

# CROSS-CURRENTS



## EAST ASIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE REVIEW

### **“We’re Never Off Duty”: Empire and the Economies of Race and Gender in the U.S. Military Camptowns of Korea**

Sue-Je L. Gage, Ithaca College

#### **Abstract**

This article focuses on the relationships between the U.S. military, race, masculinity, and power in South Korea. I argue that notions of empire are played out in off-base interactions among U.S. soldiers themselves, but also between U.S. soldiers and non-U.S. military others, particularly in the post-9/11 “war on terror” era. In these strategic interplays, soldiers often carry stereotypes held in the United States, but also reinforced by their identities and training as U.S. soldiers. Globalization trends and international relations also influence modes of communication and relations within this hierarchically ranked system and structure. This article discusses how power, gender, race, and racisms play out in the camptowns of South Korea by using an ethnographic lens to link the human face with empire.

*While walking with my Korean research assistant in Tongduch’ŏn’s U.S. military camptown next to Camp Casey (commonly referred to by U.S. soldiers as “TDC” and “downrange”), we passed a Korean woman holding hands with a black U.S. soldier in uniform, and another Korean woman holding hands with a white U.S. soldier. As we passed them, my assistant moved closer to me and walked faster, and then whispered that she was scared. Later, when I asked her what she thought of the couples we saw, she exclaimed, “They’re prostitutes!” followed by shamed silence. Hours later, on the return to Seoul, she said, “Remember that I was scared? I think it’s because those Korean women symbolize our weakness.”*

This is an entry from my fieldnotes written during my Korean research assistant’s first visit to Tongduch’ŏn, South Korea, in 2002. Strategically located north of Seoul and less than fifteen miles south of the demilitarized zone (DMZ), Tongduch’ŏn is one of the most notorious of South Korea’s many U.S. military camptowns (*kijichon*). The DMZ has separated North and South Korea since 1953, when an armistice halted, but did not end, the Korean War (1950–1953). Camp Casey in Tongduch’ŏn serves as the largest U.S. military installation north of

Seoul. It is part of a network of bases in the city and throughout the country that were established to contain the Communist threat from the north and from China. A temporary home to soldiers with one-year deployments in the U.S.'s Eighth Army, the 2nd Infantry Division (hereafter, 2ID) functions as a forward-operating division, providing major ground combat support for the U.S. military presence in Korea. It is the last U.S. forward-operating division to remain north of Seoul since discussions about the symbolic return of the land to the Republic of Korea began in 2004. 2ID's motto, "Second to None," appears on an emblem with an "Indian head," a red-skinned man in a feathered headdress, set within a white star. With this displaced racialized emblem as its symbol, the 9,000-plus troops of 2ID call the area "warrior country," and their mission since 1952 has been to "deter war" and "defend 'freedom's frontier.'"<sup>1</sup>

Drinking and sex, ways of passing time beyond work and war readiness, are readily available to the soldiers just outside the camptown base. "It's different down south [south of TDC]," reported one male soldier, "where there's more places to go and more to do. Down south you got other Korean places, even American restaurants. Everybody's always drinking here, it's their way out. [We're in] a stressful environment, too much going on, high risk, and a lot of work every day." "We're never off duty," one soldier claimed, referring specifically to their time off base during "down time." This article presents an ethnographic analysis of modern empire through which a "never off-duty" mentality and structure is enacted by the U.S. military, revealing its cracks to show how race and racisms, classism, and sexism are implemented. These enacted scripts often go unremarked and undocumented both on and off base, creating a colonized silence that perpetuates the power of the U.S. empire. I examine empire at work in the spatialized camptown areas of South Korea as it extends off base through racialized and gendered economies informed by internal race-based practices, U.S. military classifications of others, the US-ROK Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), and the training of soldiers. The U.S. military camptowns are borderlands that are simultaneously racialized and gendered as "Korean," "American," and "third world" by those in them and those outside of them. Areas of the camptown have their own inherent changing social structures and globalizations that intersect, collide, and recreate structures of power.

The U.S. military's long-standing presence in Korea has rarely wavered in its negotiating practices or unquestioned legitimacy as part of strategic regional "security" and "defense." This imperial design within Asia positioned the United States as a "liberator" of Japan during and

after World War II, creating a sense of indebtedness to the United States (Shigematsu and Camacho 2010). The Japanese imperial conquest of Korea lasted from 1905 until 1945, with its own repressive racial and gendered economies during that period.<sup>2</sup> Korea's "liberation" from Japan by the United States began immediately after Japan surrendered in 1945 and was facilitated under the auspices of the American Military Government in Korea (AMGIK). Some Koreans saw this change as simply a shift from one colonizer to another. According to Kim Hakjoo, (re)analysis by Koreans of historical records revealed a revisionist interpretation of the so-called "liberator," illuminating the more "imperialistic" agendas that later led to the division of Korea (1993). Some Korean scholars hold that the AMGIK's imperialism denied Koreans active participation in their own state's politics and future self-governance by utilizing Japanese administrators, implementing policy through direct rule, and not having a concrete or future policy concerning Korea. According to Elaine Kim and Chongmoo Choi, South Korea and the former Japanese colonies "never had an opportunity to decolonize in the true sense of the word" (1998, 3). This is what Catherine Lutz (2006) refers to as an "imperial project" and what Chalmers Johnson calls "the spoils of war," which further expanded colonized spaces through U.S. military bases and installations, creating an "empire of bases" (2004: 8).

The anecdote that began this article expresses an embodied understanding of (neo)imperial power and governance. What one Korean woman saw was not something she could clearly articulate initially; however, she felt it and knew it as a mechanism of power over her. It is through analyzing the seemingly mundane narratives of daily life that such power structures can be seen, understood, and potentially changed. As Cynthia Enloe states: "The wheels of militarization, in fact, are greased by popular inattention" (2010, vii). One way to fully understand the nuances of militarism and imperial design, Enloe proposes, is by "thinking big in order to think small and by thinking small in order to think big. . . . This is accomplished by examining the seeming minutiae of local individuals' own gendered silences, desires, memories, and aspirations" (ix). Following Enloe's lead, this article focuses on race and gender in the everyday, smaller, localized, and transnational space of the Korean U.S. military camptown called "TDC" to reveal empire at work, with race as its organizing principle. I argue that there are two different intersecting processes of racial and gendered economies instituted within the U.S. military when stationed abroad in Korea: 1) the U.S. military as a symbolic white male structure that does not, in fact, represent its diversity, acknowledge the power inequalities within

its institution, its history, and its relationship with others, or reflect the experiences of minority and female U.S. soldiers, and 2) Korea, a nation-state that is persistently ascribed as the Asian female “other” in U.S. military rhetoric and practices on the ground, which has influenced Korea’s own practices of “othering.” This research proposes to help fill some of the missing gaps in the literature, as very little scholarship exists on race and racism in globalization studies, and still less exists in studies of race and militarization or the impacts of race on U.S. military personnel stationed abroad.

