Where Is the "Korean" in the Korean War Memorial: Kissena Park's Korean War Memorial

Alice Lam

The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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WHERE IS THE "KOREAN" IN THE KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL: KISSENA PARK'S KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL

by ALICE LAM

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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by

Alice Lam

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

__________________________________________
Date      David T. Humphries Ph.D.
Thesis Advisor

__________________________________________
Date      Matthew K. Gold Ph.D.
Executive Officer

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Where is the "Korean" in the Korean War Memorial: Kissena Park's Korean War Memorial

by

Alice Lam

Advisor: David T. Humphries Ph.D.

The Korean War is branded as the "Forgotten War," but forgetting is an unconscious act and the Korean War is not so much forgotten as it is ignored. This paper looks at how the Korean War memory has been resurrected through Korean War memorials at first on a national level and then on a local level. Through the Korean War Veterans Association website, I looked at all the Korean War memorials throughout the U.S. and demonstrate how they create a distinct war narrative of sorrow and sacrifice that does not necessarily focus on the war itself. Then I delve into a case study in Kissena Park located in Queens, New York. I look at the construction of the memorial, then at the reception of the memorial from eleven Korean Americans who live in Queens. This park is located in Flushing, which has the largest density of Korean Americans in New York, making the memorial unique in its presumed relationship with the local community. From the interviews, I examine how their Korean ethnicity creates a conflict between the veteran-inspired narrative of the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park and the absent historical context of how the war was fought and its aftermath.
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On a brisk day, Michael and his friends from church were warming up to play their turkey bowl football game in Kissena Park. That was the first time he saw the Korean War Memorial, a twelve-foot high bronze-casted soldier with five smaller soldiers behind him carrying a stretcher while descending from a mountain. As Michael was observing the monument, he didn't know what the memorial was trying to convey and was surprised when he found out it was about the Korean War. The first thought that came to mind was, "This is so random. Why is it here?"

Michael was born in Korea and immigrated to New York with his family when he was ten years old. He learned about the war when he went to school in Korea and remembered seeing his grandmother tear up when she saw South and North Korean families temporarily reunite for the first time on the news. Although he is two generations away from the Korean War and does not know much about it, there was a sadness passed on from his grandmother. He also felt somber when he thought about the families who had not seen each other since the war. Although none of his family was separated, it still pains him to see his own people torn apart. While this memorial was meant to commemorate the Korean War, Michael thought there is nothing "Korean" about it. If he didn't see the title on the monument, he would have assumed that it was like every other war monument.

No historical memorial can narrate a holistic account of the past because the past is subjective to too many individuals' memories. Jonathan Kuhn, the Director of Arts and Antiquities for the New York City Parks Department, stated that monuments should not be history: history is represented in other forms such as books or museums; "Monuments are reductive by their nature."1 However, these monuments are a representation of the past;

1 Jonathan Kuhn, Director of Art & Antiquities for the NYC Parks Department, Phone call with Author, March 21, 2016.
therefore, in one way or another, they are a representation of history and there is an expectation for any type of figure that epitomizes history to at least capture the core of the moment. Monuments such as the one in Kissena Park are meant to last generations and show the later generations what moments and values the preceding generations found important. Although it seems appropriate that the Korean War is finally getting recognition at the national, state and local level, these American monuments have left out the "Korean" in the Korean War.

The argument can be made that these memorials are on United States soil; therefore, the history they depict should celebrate the United States. However, historical monuments and memorials have a responsibility to show the public about the past as holistically as possible. I am not arguing that this Korean War Memorial is bad; on the contrary, it is commendable that a community and their local officials cooperatively worked together to commemorate a part of history that was forgotten for a few of decades after the war officially ended. Compared to WWII or the Vietnam War, the Korean War is overlooked by the American memory and buried in the background of other more commemorated wars. Therefore, those who construct the memory of the Korean War have an opportunity to choose which part of the Korean War is commemorated since there is a not a strong collective American memory. War memorials are a form of history; even though they may be figurative or reductive; they still represent the past to the public and future generations. However, if the memorial only focuses on the U.S. involvement in order to celebrate the sacrifices the U.S. has made, then a more nationalistic history is remembered rather than a holistic history.

The Korean War has a special place in public historical memory because it is often paradoxically remembered as the "forgotten war." It wasn't until 1995 when the Korean War Veterans Memorial was built and dedicated in the National Mall. After that, many other state and
local communities began erecting their own Korean War memorials. Communities have taken
the initiative and resurrected this war by constructing memorials to commemorate the veterans.
By having a monument represent a historical moment, the community and their elected officials
have taken an active role in preserving a historical memory. I had the privilege to look at a case
study in Kissena Park, located in Queens, New York and see how the Korean War memory has
been constructed in this particular memorial.

In this paper I will explain different groups and organizations that participated in the
making of the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park. Most of my data comes from the Arts and
Antiquities, a department in the New York City Parks and Recreation. Sheena Brown, former
Deputy Director of Arts & Antiquities, gave me access to their file on the Korean War Memorial.
The file contains communications from different organizations, art proposals, emails from
different participants, and concerns for the memorial from veterans. I use the words monument
and memorials interchangeably. Although the semantics for these words are contested, I view
monument and memorial as serving a common purpose of marking a certain time period and use
them synonymously for the purpose of my paper.

