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The PCI News



2025 Project Bridge Graduation

Project Bridge is a year-long youth leadership and exchange program by the Pacific Century Institute in Los Angeles (8), the Korea Society in New York (8), and the Mansfield Center in Montana (8). Each year, the 24 high school students selected as Youth Ambassadors explore leadership, cultural identity, and Korean society. The highlight is a fully funded 10-day study tour to South Korea, where students connect with local peers and leaders, gaining firsthand cultural insight. The program culminates in an expert topic presentation, where students showcase their research and share their vision as globally minded, cross-cultural leaders.



((Left to Right) 2024-2025 Project Bridge Youth Ambassadors Joel Nam; Bryan Lopez; Ashley Yu; Evelyn Diaz; Yarel Mendez; Abdalrham Sheer; Kezia Arajuo; and Logan Li, Pacific Century Institute HQ in Los Angeles, California)

The 32nd Project Bridge Youth Ambassadorship Program concluded for its Los Angeles participants on Saturday, June 28, at the Pacific Century Institute Headquarters.

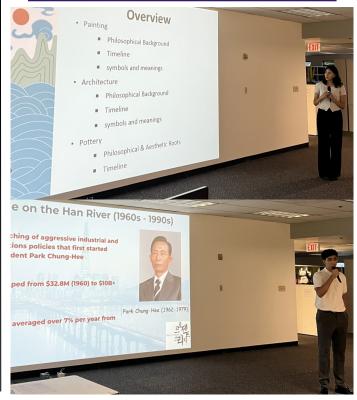
This year's graduation opened with congratulatory remarks from Consul General Youngwan Kim of the Republic of Korea in Los Angeles. Following his address, each Youth Ambassador delivered an expert presentation on a topic of their choice, with subjects including *The Korean Wave (Hallyu), Life in North Korea, The Korean Education System, Religions in Korea,* and more.

Throughout the program, the Youth Ambassadors studied a wide range of Korea-related subjects—ranging from premodern Korean history, culture, and society to modern Korea, including the Korean War and its aftermath—prior to

their study tour. The curriculum also emphasized the importance of race relations in the United States, highlighting the causes and consequences of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots. The graduation program continued with a Q&A session, during which the Youth Ambassadors shared reflections on both the program and the study tour. The ceremony concluded with congratulatory remarks from Mr. Spencer Kim, cofounder of the Pacific Century Institute.

Through programs such as Project Bridge, the Pacific Century Institute remains committed to fostering cross-cultural understanding, leadership development, and dialogue between the peoples of the Pacific.

Follow us on Instagram @Project_Bridge_ to stay updated on the Project Bridge program!



((Top) '25 PB YA Evelyn Diaz presenting Korean Visual Arts; (Bottom) Abdalrhman Sheer presenting on Korea's Economic Development, Chatsworth, California)



Board Member Opinion Editorial

This reflection by PCI board member, Dr. Siegfried Hecker, appeared on the website the Bulletin on August 6, 2025.

Reflections on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 80 years on By Siegfried S. Hecker

Thirty years ago, as director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, I wrote an essay on the 50th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In that piece (which can be found here), I had questions about the decision to use the atomic bomb that I couldn't answer: Was it necessary? Was it right? It just wasn't possible, three decades later, to put myself in President Truman's shoes as he made those fateful decisions.

Instead, I answered two other questions: Did we learn from the bombings, and where do we go from here?

I concluded that we had learned, but we must keep the horrid images of the destruction in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in front of us as a stark reminder, so we continue to address current-day nuclear dangers, making it possible for people to look back on the 100th anniversary of the bombings and say the Manhattan Project turned out all right. Now, 80 years on, I am concerned we are on the wrong path—instead of continued learning about the dangers of nuclear war, we are unlearning the most important lessons.

