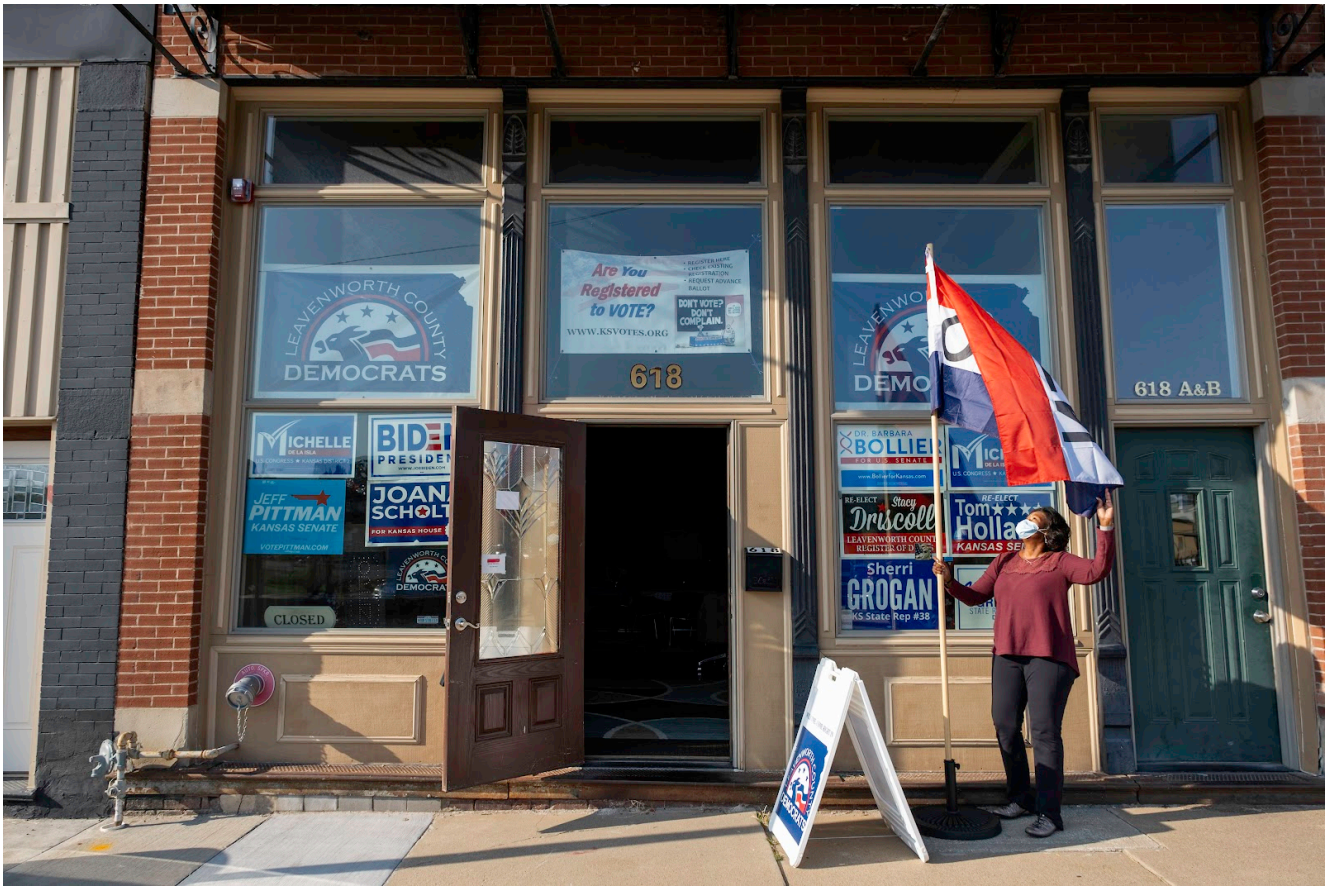
New Photo Essay by Arin Yoon: “Standing Up for Change”

Joana Scholtz wears her VOTE necklace on September 25, 2020 in Leavenworth, Kansas.