In the first part of my thesis, I briefly explain the history of "forgetting" the Korean War.
Since Americans have "forgotten" this part of their history, those who are creating a dominant
narrative of the war have a blank canvas to work with because there is not an American
collective memory. Before I look at a local Korean War Memorial, I quantify all the Korean War
Memorials throughout the U.S. and find a common narrative of sacrifice, mournfulness and duty.
Then I chronologically explain the planning, implementation and creation of the Korean War
Memorial in Kissena Park, a memorial that was at first inclusive with nations' histories but later
on became an exclusive American narrative similar to the other Korean War memorials
throughout the nation. The second part of my thesis focuses on the reception of the Korean War Memorial through Koreans who reside in Queens. I interviewed eleven Koreans to observe what they think of the memorial in Kissena Park and whether their ethnic identity informs their understanding of how this memorial portrays the Korean War. I also wanted to study whether Koreans who felt closer to their ethnic roots would find the memorial in Kissena Park more problematic because it has left their Korean narrative out of the story. As for the proximity of ethnic roots, I based it on generational differences and interviewed a range of Koreans from immigrant to second-generation.

While this is a specific case-study of a war memorial, it can clarify the purposes of monuments in society. Examining the process of creating a war monument can lead to a better understanding of how history is constructed through monuments. Monuments can carry many different symbols, ranging from periodization, historical preservation, a way to come to terms with the past, or a reinforcement of societal values. They are more than just a representation of a certain time period; they are society's way of remembering certain aspects of the past. Through this case, we can better comprehend what feature of the Korean War these different organizations were trying to resurrect from the past. Also, this case-study is particularly unique as compared to other Korean War memorials because it is located in Flushing, a district that has the highest Korean population in New York. A monument is meant to remind the public of a certain values and parts of history; however, ethnic memory and national memory can conflict with one another. The American memory of the Korean War is different from how Korean Americans remember the war.

**Constructing a Memory**
Yearbooks, photos and personal journals are examples of keepsakes we use to remember a certain memory we are trying to preserve. Keeping mementoes reinforces a memory in order to strengthen it so that the memory is not forgotten. Similarly, public memory can make certain historical memories concrete by using institutions or items such as monuments as constant reminders for the public to remember an historical event. While individuals have control over which memory they want to reinforce, public memories differ because society as a whole does not get to choose which memory is remembered and which ones are left behind. Instead public memory is constructed by the few who select which historical moments to commemorate. Not all history is remembered; it is only the history that certain members of society choose to actively preserve that remains.

Memorializing any war in American history will always be difficult because there are different agendas set out and conflicting memories from political figures, rank-and-file soldiers and the present views of society. The Korean War falls within this difficult category, and in a way it is more complicated because the war has never completely ended. In fact, at the "end" of the Korean War in 1953, South Korea wanted to continue fighting. However, the fighting ended with the armistice that was signed by representatives from North Korea, the United Nations and China on July 27, 1953, though South Korea refused to sign.

In fact the animosity between the South and North Korea is ongoing. The *New York Times* printed an article in March 2016 about the annual drills involving American and South Korean soldiers. Ever since 1957, the U.S. has sent an estimated 16,000 soldiers or more to South Korea in order to practice drills with the South Korean troops in case North Korea crosses the boundary to South Korea again. These soldiers are part of the United States Forces Korea

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(USFK), which is a sub-unified unit that is controlled by the U.S. and South Korea. The USFK website states that their mission is to maintain the stability of the Republic of Korea and continue the armistice. This year, 17,000 Americans joined 300,000 South Korean troops as they prepared for the drills. Although the war was declared to be over with the signing of the armistice, the actions by the U.S. and South Korea show that the fear of war with North Korea is still present even after six decades. This makes memorializing the Korean War in America more nuanced because the U.S. is memorializing a history that does not have a clear conclusion.

Tensions between South and North Korea continue to rise. Since 2006, North Korea has conducted four nuclear tests, and it placed two satellites into the orbit in 2012 and in February 2016, which made South Korea feel more threatened. The most recent satellite alarmed the South Korean government and the South Korean Defense Ministry announced that this year would be the largest drill ever.

The Korean War has its own peculiarities compared to other wars fought by the United States because this war was not definitively declared as a war but a police action. The various classifications of the United States engagement with Korea as a war, police action or conflict add to the ambiguity of the Korean War. Another aspect of the Korean War that has not been discussed enough is how it has been deemed as the Forgotten War. Paul M. Edwards writes that this war is not as much forgotten as it is ignored. He notes that there was no "great joy" or "outpouring of relief" after the Korean War as there was in the previous two world wars. In 1953, the Korean War ended with an armistice, and it was not the complete victory that the United

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4 Sang-Hun.
States wanted. On the home front, Americans just tolerated the Korean War with little recognition for the war or Korean War veterans.⁶

Judith Keene supports Edwards’ claims by discussing how the Korean War veterans did not attempt to commemorate their service because of the political atmosphere at the end of the Korean War. After the Korean War, veterans and their families had to go through interrogations, surveillance and public trials "in which POWs were prosecuted as communist collaborators."⁷ Since some veterans were on the radar of being susceptible to communism, many Korean War veterans "favored their absence from public commemoration."⁸ Therefore, veterans were not recognized for their valor and sacrifice but for their association with communism. At the end of the war, it seems as if no one wanted to acknowledge this war. Instead of honoring the veterans who came back from war, government officials were suspicious of their activities abroad. When the Korean War ended, the United States was more focused on other international problems such as the Cold War instead of recognizing their servicemen who just came back from war. Veterans would only begin to gain appreciation from the public several decades later.