### **Methodology**

The field of anthropology in the United States struggles to define its current and historic interactions with the U.S. military and its role in past colonial configurations of race. The controversy surrounding the use of anthropology by the U.S. military in its Human Terrain Teams, which utilize “anthropology” in the war zones, is of particular ethical concern.<sup>3</sup> There are few ethnographic accounts about the U.S. military as an institution and far fewer about the issues and experiences of soldiers, let alone “minority soldiers,” which I define as U.S. soldiers from historically marginalized populations in the United States. The U.S. military serves as a lens through which we can see U.S. race relations and racisms, which often go unremarked or ignored within the political rhetoric of “color blindness.” This article takes on Catherine Lutz’s plea with anthropology to “air out” U.S. military power and presence (2006). I intend to show how empire reveals itself in the everyday through my particular perspective and ethnographic approach as a mixed-race Korean female anthropologist with roots in the camptown, in order to offer a nuanced understanding of everyday militarism and race-based practices in Korea. The empirical data gathered for this research was collected from academic literature, news media and reports, and fieldwork in South Korea and in a U.S. Army installation in the United States. This paper focuses on data from preliminary results of information gathered through participant-observation and in-depth interviews with fifty U.S. soldiers stationed at four U.S. military installations in South Korea (Camps Casey, Yongsan, and Humphries, and the Osan Air Base), primarily on twelve interviews conducted with U.S. soldiers stationed at Camp Casey in Tongduch’ŏn in 2004 and a focus group of ten soldiers stationed at Casey in 2006.

The goal of the larger research project, which I began in 2001, was to further understand the experiences and identities of Korean Amerasians.<sup>4</sup> This necessitated an investigation of the

lives and experiences not only of Amerasians but also of U.S. soldiers around the camptown areas, Korean and Filipina women who lived and worked in the camptowns—many of whom engaged in a range of service work for U.S. military consumption—and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals who offered services to “mixed” Koreans. With the exception of a novel by Heinz Insu Fenkl titled *Memories of My Ghost Brother* (1996) and a few media reports, little research exists on this marginalized population. Since the 1990s feminist and political science scholars have paid some attention to the effects that militarization in the camptowns has had on gender issues, but very little attention to its effects on Amerasians. The experiences of U.S. soldiers themselves are largely scripted by the U.S. government’s particular agenda, as soldiers are instructed on what to say and who not to talk to. To provide another voice, I interviewed soldiers on U.S. military bases about their experiences within the military itself, both on and off base, and more specifically about their understanding of Amerasians, camptown women, and local Koreans. I also asked their thoughts about policies and practices within the military with regard to births abroad and citizenship.

My official request to interview soldiers was made through the U.S. Embassy in Korea in 2003, the first year of my fieldwork. After almost ten months of awaiting permission, I made subsequent requests to U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) representatives and then to the Eighth Army’s main Yongsan Public Affairs Office in Seoul, which opened the door to other public affairs offices in other U.S. bases in Korea. After receiving approval from the various links in this chain of command, I was finally allowed to interview soldiers. This was not the end of the bureaucratic hurdles, however. Before I could begin my work, public affairs offices throughout the country informed officers in various units to order their noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to select soldiers to be interviewed. This meant that no officers or NCOs became part of the pool of interviewees and, further, that what the participants learned about the intention of the research resembled the garbled result of a game of telephone. As a result, only the following ranks were represented among the interviewees: private, private first class, and specialist. I was not able to recruit the soldiers myself in this first round of interviews. I received final approval to conduct the interviews in June 2004, during the remaining three weeks of my fieldwork year. In that brief time, I interviewed more than fifty U.S. soldiers on four different U.S. military installations throughout the peninsula. This was a hard but revealing lesson in “chain of command” bureaucracy and information flow within the military. One female soldier I interviewed

explained it this way:

In general, the military is suspicious of anyone who wants to do interviews. As soldiers, there's stuff that we have to be cautious about saying, and I was a little nervous about what you were going to ask me and what I can or can't say because I know there are some things that I'm not at liberty to give out, and you don't always have a fine line in your head to know what we're supposed to say or not say. They don't train us to do any kind of interviews, so they may be a little scared about what a soldier might tell you. They want people to believe that we're 100 percent professional and perfect, but we're humans and we do screw up, and they don't want the public to know that. They're probably afraid you'll interview someone who's going to say something they shouldn't, because I guarantee that there's someone who will.

This research for this article is drawn primarily from the interviews I conducted at Camp Casey in 2004 and with a focus group of ten variously ranked soldiers there in 2006. The demographic makeup of the 2004 group consisted entirely of enlisted private or specialist ranked soldiers: six men and six women—all racialized minorities except for two white American women. The soldiers interviewed individually included one Asian male, one Hispanic (white) male; two Hispanic females (one white and one black); one African-American female; two white females; and one mixed Asian and white female. Three of the twelve did not have U.S. citizenship. The sample was not representative of the U.S. Army's demographics and included only a very small fraction of the military's population in Korea, the majority of whom are young white males. Because soldiers stay in Korea for only one year, their understanding of the country seldom goes beyond sex and drinking before it is time to return home or move to the next duty station. During a return research trip in 2006, I requested permission to conduct a focus group with soldiers at Casey. These soldiers were selected by another high-ranking officer within that unit and were all young white men of similar rank, except for one NCO, who was the highest-ranked and oldest person in the group.

Several of the interviewees in 2004 were selected because the local public affairs officers and NCOs misunderstood the term "Amerasian" on my request form; like many Americans, they equated "Amerasians" with "GI babies" or "war orphans." This confusion resulted in many minority soldiers being chosen for my interviews. Several were told that they were assigned to do the interview; others were told, "You're Asian, so you need to go talk to this lady." Most

were thoroughly confused, but when I described my research on Amerasians and my interest in understanding their experiences as U.S. soldiers stationed in Korea, they became interested, admitting that they seldom had a chance to talk about their experiences. For me, it was a rare opportunity filled with mishaps, but what emerged through listening to stories of those on the margins was a frequently overlooked pattern of institutionalized racism and empire.

### **Governing Practices of Empire and the Economies of Race and Space**

Most U.S. military installations, whether at home or abroad, are places of power, both real and imagined. The interplay and presence of both is essential to empire and its maintenance. Foucault refers to power as “less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government,” which includes “modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of actions of other people” (1975, 221). The governing practices at work in the camptown are racialized and internalized or resisted, then expressed within the interactions. This power is reflected in the design of the camptown. Cold war politics and defense strategies required a “never off duty” mentality as a protective strategy on several levels that are not only specific to South Korea, but are more evident through “official” rhetoric because of South Korea’s close proximity to the “rogue north,” especially since the Bush administration’s conceptualization of the “axis of evil.” According to U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) records, approximately four million U.S. military personnel were stationed in Korea between 1950 and 2000—more than 326,000 in 1953 alone. Since then the number has ranged between 30,000 and 60,000. On October 17, 2008, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and ROK Minister of National Defense Lee Sang-hee reaffirmed that U.S. troop levels would remain near 30,000 (DoD 2008).

Coinciding with South Korea’s economic boom in the 1990s, South Korean society diversified at a rate faster than ever before, increasing the number of inhabitants not seen as legitimate by Koreans to include not only Amerasians but also the progeny of unions between Koreans and migrant workers from around the world and children born from international Asian brides brought into the rural areas of South Korea to marry Korean men.<sup>5</sup> Between 1945 and 2000, international marriages and relationships occurred primarily between U.S. male soldiers and Korean women. During my initial research trip in 2002, interracial unions were still relatively rare in South Korea outside the camptowns. While it is estimated that one in five

Korean women worked in the camptowns (Moon 1996), women who engage in relations with non-Korean others, particularly those within the U.S. military, have been stereotyped as prostitutes, a label and symbolic reference to *kijichon* or the camptown (figure 1).

