

Repatriation

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

English Title Repatriation
Original Title Song Hwan
Korean Title 송환
Chinese Title 送還

Director KIM Dong-won
Country of Origin Korea (South)
Year of Production 2003
Released Date March 19, 2004
Genre Documentary
Category Humanism, Historical, Political
Running time 149 min.
Original Shooting Format DV Cam
Screening Format DV Cam, Digi-Beta, HD, 35mm, DVD, Beta
Screen Ratio 1:1.85
Length 15,000 ft.
Number of Reels 8 reels
Color Color, B&W
Sound Dolby SR
Language Korean with English Subtitles

Production P.U.R.N Production
Distribution INDIESTORY Inc.
Co-distribution Artplus Cinema Network
Int'l Sales and Marketing INDIESTORY Inc.
Distribution Support KOFIC

Repatriation

REVIEWS 1

Ultimately a story about the indomitable human spirit, **Repatriation** is an extraordinary chronicle of human drama in the context of political change, and a testament to those who stubbornly, and at tremendous cost, fight for what they believe in.

- Diane Weyermann, 2004 Sundance Film Festival

This deeply personal tale is neither conventional profile in courage nor routine political polemic, but rather a carefully balanced, constantly evolving portrait of life then and now on both sides of the world's only still-divided country.

The director KIM always keeps one eye fixed on a broader portrait of contemporary Korean society, offering a vivid sense of what it means to live in a divided nation and why the dream of reunification remains such an important one for so many Koreans on both sides of the border.

- Scott Foundas, Variety

How do men who have spent so long incarcerated reenter the outside world?

How is one affected by a cultural conversion four decades in the making?

KIM Dong-won narrates throughout the film, providing an insightful perspective.

- 2004 Amnesty Int'l Film Festival

The director has labored over the subject matter intensely, harbouring special love for his subjects. That evokes a lot of empathy from the audiences toward the film. The audiences is able to witness the director himself living side by side with the political prisoners, starting a chemical reaction with the audiences as the subject being shot and the subject shooting are revealed together.

Such a work is hard to achieve.

- CHO Young-kag, 2004 Jeonju Int'l Film Festival

How were these men able to survive thirty years of systematic torture?

And how have they gotten along since regaining their freedom?

This highly personal documentary fresco looks into these questions and many more besides.

- 39th Karlovy Vary Int'l Film Festival

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REVIEWS 2

The heart-scraping Korean doc **Repatriation** follows a group of elderly ex-prisoners jailed in the South for decades after being caught spying for the North. Tortured, many renounced Communism; upon release, those who remained unconverted lived (and sometimes dies) in the South before heading home, where they were hailed as heroes.

- Ed Park, *Village Voice*

Repatriation is awed by the steadfastness of the former prisoners, so much so that it chooses to tastefully ignore the fact that update of pro-Soviet propaganda, so out of touch with reality it would almost be humorous if it weren't the service of totalitarianism.

- Saul Austerlitz, *New York Press*

Trapped in the middle, between North and South, idealism and cynicism, KIM watches as the "grandpas" endure both intra-family conflicts and tearful reunions.

Repatriation is an emotional, complex, and conflicted cry from a divided country.

- Anthony Kaufman, *indieWIRE*

Repatriation is not ego-driven in the way that some recent American documentaries are, but it recognizes that any coherent appraisal of Korea's North-South problem and the wretched history of South Korean politics needs to be anchored in the changing subjectivity of an engaged observer. A film of great candour, this is the most searching account of modern Korean politics ever made.

- Tony Rayns, *23rd Vancouver Int'l Film Festival*

KIM's two-and-a-half hour film is a political, highly contemporary, meditative and, at the same time, exciting document of a cultural encounter.

- *47th Int'l Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film*

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SYNOPSIS Short Synopsis



In the spring of 1992, I, a film director, became acquainted with two long-term ‘unconverted’ political prisoners. Sent to South Korea as spies, they were arrested and spent thirty years in prison, serving out their sentences without renouncing their communist beliefs.

At that time, with no place to call home, they moved to our neighborhood. And drawn to their utterly un-spy-like demeanor, I subsequently filmed them for more than a decade.

