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### Morkovcha [Korean Carrot Salad]

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Morkovcha [Korean Carrot Salad]

by

Lidiya Kan

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts, Integrated Media Arts, Hunter College  
The City University of New York

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Date

Veronique Bernard

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Thesis Sponsor

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Date

Kelly Anderson

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Second Reader

**For Aleksandra and Mila**

## **ABSTRACT**

*Morkovcha, Korean Carrot Salad* is a short documentary that tells a story of ethnic Koreans from Russia and the post-Soviet territories making their new home in New York City. The history of the diaspora is told through conversations with my mother, personal stories, fragmented memories, and my family photo archive. This very personal film is my attempt to revisit the 160-year history of the Russian Korean diaspora and to record and preserve our unique fusion of cultures in the melting pot that is the United States. Its purpose is to help to process and accept the tragic past of my ancestry to move forward.

An important character of the film is Morkovcha, the Korean carrot salad, an invention of the Russian Korean diaspora; its essence is symbolic of our mixed identity. The name itself is the merging of two words: “Morkov,” the Russian word for carrot, and “Cha,” a phonetic variation of the Korean word for salad.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The idea of documenting the Russian Korean community originated a few years after I moved to the United States, first as a photography project, motivated by others’ confusion about my Russian citizenship and questions about why I do not speak Korean. In those earlier stages, the project was broad and unfocused, largely because I realized I knew very little about the history of my own family. And even though I kept photographing and occasionally filming mine and other Russian Korean families, the project eventually became peripheral.

I resumed the project in Spring 2019 during my first year as an Integrated Media Arts student, in a Fundraising for Film class with Tracie Holder, the research continued in New Currents in Documentary class with Reiko Tahara, and, in Fall 2019, it developed into a proposal for a documentary film in Developing and Producing Documentary with Veronique Bernard. The project finally had a format, structure, and, most importantly, purpose.

The project is a 22 minutes documentary film that follows my journey of learning about my family history. The film starts in Manhattan New York, in my mother's kitchen as she prepares morkovcha salad and shares stories about the dish. Viewers learn a couple of additional facts: our first language is Russian and a trip to Uzbekistan is in a new future. In April 2020, Covid 19 spreads through the world, borders are closing, and New York is in lockdown. The trip is canceled, my mother and I are quarantining in separate locations, she is in Manhattan and I am in Queens but our conversations continue in a form of regular phone calls. This is the starting point of my exploration of Russian Korean history, my family story, and my own identity.

The historical narration of the initial migration of Koreans to the Russian Empire, their life in the Far East, unfair treatment by the Soviet government, and the deportation of 1937 provides context for the later stories of my grandmother who experienced these events personally.

Like passing the baton, we are in my kitchen next where I continue the salad preparation and season it while my mother's voice carries on the narration. We learn about the life of the deportees in Uzbekistan, a possible origin of Morkovcha, and its significance in Russian Korean

cuisine. The stories become more personal as we shift to my grandparents' old house in Uzbekistan. I learn about my grandmother, who passed away when I was too young to remember, from my mother. The family visits the cemetery on April 5th, parents' memorial day, this was the reason for our canceled trip this year. Even though we are unable to be there in person, my mother and I take time to remember my grandmother's life.

As I work through the family archive, scanning and restoring the old photographs, my grandmother's role in the film becomes more significant. She represented the generation of Koreans that endured losses and struggle but she was never resentful or felt sorry for herself.

We are back in New York, the place even further from our homeland, but my mother finds another thread that connects her to my grandmother, the ocean. She finally experiences the ocean for the first time, she hears the roaring sound of waves that my grandmother was so fond of because it reminded her of her childhood in the Far East of Russia, in Vladivostok.

The film ends back at my mother's place. It is a Thanksgiving celebration, however, my narration makes it clear this was the previous year's gathering, due to the pandemic, we could not get together in 2020. This scene is symbolic, celebrating Thanksgiving for my family is a way to embrace our new home where our mixed identity does not stand out. My mother's comment at the end, however, raises a question: will the next generation of American born Russian Koreans identify with their parents' and grandparents' culture.