Joana Scholtz sets up the "open" flag at the Democratic party's headquarters on September 24, 2020 in Leavenworth, Kansas, in preparation for an evening of phone banking by an all volunteer staff.

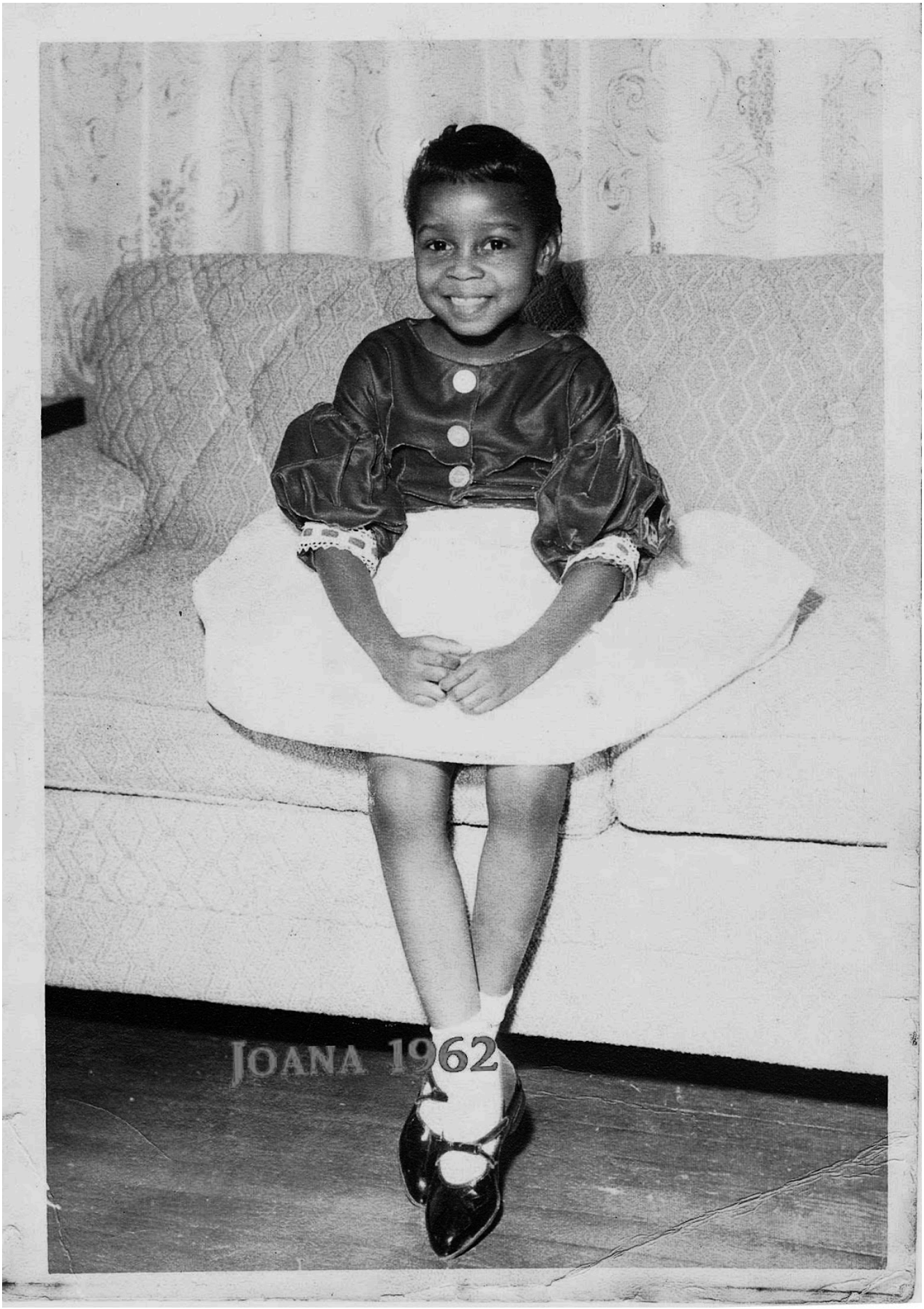
L: *Joana Scholtz points out the political leanings in different neighborhoods of District 40, outlined in red, on a map that shows how the borders have been gerrymandered, on September 22, 2020 at campaign headquarters in Leavenworth, Kansas.*