By the end of the 1990s, relations between North and South Korea significantly improved, and even the most hardened unconverted cases were released. And my question of “How did these men survive the dehumanizing conversion process of systematic torture for more than 40 years?” had turned into “What awaited them in the outside world? And what was their final destiny?”

In the new millennium, President KIM Dae-jung’s presidency saw a growing movement to repatriate the long-term ‘unconverted’ political prisoners, especially those from the Korean War. In the year 2000, sixty-three former ‘unconverted’ prisoners were finally repatriated to the North.

And I tried to go to Pyongyang to meet them living in the North in vain. Instead CHO sends his heartwarming words saying that he thinks of me like a son.

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SYNOPSIS Long Synopsis 1

Spring of 1992, Two old men come to the village where I was living. They were unconverted long-term prisoners who were released after nearly 30 years of imprisonment for being a spy from North Korea. Between the two, I get along especially well with Mr. CHO Chang-son. CHO was sent to the south in 1962 with 6 others. One of them died and the rest of them were all arrested.

Fall of 1992, CHO meets with JIN Tae-yoon and KIM Young-sik, his converted colleagues who couldn't withstand the conversion scheme that was enforced in the prison. They show tears of remorse in front of CHO.

Especially, I am impressed by KIM Young-sik's simple and honest-looking face that is hard to make one believe that he was once a spy.

1993, With the inauguration of President KIM Young-sam, POW LEE In-mo is repatriated back North and the long-term prisoners have hope for returning home. However, both South and North Korean governments take advantage of this repatriation with political intentions that brings tension between both Koreas.

CHO gradually adjusts to the South Korean society. Many people begin to support the long-term prisoners and in turn these prisoners play a symbolic role in the reform movement in the South Korean society. However, on the other side, there are also many long-term prisoners who pass away due to old age and sickness. I'm struck with awe by their unshaken belief even in front of death.

Spring of 1995, Centering around POWs including HAM Sae-hwan, the Repatriation Committee is set up. I help them by filming those who hope to be repatriated and plan to send the tapes to North Korea with the help of Ishimaru Jiro, a Japanese journalist. However, the North rejects his entry due to food crisis experienced in the North. With this incident, Ishimaru begins to film North Korean defectors at Yanbian, China. During the process, his amicable feeling toward North Korea takes a different turn.

1996, I get arrested under the charge of having violated the National Security Act by making a film about long-term prisoners, who still refuse to convert. However, this incident draws me closer to the long-term prisoners.

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SYNOPSIS Long Synopsis 2



1998, As KIM Dae-jung government comes into power, there is an air of reconciliation between South and North and the possibility of repatriation for long-term prisoners seems to be imminent.

Late 1999, A 'Repatriation Committee for Unconverted Long-Term Prisoners' is set up and the repatriation movement develops in full-scale. However, rightist groups including the Union of Abductees' Families are still death-defiantly opposed to repatriation.

June 15, 2000, Joint statement of South and North Korea is announced that includes the repatriation of all unconverted long-term prisoners back to North. However, long-term prisoners including CHO are unexpectedly silent in response to the announcement. CHO visits KIM Young-sik and other converted colleagues to say goodbye. The converted ones who cannot return home feel remorse to the bones. CHO visits the shores of Ulsan where he lost his comrade while coming down South and takes a handful of earth to take back to the family of the deceased comrade.

Sept. 2, 2000, 63 unconverted long-term prisoners return to Pyongyang which they so longed to go back to in their dreams. CHO and other long-term prisoners are treated well as heroes in the North but are also mobilized to propagate the system. I try to go to Pyongyang to meet with CHO and other repatriated long-term prisoners but due to my failure in doing so, I ask another person to film them for me.

CHO sends his heartwarming words saying that he thinks of me like a son.

AND NOW, KIM Young-sik and other remaining converted long-term prisoners have annulled their conversion and are struggling for repatriation.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE



“Beliefs, Hope, Peace, Coexistence”

I want to speak about the walls that I've felt during meeting the long-term prisoners. I believe accepting these walls is an inevitable task for the unification of Korea. Unification cannot be achieved just by long-cherished desires or shouting it out loud. Even if unification is suddenly announced some day, it cannot be completed truly as long as these walls exist.