## **Background**

Koryo-Saram, ethnic Koreans of the post-Soviet territories, is one of the largest groups living outside of Korea, after China, the United States, and Japan, with a total population of about 500,000 people. During the Convention of Peking in 1860, several treaties were signed between the Qing Dynasty of China on one side and Great Britain, France, and the Russian Empire on the other. Following one of the agreements, China surrendered part of its territories to The Russian Empire where many Koreans, forced by poverty and lack of farmland, had previously settled. Migration continued through the early years of the 1900s. The defeat of the Russian Empire in the Russo-Japanese War over control of Manchuria and Korea was followed by the Japan–Korea Protectorate Treaty of 1905 that stripped Korea of its sovereignty and the 1910 Japan–Korea Annexation Treaty by which The Empire of Japan formally seized Korea. These events resulted in an anti-Korean attitude by Russian officials. However, the migration steadily grew in the early 20th century. There were over a hundred Korean villages, a large number of schools, hospitals, journals and newspapers, and a theater. Most activities were in the Korean language. However, unlike Japanese and Chinese immigrants, Koreans willingly assimilated into their new homeland; they learned the language, Russian names were given to children, and some converted to Russian orthodoxy. They were Russian citizens, politically involved and contributing to the economy of the Soviet Union; rice farming and fishing were the main trades.

During the early 30s, the Soviet government started working on plans to control the population and reduce migration. On August 21st, 1937, Joseph Stalin and Vyacheslav Molotov signed a resolution "*On the Exile of the Korean Population from Border Raions of the Far East Kray*"; the deadline to execute the plan was set for October 25, 1937. The resolution ordered the immediate deportation of the Koreans living near the borderline to Central Asia. This was the first large-scale repression based on ethnic identity conducted by the Soviet government, followed by many more relocations of various ethnic groups throughout the country. The Korean deportees were baselessly accused of espionage for the Japanese and the false allegation haunted them for many years after.

In the fall of 1937, 172,000 Russian Koreans were ordered to leave their homes, cattle, and farms, to be taken to the other side of the country. The government did not offer explanations for its actions. People were loaded onto cargo trains that were built to transport cattle, families were packed 25-30 people per car and sent off to Central Asia. The traveling took over a month to complete with multiple short stops on the way; children were born and elders passed away. Hundreds of Koreans did not make it to the final destination. And yet, according to my grandmother, it was one of the more humane ethnic relocations by the Soviet Union government because they were allowed to pack what they could carry.

The deportees were left without any means to survive, being abandoned by the government in the middle of the Kazakh's steppe weeks before the harsh winter months.

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<sup>4</sup>[Постановление Совета Народных Комиссаров Союза ССР и Центрального Комитета ВКП\(б\). О выселении корейского населения пограничных районов Дальневосточного края. 21 августа 1937 г.](#)

Families dug holes in frozen ground to create shelters and with the generous help from locals were able to get through the first couple of years in the new homeland. Eventually, the deported Koreans developed rice and wheat cultivation, contributed to many of kolkhoz's<sup>2</sup> successes, restored their cultural institutions, and became active in the Soviet Union's political, economic, and social life. The trauma became hidden in the memories of the elders and almost forgotten by the generations born after 1937, along with the language and many traditions. Soviet identity, forced upon Koreans by the regime and policies, came to be the dominating one for us but full acceptance was never reached; we are long term visitors with no place to return to. Both my grandparents were young adults when their families were deported to Uzbekistan, they were lucky to survive the ordeal of which they chose not to talk to their children and grandchildren. In 1993, the Russian government officially admitted unlawful treatment of the Koreans and rehabilitated them as the victims of political repression<sup>3</sup>.

## RESEARCH ANALYSIS

*Morkovcha [Korean Carrot Salad]* is a deeply personal story of my family which requires openness and vulnerability that is uncomfortable, to say the least. The topic of the 1937 deportation was never discussed in my family. During my grandparents' generation, it was too painful to remember. When my mother and her siblings were growing up, it was too dangerous

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<sup>2</sup> A collective farm in the former Soviet Union. Колхоз - коллективное хозяйство.

<sup>3</sup> [Постановление Верховного Совета Российской Федерации. О реабилитации российских корейцев. Москва. 1 апреля 1993 г.](#)

to discuss the events and criticize the government. In my generation, it was simply the lack of knowledge to enquire for more information. Growing up, it was normal for me to be Korean in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan because it was not a rarity, I was surrounded by people that looked like me. I started learning about the history of Russian Koreans in my teens from friends and family members, this was never mentioned in schools' history classes. My discomfort continued to change as my grasp of the Korean diaspora was expanding; books, articles, and films provided a larger context, a conscious acceptance that thousands of other families went through the same trauma.

