

"Beauty" - Art Exhibit

This is a collection of narratives contributed by North Korean diaspora women who had made the long, treacherous journey out of the DPRK, and by their partners who have supported them. Many of the diaspora women encountered gender-based violence en-route to a new country and new life. I wish to engage as many North Korean diaspora women as possible who have the courage to share with us some of their precious life-stories' through visual, audio, text or performance-art media; and contributions by their partners and male supporters who stood by them throughout the journey.

Many of women fleeing North Korea have encountered human-trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence, including forced marriages. They may have been forced into the sex industry whilst hiding in a third country, or even in South Korea. The individuals may have felt that their inner spiritual beauty and humanity had become tarnished, wounded or nearly destroyed by those who abused them, or by those who turned a blind-eye to their ordeals. As in exquisite, precious plants, I wished to re awaken and nurture the beauty in the women.

Why do this? I am a survivor of childhood and adult gender-based violence myself. I had started to work with North Korean women because I felt their voices were one of the most marginalized and least heard in society anywhere. Even in days when I was sorely despondent about pursuing advocacy work, it somehow made me feel strong and beautiful to be able to give a part of myself to these women and their faithful partners, I wished to elucidate to society the inner beauty and courage of these women, and to show my 'thanks' and deep appreciation to the men who walked by their sides, step by step during their treacherous journeys.

I thought in unison, we can ride the turbulent waves of being survivors and 'voices' for others globally; and to 'thank' the heroic men who were not ashamed of walking with those whom they loved. In society, men are often assumed to be the perpetrators of trafficking of North Korean women. However, there are also those who stood by to cherish and protect them and their children, despite of risks to their own safety en route to another world.

I hope we together can create a significant statement to society, especially to the audience and to decision makers who can improve the life-quality of diaspora women of North Korea, and to pay homage to the men who supported them. As part of an international society, it is our duty to actively protect beauty, courage and wisdom in all forms.

As a token of 'thank you', I wished to give our supporters, participants and exhibition guests, a small hand-mirror with 'thank you for your beauty and courage' written in Korean.

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