillion.

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KOR-US FTA

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Background:

The KOR-US FTA was launched on February 2, 2006, and the first of eight formal negotiating rounds took place in June 2006. Korea was the world's seventh largest goods exporter (\$284 billion) and importer (\$261 billion) in 2005 – the fourth largest in Asia. Korea was also the world's tenth largest services exporter (\$44 billion) and sixth largest services importer (\$58 billion) in 2004. Over the past ten years, Korea's real average annual growth rate in trade was two and a half times the pace of its GDP growth. This FTA will strengthen the more than fifty-year-old alliance between the United States and Korea and will underscore the substantial U.S. engagement in and commitment to East Asia. The KOR-US FTA will also help cement important political and economic reforms that Korea has undertaken in the past decade and help promote strong economic relations with the region.

Agriculture

Historically, Korea has been one of the most protected agricultural markets in the world. The KOR-US FTA will create highly valuable new export opportunities for American farmers and ranchers by eliminating and phasing out tariffs and quotas on a broad range of products. Under the agreement, over \$1 billion worth of U.S. farm exports to Korea will become duty-free immediately. Most remaining tariffs and quotas will be phased out over the first ten years the agreement is in force.

Industrial Goods and Consumer Products

Nearly 95% of bilateral trade in consumer and industrial products becomes duty-free within three years of entry into force of the Agreement, with most remaining tariffs eliminated within 10 years.

Autos

The KOR-US FTA will eliminate discrimination in engine displacement-based taxes, long a significant impediment to market access in Korea. The agreement contains strong commitments to address the specific standards-related concerns raised by U.S. auto manufacturers and to create a working group to review auto-related regulations being developed as an early warning mechanism to prevent new problems from arising and to promote good regulatory practice in Korea. The agreement also contains a special enhanced dispute settlement mechanism for auto-related measures, with strong remedies to deter actions on autos that are inconsistent with the agreement.

Textiles

With the inclusion of the "yarn forward" rule of origin, the KOR-US FTA will give apparel products from Korea preferential access to the U.S. market while supporting U.S. fabric and yarn exports and jobs. Textile and apparel makers in both countries will benefit from a special textile safeguard and strong customs enforcement requirements.

Investor Protections

The agreement ensures that U.S. investors in Korea will have the same rights and enjoy equal footing with Korean

investors. These rights will be backed by a stable, transparent legal framework.

Services

The agreement will expand market access and investment opportunities in a number of service sectors, including telecommunications and e-commerce. The agreement will also expand market opportunities for U.S. audio-visual products.

Intellectual Property Rights Protections

The agreement provides high-level standards for protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights, including trademarks, copyrights and patents, consistent with U.S. standards.

Labor Rights and Environmental Stewardship

The agreement requires both countries to enforce their own labor and environmental laws, ensures access to legal mechanisms to ensure enforcement, and establishes mechanisms to enhance cooperation in efforts to safeguard labor rights and environmental protections.



Walking to Build Bridges 4.29 Walk-A-Thon



Different generations of Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors holding the banner and leading the walkathon to build bridges.

About the 4.29 Center

The 4.29 Center was founded by the Korean American Coalition, with support from the Martin Luther King Legacy Association and The Korea Society. Sparked in response to the social upheaval and unrest that devastated parts of Los Angeles on April 29, 1992, the 4.29 Center provides a human relations program runs an alternative dispute resolution center that works with individual and groups. Since 1997, the dispute resolution has been successful in the mediation of countless personal and small business cases and provides support for those overcoming language barriers.

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Walking to Build Bridges

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Walk-a-thon

The 4.29 walk-a-thon was held on Saturday, April 21st, 2007, from the heart of Korea town at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Harvard Boulevard, to Mac Arthur Park, a 1.4 mile stretch down Wilshire Blvd. The Korean American Coalition (KAC) held the 4.29 walk-a-thon to build awareness, forge bridges between communities and raise funds for its 4.29 Center.

The walk-a-thon was successful in its goal of building bridges for a better future. There were people of all ages and all colors walking together. It was an amazing thing to see everyone walking at a good pace to stay together as one. After the walk everyone met at Mc Arthur Park for a discussion of why this walk-a-thon matters and how great it was to see people that cared so much for this cause. Some of the speakers included USC Football Coach Pete Carroll, Connie Rice, and Bo Taylor.

Comments from participants

I wasn't able to understand the LA riots until my junior year in high school...There is no doubt that the possibility of another riot breaking out in LA could occur. However, if we try to prevent it by building understanding between cultures, then maybe, there is a possibility to prevent any more riots from occurring.

Joanne Tran of CSU Northridge

I am walking in the Walk-A-Thon to support those people working to build a better L.A.

Wade Kyle, elementary school teacher

It is our responsibility as educated and knowledgeable people to teach the children the lessons we learned and to reach out to them. This will help improve our society and our future.

Denice Gonzalez, UCLA student

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