Children of unions between Asian women and U.S. soldiers stationed abroad are also emblematic of the camptown. Prior to the era of globalization, South Korea maintained a mythical claim to its status as a “homogeneous” society, a description repeatedly referenced in academic and nonacademic sources in and outside of Korea. This is what Liisa Malkki (1995) refers to as “mythico-history.” South Korea’s incorporation of and sustained contact with non-Asian others was slow and limited, but more importantly, a mythology was needed in order to construct the idea of the nation as resistant to Japanese colonization. Ever since the end of World



Figure 1. Flags in Camp Humphries Camptown in South Korea, 2006. Photo taken by the author.

War II in 1945, when the American occupation of Korea began, ethnic nationalism has had a negative impact on those referred to as “mixed blood” (*honhyŏl*, or “Amerasians”) (Gage 2007b). These individuals are racialized based on Korean self-understandings, as well as understandings of U.S. race-based practices. They are treated according to local notions of pollution but are also subject to U.S. understandings of race relations whereby blackness is ascribed the lowest status and therefore treated worse than other mixed Korean Amerasians. Historically, the United States has done little to account for individuals born through these unions, which speaks to the legacy of inequity within U.S.-Asian relations since the late 1880s (Gage 2007a). Thanks to a stronger economy and the Korean Woman’s Movement of the 1990s, women began to gain recognition and rights, and fewer worked in the clubs that catered to the U.S. military in the camptown areas. During the past decade, the gap left by their departure has been filled by Filipina women. Another important change in South Korea is the increased representation of ethnic minorities in the U.S. military, many of whom are stationed abroad.

Until recently, TDC was home to five of the seventy-seven military installations in South Korea, none of which were designed to support military families. The largest installation is Camp Casey. Because of this camp’s strategic location near the DMZ, its purpose was to “deter war,” so families were not encouraged or supported there. Other U.S. military installations further south had command sponsorships for families and were made to replicate small American towns so that military personnel and families would “feel at home in safe and sanitized” areas (Baker 2004, 53). Their limited exposure to “the other” would happen only at the discretion of powerful Americans. These “little Americas” exuded a version of “white” American suburbia and offered conveniences and resources, such as special housing based on rank, shopping centers with postal exchanges, hospitals, chapels, playgrounds, recreational areas, parks, and schools, creating an imperial structure of “white space.”

Outside the military installations, all camptowns in Korea have areas for sexual entertainment and consumption. According to one soldier, “some are raunchier than others.” Tongduch’ŏn offered two such areas—a “more raunchy” one in an area called Tokori, near a smaller U.S. military installation known as Camp Hovey (now closed), and a “less raunchy” one near Camp Casey. Other areas have more explicit names—like “Hooker Hill”—for areas devoted to sexual services. Ann Stoler, in her 2002 examination of Indonesia and colonial rule, says that

sexual arrangements were critical in creating colonial categories and distinguishing the ruler from the ruled. According to Bruce Cumings, camptown areas have little to do with Korean culture, but rather are a way of life for many people: “[They have been] an integral part of Korea’s subordination to Japanese and American interests through most of [the twentieth] century; the military base in the It’aewŏn [Yongsan in Seoul] area, after all, was Japan’s for four decades, and now it has been ours [the U.S.’s]. . . . In 1945 the camptowns just switched patrons” (1992, 174). The “web of subordination” to which Cumings refers is still present within the camptowns.

As you enter the camptown area, you feel as though a visceral line has been crossed. An invisible door, once entered, takes you into a place transformed by pollution. The camptown is what Catherine Lutz refers to as “the edge and essence of the U.S. ‘empire’” (2009, 15). More specifically, with reference to the military, she defines *empire* as “a constellation of state and state-structured private projects successfully aiming to exert wide-ranging control, through territorial or more remote means, over practices and resources beyond the state’s boundaries” (594). Power cannot exist alone; it builds upon collaboration with supranational institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and nongovernmental organizations, whose interests lie in global capital and the maintenance of global hierarchies (Hardt and Negri 2000). This appears to be true in the South Korean national and local context as well, in the structuring of shops, clubs, human international organizations that serve as brokers between women elsewhere and South Korean club owners, local governments, police, and the Korean Special Tourism Association (KSTA) of the camptowns, as well as the U.S. military and government. Korean women of the camptown have historically served as “ambassadors,” easing tensions between the United States and Korea through their bodies (K. Moon 1996). Here I do not dismantle or critique modern delineations of what is referred to today as “empire”<sup>6</sup>; instead, I use this vague and contested term to explore through ethnographic observations how the U.S. military camptown areas in Korea create new systems of empire and subempire that are simultaneously historical and current forms of imperialism. The air is thick, the places are gray and run down. Signs posted by the local KSTA on these clubs’ front doors say that they are for the use of U.S. soldiers only (figure 2).

Eun-shil Kim describes camptown spaces as “deterritorialized”—spaces of marginality that are neither here nor there (2004). They are places where “anything goes.” “It’s Korea, man!”

exclaimed one soldier, as if that simple sentence explained it all. Another soldier described TDC as “Sodom and Gomorrah.” As a borderland, Tongduch’ön could be described as having “a neutral or ‘no man’s land’ quality, [as being] almost a third country . . . where ordinary civil rights are suspended” (Price 1971, 27). Human rights are ignored in these spaces, allowing for abuses and violence to take place there every day. The average South Korean is ashamed of and loathes these places. One Korean male serving in the U.S. Army stationed in TDC remarked, “It is a disgrace to Koreans.” He does not go to the camptown, despite being stationed and living next to it in the Casey barracks. “TDC has a bad reputation,” an Amerasian man told me. “She probably knows,” he said, nodding to my Korean assistant, who looked down and nodded her head “yes.” To Koreans, Tongduch’ön is a place you do not want to go, and if you do go there or live there, you want to get out. Through stoking such fear the intentions of the United States as an empire are expressed and understood, which allows the global reach of the U.S. military to extend far beyond the gates and fences of the bases.

Because illicit activities take place in the camptown, only some Koreans are willing to venture into it for possible economic benefit. The crossing is a literal and metaphorical one for these Koreans, and in some ways it involves a transformation—not only of language but also of behavior. People in such polluted spaces are seen as “transitional beings,” since they are neither one thing nor another or may be both (Turner 1967). Some are born as “transitional beings,”



Figure 2. Korea Special Tourism Association Sign on Club Door in Camp Casey, South Korea. Photo taken by the author.

while others become them, though the U.S. soldiers historically do not. It is in this deterritorialized space that empire is seen and felt, and that the unequal relationship between the United States and South Korea is revealed. This does not preclude acts of agency within the camptown or expressions of anti-Americanism. However, no matter how contested and resisted it may be, the U.S. military presence will likely persist, since the ongoing dialogue between the Republic of Korea and the U.S. government is concerned more with base relocations and restructuring than with eradication or removal of the military.<sup>7</sup>

### **Race and Racism within the U.S. Military**

The demographics of U.S. military personnel have changed substantially in the last ten years, with more minorities, women, and noncitizens included in, yet not represented by, the symbol of Uncle Sam. The election and reelection of a black president promotes the myth of a postracial or color-blind America. However, Setsu Shigematsu and Keith Camacho (2010) point out that racialized and gendered colonial economies structure and determine current uses of “diversity” within postmodern and neoliberal contexts. In essence, the myths of neoliberalism and color blindness merely silence the experiences of racism and reproduce the same racial inequalities. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant assert in their seminal book *Racial Formation in the United States* (1994), racial classifications are determined by social, economic, and political forces that involve micro- and macro-level relations. The camptown serves as an example of a colonized space with a racialized hierarchy of subordination through these classifications. Frantz Fanon ([1963] 2004) argues that, within such colonized spaces, an economic infrastructure constructed through the larger superstructure of race retains white power and hold. I similarly contend that the camptowns in Korea are segregated to (re)produce demarcations of race and gender through power. The soldiers who make up the U.S. military, provide an important example for analyzing the formations of racial classification and its economy during the “war on terror” era, especially when they are stationed abroad.