The forgotten aspect of the Korean was more a "structured absence" than amnesia of American memory.⁹ Forgetting is an unconscious act. It is not that Americans forgot the Korean War; it is that they disregarded it and, therefore, it was a silenced part of history. Edwards’ description of Americans ignoring the Korean War and its veterans is a more accurate trademark of the Korean War. Before 1986, the Korean War was "invisible" on the calendar of patriotic war

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⁶ Edwards, 5.
⁸ Keene, 1106.
commemoration. After the Washington memorial in 1995, "there has been a veritable boom across the United States in monument building to the Korean War."

As the Vietnam Memorial was being built in the National Mall, the memorial revolved around the soldiers who were prisoners of war or those were missing in action. The Korean War veterans saw an opportunity to memorialize their POW-MIA soldiers as well. Keene points out that the commemoration of the Korean War and Vietnam War occurring in the same decade is no coincidence. The Korean War piggybacked on the Vietnam War memorialization and began to declare that the Korean War needed to be memorialized too. In 1985 the Korean National Veterans Association was established to commemorate the Korean War and this association helped create the Korean War Veterans Memorial in National Mall in 1995. Even though the Korean War was before the Vietnam War, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was built thirteen years before the Korean War Memorial in the National Mall. It is clear why the Korean War is branded as the forgotten war. Even the federal government memorial park has left the Korean War behind in the past. While the Vietnam Memorial took a little less than eight months to build, Congress approved the construction of the Korean War Memorial in 1986 and it took nine years to finish the project. After the Korean War Memorial in the Mall was erected, other local and state communities began to erect their own Korean War Memorials. Time needed to pass before Americans could commemorate the Korean War.

**Korean War Memorials in the United States**

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10 Keene, 1095.
11 Keene, 1095.
12 Keene, 1106.
13 Keene, 1106.
War memorials are historic moments brought to the present with certain themes attached to them, and these memorials serve as a medium for historical teaching. These historic memorials are a way to make sense of the past and create an understanding for the public. War memorials can never fully represent all the aspects of war, such as specific battles, political tensions, mourning for fallen soldiers and victory. Since memorials cannot be all encompassing, those creating them must select which items to highlight and also choose which distinctive themes they want to associate with the Korean War in the collective American memory.

This war is difficult to memorialize because it is ambiguous whether the United States' encounter with Korea was a conflict, police action or war. Furthermore, there was no dominant narrative for the commemorators to work off of because the Korean War was ignored during and after the war. Therefore, commemorators of the Korean War had to create a narrative that the public could understand and that would crystallize the Korean War in the collective memory of the U.S. During the Korean War monument building boom, it was clear that all of those who participated in building these memorials wanted to resonate a narrative that was specifically American and focusing more on the American soldiers’ experience. Through the Korean War Veterans Association website, I looked at the all Korean War memorials throughout the United States, quantified the data and categorized the memorials into two sections.14 The Korean War memorials have a distinct war narrative that clarifies the question of the U.S. involvement in Korea during the early 1950s.

The first category is war representational monuments, which means any monuments that display soldiers, war materials, and/or a map of Korea would be put into this set. Soldiers are one of the more honorable representations of war because they exemplify valor, duty and the self-

sacrifice. The war materials refer to the rifle and helmet that are used to symbolize the battlefield cross for soldiers who died at war. Lastly, many of these memorials have a map of Korea branded on the monuments, and I decided to include this in the war representation category because maps give the public a concrete idea of where the war was fought. The first three figures below are examples of war representations. Figure one is a Korean War Memorial located in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Soldiers are carrying a wounded comrade and continue on with their mission. The second sculpture is a soldier standing at a distance from the background looking down at a nametag, mourning over his fallen comrades. The first part depicts hardships that the Korean War soldiers had to go through and the second part of the memorial displays ideas of loss and sacrifice as this soldier is looking at a fallen comrade’s nametag. In figure two, Pineville, Louisiana decided to commemorate the Korean War by showing a map on their monument below which it states in capitalized letters, “Freedom is not free.” Although there is no soldier in figure two, it is categorized as war representational because it shows a map of Korea. Compared to other war monuments like those for WWII or WWI, which generally don’t have maps of Europe, the memorials commemorating the Korean War often include maps of Korea because many Americans were not familiar with the geography of Korea. They give the audience a clear image of where American soldiers went and fought in the war. Lastly, figure three is a memorial located in Wichita, Kansas which displays both the soldier and battlefield cross to remember the Korean War by recognizing the fallen soldiers. The first and third figures suggest a sorrowful perspective on the Korean War, while the second figure shows a physical image of the place where soldiers protected freedom.

The second category is classified as conventional monuments because these monuments honor the Korean War by paying respect to the fallen soldiers without any war representation or
symbolism. The conventional monuments pay homage to the Korean War by either inscribing names of fallen soldiers on a monument or acknowledging the Korean War with a plaque or stone. Figure four is an example of a monument that does not have war representation but still pays honor to the Korean War veterans.

(Figure 1) Atlantic City, New Jersey  (Figure 2) Pineville, Louisiana  (Figure 3) Wichita, Kansas

(Figure 4) Cathedral City, California

A total of forty states have monuments dedicated to the Korean War, and there are 110 Korean War memorials in the United States. Of that total, 84 monuments are classified as war representational, while the other 25 are conventional monuments. (I classified one of the monuments as unidentifiable because the picture of the monument is blurry.) These local, state and national Korean War memorials tell a common narrative of the Korean War using similar
monumental figures. Instead of focusing on the politics or why the war had started, these monuments focus on the soldier's narrative, specifically fallen soldiers. Seventy-five percent of Korean War memorials in the nation demonstrate that the Korean War was an actual war in which soldiers sacrificed their lives. These memorials offer symbolic gestures of war, a way to show that even though the Korean War was not declared a war, it was fought like a war with soldiers departing from the U.S. and some not coming back. The Korean War memorials together commemorate, justify and recognize soldiers' service in the military.