R: *Joana Scholtz discusses her next steps in a Zoom meeting with her staff which she refers to as her "Kitchen Cabinet" on September 22, 2020 at campaign headquarters in Leavenworth,*

Kansas.

My first encounter with Joana Scholtz was as I ran after her (and her husband, Rik Jackson) as they were exiting campaign headquarters and about to enter their car. I was on assignment photographing football fans on the first day of the NFL season and I was on the lookout for people decked out in the red and yellow Kansas City Ch**fs gear. Rik graciously obliged to be photographed and as we got to talking, Joana said she was running for the Kansas House of Representatives in District 40. I was excited to meet a political candidate and was surprised at how down to earth she was. I had always felt like politicians were out of reach, but with Joana, I felt like we could talk for hours.

I called her up not long after that chance meeting and asked her if I could document her campaign for a photojournalism workshop and to my surprise, she agreed and opened up her life to me. In that week, I learned a lot about local politics, what it means when a district is so clearly gerrymandered, and what a grassroots campaign looks and feels like. We recently caught up via Zoom and talked about her career in the military and foray into politics and her personal experiences as a Black officer in the Army in the 1980s.



Joana at the age of five in 1962 in Chicago, Illinois. Courtesy of Joana Scholtz.

Born in Mississippi, granddaughter of sharecroppers, at the age of four, Joana moved with her siblings and mom to Chicago with the Second Great Migration. Joana recalls, “When I was in college, I was going to be an Education major then I found out at the end of first semester that when you graduated and actually got a job that the salary was so low that you qualified for food stamps. And, you know, after my mother and my stepfather got divorced, we were living on welfare in the projects, getting food stamps and I was always embarrassed by that. So there is no way I was going to get a college education and wind up back on food stamps.”

So, in 1979, as a sophomore at Knox College, she joined the ROTC and was commissioned as an intelligence officer because she knew that the military was one of the few professions where men and women were paid the same amount. That sealed the deal.

Joana Scholtz on ROTC maneuvers exercise at Knox College in 1979 in Galesburg, Illinois. Courtesy of Joana Scholtz.

Joana Scholtz and her best friend Lenore Ivy at their Captain promotion ceremony while attending the Officer Advanced Course at the Military Intelligence Center and School in July 1983 at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Courtesy of Joana Scholtz.

Joana found community and mentorship with other Black officers. “I think as a general rule, people do seek their own just for the comfort and the support of somebody who understands your journey.” She soon realized that many of her Black peers were being “recycled” through the Officer Basic Course and saw it as a systemic problem. “Military intelligence was a really segregated branch. They were not necessarily welcoming to Black officers. There was a lot of fear of failure from the Black officers. And there was a lot of frustration because there wasn’t a lot of feedback. Although Jim Crow was over and the military was integrated, people’s minds weren’t necessarily integrated.” Being a woman in the military also brought about its own challenges. “You dealt with a lot of sexual harassment. In 1979, there were no sexual harassment laws. And when a woman complained, it was often blamed on the woman. And she was either blackballed or sent to another unit. The consequences were for women because you were in a male environment.”

Joana Scholtz with her Combined Arms Services and Staff School group in 1996 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Courtesy of Joana Scholtz.