Institutional racism has always existed within the U.S. military. The military’s foundational beginnings were white and colonial, made up of “citizen soldiers” who used force and violence in their conquest and enslavement of Native Americans during the quest for the Northwest Frontier (Baker 2004). That same mindset generated the emblem of 2ID’s “warrior.” Scholars argue, in the few studies that exist on the topic (Murray 1971; Grossman 1993; Sterling

1996), that the history of African-Americans in the U.S. military is characterized by an institutional racism that persists into the present. The structure of race and racism is played out in relationships and interactions both on and off the military bases, revealing the strategies of U.S. race-based practices. For example, the racially segregated areas of nightclubs in South Korea reflect the racial segregation of the troops. The U.S. Army has remained segregated despite President Truman's Executive Order 9981, which outlawed racial discrimination in the military (A. Lutz 2008). During formal and informal periods of segregation in TDC, African-American soldiers were provided with entertainment and services in a small alleyway, while white soldiers enjoyed the use of a larger area. Korean women working in the clubs were demarcated based on spatial allocation and the race they "served." Two documentary films, *The Women Outside* (1995) and *Camp Arirang* (1996), show them dressed for their "racial" roles. Racism and the mistreatment of African-American soldiers stationed in Korea was observed by local Koreans, in effect shaping their ideas of race and their own treatment of African-American soldiers and mixed Koreans. This mindset was further solidified by the stereotyping of African-American soldiers as "cowardly and unreliable" during the Korean War because of institutionalized racism within the military. Any designated "poor performance" was explained through race.<sup>8</sup> A "strong" military was configured as the heart of the U.S. nation, and thus had to be "white."

Military service, historically and currently, has been considered a way for minority men to gain recognition and rights, and was seen as having potential political leverage that could be advantageous for those returning from war (Grossman 1993). This is what Aihwa Ong refers to as striving for "cultural citizenship." Cultural citizenship is defined as the "cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory . . . a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society" (1996, 738). However, the word *cultural* in "cultural citizenship" means *white* in this context, and thus nonwhites cannot attain cultural citizenship but are encouraged to "strive for" it within the myths of multiculturalism and neoliberalism. Japanese Americans, like those of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team who volunteered to serve despite the fact that their families were interned during World War II, provide another example of how minorities laid everything on the line to obtain recognition (Daniels 1993). These Japanese American soldiers assumed a "go for broke" mentality in hopes of attaining freedom and

democracy. Within the U.S. military, the idea persists that “nonwhite” constitutes “the enemy.” This perception is taught, performed, and reconstructed depending on the conflict, without addressing race or racism within its own structure. As a result, numerous challenges and consequences are created for those who “look like the enemy.”<sup>9</sup> “I was trained to hate you, you gook,” one Vietnam veteran, now a peace activist, told me. As he spoke, his eyes seemed to return him to another time and place, making him unrecognizable. In the documentary film *Looking Like the Enemy*, Asian-American soldiers from World War II, and from the Korean and Vietnam Wars, discuss how they were racialized not only as “Asian” but also as “the enemy,” experiencing racism, insults, and racialized violence. Nevertheless, military service continues to be seen as a means for minorities to gain recognition in the United States.

### **Globalization and the Continuation of Empire in Korea**

In the camptowns during the mid-1990s, I observed Korean merchants and shops, white and African-American U.S. military men, Amerasians, and Korean women working or walking with infants snuggled in *podaegi*, a cloth wrap used to carry a baby on one’s back. Korean shopkeepers sold knockoff items from “designers” such as Fubu, Sean Jean, Coach, and Louis Vuitton, as well as pawned items and furry Korean “mink” blankets. There were portrait painters, tailors, and shops selling hats and belt buckles (some decorated with Confederate flags), and numerous clubs surrounding the littered, dusty, dirty, leafless areas of shadows and concrete. Over the last fifteen years, certain changes in the camptowns have occurred, not only in their spatial and aesthetic structural aspects, but also in terms of the people who occupy them; many things have also stayed the same. The increasing prevalence since 2002 of Filipina women (referred to in sexualized and derogatory ways as “juicy girls”) in the clubs was one stark change. Many of the shops are still in place, but there are now new shop owners—not all of them Korean—and new shops selling lingerie and cell phones. Since 2002, many Filipina and some Russian women can be seen pushing strollers with mixed “American” babies snuggled inside. Also more visible in the twenty-first century are changes in the demographics of the U.S. military, with more minority Americans, immigrant noncitizens, and female soldiers in the U.S. forces.

In addition to these changes, as a result of Korea’s economic boom, the number of immigrant workers in the country has dramatically increased to include workers from Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia, the Philippines, Nigeria, Russia, and Peru, among others, and this influx continues to create shifts in the camptown. Ethnic restaurants with names like Turkish Kebab, Brazilian BBQ, and Hello Philippines have been popping up, and even the so-called “Korean” souvenirs sold in camptown stores to soldiers are blatantly and stereotypically “Oriental” and sport “Made in China” tags. The upper-class strata of Korean society—those with connections to the U.S. military—are now allowed to golf inside Camp Casey’s enclosure, but otherwise most Koreans opt to remain outside the camptown. The rules have to do with class, networks, race, and gender, as well as legal status. In the daytime Camp Casey is a relatively quiet place where one can see a few Korean men and women, some Filipina women, a few soldiers in uniform, and shopkeepers selling goods. At night, particularly on paydays and weekends, the camptown is transformed into a massive nightclub, blasting loud music of various genres—country music for the older white soldiers, hip-hop for the younger black and white soldiers. There are more than seventy clubs to choose from within the two-block area. One’s senses are fully engaged as the scene creates a feeling of “fight or flight” from the smells of alcohol and vomit and the sounds of women’s laughter, soldiers’ cussing, and a blaring cacophony of music. One minority male soldier described such scenes as “the norm” and talked about the human trafficking and prostitution that occur there. “Not much I can do about it,” he remarked. “If the army isn’t going to do anything, I can’t do anything either.”