Most of the war representational monuments of the Korean War have a motif of anguish and loss by depicting soldiers as exhausted and worn out from war. These kinds of representations remind the public that the Korean War was a taxing and arduous war, not just a police action or conflict, but an actual war in which soldiers were killed and veterans were affected emotionally, mentally and physically. Even the battlefield cross sends a strong message that the Korean War had taken soldiers like any war would do. While a map of Korea might not send the message of anguish or loss, it does give the public a visible image of where soldiers traveled to fight and where many died. The war representational Korean War Memorials are trying to clarify the ambiguity of the Korean War. Since a majority of memorials are war representational, it gives the public the impression that this war included things found in every war: sacrifice of soldiers, injuries, rifles, helmets, army uniforms, and death.

The Korean War memorials throughout the U.S. do not focus on the Korean War in all its complexity; instead, the Korean War memorials have a veteran-inspired narrative. Since 84 out of 110 Korean War monuments are war representational, the dominant narrative of these memorials are motivated by the American veterans' perspective. The Korean War memorials portray the history of the war through the eyes of American veterans, not through the eyes of the
country that experienced the war or the Koreans who suffered through the war. Korea and its people are largely left out of this U.S. commemoration of the Korean War and instead the narrative of the Korean War only looks at how the U.S. made sacrifices for freedom in Korea.

(Figure 5): Osan, South Korea   (Figure 6): Seoul, South Korea

The memorials in United States differ from the ones in South Korea because the soldiers in these monuments commemorate a different feeling. Figure 5 and 6 are pictures of war memorials dedicated to the Korean War in South Korea, and both these the pictures show soldiers in a victorious and liberating style. While American Korean War memorials portray the American soldier as exhausted and distressed from war, South Korea chose to acknowledge the Korean War in a triumphant manner. South Korea shows how the Korean War represents freedom to them, the United States portrays the Korean War as a war that was difficult and sacrificed many American soldiers.

In the next section, I will focus on the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park. I will discuss and analyze this case-study to see how the Korean War is constructed in a monument. Furthermore, I will examine how a historical narrative is created, who creates it and what kind of message is sent to the public about the Korean War. By understanding these different aspects of monument-building, we can understand why the United States portrays the Korean War with a
narrative of anguish instead of a narrative of liberation like the one often depicted in South Korea.

Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park

Building the Korean War Memorial in Queens, New York was initiated by the Korean War Veterans Memorial Association (KWVMA) in 1999. KWVMA was a non-profit organization that organized in 1999 and was incorporated in 2000 with the help of Councilperson Julia Harrison for the purpose of erecting a memorial in Flushing. Since the Korean War Memorial project would be in the hands of the veterans, it is clear that the narrative of the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park would be told from the veterans' perspective.

Finding a location was the first task for the KWVMA. Daniel Beard Park, located in Downtown Flushing on Northern Boulevard, was the first choice; however, this park deals with a lot of traffic and if an edifice were to be erected, it would not be able to be fully appreciated due to the busy traffic.15 In 2000 KWVMA decided to erect a Korean War memorial in Kissena Park. Since there are many residents who visit Kissena Park, this space would be better. Also, those involved in the project understood that this memorial would be located in Flushing, home to one of the largest Korean American communities in the U.S. Therefore, putting this memorial in Flushing would make it more unique. Not only would it serve as a reminder to the community about the soldiers who fought and did not return from the Korean War but it also proves that this Korean community was able to flourish in Flushing because of the heroism of the American veterans.16

The ambiguity of the Korean War had already caused confusion in the initial stages of planning. Since American involvement with Korea in 1950 has many titles, as discussed before, it was unclear to the local politicians what the Korean War Memorial would commemorate. Was it a war or was it a police action? While discussing the proposal of building a Korean War monument, Harrison uses careful language in her letter to Henry Stern, Commissioner of New York City Department of Parks. She clearly states that the Korean War memorial in Queens would be an effort to memorialize the men who gave their lives in the Korean military action and parenthesized that the Korean Conflict was never declared a war and therefore should not be thought of as such.17 Although Harrison had a hand in establishing the KWVMA, by 2000 she disassociated herself from the project by stating that the KWVMA had enough members to carry on without her support. She asked that the KWVMA to no longer make her or her office a "point of contact."18 In 2001, Harrison stepped down from her post and was succeeded by Councilperson John C. Liu who enthusiastically participated in the planning and execution of Korean War Memorial.

The funding of the memorial was separated in two ways: the landscape and the memorial itself. Public funding, meaning money from local politicians, the state and the city, would go to the installation of the landscape. The money for the actual artwork came from private funds that were raised through the KWVMA from veteran families, Korean American businesses and donations from politicians. Since the veterans initiated the project, the memorial would be built according to their agenda. Veterans wanted a memorial that would honor their history in the war. These were veterans who did not necessarily receive a public welcome home after the war and

felt that their time spent in the war went unnoticed. With that in mind, they sought out local politicians and the NYC Parks and Recreation to help create and commemorate apart of their history. Many Korean War Veterans did not talk about the war because society had ignored it and it created a void in their lives. It was not until the U.S. started recognizing the war that these Korean veterans felt comfortable enough to talk about their experiences and realized that they also deserved to be a part of American history. Therefore, the veterans who initiated the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park thought it was a great opportunity to publicize a "forgotten" history in which they are the main characters.