During my research, I was pleasantly surprised to find a feature documentary *Koryo Saram - the Unreliable People* (2006) by Y. David Chung and Matt Dibble. The film is by American filmmakers and focuses on Koryo Saram from Kazakhstan. Maps, expert interviews, eyewitness encounters, voice-over narrations, and archival footage create a clear linear story of the events. The film's target audience is the Western English-speaking viewer as it provides a great introduction to the subject matter, an outsider's investigation of hidden history. The title "*The Unreliable People*" is a hint to the false accusation of Korean espionage for the Japanese that was used as an official reason for the deportation. According to German Kim, the historical consultant for the film and Russian Korean historian, what could be considered a clever title was not received well by those whose families were affected by this claim; to Russian Koreans, it was painful and insensitive. My mother reacted similarly. She recalled being called a traitor at 5

years old by another child and, even though she did not understand at that time what it meant, the interaction was carved in her memory.

*Депортация. 1937* (Deportation. 1937) (2017) by Valentin Park is a short documentary film, produced by the Association of the Korean organizations in Primorsky Krai (AKORP). As the title shows, the film's theme is the deportation of the Koreans from the Far East; it is an expository documentary with formal interviews and a "voice of God" type of narration over archival footage. Valentin Park, the founder of the AKORP, is an author, businessman, politician, and activist who made it a life goal to spread awareness about Koryo Saram, promote the Russian-Korean relationship, and the unification of the Korean Peninsula.

*Zheruik* (Promised Land) is a feature film by Slambek Tauekel, a Kazakh filmmaker. The script was written by Lavrenty Son and based on his childhood memories. The story is told from the point of view of Kazakh people whose compassion towards abandoned deportees was crucial to their survival. The film starts with the Korean exile but does not stop there and is followed by the arrival of other ethnic groups as Stalin's Great Purge continued.

These films were produced by American, Russian Korean, and Kazakh filmmakers; three languages, three different formats and approaches created a comprehensive historical account of the events.

Many videos about Koryo Saram, articles and online posts cited German Kim, Director of the Institute of Asian Studies and Professor of the Department for Far East Studies, Faculty for Oriental Studies at al-Farabi Kazakh National University; he was a historical consultant in

*Koryo Saram - the Unreliable People*. German Kim has written a large number of books and papers about the Korean Diaspora that have been internationally acclaimed, he led and participated in various conferences worldwide, and runs a YouTube channel and a Video-Encyclopedia of Koryo Saram. It was clear that he was the primary resource for many projects and if I wanted to obtain the most accurate information, I needed to get in touch with him. It did not take much internet search to find Mr. Kim's contact information since a good amount of his work has been translated into English and is publicly available in various educational databases. Despite his busy schedule, thousands of miles between us, and an 11-hour time difference, he was generous with his time to meet with me virtually. He answered my questions, referred me to specific articles, confirmed stories I heard as a child, and filled the gaps in my knowledge of our history.

## **PRODUCTION PROCESS**

The deportation of Koreans in 1937 was one of the ugliest moments in Soviet history and still haunts the descendants of those who experienced it first hand. My grandmother was 16 years old when she was deported; by that time, due to the disastrous aftermath of the 1917 revolution and the Soviet regime, she had already lost her father, mother, and brother-in-law and was separated from her older sister and niece. This was a pivotal and painful moment for my grandmother, dividing her life into two parts: a pre-deportation life in Vladivostok and post-deportation life in Uzbekistan. She passed away early, way before I got to the age of any

type of heritage curiosity; I have very few memories of her and many of them are from stories my mother has told me through the years. In the Russian language, the same word is used for “story” and “history”; the stories my mother shared with me became the foundation of the film and tell the broader history of Koreans in Russia. I had a unique insider’s point of view, exclusive and unlimited access to the Korean diaspora in Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and the US, and I felt it was finally the time to delve deeper into my ancestral heritage.

The first version of the film had 3 female characters including my mother. All three are ethnic Koreans born and raised on the other side of the Iron Curtain and currently living in New York City. The main focus was on the current adaptation of Russian Koreans to the United States through opening authentic restaurants in Brooklyn and raising the next generation of now American children. I planned to travel to Uzbekistan, to the small town of Toytepa where my grandparents settled after the deportation, my mother grew up, and my cousins still live. Their everyday lives would show the contrast and growing disconnect, both cultural and geographical, between family members that ended up on two different continents. In Fall 2019, the pre-production stage was completed and production began. I started by filming my family Thanksgiving celebration in the United States. I got in touch with my Uzbekistan characters, prepared a schedule, and was ready to go full steam ahead.