During the first 50 years of nuclear weapons—despite J. Robert Oppenheimer's concern about an atomic apocalypse, shown so dramatically in the final scene of Christopher Nolan's film Oppenheimer—we are all still here. Although we had close calls—the Cuban Missile Crisis, a variety of nuclear weapons accidents, and serious health and environmental concerns resulting from the US-Soviet arms race—a global nuclear order had evolved. It consisted of a combination of norms, agreements, treaties, institutions, and practices. Briefly stated, during that evolving order, nuclear weapons were not again used in war; there was only limited proliferation of nuclear weapons; no nuclear terrorism occurred; and the public saw significant benefits from peaceful nuclear technologies such as nuclear electricity and nuclear medicine. By 1991, the Doomsday Clock was set at 17 minutes to midnight to reflect a much-reduced nuclear threat, which had changed in character, from nuclear weapons in the hands of the Soviet government to nuclear weapons, materials, and experts getting out of the hands of the Russian government and other states of the former Soviet Union.

That global nuclear order would not have been possible without cooperation between the two nuclear superpowers, the

Soviet Union and the United States, even while they were engaged in intense Cold War competition. Likewise restraint was necessary, through arms control agreements and other measures intended to accompany mutual deterrence and make war less likely. Cooperation was particularly crucial to ensure the safety and security of the Soviet Union's tens of thousands of nuclear weapons and millionplus kilograms of fissile material as the country broke up, creating political, economic, and societal trauma. But cooperation was also necessary among the rest of the world's nations to support the global nuclear nonproliferation regime, prevent nuclear terrorism, and expand the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies.

A fast-forward to 2025 brings us into a much more dangerous world—the Doomsday Clock is set at 89 seconds, the closest it has ever been to midnight. After more than a decade of close cooperation with the United States, Russia began to chart its own course, bristling under what Russian President Vladimir Putin called in a 2007 Munich Security Conference speech[1] America's "hyper exceptionalism." President Xi Jinping decided to abandon China's decades-long policy of minimal nuclear deterrence, embarking on a significant buildup of his country's nuclear forces. India and Pakistan entered the nuclear weapons club with a flurry of nuclear tests in 1998, increasing the stakes of conflict in South Asia. North Korea developed a nuclear arsenal that threatened not only South Korea and Japan, but also the United States. After the Trump administration withdrew from a nuclear deal in 2018, Iran reduced the breakout time required to produce bomb-grade uranium to weeks, prompting Israel, supported by the United States, to strike its nuclear facilities this June.[2]

Russia and the United States systematically abandoned nuclear arms restraints. Frustrations with what they considered a lack of progress toward disarmament, in 2017 a sufficient number of states signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in 2021, driving an even deeper wedge between the nuclear-weapons and non-nuclear-weapons states.

The most serious fracture in the decades-long global nuclear order came when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Much of the concern about that conflict focused on President Putin and his government threatening to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine or Europe. But the cracks in the nuclear order went much deeper.[3] Russia broke the security guarantee it signed in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which had convinced Ukraine to return to Russia the Soviet-era nuclear weapons it inherited. The security guarantee and numerous other international agreements, treaties, and organizations



Board Member Opinion Editorial

were essential components of the nonproliferation regime.

As part of the nuclear order, Russia had over the years become an important member of global organizations that worked to prevent nuclear terrorism. Russia had also traveled a long and positive road to recovery in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy after the 1986 Chernobyl reactor disaster. It greatly improved its regulatory system, cooperating with the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission and with other members of the nuclear industry. Russia agreed to down-blend 500 metric tons of highly-enriched uranium from its military complex for nuclear reactor fuel in the United States—a splendid example of swords-to-plowshares cooperation. In the process, it also established itself as an essential part of the global nuclear fuel supply chain, possessing some 40 percent of the world's uranium enrichment capacity. Russia was poised to become a major exporter of nuclear power plants. It was a respected member of most international nuclear organizations, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

With the invasion of Ukraine, all is now either gone or under stress. When Russia invaded Ukraine, its soldiers pilfered material from the contaminated exclusion zones of the destroyed Chernobyl reactor in what constituted a case of statesponsored nuclear terrorism. Even more egregious was Russia's shelling of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine, followed by its efforts to force Ukrainian reactor operators to work at gunpoint.

Rebuilding the necessary global nuclear order, which we must, is one of today's defining global challenges. We will need China to step up while we wait for Russia to hopefully return to behaving like a respected nuclear power. Perhaps an even more serious threat to the global nuclear order are the wounds the current US administration has inflicted on our country. It is destroying our system of alliances and friendships around the world. It is adopting many of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 recommendations to shape a different future for our national scientific and technical enterprise—recommendations that are dramatically at odds with what made America great.

