

## APHG Teachers Experience the Korean Delegation

I want to thank COGA for nominating me to be a part of the 2014 Korean Delegation. It was one of the most memorable experiences of my lifetime. I learned so much from this experience that to narrow it down to a few sentences cannot fully express what I will share with friends, family, colleagues, and students for years to come. I went to Seoul a night early and stayed at a hotel near a beach in Incheon near the airport. I then navigated public transportation with lots of luggage and went to Paju to visit a friend who teaches at English Village. I attended the eight day Korean Delegation. I was able to extend the trip and stayed in Tokyo for two nights and then went to Nikko, Japan to experience the Japanese sacred areas and hot springs for two nights. This journey became such an adventure with learning experiences at every juncture. I am very thankful for all of the new colleagues and friends that I have acquired on this journey.



We all have preconceptions about people and places. The Korean Delegation teachers were given the task to find out what our students knew about Korea and Korean people. Our stereotypes and preconceptions as a class, myself included, were blown away. What I found were the most hospitable, helpful, and caring people. I found Seoul to be the most modern, safe, and clean city that I've ever visited. Everything we have in America, they have in Seoul from my perspective. Strangers who could barely, if at all, speak English helped me carry my luggage, find my way on the public transportation, walked me to places I was looking for, and

even helped with the ATM (in the booth), and anything else I sought help with. For instance, after I asked for a Sim card at a local 7-Eleven, a girl ran up to me on the street and walked me to where she thought I could find one. This is one example out of so many. I didn't have a smart phone at the time and had to seek help with strangers very often. I never once felt unsafe, except when a man went into the ATM booth with me to help me, but only goodness prevailed at every juncture. Everywhere I went, people wanted to talk with me, practice speaking English, people walked with me, ran with me, and helped me. I even stated out loud after a man ran and carried my luggage and sweated for an hour out of his day, I stated, I hope an American would do that for a stranger.

I also never felt the admiration and respect for teachers that I felt in S. Korea. I'll never forget the wonder and admiration in people's eyes when I said that I was a teacher. And as I saw people in their various jobs and daily routines, I felt so very privileged to be a teacher and have the opportunity to step out of my daily routine and see what others do day in and day out around the world.



One of the reasons that the Korean Delegation works with American high school teachers is to build relationships between Americans and Koreans and to raise awareness of Korean people and their international concerns. Encroachment and territorial concerns Between Korea, both North and South, China, and Japan are of deep interest to the Korean people. Some of the specific concerns that teachers are asked to teach about in addition to a focus on Korean people, culture, and history are naming issues and territorial concerns. The delegation asked us to support mapping companies that name the East Sea rather than the Sea of Japan. Dokdo is more than a rock that humans don't live on. It is a national park filled with life, beauty, science, nature, and natural resources. The North and South divide is a large concern and there are talks of unification. Pictures of the DMZ in our textbooks can't give the same feeling as being there in person. There are concerns of active landmines, human rights issues, and people escaping from N. Korea and migrating into S. Korea or other countries. In conclusion, Korean people have a rich history and culture and would like for American students to care about them, learn more about them, and to lobby on Korean peoples' behalf.

Thank you for your time and interest,  
Unity Hartman



Thank you to Rebecca Theobald, Steve Jennings, and COGA for a nomination and an opportunity to attend the 5th International Conference on Geographic Naming and Geographic

Education in Seoul, South Korea. This conference was organized by the Northeast Asian History Foundation with the main focus on Geographic Education for a Harmonious Global Society. Fourteen other delegates and I participated in an eight day field study experience in and around Seoul, a trip to the southeastern region of the peninsula, and the DMZ. We gained direct experience with the Korean people and their culture, the current Korean geopolitical situation, and the territorial and geographical naming issues persistent on the peninsula. A place that once existed only in my perception, now offers a real and practical case study to the topics required by the AP Human Geography curriculum. Through this experience, I have a deeper understanding of the implications of associations and the changing interconnections among places in the Korean peninsula. It was a life changing experience. Thank you.

Thank you,  
Rob Gilliam