The year 2020 had other plans. I could not film or even meet with individuals involved in the project because of the shelter-in-place order in March. In April, my trip to Uzbekistan was canceled as countries around the world closed their borders. The first couple of months of

lockdown were mentally numbing, full of uncertainty and fear. This was also a time to reflect on what is meaningful, who is significant, and how easy it is to lose those who are important to us. I began to look around at what was available to me, literally, in my apartment trying to find a solution, rework the project. There was plan B, followed by plan C, and, finally, plan D that became the guideline for the current iteration.

Daily phone conversations with my mother, old photographs from our family archive, Russian books, and various trinkets from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on the shelves were little bricks that helped me to build the foundation for my film. Staying home 24/7, there was plenty of time to research the topic I was exploring.

### **Structure and Stylistic Choices**

Equipped with visuals and historical facts, it was time for me to work on the structure of the film. From the inception of the project, I wanted to configure historical facts around 3 female characters' personal stories and it was important for me to sustain it. Eventually, the three characters of the film turned out to be three generations of my own family: my grandmother, my mother, and myself. The film is bilingual with translation subtitles in both languages to make the film accessible to a larger audience and avoid prioritizing one language over the other. However, certain information is deliberately in Russian, such as personal memories and experiences, and in English, such as historical facts.

My grandmother's life experience became the basis for the story development creating a more empathetic experience; viewers become aware of some of the most distressing events in the history of the Korean Diaspora while learning about the individual drama. The full understanding occurs during the segment in the middle of the film where the archival footage is accompanied by my narration, an intentionally brief summary of the events, for context and not to overshadow my family recollections. The voice-over is in English, to make sure that the English speaking audience focuses on audio and video and is not distracted by the need to read subtitles. The voiceover is accompanied entirely by photographs and archival footage from the era shot by various international photographers and film organizations. There are no official archives for the Russian Korean diaspora and much of the Soviet video archive was misplaced and lost after the collapse of the country. German Kim's Video-Encyclopedia of Koryo Saram was the initial source for the archival footage used in my project Online social groups of Russian Koreans like *Koreans\_Rus* and *Koryo-saram.ru* were full of photographs, videos, articles, and references about the diaspora. When looking for the original source of archival video clips, I would often go in circles from one group to another and back to the first one. I contacted the administration of one of the groups asking for the licensing information only to receive a friendly response to just use the video because it is much easier there [Former Soviet Union territories] to share and re-share the archival footage. Archival photographs were easier to gather, some of the images are scans of my family archive, reproductions of old postcards of Vladivostok, and photographs taken by Eleanor L. Pray, an American living in the Russian Far East with her husband. Eleanor

Pray's historical black and white photographs of everyday life in Vladivostok are accompanied by her letters home in which she described the political and social environment she witnessed first hand. Later her correspondence was published in a book Letters from Vladivostok, 1894-1930 (The Eleanor L. Pray Collection). Since I was the only grandchild interested in old family photo albums, it was natural that I inherited the family archive. For many years these black and white silver prints were collecting dust in my grandparents' cabinet. When I got them, I was able to appropriately archive, digitize and restore them before they deteriorate. Scanning of the photographs and restoration process eventually became a part of the film.

Recent photographs and videos of my family that I have produced in the past several years are used throughout the film. These records, originally shot without a clear intention, are my contribution to the historic preservation of Russian Korean identity as it transforms, influenced by major events like the collapse of the Soviet Union and personal ones like the migration to the United States.

Conversations with my mother connect the present and the past. The narrative unspools backward, from the present time to my childhood in Kazakhstan, to my mother's youth in Uzbekistan, to my Grandmother's years in Vladivostok, followed by serene beach scenes from Rockaway, NY back in the present tense. A Thanksgiving celebration is the final scene of the film as the family comes together for a uniquely American holiday with a Russian Korean twist. The circle is complete.