At the end of World War II, the scientific and technical foundations for America's success were based on the recommendations of Vannevar Bush, director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, in his 1945 report to President Truman, "Science, the Endless Frontier." [4] That report advocated building on the Manhattan Project's demonstration of how the government, universities, and scientific communities can work together to achieve critical national goals and, in

turn, help build America's economic and military might.

What made the United States the envy of the world and the favorite destination for many of the world's most gifted people was a combination of robust democracy and the use of soft power side-by-side with military might. But after nearly 80 years of a rules-based, liberal international order in which America and the Western world flourished, the current administration has tilted toward illiberal semi-democracy, with trade war-creating tariff increases and the unraveling of alliances, at a time when challenges from Russia and China underscore this country's need for allies and friends. America's global role in leading the world toward peace and prosperity must be underpinned by leadership in science and technology. Bush's blueprint for US science policy called for robust federal investment in basic research, largely at universities and through nonpartisan mechanisms. Science was viewed as a public good essential to the nation's economic, security, and health enterprises. His vision led to the creation of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and influenced the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and defense organizations that championed the importance of dual-use technologies to benefit not only the military but the broader economy. Science was viewed as independent, curi-

These are no less necessary as pillars of future America greatness than they have been for 80 years.

osity-driven, and essential to a strong, educated democracy,

with the government as an enabler and protector of free sci-

entific inquiry.

The Project 2025 blueprint would create a paradigm shift. It calls for political oversight, particularly to curb perceived liberal dominance in science. Scientific institutions must be ideologically accountable, and government should not fund science that conflicts with so-called conservative principles. Federal institutions are viewed as biased by deep state actors and slated for major reductions. The project's view of American universities couldn't be more different from Bush's vision. They are described as ideologically captured institutions, an enemy of the state. Rather than promoting robust funding of scientific research, federal funding would come only with ideological scrutiny.

During the 2024 presidential campaign, Trump tried to distance himself from the Project 2025 blueprint. But the actions of his administration to date appear frighteningly aligned with it. Key scientific agencies—the NSF, NASA Science, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the Centers

(Cont. Page 5)



PCI Programs

Korea Peace Academy

The 2025 Korea Peace Academy launched its lecture series on June 25, 2025, with over 40 participants in attendance.



(Wendy Cutler, Vice President, Asia Society Policy Institute, , Seoul, Korea)

Lecture 1 - Jeong Se-hyun: "Can North and South Korea Meet Again?"

Former Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun assessed the current state of inter-Korean relations and prospects for renewal. While acknowledging growing tensions—particularly after North Korea's declaration of a "two-state, hostile posture" he stressed that improvement is still possible. Drawing on examples from the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations, Jeong illustrated how sustained engagement can reverse periods of strain.

He noted recent signs of goodwill, including North Korea's halt to loudspeaker broadcasts following President Lee Jaemyung's suspension of anti-Pyongyang broadcasts. Jeong suggested that reviving U.S.-North Korea dialogueespecially by tapping into President Trump's openness to engagement—could help lay the groundwork for a future Lee-Kim summit.

Lecture 2 - Moon Chung-in: "The 2025 New Government's Korean Peninsula Strategy"

Professor Moon Chung-in explored the Korean Peninsula's place within a turbulent global order. He characterized current geopolitical crises—Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Israel-Gaza conflict, strikes on Iran, India-Pakistan clashes, and U.S. tariff wars—as the actions of "monsters" exploiting a power vacuum left by the weakening of U.S. hegemony and the rise of a multipolar system.



(Wendy Cutler, Vice President, Asia Society Policy Institute, Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea)

Moon stressed that Korean Peninsula peace and prosperity are directly linked to these global shifts. While acknowledging small steps—such as halts to leaflet scattering and loudspeaker broadcasts—he was skeptical about short-term breakthroughs. He urged a creative response to Kim Jong-un's "two nations, two hostile states" declaration, warning that the Lee administration faces formidable domestic and international challenges. To succeed, he said, diplomacy must be pragmatic but anchored in a clear, long-term vision, not short-term opportunism.

