

YU GWAN SUN AND THE MARCH FIRST MOVEMENT: THE TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY OF PEACEFUL RESISTANCE

Japan's Occupation

The Japanese Empire returned Korea to China and ruled over its colony. Korea "suffered all indignities as a harsh colony" (Chikunori). In contrast with Korea, the Japanese remained in control of the peninsula for thirty-three years.

"The Japanese believed that an economic system of general production for colonial expansion was Korea's 'divine' duty. They sought to mobilize government people themselves, from the top down, and give them free political rights, to bring them back into economic life. The Japanese understood that the only way to do this was to establish a new educational system and a new system of social and economic relations based on modern science and technology." (Chikunori)

"Koreans lived under the most ruthless colonial rule ever known in history."
-Yang Ha, professor at Yonsei University in Seoul

"Energy for a Korean independence movement grew between 1911 and 1919, as the general population became increasingly educated and willing to stand up against the Japanese."
-Kohler

The Birth of Resistance

In Korea, many secret groups for the purpose of independence had been formed. Schools were built to promote national consciousness. Other groups that were desperate for independence moved over to Manchuria and the Manchurian Army groups and established new schools. All these efforts flowed in the direction of bringing people together for the total impact of the independence movement. (Harvard TV)

The Korean people and their leaders were determined to fight for their independence. They were not afraid to die for their freedom.

In January 1919, President Woodrow Wilson gave the American people's statement with the intention of recognizing people's right to self-determination. World War I. Korean students used Wilson's speech to outline their demands of independence which were rejected publicly in Seoul.

Thesis

Under Japanese occupation since 1910, Korea of the twentieth century harbored a national culture that prompted thousands to resist Japanese rule. The March First Movement of 1919 made a martyr of the young activist Yu Gwan Sun, whose efforts would evoke the triumph of Korean independence.

"Korea's Joan of Arc" (S. Kim)

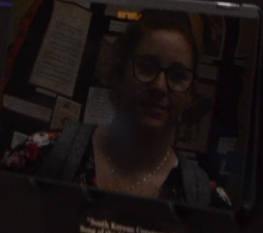
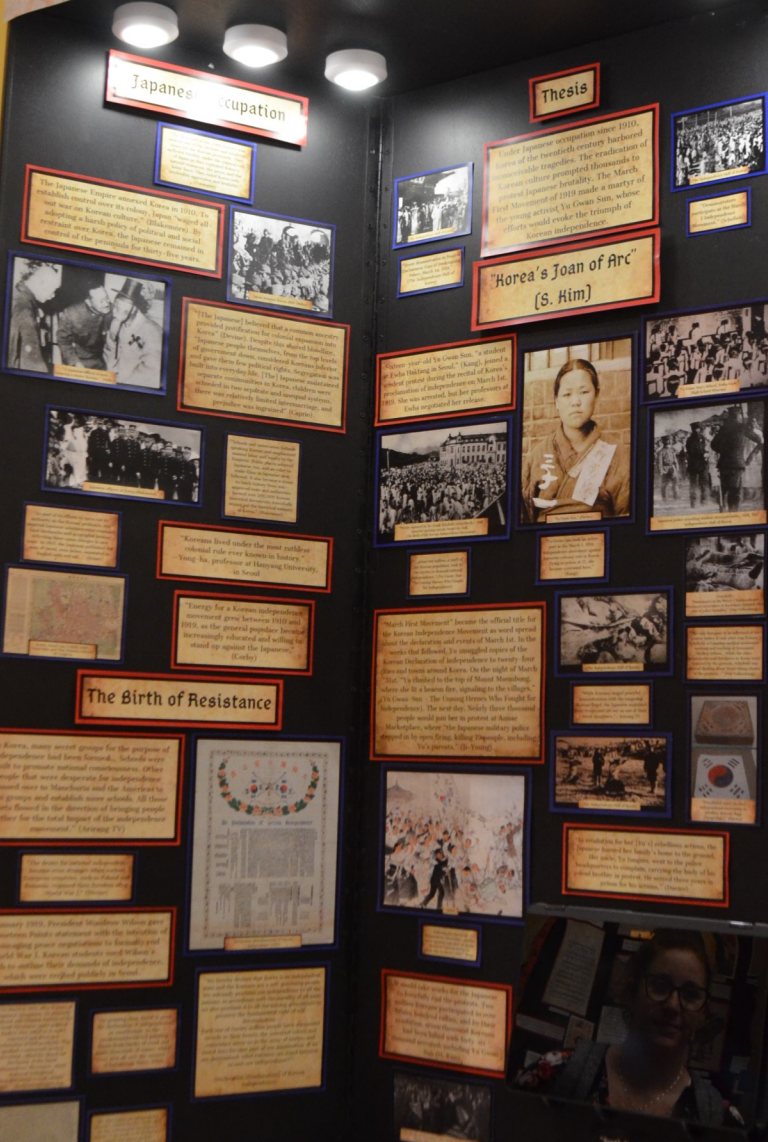
Yu Gwan Sun, a student leader of the March First Movement, was a young patriot during the period of Korea's Japanese occupation. He was a student leader of the March First Movement, which was a peaceful resistance to Japanese rule.