### **Asymmetrical Relations: U.S.-ROK Status of Forces Agreement**

Historically, a prime characteristic of the camptown is its transience, which itself has a kind of power—the power of temporality that demands no commitment. With its impermanent nature and the yearlong deployments of soldiers, there is no required or encouraged commitment to others, to the environment, or to domestic affairs. This lack of commitment is evidenced by the large number of U.S. military “fathers” of Amerasians throughout history (Gage 2007a), as well as the disregard for the lives of locals who have been evicted for base expansion or development,<sup>10</sup> crime, and the environmental hazards left unresolved by the U.S. military presence abroad (C. Lutz 2009). These problems are rarely dealt with because of the existing Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the United States and the Republic of Korea. The most challenging part of the SOFA is that the United States has sole jurisdiction over the soldiers’ offenses when the soldiers are “on official duty.”<sup>11</sup> The SOFA in Korea prevents

American troops from being tried by civilian (i.e., local) courts for crimes committed while “on duty.” The “never off-duty” mentality, as it exists in TDC and other camptowns in Korea, creates a rationale that U.S. soldiers are never subject to local courts or laws. An example of this was the gruesome rape and murder of a Korean woman named Yum Kum-I in 1992 by U.S. Private Kenneth Markle, who was sentenced to only fifteen years in prison by the U.S. military court. Korean protestors demanded that the SOFA be reformed to uphold equality. This was one of many violent acts that have occurred since 1945 that most Americans never hear about. The concept of “agreement” within the title of “Status of Forces Agreement” suggests collaboration and negotiating practices; however, the SOFA in Korea is an “asymmetrical agreement [that] detracts from the traditional notion of ‘empire’” (Hohn and Moon 2010, 12).

Tongduch’ŏn, like other camptowns in Korea, was comprised of several villages before becoming a military camptown. One retired soldier explained, with undertones of cultural imperialism and paternalism, “You know it wasn’t a city until *we* came, right?” The TDC camptown is an example of how the U.S. empire exercises its power, not through sheer force, but through the more insidious channel of governance via the U.S. soldiers’ presence in this transnational space where sexuality, race, gender, and dominance wield authority, and where people become marked with specific identities that structure the actions of those inside and outside its boundaries. Because Korea’s U.S. military bases are primarily in rural areas, most Koreans do not pay much attention to these spaces, which creates a unique and optimal “spatial arrangement that governs how the U.S. and surrounding civilian communities interact.” Those who live within these areas are poor, marginalized, and stigmatized, bearing “the burden of the U.S. military presence” for other Koreans (Hohn and Moon 2010, 19). Korean Amerasians, their mothers, and other women of the camptown bear this burden more than others. For those who marry and immigrate to the United States with their military spouses, the shadows of the camptown follow them, even if they never engaged in club work (Yuh 2002). In Europe, community councils were established early on in the creation of the bases to work out problems regarding housing, noise, crime, misbehavior, and so on. Korea did not establish a council until the horrific deaths of two middle-school girls near Paju by a U.S. military convoy on June 13, 2002, fifty-seven years after the U.S. military presence began. The two soldiers involved, Sergeants Fernando Nino and Mark Walker, were acquitted of involuntary manslaughter by a military court, but protestors demanded that the two men be tried in Korean courts (Baker 2004).

Deaths occurring during “on-duty” time are seen as “human collateral.” The commander of the base apologized publicly for the deaths and provided financial compensation to the two families, an unprecedented act. However, this particular incident was a final straw, after which citizens created a council to help (re)build relations between the United States and local Koreans. The council addresses issues and challenges resulting from the U.S. military presence in Korea during a post-9/11 era, when the United States needs its allies, and an economically strong and globalized Korea is an important one.

### **Us/Them in the Post-9/11 U.S. Military Camptown**

*“There’s one thing that 9/11 did; it moved us [black Americans] up.”*

With the creation of a subway line running from Seoul to Tongduch’ŏn that began operating in 2008, the outside appearance of the camptown has become “cleaner” and less obviously an area of drinking and sex; however, the remnants of *kijichon* remain active. The shops and homes that served as the face of the camptown were demolished to make way for the subway, and the clubs are now partially hidden behind the subway structure. Along with this new artery to Seoul, a new suburb or “villa” called “New Town,” with high-rise apartments and high-end shops, sprung up almost overnight, located far enough away from the camptown to have a separate identity and its own subway stop within Tongduch’ŏn. With its Seoul-like cosmopolitan atmosphere, “New Town” is a place where transnational interactions are experienced with more ease than in the camptown or elsewhere, including the downtown area of Tongduch’ŏn, where the line between what is “Korea” and what is camptown is still rigidly demarcated.

Although there is talk of extending deployments to three-year tours in South Korea<sup>12</sup>, most soldiers come for only one year. In that year they interact with others in somewhat limited and racialized ways, but most significantly in relation to a hierarchy in which white males are privileged and accepted as superior. Nadia Kim (2006), in her research among Korean immigrant women, confirmed what Frantz Fanon ([1952] 1967), Edward Said (1979), R.W. Connell (1987), and others have written about the ideological presentations of hegemonic masculinities that present the white male as superior, an image created and perpetuated by European and American colonial empires. The face and image of the white male continues to symbolize legitimacy and

power (Moxley 2010). In a post-9/11 understanding of the world, the U.S. military expresses this racialized and gendered hierarchy of power in the way it sees itself and its soldiers as “first-country nationals,” even when stationed overseas, with others ranked as second, third, or other. Leon, a ninety-year-old Jewish immigrant to the United States, once asked me, “Why is it that English is the only language that capitalizes ‘I’?” This notion of entitlement is embedded within the very details of the English language, as Fanon ([1952] 1967) also argues. U.S. military personnel in South Korea and the larger structural and symbolic issues of authority, power, and privilege resonate in the structure of the language. The host country citizens (in this case Koreans) are considered “second-country nationals,” and others are “third-country nationals,” generally relegated to “third world.” In this structure, third-country nationals silently move about the area, saying little to anyone, while U.S. soldiers expect and accept the hierarchy that privileges them. As third-country nationals become more and more visible in the camptown and other parts of Korea today, the current “war on terror” further complicates their lives in the U.S. and abroad. This is further complicated by U.S. race-based practices and immigrant status that privilege whites as “first,” African-American and other U.S. ethnic minorities as “second,” and non-citizens as “third” when stationed abroad. Race and racial profiling, especially but not exclusively since 9/11, remains an ideological instrument employed as a way of identifying “the enemy” through an “us/them” binary, both abroad and domestically in the United States. But, as one African-American soldier told me, 9/11 moved him and others classified as “black” up the racial order and placed another “brown” body at the bottom, with those relegated as “Middle Eastern” or “Arab.” For the U.S. government and the U.S. military, the global war on terror has created a “faceless” racialized enemy that again is not white. Sometimes this us–them distinction occurs under the umbrella of the U.S. military, as this space in particular becomes more globalized and transnational, and thus more racially “diverse.” However, whiteness is still privileged. In interactions abroad, soldiers often carry stereotypes held in the United States that are further solidified within the realms of their military service and training, as well as limited experiences in the camptown and other deployments of war. These stereotypes are complicated by the fact that the U.S. military is becoming significantly “brownier” with the addition of non-U.S. citizens (Plascencia 2009), even though whites still compose the majority (table 1).