Lecture 3 – Chung Eui-yong: "Negotiating with Trump: Experiences"

Former National Security Office Director and Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong reflected on his experiences working with President Moon Jae-in to engage Donald Trump. He emphasized that Moon's approach, rooted in the South Korea-U.S. alliance, was guided by four key traits:

- 1. Thorough preparation diligently reviewing extensive materials before meetings
- 2. Consideration and humility respecting and understanding the other party
- 3. Consistent principles maintaining steady positions
- 4. Praise and gratitude expressing appreciation throughout

Chung urged the current government to apply these lessons in re-engaging Trump and advancing the Korean Peninsula peace process.





Board Member Opinion Editorial (Cont.)

Reflections on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 80 years on (continued from page 3)

for Disease Control and Prevention—are slated for cuts of 40 percent and more. Likewise, scientific institutions and universities are increasingly exposed to conservative ideological litmus tests.

Why is an independent American research enterprise important to preserving a global nuclear order? It's because our nation's leadership in the nuclear sphere, be it for military or civilian purposes, depends critically on our global leadership in science and technology. The Project 2025 blueprint would move us dramatically backwards and out of a leadership position.

As we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Manhattan Project, we must keep in mind that it not only produced the first atomic bombs but also fundamentally restructured the relationship between science, government, and the military in the post-war world. It ushered in university-government partnerships and catalyzed postwar civilian technologies. It was the real-world proof that "Big Science" funded by the government can serve the nation. The Big Science model was institutionalized after the war with the establishment of multidisciplinary institutions like the Los Alamos, Lawrence Livermore and Sandia national labs, along with a suite of civilianfocused Atomic Energy Commission laboratories. It was as much the critical assembly of talent—largely from Europe, which many of the world's greatest scientists fled to escape Hitler's and Mussolini's reigns of terror—that led to the Manhattan Project's success as the critical assembly of nuclear material.[5] It was the coming of age of American physics, demonstrating that large-scale, interdisciplinary, government -funded research could yield transformative national outcomes.[6] It gave scientists not only influence but also new ethical responsibilities[7] and resulted in the establishment of The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and the Federation of American Scientists.

Indeed, the outlook for the nuclear world today is much more troubled than when I looked back at the 50-year commemoration of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. We are in danger of forgetting the horrors of that destruction. We have unlearned the most important lessons about the need for cooperation and for mutual restraint. Russia presents the most immediate challenge to the global nuclear order, because its unjustified, brutal war in Ukraine has torn the order's fabric. But the paradigm shift we are currently seeing in the United States and other major powers— toward renewed nationalism, emphasizing a more emphatically sovereigntist

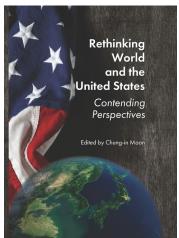
tilt than before the advent of globalization and a rules-based international order—may present the greater long-term challenge. This is especially so in America, where we are tearing down the pillars of our success—governmental, nonpartisan support of science and universities—that have served us well since 1945. These changes will impede our ability to rebuild the global nuclear order and prevent a nuclear apocalypse.

- [1] http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034
- [2] https://thebulletin.org/2025/07/time-for-iran-to-make-a-no-enrichment-nuclear-deal/
- [3] https://thebulletin.org/2022/04/siegfried-hecker-putin-has-destroyed-the-world-nuclear-order-how-should-the-democracies-respond/#post-heading [4] Bush, Vannevar. Science, the Endless Frontier: A Report to the President. Washington, D.C.: Office of Scientific Research and Development, 1945. [5] Hoddeson, L. et al. Critical Assembly: A Technical History of Los Alamos During the Oppenheimer Years, 1943–1945, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 1993..
- [6] Kevles, Daniel J. The Physicists: The History of a Scientific Community in Modern America. Harvard University Press, 1978.
- $\slash\hspace{-0.6em}$ [7] Rhodes, Richard. The Making of the Atomic Bomb. Simon&Schuster, United States, 1986.

PCI Board Members, Founders and Fellows often contribute to the media. The opinions expressed are solely those of the individuals involved and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Pacific Century Institute.

Book Release

Rethinking World and the United States: Contending Perspectives



The essays in this volume were prepared for Yonsei University's Center for North Korean Studies James T. Laney Distinguished Professorial Lectures program in honor of the 1993-97 former ambassador to the Republic of Korea and 1977-1993 former President of Emory University. They were organized and moderated by Chung-In Moon, an eminent international relations scholar and the James T. Laney Distinguished Professor at Yonsei

University where Laney himself once taught theology. The lectures pay tribute to Laney's life-long interest in the Korean peninsula and his dedication to education, research, public service, and conflict resolution, as does the Pacific Century Institute's Laney Chair for visiting professors at Yonsei University.