The idea to ease the way into the complex and complicated history using food was initially inspired by Jennifer 8. Lee's book *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food*. I first heard Jennifer 8. Lee on the radio talking about fortune cookies being associated with Chinese cuisine here in America, but in China, people are not familiar with the phenomenon. I immediately remembered an encounter from many years ago when a Russian girl in an ESL class asked a South Korean classmate for the Korean Carrot salad recipe because she really loved it, and the Korean girl being very confused about this mystery dish. This was not an isolated incident, many from the former Soviet Union are very surprised that Morkovcha is not a "real" Korean salad.

*Garlic Is as Good as Ten Mothers* (1980) by Les Blank had a big influence on me, a tribute to garlic with appealing scenes of meal preparation, jolly music, and historical facts. This documentary and my film are very different, except for the food element being present and in these scenes I wanted a sanguine tone to come through. Despite the horrific historical events that are exposed in my story, I did not want the trauma to be at the center of it. Re-watching *Garlic Is as Good as Ten Mothers* during production helped me to find the balance when I got overwhelmed by the history I was learning and focused on the resilience of the deported Koreans instead of the hardship.

I watched *The Search for General Tso* (2014) by Ian Cheney for the first time right after I discovered Jennifer 8. Lee's book. My original plan was to create my own search for the origins of Morkovcha and discoveries about Russian Korean identity that would result from it. As my

film was changing, I set Ian Cheney's film aside. I watched it again during the editing stages, I did not remember many details and was surprised how similar it felt to my own film. I viewed the film once more and focused my attention on sound design and music choices. Traditional Chinese music through the film amplifies the authenticity of the story of *The Search for General Tso*. After noticing it, the ethnic-cultural compositions felt like the most natural and simple decision, however, in reality, I went through many more traditional cinematic scores before finding the right fit. In the end, I chose to use three types of compositions: Kazakh folk music, Russian classic by P.I. Tchaikovsky, and traditional Eastern motives, perfect accompaniments that encapsulate who Russian Koreans are.

The editing process was challenging in the earlier stages, the common criticism was that the films seemed to be broken into distinct chapters and the scenes, even though telling one story, were separate as if they were pages in a photography portfolio. It was difficult for me to understand what it meant exactly, identify the problem, and try to solve it; my edit choices seemed organic to me. To find the answer and distract me, I turned to documentaries that I watched in the past couple of years in different classes in the program. One of the documentaries was *Hale County This Morning, This Evening* (2018) by RaMell Ross. RaMell Ross, a trained photographer, was praised by critics for his unconventional approach when making the movie. Owen Gleiberman of *Variety* called it "a documentary put together like a series of photographs. In this case, the photographs are filmed images, so they in effect come to life." That is when I realized that I had been editing my film as a photographer editing a still image portfolio. Each

image needs to stand on its own, once the viewer flips the page, they go to another scene. There is no sound or crossfades between the photographs for a smooth transition, they are only connected by the project concept. My extensive background in photography was a disadvantage, in this case. In the end, RaMell Ross' *Hale County This Morning, This Evening* helped me by showing me what not to do in my own film and let go of the photographer's way of thinking.

### **Animation**

There are three animations included in the film, the characters are inserted in the original photos of the places where these stories take place. I have been photographing my grandparents' house every visit to Uzbekistan in the past few years. The house has not been renovated since my grandparents' passing and has the same atmosphere as when I was a child. These clips illustrate my mother's and my childhood memories, small events that are not forgotten through the years, and now being connected to the current understanding of the historical events that impacted thousands of Russian Koreans. The girls are rough black and white drawings, like indistinct memories; in contrast, with the sharp clear color photographs of rooms that remain unchanged in time.

These animations are also intended to lighten up the heavy topic. Despite the tragic prelude of our history, both my mother and I agreed that we had happy childhoods. My grandmother's life was fulfilling and her reluctance to answer questions about her younger years was probably her way to heal.

## **Narration and Storytelling**

As much as I dislike hearing my voice in recordings, I knew that the narration for the film needed to be done by me because of the film's intimate nature. It was a learning process to work on this part of the film. The history of the Russian Korean diaspora is complex and it took a long time to compile the information in short, clear, and compelling sections. Once the text was finalized, the recording process was as difficult: passing, clear pronunciation, and voice tonality required several tries and errors.

The story is told in collaboration with my mother. Hours of our conversations needed to be reduced to the most informative and relevant to the story segments. During this process, there were a lot of reductions and eliminations, it is a grueling process when working on something personal. Feedback from my peers and advisors was instrumental at this stage and the ability to maintain the balance between being open-minded and not losing my own vision of the project.