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"March First Movement" became the official title for the Korean independence movement as well as the name of the day and month of March 1st. In the words of the National Anthem, it is the day when the Korean people stood up for their freedom and independence. On the night of March 1st, 1919, a student leader of the March First Movement, Yu Gwan Sun, was a young patriot during the period of Korea's Japanese occupation. He was a student leader of the March First Movement, which was a peaceful resistance to Japanese rule.

"The young heroes who fought for their freedom. The next day, thirty three thousand people would join him in protest at the Japanese Consulate. The Japanese military police arrested Yu Gwan Sun, killing Gwan Sun, including a young man, the Korean."

"The Japanese had the idea of a nationalistic movement, the young heroes who fought for their freedom. The next day, thirty three thousand people would join him in protest at the Japanese Consulate. The Japanese military police arrested Yu Gwan Sun, killing Gwan Sun, including a young man, the Korean."



Japanese Occupation

"The first half of the twentieth century was indeed one of the darkest and toughest times for the Korean peninsula. They suffered terribly under the colonial rule of Japan as they exploited Korea's natural resources, the press, and the labor force. They ruled Korea with intolerable aggression and brutality."
- (Toomgum)

The Japanese Empire annexed Korea in 1910. To establish control over its colony, Japan "waged all-out war on Korean culture," (Blakemore). By adopting a harsh policy of political and social restraint over Korea, the Japanese remained in control of the peninsula for thirty-five years.



Japan Annexes Korea, 1910 (Miller)



"A Japanese officer is seen taunting a senior Korean," (Miller)

"[The Japanese] believed that a common ancestry provided justification for colonial expansion into Korea" (Devine). Despite this shared bloodline, "Japanese people themselves, from the top levels of government down, considered Koreans inferior and gave them few political rights. Segregation was built into everyday life. [The] Japanese maintained separate communities in Korea, children were schooled in two separate and unequal systems, there was relatively limited intermarriage, and prejudice was ingrained" (Caprio).



Japanese officers in Korea (Blakemore)

"Schools and universities forbade speaking Korean and emphasized manual labor and loyalty to the Emperor. Public places adopted Japanese, too, and an edict to make films in Japanese soon followed. It also became a crime to teach history from non-approved texts and authorities burned over 200,000 Korean historical documents, essentially wiping out the historical memory of Korea." (Blakemore).

"As part of its efforts to carve out its authority on the Korean peninsula, the imperial Japanese administration renamed local landmarks and geographic locales, reflecting these name changes in new maps. In 1910, the Japanese published the map of Seoul, seen below, annotated in English with red ink..." (Stoner)



Seoul, Korea, 1910. Geography and Map Institute, Library of Congress

"Koreans lived under the most ruthless colonial rule ever known in history."
- Yong-ha, professor at Hanyang University, in Seoul

"Energy for a Korean independence movement grew between 1910 and 1919, as the general populace became increasingly educated and willing to stand up against the Japanese."
(Corby)

The Birth of Resistance



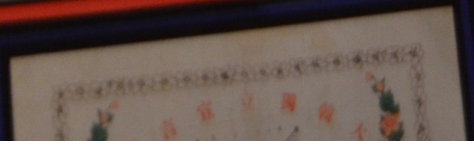
"Street demonstration in front of the Independence Hall in Seoul, Korea, March 1st, 1919 (The Independence Hall, Korea)"

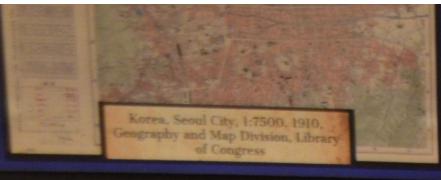
Sixteen-year-old student protest at Ewha Haktang, 1919. She was arrested in 1919. She was at Ewha n