For a copy, please contact pci@pacificcenturyinst.org.



PCI Programs

Junior Fellowship

Neither Forgone nor Forgotten: Post-MPI reflections on Trauma, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation

By Paul Kyumin Lee

I am deeply grateful to have the support of the PCI Junior Fellowship again this year, which enabled me to travel to the Philippines in May to participate in the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI) and take courses on Trauma-Informed and Resilience-Oriented Practice and the Praxis of Forgiveness and Reconciliation Amid Polarization. It was a fitting way to follow up on my involvement with the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI), for which PCI had supported my participation back in 2023. Given that the point of trainings like MPI is for participants to take lessons back to their own communities, I thought it might be valuable to reflect on what I thought were the most salient learnings as I continue "Phase 2" of the Letters to My Hometown Project (which I started two years ago thanks to the support of PCI) this summer in New York and Los Angeles, this time featuring conversations between elderly Korean Americans and their grandchildren.



(PCI Junior Fellow Paul Lee at the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute (MPI) with other participants in Davao City, Philippines)

TRAUMA(S)

It's clear that many people – whether Korean or not – experience trauma, whether on an individual or collective level. However, I think what makes the case of Korean American divided families exceptional is that there is an intersection of so many sources of trauma – including experiences of Japa-

nese colonialism, displacement from hometowns and separation from family in North Korea during the Korean War, poverty and military dictatorships in South Korea, to alienation as immigrants in the United States. They have not only faced marginalization in society, but also with their own children and grandchildren, with some of whom they do not share the same language or faith. As I'm starting to understand just how complex the traumas of the Korean American community are, I am realizing that one intervention will not be "enough" to break through these cycles of violence and silence.

I do think it is worth discussing the "typical" way Koreans have been lauded for dealing with their "han" – through 인 내/innae, which can be translated as "patience," "perseverance," or "fortitude." If you look at the Chinese characters, though — 忍耐 (each meaning to "endure" or "bear" something) — you will see a knife held above a heart in one character, as well as two characters that spell out "and another inch." This is exemplified in films like "Ode to My Father," which laud the virtues of sacrifice despite suffering for the sake of one's family and nation. Yes, gritting one's teeth and enduring may have led to economic prosperity, safety, and stability, but at what cost?

I would argue that freeing ourselves from the multiple "hans" of history requires transforming the culture of 인내/innae toward one that loosens the grip of those knots on our bodies and souls. Could it be through 정/Jeong/情? The connotation of the Korean word of the Chinese characters for letting one's heart free(放心 방심), however, is being negligent, absent-minded, or even underestimating. What would it take for one's heart to truly be at ease (安心 안심)?

FORGIVENESS

While I was learning that forgiveness – the decision to let go of bitterness, anger, and resentment – was key to finding freedom and a sense of agency, I really struggled for most of the two-week program to find the concept of forgiveness relevant for Korean American divided families. For unlike in the rido (clan feuds) of revenge killings between communities in Mindanao or the Rwandan genocide, it is difficult to assign a name or face to a single "perpetrator" for an event like displacement or family separation. Who would these elderly Korean Americans need to forgive – the North or South Korean military? US or Soviet government officials?

It was only when I rewatched clips from the interviews I did two years ago that I noticed that when I asked interviewees, "what do you want to tell your family in North



PCI Programs

Korea?" many of them would get emotional and say how sorry they are for not being able to visit them again, or for the fact that only part of their family was able to leave the country. Perhaps behind these apologies were feelings of unresolved guilt, contrition, and self-blame that I believe reflect a desire to be forgiven by their family members (even if it was not their "fault" that they were divided).

Perhaps the intergenerational conversations this summer can also provide spaces for grandchildren to "forgive" their grandparents for whatever harm that was done through this culture of silence, shame, and endurance. I am starting to accept that forgiveness is possible even without explicitly saying the words "I forgive you." Rather, if we understand forgiveness as "the final form of love" (attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr)," perhaps we can find forgiveness in ordinary and extraordinary gestures, such as unexpected tears over a homecoming meal.