I used both the English and the Russian languages to tell the story; my narrations are in English and my mother's storytelling is in Russian, which is a common bilingual way of communicating in my family. Using both languages expands the audience's accessibility. This film aims to introduce the topic to English-speaking viewers as well as to many in the former USSR since it is not a widely known chapter in Soviet history.

## **Symbolism**

The film opens in my mother's kitchen as she prepares Morkovcha, a Korean Carrot salad. Morkovcha is an important character of the film, a light-hearted introduction to the subject matter that threads through the film and becomes a metaphor for our mixed identity. The origin of the salad is unknown, but its significance in Russian Korean cuisine is indisputable: it is the most recognized and loved Korean dish in Russia and the Post-Soviet territories. Similar to its creators, Morkovcha has gone through changes, adapted, and thrived in a foreign land. The name and the nature of the dish are multicultural. Adapting to the absence of some ingredients by replacing them with what was available resulted in the creation of a variety of new dishes that have no analogy to the food of South Korea. Ironically, for many in the post-Soviet territory, Russian Korean cuisine is the only Korean food with which they are familiar.

Food preparation as a ritual is often associated with family bonding, intergenerational connections, and cultural exploration. The process of the salad making is divided into two parts: my mother's initial preparation of the carrots, peeling, washing, and slicing in her kitchen "disrupted" by the pandemic, trip cancelations, and everyday worries; and routine resuming in my own kitchen where I continue from the moment we left off adding final seasoning to the salad as if in a relay race where instead of a baton we are passing family recipes.

The salad makes its final appearance at the end of the film, ready and served on the table among other dishes. It takes center stage only shared by another culinary symbol, Thanksgiving turkey, another culture that is merging with our Russian Korean blend. The scene plays out with

multiple conversations among family members in the background, a mix of Russian and English languages.

Another ritual in the film is the act of restoring and preserving old photographs, the family archive. My love for photography began with a love for photographs, specifically old photographs from the family albums at my grandparents' house where I spent every summer. I do not remember how I discovered these albums, they just always existed in my childhood memories. It was like time travel, looking at the snapshots from the past and reading handwritten notes on the back. I was the only grandchild who was consistently interested in these photographs, year after year. It was only natural that many years after my grandparents passed away, I inherited the family archive. By the time I received these photographs, many were damaged, scratched, faded, handled with bare hands, and stored in a plastic bag. Photography is not only about creating the new but also repairing what already exists. To me, the restoration of these images was like a reconstruction of the family memories.

I wanted to make the scanned photographs a part of the film and was looking for a way to liven them up other than slow panning, zooming, and fading transitions from one photograph to another, a technique known as the Ken Burns effect. As a photographer, I spend hours retouching images in photoshop restoring old photographs. I started screen-recording this digital restoration process of the family photographs without a clear idea of how I would use it in the film.

However, as the story was developing and the archival aspect was taking a prominent place, these scenes became the alternative way to incorporate still images that I was looking for. Small

black and white silver print filled the frame, this was a way for me to connect and interact with my long-gone family members. The handwritten note on my grandmother's photograph saying "Photo of Aleksandra. In a long-lasting memory for niece Hvan L. V. and sister Li A." is like a treasure discovered unexpectedly. Those who pay attention would realize that this is the sister and the niece that ran away to save their lives during Stalinist repression in the 1930s. There are a few other "easter eggs" hidden through the film that an informed and attentive viewer could discover. The Kazakh flag on the wall behind me, a clay wind-instrument next to the computer that is used in the score, printed photographs in the magnet board of places and people that appear in the film, book titles, and mementos are some of the elements that are significant to me and relate to the story. I choose not to reveal these points to everyone, these do not impact the story, however, they are meaningful to those who are aware because they share my experience.

Scenes on the beach of my mother in front of the waves were not in the original version of the project; as I was learning more about my grandmother, I came to realize how significant the ocean was to her and connected her to her childhood. My grandmother was born in Vladivostok, a coastal city, but due to circumstances had to live all her adult life in the desert climate of Uzbekistan. My mother recalled occasional memories of the city, different kinds of seafood sold at the markets, the ocean; they talked about going back for a visit but busy lives and the early passing of my grandmother prevented it from happening. The first time my mother stood in front of the ocean was when she moved to the United States. She felt the strength of the

water, saw the curved horizon line and heard the roaring sound of waves, and finally knew exactly what my grandmother was telling her.