Surprisingly, they also received a donation from South Korea. ¹⁹ The KWVMA met with the Korean Consul General to discuss the project in Kissena Park and asked if the South Korean government would like to donate to the memorial. By 2004, Korean Consul General Duk Ho Moon informed the KWVMA that the South Korean Government would provide $153,000 to the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park. He stated, "A Korean War memorial in Kissena Park is a great testament to the burgeoning Korean-American community outside of Korea as well as an honorable tribute" to the veterans.²⁰ The South Korean Government was grateful for the U.S. involvement in their war and donated money to their memorial, but they also wanted this money to honor the Korean American community that has progressed in Flushing. One of the stipulations from the Korean government was that a Korean Flag be incorporated into the memorial.²¹ Throughout the process, this memorial became more about the veterans less about the Korean community.

At first, Jonathan Kuhn, the Director of Arts and Antiquities, thought this would be a small scale project to fix the dilapidated flagpole in Kissena Park and that would be enough to honor the Korean War. However, David Copell, Chairman of the Committee of Set and Design for KWVMA, wanted a larger scale project. Besides fixing the flagpole, he wanted the Republic of Korea flag and United Nations flag to fly alongside the American flag. Moreover, Copell proposed that the memorial have three sculptured figures, one Korean and two American soldiers. This was a big-scale project and, therefore, needed an art consultant to help organize and plan the memorial.

The first art consultation company that would work in tandem with KWVMA was Falcon Perspectives. This is a design firm that would develop and oversee the project. Liz Thoma, president of Falcon Perspective, created the first proposal. She created five life-size bronze statues standing in front of a wall, and of the five figures, three were soldiers that represent the United States, the Republic of Korea and the United Nations. The other two would be a mother and her child meant to represent the two million Koreans who perished during the war. The wall behind the figures would be inscribed "Freedom is Not Free." to show how soldiers made the sacrifice to defend liberty. Around this inscription would be the names of the countries that defended South Korea. Under the life-size figures would be a twelve feet diameter circle cut in half with the Ying and Yang symbol of the Korean flag. Figure seven is a draft of the proposal, but the statue of the mother and child is not in the photo. Even though KWVMA liked Thoma's plan, Kuhn hoped that this proposal was open for discussion and was only aware of the proposal after it was made. Under the leadership of Falcon Perspectives, Kuhn and the rest of the Parks

Department were out of the loop until plans were settled with KWVMA and Falcon Perspectives, which led to a tense relationship at the start between KWVMA and the New York City Parks Department of Parks.

(Figure 7) Thoma’s Proposal

This design was submitted to the Park Department and Arts Commission and approved in 2001 with minor changes. But the Falcon Perspectives proposal became too expensive. After the 9/11 attack, KWVMA had difficulty raising enough money to meet the cost of Falcon Perspectives’ proposal. At first the estimated cost for the Falcon Perspective project was $500,000 and then the cost was raised to an estimated $1,000,000.24 The KWVMA decided to modify the design to a smaller scale so that it could be more affordable. Instead of three to five figures, the KWVMA limited the design to one soldier. There are many Korean War memorials that have a statue, and Copell wanted the memorial in Kissena to be original by making the base of the sculpture distinctive.25 Since they could not afford all the figures, they had to compromise


their inclusivity of U.N and South Korea and instead focused on making the single soldier an American.

Since the KWVMA could no longer afford Falcon Perspectives, they hired the Modern Art Foundry to be the new art consultant. The KWVMA had to start from scratch by working with the art consultants to design a new, cost-effective monument. Once a proposal was made, it had to be submitted to the Park Department and Arts Commission for approval. Anatole Mikhailov was the artist provided by the Modern Art Foundry. When constructing a monument in New York City, the usual process is to have a limited competition to select the artist, but Kuhn thought that this was beyond the capacity of the Veterans group to organize that kind of competition.

(Figure 8): Mikhailov Proposal

In the second proposal, Mikhailov-proposed an anguished soldier holding his rifle and leaning against a large bolder for support. The base of the sculptor is in the shape of pentagon and each side would represent a different aspect of the Korean War. The first panel has a quote from John F. Kennedy, the second panel has a quote from the President of the Republic of Korea from 2000, and the third panel has a picture of soldiers carrying a stretcher and above the picture
is the phrase "Freedom is not Free." The fourth panel has another picture of soldiers on Korea's mountainous terrain, while the last panel states all the countries that participated in the Korean Conflict.

The final decision of whether artwork is approved comes from the Arts Commission. The New York Arts Commission reviews the permanent collections of arts and architecture proposed on New York City property. In 2003 after reviewing the Mikhailov proposal, the Art Commission rejected it and recommended that the soldier appear without a weapon and a female should be incorporated into the memorial.26

The KWVMA was angered and frustrated with the rejection. Copell spoke on behalf of KWVMA and wrote to Kuhn that "these veterans...are combat experienced veterans, not someone in the rear echelon."27 Copell also wrote to Richard Murphy, the Queens Commission of Parks, stating that a solider without a weapon would be an oxymoron.28 The veterans wanted what they deemed to be a correct depiction of what the soldiers went through in Korea. If a soldier does not need his weapon, it implies that there is in no danger. By taking away the weapon component of the memorial, it takes away from the military aspect of the veterans’ service in Korea. These soldiers attacked with weapons in Korea, not with their hands and, therefore, the sculpture of a soldier should be carrying a weapon. The Korean War veterans were not only trying to commemorate the Korean War but also justify that it was in fact a war.