	<b>1990</b>		<b>2000</b>		<b>2010</b>	
	<b>Military</b>	<b>General Population</b>	<b>Military</b>	<b>General Population</b>	<b>Military</b>	<b>General Population</b>
White	85.1%	72.7%	65.9%	63.1%	75.6%	63.7%
Black	7.7%	12.7%	19.8%	13.0%	18.9%	12.2%
Hispanic	4.4%	10.5%	7.9%	16.5%	11.9%	16.3%
Asian	1.6%	3.2%	3.6%	4.6%	4.8%	4.7%
American Indian	1.2%	0.8%	1.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%

Table 1: Racial-Ethnic Composition of the U.S. Military and Military-Age General Population. *Sources:* Ruggles et al. 2008 (in Lutz 2008), DEOMI 1990, 2000 (in Lutz 2008), and DoD 2010.

From 1990 to 2010, there has been a sizeable increase in minority representation within the U.S. military, particularly among those designated as African-American and Asian-American from 1990 to 2000, and among Hispanics from 2000 to 2010. There has also been an increase in the number of women, especially African-American women, serving, and African-Americans now compose 31 percent of women in the U.S. military, compared to 16 percent of their male counterparts, as reflected in the selection of holiday nutcrackers sold in U.S. retail stores (figure 3). Class, race, and changes in citizenship laws since 9/11 have also generated an increased strategic recruitment of noncitizens. Programs such as the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MANVI) program and the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act in the United States were created to “ease” the path to citizenship for noncitizens. The military is presented to noncitizens (legally or culturally) as a way to gain certain resources and privileges to which they are otherwise not privy. The DoD, with its recruitment challenges, has little interest in challenging pervasive institutional racism and sexism; instead it boasts about its “diversity.” In a public affairs news release, the DoD (2008) claims, “Non-citizens have served in the U.S. military since the Revolutionary War. Today about 29,000 non-citizens serve in uniform and about 8,000 permanent resident aliens (green card holders) enlist each year.” However, looking through a broader lens, one could also argue that again this reflects empire at work through racialized and gendered economies. The strategies of empire repeat the myth of cultural recognition through military service and neoliberalism achieved, and hide the realities of racism within. Globalization is creating a new arena for restructuring the “us–them” paradigm, particularly in terms of how power gets played out in notions of race and gender in the camptown. Some soldiers look like the “other,” and some look

like the “enemy,” putting them at risk fore being seen as targets or suspicious subjects. “Brown” U.S. soldiers are both agent and victim to empire. John Comaroff (1996) discusses how ethnonationalism emerges as a reaction against globalization, providing new politics of identity, but fails to add that it sometimes enhances and compounds old identity politics that do not get recognized or resolved. While U.S. soldiers and personnel are all “foreign workers” in Korea or abroad, they are not defined as such, nor are other white Americans working in Korea; rather, they are seen as desired “guests” who (re)create racial hierarchies and introduce new levels of pollution and rules of interaction.



Figure 3. Holiday nutcrackers, Ithaca, New York. Photo taken by the author.

Racism persists within the U.S. military. Former U.S. president Bill Clinton clearly articulated this belief within the agenda of promoting the success of President Obama’s first term during his commentary on November 4, 2012, a few days before Election Day. “One of the things the decider-in-chief has to do is decide whether he’s going to bring this country together

across all its diversity or let it drift apart. Look at how much stronger the American military is because it is less racist, less sexist, and less homophobic, and we're just looking for people who can do the job." This was stated within a historic and current atmosphere of racism, sexism, and homophobia. Sexual harassment and assaults within the military are at an all-time high. According to DoD data, one in three military women has been sexually assaulted, compared to one in six civilian women, with only 14 percent of assaults reported (O'Toole 2012). Clinton's comments came only a year after the brutalization and subsequent death of Danny Chen, a U.S. Army private of Chinese American ethnicity who was harassed, beaten, and degraded with racial slurs. He was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound while stationed in Afghanistan in October 2011 (Hajela 2012). Clinton's remarks were also made just six months after leaked evidence of racism within U.S. military officer training. One of the instructors at the Joint Forces Staff College taught that Islam is "the enemy"—this in a college for professional military members, mid-level officers, and government civilians taking courses on subjects related to planning and executing war (Associated Press 2012). The content of Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Dooley's course specifically stated, "They [Muslims] hate everything you stand for and will never coexist with you, unless you submit."

"Brown" U.S. soldiers are often teased about looking like the enemy. Many whom I interviewed reported being called names like Osama, Saddam, Taliban, Chink, Jap, Gook and *Adjushee* (the Korean word for middle-aged man said in a derogatory tone), despite being integral to the U.S. Army's "war on terror" inside and outside Korea. All of this together greatly complicates what is understood as "first-country national" and how U.S. soldiers without U.S. citizenship are seen and treated within the U.S. military institution. "They're just teasing; it's all in fun," one minority soldier explained. "It's OK. It doesn't bother me," said another, shrugging and looking away. Their facial expressions and body language communicated something very different, however. I heard similar remarks from minority soldiers throughout the Korean peninsula. Not surprisingly, stereotypes are ossified in the camptown and through experiences of war. One high-ranking soldier who had recently returned from Iraq said sarcastically, "I'm still working on my *Arab* relations." Similar to what Jin-kyung Lee (2009) found in her research among South Korean soldiers in the U.S.-led Vietnam conflict, these anecdotes show a pattern that speaks to how empires and sub-empires are played out, as certain nonwhite U.S. soldiers are both agents and victims of U.S. imperialism overseas.

Most white and black men in the camptown are assumed to be soldiers. “Why else would they be in the camptown?” remarked one local Korean resident. However, those perceived as not black or white are met by other assumptions. Several Filipino American soldiers reported being denied entry to clubs because they were presumed to be foreign workers. “We told them [the Korean club workers], ‘We’re soldiers, U.S. soldiers. We have a right to be here.’” Some of the Filipino American soldiers registered a complaint, but others said it wasn’t worth it, as they could go to another club where they knew they would be admitted. When I was interviewing a Korean Amerasian bartender and a Korean female club owner at a local club late one afternoon, a Filipino man tried to enter the club even though it wasn’t open. After the female owner shooed him away, the bartender explained to me how some Filipino men and soldiers try to convince Filipina women to leave with them and never go back to the clubs, which according to her was why the women have to be watched by the club management at all times. Like the Filipino Navy veterans in Theresa Suarez’s (2011) research, these Filipino soldiers felt that their male privileges as “American soldiers” were denied because of their presumed race and/or ethnicity and that their national belonging and masculinity were questioned. However, it also suggests agency and resistance. The camptown, with its extraterritorial nature, is a place where imperial power can be challenged—for example, in the 1970s riots by African-American soldiers within Korea camptowns who questioned the U.S. color line (Hohn and Moon 2010). Korean soldiers within the ROK military who work with the U.S. military also increasingly shift power by looking down on American GIs and reversing their gaze on white female soldiers (S. Moon 2010). Several soldiers, when interviewed, referenced these Korean soldiers who serve within the Korean Augmentation to the United States Army, or KATUSA, as “*my* KATUSA,” reflecting an ownership and entitlement over the demasculinized Korean male body.

The defining processes that determine who is and who is not an “American soldier” are based on the schema and experiences of the individual. One of the questions I asked soldiers was, “How do you know who a soldier is?” One soldier replied confidently, “I can tell you within five minutes.” Others answered: “The haircut,” “Who they’re with,” “How they dress,” “How they carry themselves, their walk,” “When they step off, I guarantee you they’ll step off with their left foot first.” These soldiers speak of a group consciousness and embodiment of identity that manifests in soldiers’ physicality, something that nonmilitary others do not and cannot fully comprehend: “People who aren’t in the army can’t usually tell who is, but we can.