Traditionally every year our extended American family gathers at my mother's for Thanksgiving celebration, except this year. The footage of Thanksgiving in the film was shot in Fall 2019. Since the inception of the project I knew how I would begin the film and end it, Thanksgiving dinner was the first scene I recorded. For my immigrant family embracing this holiday was an initiation into American life. We learned its origins and controversial background; but for us, it marked the beginning of our adaptation to this country. Each family member had a different journey to the United States, some easier than others, but every one of us made this decision ourself. My mother explains that the only Korean left in us is our appearance, Russian is our identity and language. This duality feels like a disadvantage: we are not Korean enough for Korea and not Russian enough for Russia. However, there is a comforting sense of belonging for us living in New York, our mixed identity does not stand out here but contributes to the melting pot. The scene shows a traditional Thanksgiving turkey next to morkovcha on the table. English and Russian languages are used interchangeably in the conversations. In conclusion, my mother realizes that there is a price to pay for the comfort she gained. It is the loss of our Russian Korean identity in the next generation that is born here and a widening gap between members of the family living in the United States and those that stayed in the former Soviet Union territories.

## **AUDIENCE AND EXHIBITION**

I hope the film reaches a wide audience. My choices in music, archival footage and photographs, and other proprietary materials were determined by the intention to show and share the film.

I spent a good amount of time researching music that would emphasize different cultural elements that are combined in Russian Korean culture. There were some poor choices that with the help of my peers and advisors were identified and changed. Kazakh culture is a big part of my upbringing and I wanted to make sure to include authentic Kazakh music. YouTube search led me to the HaSSak Ethno-Folk Ensemble that gave me its permission to use its arrangements. Eastern theme compositions and Tchaikovsky's waltz were found on Kevin Macloud's website that provides royalty-free music for free or a small charge.

Most of the archival footage used in the film appears to be orphaned films of the Soviet era that are freely circulating on the internet. Hosts of these videos were not the original owners and assured me that licensing laws in Russia were loose or did not reply to my inquiries. However, I am still attempting to find the source for the footage or to obtain similar archival videos from various collections. The photographs used in my film are partially from my family archive and partially from Eleanor L. Pray Collection from the Library of Congress. This collection was gifted by the donor to the Library of Congress in 2002 with 10 years of publication and distribution restriction. The restriction expired in 2013 and there are no other restrictions known.

In the film, I use a 20-second audio clip of PBS NewsHour with Judy Woodruff. The piece is from March 19th, 2020 NewsHour Special *Confronting Coronavirus*. The segment has not been cleared with the network yet but I am planning to license it in the near future.

Russian Korean history is not a well-known story even in the post-Soviet territories. My film is just an introduction to the subject matter, there is so much to grasp and uncover. It is for anyone curious and interested to learn about hidden events in history. I want to expand the knowledge not only spatially but also in time, to the next generation that is growing up not connected yet to their heritage. I am realizing now that this project, photos, videos of my family are my contribution to the family archive, its private recognition as important as its public acknowledgment.

The process of making this film was overwhelming on different levels. It was complex technically and physiologically and my goals were not extended further than producing a compelling good quality film; the first introduction to the Russian Korean culture for many viewers. Film festivals that focus on Asian filmmakers and/or stories will be a good start to share my film. The Korean part of our identity was suppressed for so many years that we became invisible to the Asian community and I would like to contribute to changing that. I plan to explore educational distribution routes as the film covers historical events that are not widely known. Video Librarian, a resource for educators to find films, accept submissions to be considered for their permanent collection. Submitting to the organizations such as the

International Documentary Association, New Day Films, and Women Make Movies is another possibility for distribution.

For distribution in Russian and the former Soviet Union republics, I plan to reconnect with the groups and organizations that helped my research when I started working on the film. I would like to submit the film as my contribution to the pool of information about Koryo-Saram for Russian-speaking audiences. *Morkovcha [Korean Carrot Salad]* has a different perspective than other films about Russian Koreans that exist so far, it does not linger in the past but looks forward to the unknown future. The history of the Russian Korean people was disregarded for years in the Soviet Union and unseen by the rest of the world. My goal for the film is to make the Russian Korean culture finally visible and to inform, educate and entertain audiences interested in this neglected diaspora.

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