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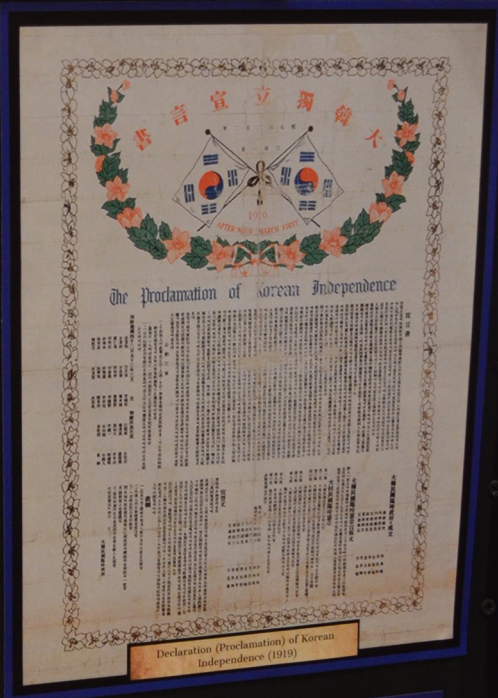


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The Birth of Resistance

"In Korea, many secret groups for the purpose of independence had been formed... Schools were built to promote national consciousness. Other people that were desperate for independence crossed over to Manchuria and the Americas to form groups and establish more schools. All those efforts flowed in the direction of bringing people together for the total impact of the independence movement," (Arirang TV)

"The desire for national independence became even stronger when various European countries, such as Poland and Romania, regained their freedom after World War I," (Devine)



In January 1919, President Woodrow Wilson gave his Fourteen Points statement with the intention of encouraging peace negotiations to formally end World War I. Korean students used Wilson's speech to outline their demands of independence, which were recited publicly in Seoul.

"We hereby declare that Korea is an independent state and the Koreans are a self-governing people. We solemnly proclaim our independence to all the nations, in accordance with the equality of all men; we also proclaim it to all the coming generations to preserve the fundamental right of self-determination ... Each one of twenty million people have sharpened swords in their hearts, the universal values and conscience serve us as the army of justice, and moral laws become part of our ammunition. If we are determined, what enemies can stand between us and our independence?"
(Declaration (Proclamation) of Korean Independence)

"On March 1, 1919, after 9 years of Japanese occupation, 33 primarily cultural and religious leaders of the Samil Movement (most political leaders were jailed or in exile) convened and drew up a proclamation of independence. This sparked a nationwide protest movement, called the March 1st Movement or the Samil Movement or the Samil Independence Movement, which featured widespread demonstrations to end colonial rule." (declarationproject.org)

"No printing shop dared to print the declaration of independence or constitution. So the revolutionists carved printing forms from blocks of wood and made thousands of copies, which were sent all over the country." (Chattanooga News, 1919)

[Faded text, likely a document fragment]

Mr. Jun Tokun, an independence advocate, relates his own words after he was sentenced to two years in a prison. "I am ready to be hanged as a patriot, but please abolish discrimination for the sake of over 25 million Koreans." (MacArthur)

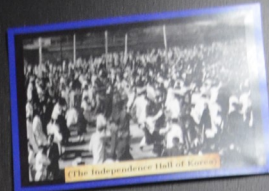
This 1919 resolution article proclaimed the birth of World War I, including the names of Korea. It is the starting point of the six countries' cooperation.

Thesis

Under Japanese occupation since 1910, Korea of the twentieth century harbored inconceivable tragedies. The eradication of Korean culture prompted thousands to protest Japanese brutality. The March First Movement of 1919 made a martyr of the young activist Yu Gwan Sun, whose efforts would evoke the triumph of Korean independence.