It's ingrained." U.S. soldiers, however, believe they must know the difference in this post-9/11 era. Michel Foucault (1975) elaborated on how the soldier is constructed as a product of molding through discipline of every part of the body, creating control over the body and maximizing its utility.<sup>13</sup> This assimilation process requires that the docile body turned soldier represents a homosocial, hypermasculine, and white symbol of America. One soldier explained it to me this way: "It has to do with when you become a soldier; it takes a certain change that's subconscious."

In a focus group interview with white male soldiers from Camp Casey in 2006, I asked about interactions with non-Korean, non-American others. A sergeant answered quickly and absolutely for everyone: "No! No interactions with third-country nationals! When our curfew hits at 12:00 a.m. or 1:00 a.m. on weekends, we vacate the bar scene and they come in." One soldier quietly added, "Some from the Philippines." Another elaborated by saying, "There are some people that interact with them, but not that much. Maybe with the people that happen to work in the clubs." One sergeant explained,

We have been told it's not safe [to interact with third-country nationals]. We're not here to help them. Everyone gets a SEDA training—that's Subversion and Espionage Directed Against the U.S. Army—and a lot of times it's third-country nationals who have been trying to get information from soldiers. Same thing for years—"Be careful who you talk to and what you say." 9/11 maybe brought it back to the forefront of the Army.

Despite the rhetoric and "training," in reality U.S. soldiers intermingle freely with those who do not claim U.S. or Korean nationality, especially women designated "third country" in the camptown. Their comments prove that the notion of empire trickles down to the inner workings of the camptown and off-base interactions through carnal knowledge and desire. It is interesting to note that foreign women are not viewed in the same way as third-country national males. Despite the SEDA training and the rules against interacting with third-country nations, interactions with foreign women working in the clubs continues; however, many soldiers do not see these women as true partners or spies, but as objects of sexual gratification.

### **Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender with “Third-Country Nationals”**

The intersectionality of race, class, and gender is essential to the exploration and further illumination of empire at work through racial and gendered economies.<sup>14</sup> Gender is an important factor, especially in TDC, since the ratio of military men to women serving in the U.S. Army is seven to one (Patten and Parker 2011). Because 2ID is an infantry division, there are far fewer women stationed there. “It’s a lot harder for women here at Casey. The number of women is small, so I have to be cautious. All the women up here do because things happen,” one white female soldier reported. A female African-American soldier stated that it was helpful to have a partner while at Casey because of the frequency of sexual harassment. Another woman stated it this way: “It’s mostly males. There’s [sic] so many guys that when they get drunk they try to be all over the females. It’s hard being a woman in the military, but some people don’t like it because some males think it [the military] is only a male thing.”

Despite the increase in women serving, soldiers are symbolically assumed to be white or black males, which complicates the identities not only of women in general, but of “Asian-looking” female soldiers and women in the area who are not affiliated with the clubs in particular. Not only is “Orientalism” at work, but the presence of the U.S. military also reinforces ideas of “Asian” women as sexual objects, affirming male power and female weakness and victimization. Many of the women are U.S. citizens, but they are nevertheless often thought of as “juicy girls” when they walk on the streets of the camptown; or if they are of mixed Asian descent, male soldiers comment and teasingly degrade them by saying, “Your mom was a juicy girl.” This represents not only the white masculine empire at work, but also what Laura Kang refers to as the “troubled interplay of ethnic, national, and racial identification of Asian, Asian-Americans and American with woman,” which creates an unequal relationship between the different subjects (2002, 215). Soldiers utilize the U.S. racial classification system in their understandings of those within the military and outside of it, even if stationed in another country ethnically comprised along national terms. These classification systems become further “troubled” by gender and gender stereotypes, as they intersect with “Asian.” “Juicy girl” describes how clubs where Filipinas work tally the number of small, overpriced juice drinks soldiers buy for each woman in order to evaluate the women’s work “effectiveness.” The “juice drink” tally is visible to the women and is sometimes as simple as a chalkboard displaying work names and a series of checks. One white soldier said, laughing, that he goes down to see his

“juicies,” referring to the women who work in the clubs. Another soldier explained, “Juicies are the women you buy drinks for, and this *mamasan* keeps track of how many drinks the girl gets. They’re not allowed to drink alcohol—they can only drink these little shot glasses of some kind of juice. It doesn’t taste very good; I tried it.” Many Filipinas working in the camptown clubs came to Korea on “entertainment visas” and were told that they could pursue their musical careers. The Republic of Korea has a special visa agreement with the Philippines to allow for E-6 Art and Entertainment visas through the Philippine Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). According to the Ministry of Justice (2007), as of 2006, there were 17,275 Filipina women who were in South Korea legally: 4858 (28 percent) were engaged or married to South Korean men; 2508 (15 percent) held “entertainer” visas, and 3237 (19 percent) had industrial laborer visas. Many more go undocumented. However, their musical talents are not their primary “entertaining” responsibilities. Many come to find out that they are under the power of the club owners, and their work is not to sing or play music in a band, but to drink with, talk with, and perform certain forms of sexual “entertainment” for the soldiers. “That’s the term I heard, they’re just females that will sell their time, may not do sexual acts, but they’ll still sit with the guys and talk with them,” explained one married female soldier. “Being in the military, there’s lots of males and not many females. And a lot of the females over here are not single, so that lowers the numbers of guys finding companionship inside, so they go out to look for it.” The women are looked down upon, even though some soldiers marry them. One female soldier described it like this: “My husband goes to drink at the clubs and I go with him. It’s different seeing girls sell themselves for twenty dollars, sitting with men, drinking with them, massaging them. It makes me feel disgusted, it’s really gross. It’s also different to see how soldiers act around these females, like they can’t go a year without, you know, having any. I feel sorry for the girls; they say they’re lied to about working here. But that’s where all the soldiers here meet spouses in Korea, downrange. Some soldiers look down on those women and they’ll talk bad about them, but then you’ll see them at the clubs with the drinky girls.”

When I interviewed white U.S. soldiers, several informed me that these women were “Korean,” when in fact it was rare at that time in TDC to find a Korean woman working in the clubs who was not bartending or in management. One minority male soldier discussed how his Korean girlfriend was stereotyped in this way. “You either are with an American or a juicy girl,

that's the stereotype. When I was dating a Korean woman, they would say, 'Yeah, she's a juicy girl, right?' This bothered me. Soldiers call women 'juicy girls' whether they're Korean or Filipino. And when you're with someone, they point to other men and say, 'Weren't you one of her clients before they got married?' It's the mentality: us versus them." With this racialized gender dynamic complicated by the upholding of a "never off-duty" mentality and the maintenance of "warrior" identity, there is a heightened sense of machismo and entitlement. The lack of desire to learn or understand the cultural context and a general ignorance of the self reinforces the imperial design.