When asked about her greatest accomplishment while in the military, she says, “You know a lot of people would look at awards as a greatest achievement. But for me, my greatest achievement was getting beyond the self, getting beyond my own struggle, getting beyond looking at what I needed to achieve to realize that leadership is about taking care of people. For me, that was my biggest growth and my biggest achievement- to realize that my soldiers really did come first. As an officer, you gotta be successful. You gotta meet all of these criteria and goals and standards and whatnot. That’s just part of being an officer, but really understanding that it’s the people you lead, whether it’s wartime or in peacetime, it’s how you accomplish the mission as a group. And how people feel when they finish accomplishing the mission. If I have a soldier who

works for me and he or she is no better off after working for me, then I haven’t done my job.”

Joana and Steven Scholtz on their wedding day on December 19, 1985 in Lyngby, Germany. Courtesy of Joana Scholtz.

In 1983, Joana met Steven Scholtz, who was her sponsor when she arrived in Germany. “From the moment we met, we knew each other. We started hanging out on the weekends and we would always talk about who we were going to date and then we kind of realized we weren’t dating anybody but each other. We got married in 1985. Back then there were very few couples where the woman was Black and the man was White. And I remember the first time we walked into a Hail and Farewell, the whole room hushed. Other times, people who would be talking to us and they would be like, ‘Where’s your wife? Where’s your husband?’ They were more uneasy than we were.”

L: *Joana Scholtz speaks with women at a luncheon with the Leavenworth-Lansing Chamber of Commerce Women’s Division on September 22, 2020 at the Community Center in Leavenworth, Kansas.*

R: *Joana Scholtz reaches out and briefly squeezes the hand of one of her constituents during the luncheon with the Leavenworth-Lansing Chamber of Commerce Women’s Division on September 22, 2020 at the Community Center in Leavenworth, Kansas.*

Joana became pregnant with her son Alex in 1987. “Steven and I had made a pact before we got married, that if we had a child while we were on active duty, one of us would get out. I assumed it would be him. I had no idea he assumed it would be me. And so when we actually had the conversation when I was

about five or six months pregnant and he said, ‘Well, when are you going to let them know you’re resigning your Commission?’ and I thought, ‘What do you mean? I was waiting for you.’ And so we flipped the coin. I mean, I totally trusted him and he totally trusted me. So we had to have a tiebreaker. We often had to go to the flip of the coin. I couldn’t believe I lost the toss. But, if you lose the toss, you’ve got to honor it. Maternity leave was six weeks. And the military really wasn’t equipped. I don’t think the military had thought through the consequences of having women, in their prime childbearing ages, and the effect on mission readiness.” Joana got out on December 31, 1987 and eventually went on to work in education in 1998, as a teacher and then as an instructional facilitator. Steven passed away in 2016 only 17 months after being diagnosed with terminal brain cancer.

Joana Scholtz waves at a neighbor while crossing the street with her yard sign, on September 25, 2020 in Leavenworth, Kansas.

A year later, Joana retired. She realized that her community desperately needed change. She reopened the Leavenworth NAACP

chapter. Not long after, she decided to run for the Kansas House of Representatives seat in District 40 because no one in the Democratic party was challenging the incumbent. “I had no idea that campaign would be so vicious.” At a voter registration event with Buffalo Soldiers on Fort Leavenworth, a military installation which forbids all political and partisan campaigning under the Hatch Act, a candidate from the Republican party arrived with his campaign team dressed in campaign gear. Someone told him that he would have to leave and come back after he changed. Joana was shocked when the next day, a story circulated on Facebook that the angry Ms. Scholtz had something to do with it. She couldn’t believe that he was trying to exploit the angry Black woman narrative to justify his overstepping the rules.

Joana Scholtz wears her “Stand with Joana Scholtz” mask while canvassing on September 23, 2020 in Lansing, Kansas. She speaks for a long time with a swing voter and her husband, a Republican. “How do you feel about second amendment rights?” is the first question asked. The couple agrees to hold on to a yard sign while they research her platform. They will return

the sign if they decide not to put it in their yard.