"Street demonstration in front of Daehannun Gate of Deokkung Palace, March 1st, 1919." (The Independence Hall of Korea)



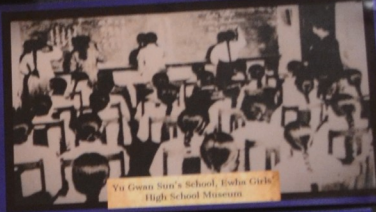
"Demonstrators participate in the March 1 Independence Movement." (Schofield)

"Korea's Joan of Arc" (S. Kim)

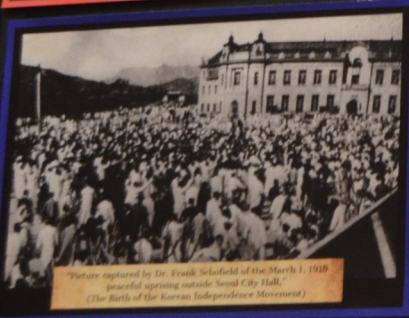
Sixteen-year-old Yu Gwan Sun, "a student at Ewha Haktang in Seoul," (Kang), joined a student protest during the recital of Korea's proclamation of independence on March 1st, 1919. She was arrested, but her professors at Ewha negotiated her release.



"Yu Gwan Sun." (Davies)



Yu Gwan Sun's School, Ewha Girls' High School Museum



"Persons captured by Dr. Frank Schofield of the March 1, 1919 peaceful uprising outside Seoul City Hall." (The Birth of the Korean Independence Movement)



Japanese police arresting student demonstrators, 1919. The Independence Hall of Korea

"...about two million, a tenth of the Korean population, took to the streets to demand national independence." (Yu Gwan Sun "The Unsung Heroes Who Fought for Independence")

"Yu Gwan-sun took an active part in the March 1, 1919, independence movement against Japanese colonial rule in Korea. Dying in prison at 17, she became a national hero." (Kang)



(Schofield) "Participants in the March 1 Independence Movement were taken to Severance Hospital when acts of police brutality." (Van Volkenburg)

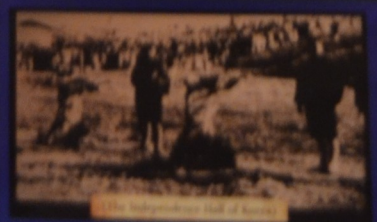
"March First Movement" became the official title for the Korean Independence Movement as word spread about the declaration and events of March 1st. In the weeks that followed, Yu smuggled copies of the Korean Declaration of Independence to twenty-four cities and towns around Korea. On the night of March 31st, "Yu climbed to the top of Mount Maebong, where she lit a beacon fire, signaling to the villages," (Yu Gwan-Sun - The Unsung Heroes Who Fought for Independence). The next day, Nearly three thousand people would join her in protest at Aunae Marketplace, where "the Japanese military police stepped in by open firing, killing 19 people, including Yu's parents," (Ji-Young)



(The Independence Hall of Korea)

"While Koreans staged peaceful demonstrations with the taegukgi (Korean flag), the Japanese mobilized their troops and set out on one of their worst slaughters." - Arirang TV

"The only foreigner to be informed of the protest before it took place was Francis Schofield, a Canadian medical missionary working and teaching at Severance Medical school. While the other missionaries and foreigners in Korea were captured by the gendarmes, Schofield was instead hiding about Seoul taking photos of the protests." (Van Volkenburg)



(The Independence Hall of Korea)



"Schofield used for the independence movement to produce Korean flag (1919-1937)" (The 1st)

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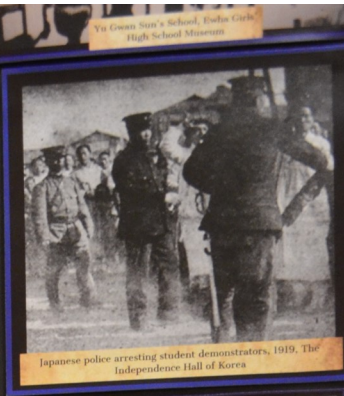
student protest...
proclamation of independence on March 1, 1919. She was arrested, but her professors at Ewha negotiated her release.



"Picture captured by Dr. Frank Schofield of the March 1, 1919 peaceful uprising outside Seoul City Hall." (The Birth of the Korean Independence Movement)



"Yu Gwan Sun." (Davies)



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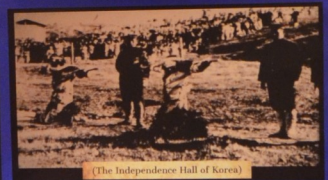
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(The Independence Hall of Korea)



"Woodblock used [in the] independence movement to produce Korean flags (taegukgi)." (Davies)



(Kang)

"Following the March 1st Independence Movement... another mass uprising took place at Auna Market in Chosun led by Yu Gwan-sun on April 1, 1919." (Kang)