While red-light districts exist in other parts of Korea, for local Korean men and male tourists, *kijichon*, or the U.S. military camptown, still has a specific historical identity and role in the development of the South Korean economy, and in the expansion of U.S. power as an empire. There are striking similarities between Korean women and Filipina women who have worked in the camptown in their positioning as subordinate, sexualized commodities regulated by state, inter-state, and local actors who push the wheels of militarization and empire. However, their situations are also substantially different, especially with the experiences of international human trafficking, migration, and the triple colonization experienced by Filipinas. Filipinas abandon a (post)colonial life in the Philippines in place of another one within the camptowns of South Korea and must deal with both U.S. and South Korean structures of racism, classism, and sexism. A Korean woman featured in a 2009 *New York Times* article stated, "Our government was one big pimp for the military" (Choe 2009). The Filipina women I interviewed reported similar experiences with governmental bodies when they discussed the informal role of the United States in prostitution and human trafficking in South Korea (c.f. Cheng 2010).

## Conclusion

In 2004, many of the soldiers in Tongduch'ŏn were unexpectedly deployed directly to Iraq, a double deployment. Over four hundred of them subsequently went AWOL, abandoning the wives, girlfriends, and children they had in Korea and leaving them without support. Most of the women were Filipina or Korean. Because of the men's AWOL status and the backing of many American female spouses residing there, the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) responded when the women demanded support. As a result, most of the men were tracked down and forced to deal with their responsibilities in South Korea. Unprecedented as this may seem, it does not

address the larger structure of empire through racialized and gendered economies. Throughout this article I have provided ethnographic data to argue that within these “deterritorialized” spaces of the camptown, which are seen as “alien” and outside of civil rights and protection, there are places where empire has its greatest and most invisible impact. “Empire” as a concept speaks to something seemingly “out there” and “above,” claiming an ethereal power. Yet it is lived, embodied, enacted, questioned, and challenged in daily life, rarely noticed on the ground as it is experienced directly by those who encounter its intangibility but know it viscerally. Empire and its power are understood, embodied, and performed by U.S. soldiers and their relations in South Korea, expressing the linkages with imperialisms through the dominance of the white Euro-American male subject, despite the military’s changing demographics.

I have argued that everyday iterations of U.S. military power are enacted by soldiers in the camptown through racialized and gendered scripts implemented by empire. Soldiers are docile bodies who accept the governing practices of empire organized by a racial binary of “us–them” and “white–other.” Many minorities join in hopes of gaining cultural citizenship and cultural capital, whereby race persists as the organizing principle, making equality unlikely. The data presented shows how Koreans and minority soldiers are, in essence, both victims and agents of the U.S. empire, despite globalization and “diversification,” which have helped to reconfigure racial hierarchies while maintaining white masculine power. The phrase “never off-duty” reveals a protective manifestation and expansion of the United States’ empire; however, the lived experiences of those within the empire show the cracks of that power and its hold. As Catherine Lutz points out, the linkages of empire with the human face are what make the “frailties of imperialism more visible, and in so doing, make challenges to imperial projects more likely” (2006, 593).

The U.S. military’s power intersects with increasingly localized power in South Korea. For example, Koreans who own shops and clubs hold Filipina club women’s passports and establish rules about where they can and cannot go. Koreans call U.S. soldiers “Cheap Charlies” if they barter too low. They refuse to speak English to the U.S. soldiers or Filipinas at the local post offices. The camptown is also a place where minority male soldiers can contest the color line through heteronormative, hypermasculine sexual desire and claim, historic and present. While these may seem like acts of agency at work, many are misplacing the larger organizing structure of how empire works by shifting the understanding of those who are “rulers” and those

who are “ruled,” and as a result, they become both victims and agents of the U.S. empire. However, it is through the everyday lives of the more “liminal” subjects and places like the camptown that we see the weaknesses of empire, the fault lines and the gray areas, where the boundaries are more malleable and empire can be questioned and changed—a symbol of agency in the roughest of places. The camptown is an example of empire’s ethereal power, which only works when inattentive to its weakness and “air-like” quality. “Shackles without chains,” as one retired veteran expressed it. Frantz Fanon ([1963] 2004) describes this psychology of colonialism created through a racist system that convinces the colonized that they should strive to “lighten their darkness” and become “whiter.” He argues that in order to end colonization, one must first see the myths that the colonizer has created and placed upon us.

I have offered a mapping of empire within the landscape known as “the camptown” in South Korea. The various individuals who navigate that colonized space reveal the complex and historical underpinnings of empire at work through the U.S. military. While on- and off-base spaces may be separated by fences, gates, and guards, in reality they serve as more than just peripheral structures of “rest and relaxation.” Instead, they are a major artery of U.S. governance in South Korea. The symbol of such power is embodied through the white male soldier, but enacted by all U.S. soldiers in ways that demonstrate how the U.S. empire extends off base, and how it relates to the nature of power, national identity, racism, and militarization in an era when the meaning of empire is unclear.

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### **Notes**

1. Information about Camp Casey is available at [http://benefits.military.com/misc/installations/Base\\_Content.jsp?id=2800](http://benefits.military.com/misc/installations/Base_Content.jsp?id=2800).

2. The Japanese abuse of Korean human labor, such as the “comfort women” used by the Japanese Imperial Army, went unpunished and was dismissed by the United States after “liberation” (Cumings 1996, 346). The image of Koreans was further tainted by the departing Japanese, who told the Americans of “Korean communists and independence agitators . . . plotting to subvert Korean peace” (Cumings 1996, 337).
3. The Human Terrain System was implemented beginning in 2007 as an operationalized use of nonmilitary “experts” from the social sciences, namely anthropology, to study “the other” and report findings to brigades in war zone areas in Iraq and Afghanistan.
4. The political construct of “Amerasian” applies to individuals born to local women in Asia and U.S. soldiers stationed in those areas. In Korea’s ethnonationalistic rhetoric, an Amerasian is anyone designated as “mixed-blood” who is born in Korea to a Korean mother who had relations with an American male. However, despite their American paternity, these offspring do not have American citizenship or rights; because of their mixedness in Korea they are relegated to a low status. They therefore experience marginalization and racism in both Korea and the United States (Gage 2007a).
5. According to the Republic of Korea Ministry of Justice (2007), unions between Korean men and women from Vietnam, China, and the Philippines made up 36 percent of marriages in rural areas in 2005, while 13.6 percent of marriages in general were international marriages.
6. For critiques, see Boron (2005).
7. See United States Forces Korea (USFK), December 11, 2008.
8. An example of this is the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment, which was disbanded and singled out (Kilian 1996).
9. See *Looking Like the Enemy*, a film by Robert A. Nakamura and Karen L. Ishizuka (1996).
10. The expansion and relocation of the U.S. military in South Korea to Anjŏng-ri (south of Seoul, near Pyongtaek) have led to the eviction of numerous rice farmers in order to build facilities and housing to accommodate Camp Humphries. Elderly women who have worked in the clubs since the 1950s are struggling financially and cannot afford the increased housing costs. Protests against the move and evictions have taken place in the area and elsewhere, but so have “welcoming” rallies to greet the new soldiers and their families.
11. See Article XXII, 3a.ii of the SoFA agreement between the United States and the ROK.
12. In a media roundtable, General Walter Sharp discussed extending tours to up to three years and eventually increasing the number of “command sponsorships” to seven times current levels, which would allow service members to bring their families with them. See the United States Forces Korea (USFK), December 11, 2008.
13. See Ricks (1997), who followed sixty-three men through their Marine basic training.
14. Stock’s (2006) research on immigrants in the military found that the most important predictor of military service after 9/11 was family income. The reasons why black women join the military need further exploration to examine the intersectionality of race and gender with class.

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