She realized then that “there was no requirement for truth in campaigning. And when you’re in a district like mine, which is basically white middle class Republican, they’re drinking the Kool-Aid. And it’s really hard to overcome that group think.” As I followed her on the campaign trail, I met her campaign manager, Rebecca Hollister, a college student at Georgetown University who was voted Young Dem of the Year in Leavenworth. Despite the generational difference, they were a perfect match, united in their desire to make positive changes in their community. Joana lost the election by a small margin, but it didn’t stop her from continuing her work to stand up for change on a community level. Speaking about Rebecca, Joana says, “She’s just a hard worker and I felt so bad when we lost. I felt worse for her than for myself because she fought so hard for me.”

L: *Joana Scholtz embraces her campaign manager, Rebecca Hollister, after hearing the election night results on November 3, 2020 in Lansing, Kansas.*
R: *Table centerpiece at Joana Scholtz’s election watch party on November 3, 2020 in Lansing, Kansas.*

Joana is now the Chairperson of the Leavenworth Democratic Committee and is working to increase voter registration. “We didn’t register as many people in disenfranchised areas as we would have liked to because a lot of them don’t want to use technology to register, but they don’t want to use paper because you have to write down your license. There’s a greater

amount of suspicion about the government in lower economic areas. And that's just something that you have to just keep going and overcoming and get people to realize that their voices count."

Joana Scholtz calls registered Democrats who have not yet voted up until the polls close at the Leavenworth Demcratic Party Headquarters on November 3, 2020 in Leavenworth, Kansas.

"My biggest focus with the NAACP right now is getting our youth up and going, but as a chapter, we really want to focus on economic development and economic wellness in our community because people talk about jobs, but if you work all your life and you have no savings at the end of it or you're always in debt and struggling, then you never experience that sense of wellness. And so we want people to understand that, regardless of your income, the goal is to reach a sense of wellness where you're paying your bills and you're putting a little bit aside. And also really starting to look at what jobs are in the community and where there is systemic racism in employment in our community. And being able to have those difficult conversations with people that make them aware of the need to

make changes and then persistently helping them make those changes."

Joana Scholtz checks her messages on her watch as she gets her hair done before a Zoom fundraiser on September 23, 2020 in Leavenworth, Kansas.

"The other thing is introducing a culturally sensitive curriculum to our school systems. Right now, it's what's easy. Like if a teacher has a curriculum for *To Kill a Mockingbird*, they're perfectly comfortable using that during Black History Month to demonstrate the struggles of Black people not realizing that that particular movie or book is extremely traumatic for Black students who are sitting in the class hearing the word n***er over, over, over, over throughout the book. And the theme of the violence against Black people and the expectation that it has no meaning. You know, it's more comfortable for that teacher to dust off that curriculum every year and use it, than find something more relevant." Reflecting back on this past year with the Black Lives Matter movement, the murders of George Floyd and Vanessa Guillen, and the recent storming of the Capitol, she says, "I think the

world is starting to figure it out. They're having to see what's always been there but it's always been kind of behind a thin veil. But that veil of civility has been ripped apart. It's really evident."

L: *Joana Scholtz checks herself in her rear view mirror before heading out to go door to door and on September 23, 2020 in Leavenworth, Kansas.*
R: *Joana Scholtz celebrates the 22nd birthday of her granddaughter Jasmine Moody, with husband Rik Jackson, daughter Jacquanette Moody, and granddaughter's boyfriend Harrison Horton at her home in Leavenworth, Kansas on September 24, 2020. Her son Alex Scholtz and son-in-law Justin Moody join in via Facetime. She says, "you know what kind of life you lead by who's at your table."*

Don't Erase My History and Don't Sell My Picture

A photo essay on the ongoing struggle of Korean "comfort women"

Kim Hwa Seon Halmoni looking out, House of Sharing, Gwangju,

South Korea, 2010

In 2010, I visited The House of Sharing, a residence and nursing home outside of Seoul, South Korea, for former Korean “comfort women.” It was founded in 1992 by funds raised by Bhuddist organizations and civic groups. “Comfort women” is a euphemism for females (mostly teenagers) who were forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War. These days, Koreans endearingly refer to them as “halmonis” (grandmothers). Despite the overwhelming number of testimonies and historical evidence to support their claims, no acceptable apology or legal reparations have been offered by the Japanese government. The idea for these portraits began when I got involved in creating a memorial for the halmonis. The memorial, now completed, is the first one dedicated to such women in the Western world.