The recommendation of adding a female to the Korean War memorial further angered the KWVMA. Copell states, "A woman appearing in this particular monument is totally

inappropriate and anachronistic."²⁹ Women at the time were not permitted to participate in combat. The closest women would get to the front lines would be to occupy jobs as nurses in the MASH units. Therefore, Copell states that if there is any depiction of a female, it should have its own monument, like the one in Washington D.C.³⁰ From this statement, it is clear that the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park would exclusively represent male soldiers only. Although women did not participate in the Korean War, they sacrificed their time and lives to help in the war in other ways and, ironically, Copell's disregard of the women in the Korean War is similar to how the veterans were disregarded by society. By only having a male portray a war, it leaves the impression that war is only fought by men and women's contributions to the war are not as commendable as male soldiers. In a way, it signifies the patriarchy of the time period and that theme resonates within this memorial because the women's narrative is still absent.

After trial and error with the first two art consultants, by 2004, KWVMA chose to work with Suzanne Randolph Fine Arts (SRFA) and finally got the right art consultant. The SRFA organized the Korean War Veterans Artist Selection Committee to discuss and plan the artwork for the memorial. The art committee was composed of representatives from KWVMA, Congressman Gary Ackermann, Councilmember John C. Liu, State Assemblyman Brian Laughlin, State Senator Frank Padavan, and members the City Department of Parks and Recreation and other civic organizations.³¹ With this committee established and consisting of different participants, it was easier to communicate and voice opinions before any decisions were


made about the final proposal. The committee provided insight and guidance for the concept and sentiment of the memorial.

In the first art committee meeting, they discussed what the monument should represent and listened carefully to what the Korean War Veterans wanted. David Copell noted that it should honor American combat soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice and be representative of their heroism. The memorial should commemorate the relationship between the United States and the Korean community. As the art committee was considering other Korean War monuments in the United States, Copell said soldiers should not be wearing ponchos like they did in the Washington D.C. memorial because there was only one rainy season and ponchos do not represent the entire experience of American soldiers during the war. Furthermore, he stated that he no longer wanted the U.N flag to be displayed because the majority of troops sent to Korea was from the U.S. From this meeting it is even clearer that the intention for the memorial would be to commemorate the Korean War veterans and not the war itself. This monument would portray the Korean War through the harrowing experience of a soldier.

Instead of getting one artist, SRFA held a competition in which artists would present their ideas and among the total submitted proposals, five would be chosen as finalists. John Liu stated that time is of the essence for the Korean War memorial because of "the aging veteran population." In order to get as many artists as possible, the art committee decided to advertise a call for artist interest in the project in local newspapers. Thirty-two artists submitted proposals.

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The art committee chose the final five artists and after comparing the five artists, would decide on the final artist.

Each finalist would receive $1,500.00 to create a more developed proposal and the committee would choose the final proposal based on votes. The five finalists were given memorial objectives and a myriad of things to get inspiration from. One of their resources was to listen to the veterans and their experiences from war. The veterans believed "that the true understanding of history comes from the memories of those who actually experienced it."35 From this remark, it is clear that the Korean War memorial was not meant to be a comprehensive history, but to understand the experience of the Korean War through the veterans.

The five finalists were invited to the Korean War Veterans Memorial at a Kissena Park Art Committee meeting and listened to different war accounts from veterans to get a better understanding of what the war was like and how they would portray it in the monument. Copell suggested that the site should acknowledge each fallen soldier from Queens by engraving their names on a wall. Frank Alex, a Korean War veteran, suggested that the soldier be dressed in "authentic winter gear" to show what kind of weather soldiers had to endure." According to Alex, "There were three seasons: rain, cold, and heat. The face and eyes of the figure has to tell it all, so anyone can see what [soldiers] experienced by looking at their faces."36 The veterans wanted more than just a depiction of a soldier; they wanted a depiction of a soldier that has suffered from the war. It is not a triumphant soldier, but a solider that has endured.

In 2004, after careful consideration of the five finalists, William Crozier was chosen to create the artwork. He has worked in New York City since 1967, and he is an award-winning artist whose work has been displayed in the Metropolitan Museum and recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts. As Crozier was constructing the monument, he constantly met with veterans to make sure they approved of his work. Crozier's father served in the Korean War and so he has experience with a Korean War veteran and was sympathetic to veterans' opinions. There was a strong interest for the memorial to be figurative and trigger sadness and appreciation for the Korean War Veterans, which is what Crozier did. When making his sculptors, he works with clay, which is then cast in bronze. In his proposal, he wanted to "honor the valor and sacrifice of these who fought and died in the Korean War." His vision was to create the memorial to evoke compassion and respect and make a connection to deepen the memory of the Korean War. He proposed two separate structures, with the space between the structures representing the soldiers who returned and those who did not. The break between the two sculptures also represents the division of Korea along the 38th parallel. After three years of planning, funding, setting up the landscape and building, the Korean War Memorial was finally presented to the public on September 30, 2007 in Kissena Park. The community, elected officials and the KWVMA attended the event to see the unveiling of the memorial.

