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Editorial

Plastic Surgeons of Korean Heritage: Why it matters to me

David Woosuk Chang

Associate Editor, *Archives of Plastic Surgery*
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

On my desk is a plaque with saying in Korean "*뭉치면 살고 흩어지면 죽는다.*" I always thought that this was an old Korean saying but actually it is attributed to an American Founding Father John Dickinson in his pre-Revolutionary War song "The Liberty Song," first published in July 1768. In the song Dickinson wrote: "*Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all! By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall!*"

It was great to get together for a nice dinner and a mingling with fellow Plastic Surgeons of Korean Heritage at the 2018 American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) Annual Meeting in Chicago (Fig. 1). It has already been 12 years since we started this tradition of gathering of "Plastic Surgeons of Korean Heritage." At 2006 ASPS Annual Meeting in San Francisco, with the help of Charles Lee (San Francisco), we organized an event for "Plastic Surgeons of Korean Heritage" that included a golf outing followed by a wonderful dinner (Fig. 2). The following year at 2007 ASPS Annual Meeting in Baltimore, we again organized a dinner meeting with the help of David Song (now, Washington DC). Since then, while not every year, we have tried to organize similar gatherings at the ASPS Annual Meetings. The first official meeting of Plastic Surgeons of Korean Heritage was organized by KSPRS and spearheaded by Joon Pyo Hong (Seoul) at 2016 ASPS Annual Meeting in Los Angeles. Ironically, I missed that gathering as I was in Korea attending another meeting.

Some ask, "why do we need to meet?" We gather and meet, just because we are all "Plastic Surgeons of Korean Heritage," no other reason. It is a great opportunity for us to meet old friends and make new friends with similar roots and background, without a special program or special agenda. It is like a big family reunion.

We now live in a global world, with emphasis on diversity. I truly embrace that, but that does not mean that we cannot be proud of our heritage. There are only about 84 million Koreans (51 million in South Korea, 25.6 million in North Korea, and 7.4 million Koreans outside of Korea) in the world, about 1% of world population. We are a small minority. There are not that many of us in this world! There are even fewer Plastic Surgeons with Korean Heritage.

In 1973, when I first came to United States, Korea was not well known. Most Americans associated Korea with Korean War but not much else. Korea was still under military dictatorship and while its economy was starting to grow, it was still a poor country with limited influence at the world stage. In 2018, Korea is one of the wealthiest countries in the world with well-known name brands such as Samsung, LG, Hyundai, etc. flooding the consumer markets. Korea is also one of the "hippest and coolest" countries with Korean culture including food, TV shows, movies, music (K-Pop) attracting many enthusiasts and admirers across the globe. In fact, a boy band BTS won the Time magazine Reader's poll Person of the Year award for 2018. However, this success is not why I am proud of being a Korean. I was very proud of my Korean heritage when Korea was still not well known and popular. I am proud of my Korean heritage because that is who I am.

Since the earliest settlements on the Korean Peninsula during prehistoric times, the people of Korea have developed a distinctive culture and personality. We are not the strongest, not the wealthiest, not the largest, but we are unique. I am proud to be a

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Fig 1. At 2018 ASPS Annual Meeting in Chicago

Plastic Surgeons of Korean Heritage at the 2018 ASPS Annual Meeting in Chicago (Smith & Wollensky Steak House).

Fig 2. At 2006 ASPS Annual Meeting in San Francisco

At 2006 ASPS Annual Meeting in San Francisco, with the help of Charles Lee (San Francisco), we organized an event for "Plastic Surgeons of Korean Heritage" that included a golf outing followed by a wonderful dinner.

part of this unique Korean heritage and I am grateful that we are able to get together as Plastic Surgeons of Korean Heritage. Because that is who we are.

NOTES

Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

ORCID

David Woosuk Chang https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8420-0098

Correspondence: David Woosuk Chang
The University of Chicago Medicine & Biological Sciences, 5841 S. Maryland Ave. | Rm J641, MC 6035 | Chicago, IL 60637, USA
Tel: +1-773-702-6302, Fax: +1-773-702-1634, E-mail: dchang@surgery.bsd.uchicago.edu

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