Long-term prisoners not only represent the conflict between South and North Korea but they also strongly remind us of what human beliefs really are. One's belief has the strong power that cannot be forcefully yielded by any system at all. And it's true that keeping one's belief is the same as maintaining the nobility of humanity.

This documentary tries to instill belief and hope for the peace and coexistence that overcomes the ideological differences.

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FESTIVALS & AWARD

Int'l Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (2004, The Netherlands)

Opening Film, UK Korean Film Festival (2004, UK)

Pusan Int'l Film Festival (2004, Korea)

Int'l Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film (2004, Germany)

One World Hong Kong (2004, Hong Kong)

'Dragons & Tigers', Vancouver Int'l Film Festival (2004, Canada)

'InFACT' Four City Theatrical Documentary Showcase (2004, USA)

Brisbane Int'l Film Festival (2004, Australia)

Era New Horizons Film Festival (2004, Poland)

Documentary Competition, Karlovy Vary Int'l Film Festival (2004, Czech Republic)

New York Human Rights Watch Int'l Film Festival (2004, USA)

Amnesty Int'l Film Festival USA (2004, USA)

Jeonju Int'l Film Festival (2004, Korea)

Freedom of Expression Award, Sundance Film Festival (2004, USA)

Special Screening (Juror's Film), Yamagata Int'l Documentary Film Festival (2003, Japan)

Grand Prize & Audience Prize, Seoul Independent Film Festival (2003, Korea)

Seoul Indie-Docu Film Festival (2003, Korea)

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PRODUCTION NOTE

12 Years of Production, 500 Hours of Filming

Ever since maintaining friendly relations with long-term prisoners from 1992, the production team recorded the process of repatriation and all the troubles and conflicts centered on it that resulted in 500 hours of filming.

The documentary not only presents the contemporary history of the Peninsula along with the personal histories of the long-term prisoners, it also contains interviews on the reality of conversion scheme carried out under government violence, the hard life after the release, South Korean supporters who struggled with them for repatriation, the serious conflicts inside the South Korean society, and the relationship between the director and the long-term prisoners.

The Only Divided Country on Earth, KOREA

After the liberation from Japanese Imperialism in 1945, Korea was divided into South and North. South Korea adopted capitalism and North Korea, communism. In extreme distrust and hostility resulting from the ideological conflict, any travel and communication between the two is prohibited.

2054 Years: 63 Unconverted Long-Term Prisoners' Sentenced Years

South and North Korea have sent thousands of spies to each other over the past 50 years. They collected information, abducted people and sometimes engaged in guerilla activities. The North Korean spies arrested in South Korea were sentenced to death or imprisoned for many years. Among them, some were released in advance having reluctantly chosen to convert through the violent conversion scheme enforced by South Korean government. However, most of them served their sentences as 'unconverted long-term prisoners' and if the sentenced years of the 62 unconverted long-term prisoners are all added up, they add up to 2054 years.

Repatriation in Half a Century

The years of division that continues almost half a century. Finally in 2000, North Korea's de-facto leader KIM Jong-Il visited Seoul and together with President Kim Dae-Jung, they adopted the 'June 15 Inter-Korean Joint declaration'. In September 2000, 62 unconverted long-term prisoners' long-awaited repatriation to North Korea is carried out. The unconverted long-term prisoners who were once young men are now old men with white hair.

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CAST 1

CHO Chang-son (age 72, prison term 30 years) – A Spy With Many Tears, Much Compassion

In 1962, he was sent to spy on the South where he was captured. Of ill health, he nearly died many times during his confinement but survived with the help of his comrades and his own strength of will. With lots of wit and a warm nature, he forms deep ties with many South Koreans after his release. Especially after his repatriation is confirmed, he sheds many tears due to his parting. Asking others if they have ever seen a spy with as many tears as himself, he is truly a compassionate man. He is a major character in this film.

KIM Suk-hyung (age 87, prison term 30 years) –Still Active In His Politics

In North Korea, he was a powerful, high-ranking government official. He is precise and tenacious in everything he does. Even after his release, he regards his political maneuver as ongoing and he speaks of the necessity of reunification and the self-esteem of North Korea every chance he gets. At times, his words can be difficult and feel tedious.