Lee Yong Soo and Lee Ok Seon Halmonis visit the memorial, Palisades Park, NJ, 2011

Chinese soldier with Korean ‘comfort women’ after they were liberated by US-China Allied Forces, Songshan, Yunnan Province, China. September 3, 1944 Photo by Charles H. Hatfield, U.S. 164th Signal Photo Company, US National Archives

Kang Il Chul Halmoni in her room, House of Sharing, Gwangju, South Korea, 2010

Kang Il Chul Halmoni looked up from her chair as locks of her short curly hair floated to the floor. I bowed: “Annyeonghaseyo.” Kang Il Chul Halmoni was born in 1928 in Sangju, a town in southern Korea. In 1943, when she was 16, a military officer abducted her. She was taken to Manchuria, where she was forced to work in a Japanese military “comfort

station”. Fortunately, Korean independence fighters rescued her. After the war, she remained in China and later served as a military nurse for Korean communist troops. Upon her discharge, she moved to Jilin City and married a Chinese man. She returned to Korea in 2000.

Walking outside, I saw Lee Ok Seon Halmoni sitting on a bench under the statue of a young girl wearing a hanbok, her face framed in a white halo of hair looking at the distant mountains. “Don’t take my picture,” she said. I put down my camera.

Lee Ok Seon Halmoni in the doorway, House of Sharing, Gwangju, South Korea, 2010

But over the next day, the halmonis gradually warmed up to me. They began asking me questions about my life in America. They told me stories, summarized the latest television dramas, and showed me their garden. I painted their nails, we listened to music, and looked through their albums together.

Kim Hwa Seon Halmoni insisted that I take a picture of her in her hanbok. But after she lay down to get a massage from a young mother and her two daughters, she closed her eyes. “Maybe you should just take one of those pictures on my wall, one where I’m wearing a hanbok.”

Kim Hwa Seon Halmoni with visitors, House of Sharing, Gwangju, South Korea, 2010

Hours before sunrise, I awoke from the tapping on the hollow gourds keeping rhythm with the monks’ prayers. I thought of the things the halmonis had told me, and what I’d read in my research. “I was poor and hungry.” “I was taken from my own home.” “She was sold by her father, twice.” “Stricken with typhoid fever, she was taken to be cremated alive.” “If I didn’t do what they said, they would slash your clothes and

shove the knives into your private parts.” “It was no place for humans.”

I closed my eyes. The tapping and prayers intensified.

Kim Soon Ok Halmoni in her room, House of Sharing, Gwangju, South Korea, 2010

In Korea, there is a concept of a collective emotion called “han,” a word that embodies the sentiments of Koreans having been colonized, a kind of unity that is inherent in their collective sorrow, a darkness from where beauty can emerge.

When students protest with the halmonis in front of the Japanese embassy every Wednesday, it is with this sense of han. It is their history too.

As a Korean woman, this project was motivated not only by this same desire, but also in hopes of creating a visual narrative about their lives beyond their victimhood. I realize that it’s more than just revisionist history that threatens their cause, it is also the sensationalism around their experiences that people try to fuel their own causes, like a photographer who profited off their images, or an activist who used their money to advance her political career.

It has been exactly a decade since I shot this series. There were 63 known Korean survivors in 2010. Today, only eighteen remain.

Park Ok Seon Halmoni and umbrellas, House of Sharing, Gwangju, South Korea, 2010