

My Dream Doesn't Stop!

Chris Moonkey Nam, Chairman of The Federation of Korean Associations, USA



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"People say that I
achieved the American
dream."

Probably no one was busier last year than Mr. Moonkey Nam, Chairman of the Federation of Korean Associations, USA. During his visit to Japan, China, and eight countries of Europe, he served the interests of the organization in his official leadership capacity. In addition to that extended trip, he also traveled to Korea and throughout the United States to encourage passage of the Korea-US FTA and to maximize results from political participation and the dual citizenship policy. To top it all off, even while doing the aforementioned things, he even wrote the book *Political Participa-*

Korean groups across the United States. You have to be a former or present president of a Korean association to become a member. There are currently about 1,700 members and we have two offices, one in Los Angeles and the other in Washington, D.C. The main duties of these offices are to support the member Korean associations as they protect the rights of the three million Koreans living in the United States, provide various services to the members, and facilitate exchanges between the Korean and United States governments.

Tell us about your projects and activities last year.

I did all kinds of things! In a nutshell, my activities could be summarized into three areas. First, I strengthened the network of ethnic Koreans around the world. Second, I endeavored to fortify the political voice of Koreans in the United States. And last, I worked to help Koreans in the United States claim their rights back in Korea.

Actually, the appointment of a Korean residing in LA to the position of Consul General was my

lines between about 170 local Korean associations with the support of Korean companies. As a result, we established a foundation to mutually connect Korean associations located not only in Korea itself, but also throughout the world. Afterwards, I visited eight countries in Europe to obtain an understanding of the difficulties Korean associations in these countries face, as well as to learn what overseas Koreans need, endeavoring to integrate this global network of Korean associations.

We assisted small and medium-sized Korean companies in their efforts to enter the American market by signing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with them. Also, we promoted and supported these companies through our base of 160 local Korean associations around the globe.

Among the MOUs we signed, the medical MOUs for Koreans residing in the United States were the most meaningful. I have witnessed many Koreans in the US who have become seriously ill due to overwork in their new country and needed medical care. To alleviate this problem, the Federation signed MOUs with the cities of Seoul, Busan and Daegu, as well as with Konkuk University, so that Koreans living in the US could seek medical care when visiting Korea.

The Federation's financial needs are partially met by membership fees. But to make up the difference, I sought and obtained support from overseas Korean foundations, thereby reinforcing our financial strength. I regard this as one of my proudest achievements.

I understand that you've held grant application seminars, too.

Although Korean associations and many groups located in the United States qualify for federal government grants, many of them have not received these benefits due to their lack of knowledge on the subject. This is despite the fact that these associations carry out many projects that support their local Korean communities. That's why one of the first projects I under-



1st World Korean Community Leader's Convention Committee

took was to hold a series of seminars to provide guidance on how to apply to the US government for grants. Many groups participated in these seminars and the feedback we received was very encouraging. Helping these members achieve financial stability and realize their goals is directly related to improving the lives of Koreans in the US. That is why I plan to continue these seminars on a regular basis for the benefit of the local Korean associations.

Last year, you published a book on political participation and the dual citizenship policy, along with a publishing ceremony held in South Korea.

Although many publications deal with political participation and dual citizenship of overseas Koreans, I saw the need for a book that clearly explains about effective measures to help overseas Koreans make their voices heard. That's why, after a long period of planning and research, I wrote and published the book *Political Participation and Dual Citizenship*. This was based on the belief that I had to methodically organize and communicate the messages that Koreans in the US want to express regarding the issues of political participation and dual citizenship, as well as the history of Korean immigration and related overseas policies. This ultimately led to the publishing ceremony at Sejong Cultural Center in Seoul at which about 5,000 people attended. I dare say that the fact that so many people turned up is proof that overseas Koreans have a strong desire for the proper implementation of policies targeted at overseas Koreans.

Furthermore, I've pub-

lished several autobiographical books, including *I Will Do Well, I Am Still Thirsty for Success, Let's Elect a Korean-American as President of the United States and The American Real Estate Market*. I plan to keep writing and am currently working on another book to support my fellow overseas Koreans.

I heard that you visited Korean associations in Europe.

I went to Europe in October of last year to meet with ethnic Koreans there and listen to their voices and invigorate the international network. The trip covered eight countries, including Great Britain, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Spain. I was honored to meet the presidents and members of the Korean associations in each country, as well as the respective Korean ambassadors. I listened to what they had to say and established closer relationships with them. During the journey, I met the prime minister of Luxembourg to discuss about Korea itself, about Koreans residing in the country, and regarding Korean language education. Throughout my travels, I was warmly welcomed and everywhere I went, people expressed their consensus view that we need to build a tightly-knit network of Koreans living around the globe who share with one another, and that this initiative requires a strong leader.

What are your future plans? I am currently one of the co-chairmen of the Leadership Conference for Koreans Overseas. As decided at a meeting held in Guangzhou, China, on March 12, the next conference will be

held June 11 - 13 in Beijing, China, opening the way for regularly scheduled conferences in the future. We expect that around three hundred representatives from around the world will participate in the event.

The Leadership Conference for Koreans Overseas was held for the first time in 1987, one year before the opening of the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul in order to support the successful holding of the Games. The Leadership Conference for Koreans Overseas, which had not met for a while, was last held by the Federation of Korean Associations, US, in May of last year at a Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. with the participation of government officials from Korea and the United States, as well as four hundred members.

My two-year term ends on May 28 of this year. Long ago, I arrived in the United States with only \$300 to my name, but with the help of Koreans in the US, I was able to build a company with annual sales of \$3 billion. I will continue to work for the rights and interests of Koreans in the United States even after my term ends. I endeavored for that goal before, I continue to endeavor for it now, and I will keep doing so in the future, too.

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3.1 Independence Day Ceremony sponsored by FKUSA

tion and Dual Citizenship, and held a book publishing event at the Sejong Cultural Center in Seoul. Chairman Moonkey Nam has played an important role in helping people around the world learn more about the Federation of Korean Associations, USA, and I interviewed him to find out about these activities and his future plans.

Tell us about the Federation of Korean Associations, USA.

The Federation of Korean Associations, USA, is a non-profit organization which oversees associations in eight regions of the US, as well as 170 other local

idea. Also, equal treatment of United States citizens of Korean ethnicity at Korean airports was my idea. Last year was very busy because I was working so hard to establish a new global Korean network, to improve the political voice and status of ethnic Koreans in the United States, and to ensure the best results from political participation and the dual citizenship policy.

The major activities during the beginning of my tenure included establishing a network to connect Korean associations and ethnic Koreans scattered around the globe.

To achieve this goal, we set up Internet telephone