"In retaliation for her [Yu's] rebellious actions, the Japanese burned her family's home to the ground. Her uncle, Yu Jungmu, went to the police headquarters to complain, carrying the body of his dead brother in protest. He served three years in prison for his actions," (Davies)

It would take weeks for the Japanese to forcefully end the protests. Two million Koreans participated in over fifteen hundred rallies, and by their resolution, seven thousand Koreans had been killed with forty six thousand arrested, including Yu Gwan Sun (H. Kim)



"South Korean Ceremony Song:
Song of the March First Movement"

"Lyrics: Jung in the Competition Park Tae Hyung 1946"
This song was created to commemorate the patriots of the March First Movement. (Hlee)

"Yu was arrested and convicted of sedition for her part in the resistance to Japanese rule." (Kang)



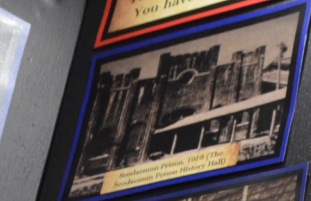
Yu Gwan Sun rejected the offer for her release at her admission of guilt. She was sentenced to five years in Seodaemun prison. Yu denounced the Japanese decision: "Your country has invaded and destroyed my country. You have no rights to judge me."



Trial Records of Demonstrators (The Independence Hall of Korea)

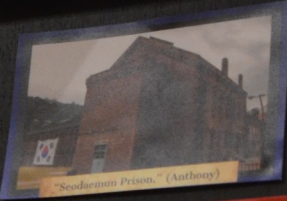
Despite being tortured, Yu refused to submit to the Japanese. "Yu demanded the release of other prisoners and continued to express her support for Korean independence. She shouted at her Japanese captors and, with other inmates, organized a large-scale protest on the first anniversary of the March First Movement." (Kang)

A Tragedy of Peaceful Resistance



"Their cells were... specifically designed for torture as they were approximately 3.3 square meters, making standing upright impossible." (Yu Gwan-Sun - The Unsung Heroes Who Fought for Independence). From underground confinement, Yu secretly documented her thoughts:

"Even if my fingernails are torn out, my nose and ears are ripped apart, and my legs and arms are crushed, this physical pain does not compare to the pain of losing my nation. My only remorse is not being able to do more than dedicating my life to my country."



"The March 1st Demonstrations, taking place in 1919, were one of the earliest displays of public resistance against Japanese occupation. Tens of thousands of Koreans were killed or injured during the protests, and many surviving activists were faced with the abysmal conditions of Seodaemun Prison." (Miller)

Yu Gwan Sun passed away in prison on September 28, 1920, when she was seventeen years old. After months of torture and beatings, Yu became a martyr for Korean independence, earning herself the title "Korea's Joan of Arc," (S.Kim). A fellow prisoner recounted her last words: "Japan will fall."

"We brought her body to our school. Students prepared her shroud with cotton cloth. However, we decided that she is our true hero and remade her shroud with silk. Japan only allowed her funeral in church quietly with only her class friends attending. The students demanded to go to her burial place also, but it was never permitted. The teachers consoled them. I, a student representative, and a homeroom teacher went to her burial place instead, but Yu Gwan Sun was never forgotten." - Jeannette Walter, principal of Ewha Women's University, 1920

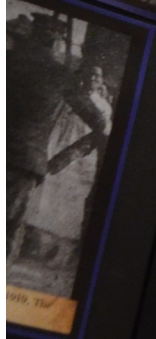


The Triumph of Korean Independence

Twenty-six years after the March First Movement, Korea was freed of Japan's rule.



"Demonstrators participate in the March 1 Independence Movement." (Schofield)



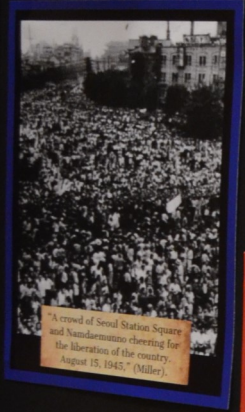
1919 3.1

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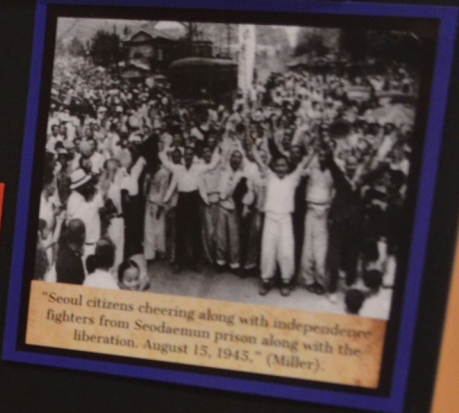
(New York Times)