(PCI Junior Fellow Paul Lee at MPI in Davao City, Philippines)

RECONCILIATION

From statues of two individuals embracing in Belfast and Seoul, or even in artwork like Rembrandt's The Return of the Prodigal Son, it seems that the most popular image of reconciliation features a dramatic in-person reunion event. But what does reconciliation look like if one or more parties are no longer alive or able to reunite (such as in the case of Korean American divided families)? I am trusting that reconciliation is still possible even while structural barriers like division and conflict are still in place – a more spiritual kind, and one that requires a radical transformation of the "ideal" of reconciliation. I am becoming increasingly affixed on "transcendence" as the key to truly healing from the wounds of conflict – not simply resolving or managing trauma, but finding the strength and solidarity to rise above a singular story of victimhood.

Reframing Psalm 85, John Paul Lederach describes reconciliation as the "meeting place" of Truth, Justice, Mercy, and Peace. But what if there are multiple versions of "truth," different struggles toward "justice," various levels of "deserving" mercy, and politicization of the term "peace"? Given the numerous understandings of such broad terms that are often lost or misinterpreted in the process of cultural translation (like in the US or South Korea, where the very concepts of "truth" or "peace" spark entrenched divisions in society), it is clear that multiple versions of each of these concepts (the various Truths, for example) need to reconcile with themselves before they can begin the process of reconciling with each other.

What, then, would be a more appropriate image to represent the process of reconciliation – one that can reflect its temporal and multitudinal complexity? From my own experience playing cello in groups my entire life, I would have to describe it as a chamber orchestra (coordinating among themselves without a conductor), beginning with each section going from utter cacophony to tuning (perhaps the brass section could be truth, percussion section could be justice, the woodwinds could be mercy, and the strings could be peace) to producing a collective sound that can be witnessed by an audience and recorded for posterity.

Some orchestras are bigger and better funded than others, while some play certain kinds of music in opera halls to openair venues. But even when they play the same piece, I've appreciated how each rendition is different, resonating more with some than others. To me, this miraculous process of harmonization of sounds and bodies breathing in sync without everyone having to play the same note or instrument is the essence of reconciliation. It is thanks to PCI that I have been able to keep playing in this symphony of peacebuilding, and I look forward to the next movement!



(PCI Junior Fellow Paul Lee at MPI in Davao City, Philippines)



Upcoming Events

Korea—U.S. Friendship Night

PCI, in partnership with the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Los Angeles and Friends of Korea, will host Korea-U.S. Friendship Night on Thursday, September 18, 2025.

We invite you to join us in celebrating the enduring friendship between Korea and the United States with an evening of engaging discussions and cultural performances.

RSVP by emailing: pci@pacificcenturyinst.org

Project Bridge 2025-2026

Prospective Youth Ambassadors are invited to apply for Project Bridge, an intercultural youth leadership program that aims to cultivate future community leaders and introduce them to U.S.-Korea relations, with an emphasis on cultural and racial sensitivity and a firm understanding of Korea. The goal of this unique program is to "bridge" the gap among cultures through cultural awareness and leadership training, with Korea as its case study. Juniors and seniors in Greater Los Angeles public schools are eligible to apply starting early October 2025. Please visit www.pacificcenturyinst.org for details.



PACIFIC CENTURY INSTITUTE 19850 Plummer Street Chatsworth, CA 91311

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Directory

Contact:

19850 Plummer Street Chatsworth, CA 91311 (818) 721-5555 (Tel) pci@pacificcenturyinst.org

PCI Web site: www.pacificcenturyinst.org

Spencer H. Kim spencer@cbol.com

Angie S. Pak angie.pak@pacificcenturyinst.org

Regional Offices:

Mid-West Office Don Evans 116 South Sherrin Avenue Louisville, KY 40203 devanscpa@bellsouth.com

Representative (Korea):

Jie-ae Sohn

10-508 Sampoong Apt., 1685 Seocho-dong Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea jieaesohn@gmail.com

PCI Fellows:

Frederick F. Carriere PCI Senior Fellow ffcarrie@syr.edu

Joseph Juhn PCI Fellow

PCI Junior Fellow paulkyuminlee@gmail.com