KIM Sun-myung (age 76, prison term 45 years) – Guinness Book World Record Holder For Longest Confinement

With a jovial and optimistic personality, he has many close friends both in prison and after his release. He gets along with people around him. It is his cheerfulness that got him through the difficult imprisonment. Born in the South, after his release, his family in the end rejects him. After much hesitation, he decides on repatriation. Recently, his life has been made into a feature film titled, <The Road Taken>.

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CAST 2

SHIN In-young (age 72, prison term 31 years) – The Shrewd, Intelligent Spy

Born in the South, he participated in student demonstrations from an early age due to the influence of his socialist grandfather. After graduating from North Korea's most prestigious KIM Il-sung University, he was part of the elite class. He was then sent to infiltrate the South on a political maneuver. Shrewd and intelligent, he wins the confidence and popularity of those around him with his logical eloquence. However, his logic is so thorough, it could sometimes be spiteful.

RYU Han-wook (age 90, prison term 36 years) – A Larger-Than-Life Man Who Called A Legendary Gangster 'Brother' In His Youth

In China, his physique and reflexes were as excellent as a professional boxer's. The oldest among the unconverted long-term prisoners, he developed high blood pressure in prison, half his body became paralyzed and he spent most of his term bedridden. However, in his youth, he was a close friend with the legendary gangster, 'the Lynx'. With a manly, magnanimous spirit, he was known for his great jokes but recently, due to old age, much is difficult for him. But the spirit in his eyes is stronger than any young man.

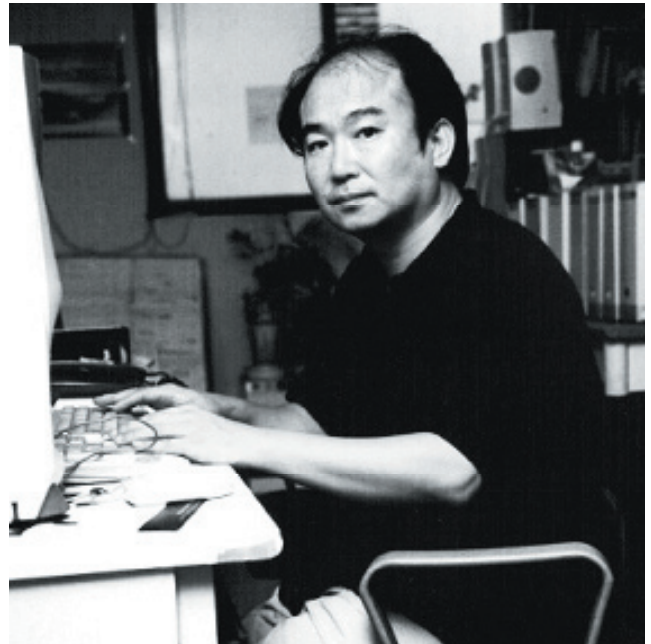
HAHM Sae-hwan (age 69, prison term 34 years) – A Most Popular Entertainer, A Righteous Man

An entertainer who dances and sings well. With a generous and refreshing personality, he is popular with many people. On the other hand, he is a righteous man who cannot hold himself back when he sees injustice done. A bachelor, he wanted to marry a woman from South Korea but after his repatriation, he started a family in North Korea.

Also appearing, members of the Association for Unconverted Long-term Prisoners

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DIRECTOR'S BIO/FILMOGRAPHY



Director: KIM Dong-won

Born in Seoul, Korea in 1955

Graduated from Sogang Univ. Dept. of Mass Communication.

Graduated from Graduate School of Sogang Univ., Dept. of Mass Communication

Began making documentary films after working as an assistant director on commercials productions in the 1980s. Founded documentary film collective P.U.R.N. Production in 1991, and has since produced and directed around thirty documentaries. Many of his works deal with people forced out of cities by redevelopment and other factors, the pro-democracy movement, and the schism between North and South Korea.

His **Sangye-dong Olympics (1988)** was screened at Berlin '89 (Forum) and Yamagata '91. Also a participant in Yamagata '99's New Asian Currents Special Program "Filming, Screening, Changing: Video Activism in Japan and Korea."