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A crowd of Seoul Station Square and Namdaemun cheering for the liberation of the country. August 15, 1945." (Miller)

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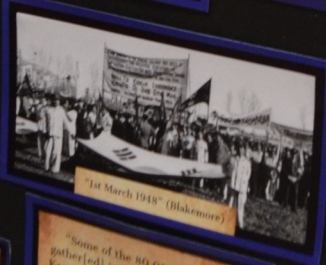
"Seoul citizens cheering along with independence fighters from Seodaemun prison along with the liberation. August 15, 1945." (Miller)

Though the March First Movement did not immediately achieve Korean independence, it was this spark of resistance that paved the way for Korean triumph. "The movement... crystallized a sense of national unity and was a catalyst for the resistance." (Kang, Inyoung)

"March First was the first mass protest of modern Korean nationalism, involving Koreans of every province, religion, class, and gender, and it marked a watershed in the evolution of Korean national identity and, more broadly, of modern Korean history," (Manela)

"Yu's efforts for independence and justice would presage the later nonviolent work of Mohandas K. Gandhi and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Junior... her name remains a source of strength and pride to Koreans even today, and has taken a place among the most beloved Korean patriots in Korean history." (Davies)

"The March 1st Independence Movement was a revolution without weapons. It was a challenge to achieve the impossible. It was also a pure student movement. They opened a new era in the history of revolutions."
— From Xin Chao (New Tide), a Peking University magazine, April 1, 1919



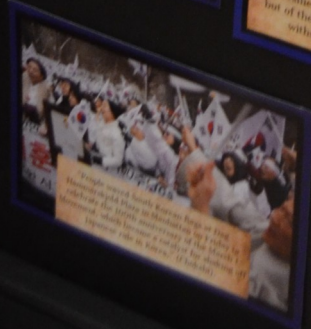
"1st March 1918" (Blakemore)

"...the movement tapped into the deep spiritual consciousness of the Korean people and unified ordinary citizens through a common vision of desiring to build a [a] nation of peace and harmony."
(The Birth of the Korean Independence Movement)

"The campaign for Korean independence is remembered as the most serious act of resistance to Japanese power of its time, and as a canonical example of conscious struggle against a foreign power." (Corby)

"Some of the 90,000 Koreans gathered [ed] in 1948 to commemorate Korea's Declaration of Independence (protest to Japan on March 1, 1919... Today, in South Korea, a reminder not just of the resilience of the Korean people, but of the years of occupation they withstood." (Blakemore)

"On March 1, 1962, the Korean government awarded Yu the Order of Merit for National Foundation... In 1996, Ewha Girls High School awarded her an honorary high school diploma. Yu's parents, Yu Jungkwon and Lee Soje, killed in the Ansan marketplace demonstration, received a presidential medal in 1993 and the Meritorious Patriot's Award in 1991." (Davies)



"A group of young Korean girls in 1919... the first day of the independence movement... the day of the independence protest to Japan on March 1, 1919... Today, in South Korea, a reminder not just of the resilience of the Korean people, but of the years of occupation they withstood." (Blakemore)

"The March First Movement is said to have inspired other leaders of peaceful resistance. Above all, Yu and the Koreans triumphed (despite their unsuccessful struggle) in demonstrating to the world their yearning for freedom through nonviolent protests — which became precursor to the Chinese May 4 Movement in 1919 at the Tiananmen Square, and inspired the likes of Mahatma Gandhi in India, who subsequently influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. in America. The woman opposite deserves a place in world history." (Hyung-oo Kim)

YU GWAN SUN AND THE MARCH FIRST MOVEMENT: THE TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY OF PEACEFUL RESISTANCE

Japanese Occupation

Under Japanese occupation since 1910, Koreans of the twentieth century experienced an unresolvable tragedy: thousands of Koreans were brutally killed. The March First Movement of 1919 made a martyr of the young activist Yu Gwan Sun, whose efforts would evoke the triumph of Korean independence.



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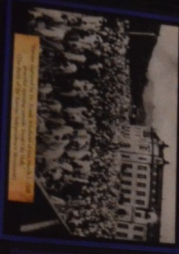
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