38 Jonathan Kuhn, Director of Art & Antiquities for the NYC Parks Department, Phone call with Author, March 21, 2016.
When creating the memorial, Crozier ripped and tore the clay to give the memorial more texture and used strong, broad strokes to express the anguish of the war. There are no smooth surfaces on the memorial; any visible part of the memorial has a rough quality to it. Crozier wanted his memorial to acknowledge the anguish of war as well as celebrate "the duty, sacrifice and pride necessary for the preservation of freedom." The first statue is a fatigued returning soldier walking on the rough terrain of a hill as shown in figure 9. His next step is supposed to be on American soil. As the soldier is taking his next step, it is going downward. The base that the soldier is walking on plows into the grass and "digs into the earth [to] literally [bring] the experience of the war back home to Queens and American soil."\textsuperscript{41} The expression on the soldier’s face is meant to depict the thought, "I have seen war and will never forget."\textsuperscript{42} By having no flat surfaces on either of the sculptures, Crozier depicted the rough, mountainous terrains of Korea that the soldiers had to travel through.


The second part is soldiers on a hill sloping upwards to a ridge, shown in figure 10. A pair of soldiers is carrying a stretcher, while the other three soldiers continue to walk up against the hill. These soldiers represent the "lost patrol." "They are out of focus and distant, but not forgotten." The narrowing of the hill creates a false perspective of great distance. It also represents the receding memory of the Korean War. Crozier subtly takes the “forgotten war” aspect of the Korean War and blends it in with the monument because this label is one of the dominant narratives for the Korean War in the U.S.

The ridge is significant to the Korean War because so many battles were concentrated on the tops of Korea's mountains. The ridge creates a slanting canopy, which is meant to create a "chapel-like sea" where visitors can enter and pay their respects. Under the canopy is the list of the fallen Korean War soldiers from Queens. In the end, the criterion for the list was to include only soldiers "who were killed in action, missing in action, died while in captivity, or died from wounds.” 43 The Arts and Antiquities made the decision that those who were listed as non-hostile deaths should not be included.44

The memorial that was supposed to commemorate veterans as well as the “Korean immigrants who have since settled in Flushing” made no reference to the Korean community in Flushing besides the inscribed South Korean flag at the base of the flagpole, which was one of the stipulations from the South Korean government in exchange for their donation. 45 At first the KWVMA wanted a memorial that would honor all the countries that participated in the Korean War.

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War, but by the end, it has become exclusively an American memorial for American veterans.46 The first memorial included soldiers representing the United Nations, South Korea and America standing united, but in the end, it is an American soldier that is left standing at the memorial. Furthermore, instead of having the South Korean flag, American Flag and United Nation flag displayed together, the flag pole only has two flags: one is the American flag and the other is a POW/MIA flag, an act which signifies that this memorial is for American soldiers who did not return from the war. Even though the South Korean government donated a huge sum to the artwork, their flag is only incorporated into the base of the flagpole, which is several feet away from the monument. The Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park memorialized only the veterans’ perspective of the Korean War.

The Purpose of a Memorial

At the unveiling ceremony for the Korean War Memorial, there were brochures containing congratulatory messages from elected officials who contributed to the project. Through the congratulatory messages, elected officials explained why the memorial is important to the community. They all stated that it was a way to pay their respects to the Korean War veterans. For example, Congressman Gary L. Ackerman notes that this memorial sends a daily reminder to the community of the sacrifices made by veterans and their families. This memorial is meant for future generations so that they can remember who served the country. Frank Padavan, Senator of New York State Senate, states that this memorial is a "lasting remembrance of all who served in the Korean War and allows generations of Queens residents to pay tribute" to the soldiers.

Besides commemorating Korean War veterans, this memorial serves a larger purpose. War memorials honor soldiers who have sacrificed their lives for their country, but they are also meant to influence future generations. Rory Lancman, Assembly member of the New York State Assembly, said "this memorial and the heroism which it commemorates will inspire future generations to answer the call to defend our country in time of peril." While the memorial provides veterans with closure, war memorials serve a bigger audience than just veterans. Memorials are also for the future generations and are permanent features in society; therefore, they need to be timeless pieces. John C. Liu, Councilmember of New York City, states that he hopes this memorial will serve as a reminder for many generations to come. He also wants it to become a focal point of the Flushing community where people can reflect on the phrase "freedom is not free." Values of democracy and duty are what elected official are looking for in these war memorials. While a war memorial is a representation of a past event, it encourages people to reflect on the past and compare it to the present.

Beverly McDemott, who is part of the Kissena Park Civic Association, notes that they wanted a monument to show what "men endured in the war." The point of this memorial is not to glorify a war, but to bring the "reality of war" into a monument and the present.\footnote{Suzanne Randolph. Korean Veterans Memorial Meeting Minutes Held at the Queens Museum to Members of the Korean War Veterans Artist Selection Committee, April 28, 2004. Minutes. From The Arsenal (New York), The Korean War Memorial File.} The reality of war is reality from American veterans’ experience, not necessarily about the reality of war from the Koreans who had to live through this war. The veterans were trying to demonstrate that the Korean War deserves to be commemorated like the other wars in American history and they were more fixated on clearing up the ambiguity of the America's involvement in the Korean War. These memorials are veteran-motivated and are framed in a way that only focuses on the veterans' narrative.
Frank Alex, one of the veterans in the KWMVA, wished that the monument in Queens would be dedicated to the Korean War veterans "so we are not forgotten." As noted above, Korean War veterans were not paid the same respect as those who served in WWI or WWII. Instead, their own government interrogated them due to Cold War fears. The Korean War veterans have a different kind of veteran experience in that they did not receive recognition from their society or the government for their service in the military. Since the Korean War history was largely ignored until the 1980s, there was no clear dominant narrative. The ambiguity of the Korean War was an advantage to the Korean War veterans because they could create their own dominant narrative and provide it to their communities. Seventy-five percent of the Korean War monuments throughout the nation portray the Korean War in their memorials with an anguished, exhausted soldier. It is clear that the proliferation of these monuments after the 1980s has created a dominant narrative of the Korean War through soldiers’ perspectives.