His other documentaries such as **Standing on the Edge of Death (1990)**, **The 6 Days Struggle at the Myong Dong Cathedral (1997)** has been presented at Berlin and Yamagata and other prestigious documentary film festivals.

As the former president of KIFV (The Association of Korean Independent Film and Video Makers), he has represented the history of Korean independent film. In 2003, he was invited to Yamagata again as a juror of the 'New Asian Currents' section and there he presented his most recent film, **Repatriation (2003)**. This film is the first Korean documentary invited to Sundance Film Festival.

A father of three adorable kids, he also teaches at the Korea National University of Art, School of Film & Multimedia.

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DIRECTOR'S BIO/FILMOGRAPHY

Filmography

- 1988 **Sangkeiy-dong Olympics** (documentary, video, 27min.)
Berlin Int'l Film Festival, Forum (1989, Germany)
2nd Yamagata Int'l Documentary Film Festival (1991, Japan)
- Three years' record of the struggle of poor residents in Sangkeiy-dong, deprived of their own places of living in 1988, a year of Seoul Olympics.
- 1990 **Standing on the Edge of Death** (documentary, video, 29min.)
2nd Yamagata Int'l Documentary Film Festival
Description of a harsh reality of Urban poor.
- 1993 **In the Forest of Media** (documentary, video, 36min.)
A work consisted with drama and documentary asking what TV means to us in this media era.
- 1994 **Haengdang-dong People** (documentary, video, 36min.)
One year after the redevelopment in Haengdang-dong, one of the poor districts in Seoul. Their agony, dream and hope of community return.
- 1995 **We'll Be One** (documentary, video, 36min.)
Through the late Reverend Moon's eventful visit to North Korea, this work inquires about the significance of reunification movement.
- 1997 **The 6 Days Struggle at the Myong Dong Cathedral** (documentary, video, 74min.)
Berlin Int'l Film Festival, Forum (1998, Germany)
Unpa Award (Best Documentary), 3rd Pusan Int'l Film Festival
- A record of the protests in the Myong Dong-Cathedral, which sparked off the famous 'June 1987 Struggle' in Korea.
- 1999 **Another World We Are Making** (documentary, video, 42min.)
5th Yamagata Int'l Documentary Film Festival
While the three years' struggle to keep their own village, the people in Haengdang-dong are looking for new hope by alternative community movement.
- 2001 **One Man** (documentary, video, 50min.)
Following the traces of Father Roberto SEO, who dedicated to the movement for democracy in Korea, this work shows how deep and profound the human spirit could be.

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PRODUCTION PROFILE

P.U.R.N Production

P.U.R.N. Production, founded in 1991, is one of the most active and progressive documentary production groups in Korea. Their presence in Korean independent documentary history is eminent. Over 13 years, they've tried to present balanced point of view of the history and society to the audience by producing and distributing a lot number of documentary videos dealing with various subject matters; reunification of Korea, labor, poverty, environment, sexual exploitation issues etc. Also believing in the power of media in reform movement, they've continued media education open to the public. With sponsorship of "P.U.R.N. Members' who support their activities, they're still exploring alternative documentary production and distribution.

CREDIT

Director, Producer	KIM Dong-won
Production	P.U.R.N. Production
Narration	KIM Dong-won
Assistant Director	JUNG Chang-young, GONG Eun-ju
Editing	KIM Dong-won, RYU Mi-rye
Photography	KIM Tai-il, JUNG Chang-young, CHANG Young-kil, OH Jung-hoon MOON Jung-hyun
Music Director	LEE Ji-eun
Composer	KIM Dong-bum, LEE Ji-eun
Sound	PYO Yong-soo
Sound Recording	MEDIACT
Coloring, effect	HONG Soo-dong, LEE Seung-ho (Jin Gong)
Art	LEE Hee-yong
Research Support	KWON Nak-ki, NAM Kyu-sun, KIM Hee-chul, JUN Woo-young KIM Chul-jin, SONG Deok-ho, KWON Oh-hyun, Ishimaru Jiro
English Translation	CHO Eung-joo, Minako Yoshida
Distribution	INDIESTORY Inc.
Co-distribution	Artplus Cinema Network
Int'l Sales and Marketing	INDIESTORY Inc.
Distribution Support	KOFIC

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