A public monument that the community uses to reflect on the past has become a parochial version of history. While the war memorial in Kissena Park memorializes the Korean War Veterans beautifully, it has forgotten to explain the bigger story of the Korean War, such as why was the U.S involved? But that brings up the question as to whether it is a purpose of a war memorial to provide knowledge to the community or to console those who have been affected by war.

During an art committee meeting, Tom Finkelpearl, Executive Director of Queens Museum of Art, questioned whether the monument should provide the context of the war since there could be school groups who come to visit the memorial. But Frank Alex states that context should be provided in a brochure, not the memorial. He believes that the purpose of the Korean War memorial was not to educate anyone. This memorial is for the soldiers. Barney Cohen,

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another veteran, chimed in and noted that if people want to learn about the background of the Korean War, they should go to the library. Instead, this memorial is meant to "evoke emotions and bring tears to your eyes."\(^{49}\) The veterans wanted this memorial to honor them and not focus on the Korean War. Veterans used the memorial to not only receive recognition for their services but to finally discuss and reflect on a part of their past that they could not do when the war ended. These Korean War memorials are therapeutic for veterans to make sense of their own past.

Other participants of the Korean War Memorial find that the memorial gives Korean Americans the opportunity to pay their respects to soldiers who sacrificed their life for Korea's freedom. Copell states that the Korean War Memorial is unique because it is located in Flushing, which has one of the largest Korean population in New York. The monument is "not only for U.S. soldiers, but Korean and Chinese who live in the area and these people need to understand what the Korean War was all about."\(^{50}\) Finkelpearl, believed this memorial allowed "Koreans who benefitted from the outcome of the Korean War" to express their gratitude to the Korean War veterans.\(^{51}\) From the memorial, Finkelpearl wanted Korean Americans specifically to acknowledge that Americans fought for their freedom and he sees this memorial as a chance for Korean Americans to pay their respects.

Since the Korean War is branded as the "Forgotten War," commemorators and veterans involved in constructing the Korean War narrative have also tried to rectify the act of

\(^{49}\) Suzanne Randolph. *Korean Veterans Memorial Meeting Minutes Held at the Queens Museum to Members of the Korean War Veterans Artist Selection Committee, April 28, 2004.* Minutes. From The Arsenal (New York), *The Korean War Memorial File.*

\(^{50}\) Suzanne Randolph. *Korean Veterans Memorial Meeting Minutes Held at the Queens Museum to Members of the Korean War Veterans Artist Selection Committee, April 28, 2004.* Minutes. From The Arsenal (New York), *The Korean War Memorial File.*

\(^{51}\) Suzanne Randolph. *Korean Veterans Memorial Meeting Minutes Held at the Olmsted Center, Flushing Meadow, Corona Park to Members of the Korean War Veterans Artist Selection Committee, March 17, 2004.* Minutes. From The Arsenal (New York), *The Korean War Memorial File.*
"forgetting" this war. But by doing so, they have neglected the war itself and focused on trying to make a memory that is focused more on the veterans rather than the war itself. Instead, the Korean War memorials throughout the U.S. focus more on the values of serving the army, the duty of soldiers and the sacrifice America has made. This is an American dominated view of the war that does not explain the Korean War and in a way the history of the Korean War is still forgotten even with the memorials. Since the Korean veterans were aging by the time the U.S. finally began to recognize their service, the timing was crucial and they had to move quickly before their memories of the Korean War were left behind.

To South Korea, the war was a crucial turning point because it separated the land and South Korea was able to develop on its own terms. Therefore, the Korean War in South Korea is represented in a triumphant and liberating style. However, the American narrative of the Korean War is filled with sorrow and sacrifice because it is depicted from veterans' perspective. Since the Korean War memorial focuses on the narrative of veterans, because it is largely driven by the veteran community, the memorials have left out the Korean part of the Korean War. In addition to the veterans who served in the Korean War, the memorial in Kissena Park was meant to pay homage to the "Korean immigrants who have since settled in Flushing." Instead veterans created a memorial that would remind Koreans of how Americans had an active role in shaping their freedom, which is true but it does not justify the act of neglecting to include the Koreans into their own history of the Korean War.

Geographical Location of Kissena Park

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The location of a memorial is not done randomly and in order to understand the
importance of the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park, it is essential to understand the
neighborhood around the park. The KWVMA were veterans from Queens and this neighborhood
has gone through a drastic demographic transformation. The Immigration Act of 1965 abolished
the race-based discrimination, which was used to restrict certain ethnic groups from entering.
Immigration was no longer based on national origin or race but “gave equal opportunity for U.S.
immigration to all countries.”53 From this act, groups such as Chinese, Korean, and Latinos were
allowed to enter the U.S. in larger numbers. Flushing’s ethnic composition changed in 1970-
1990. According to the census, in 1970, Flushing had 5.6% Asians in total, and by 1990, the
Asian population rose to 35.8% in Flushing.54 Meanwhile, the Non-Hispanic White population
was the majority in 1970, making up 76.2% percent of the Flushing population, but by 1990,
their size was reduced to 28.9%.55 All the boroughs were losing population as New York City
was going through its financial crisis in the 1970s but Flushing was the only district that
"experienced a modest increase."56 Based on immigrants by country of birth in Flushing,
Koreans were the third largest group to enter Flushing and were the second largest Asian
immigrant group in the 1980s.57 Flushing was a popular place for immigrants because at the time
it had relatively inexpensive housing and there were many modes of transportation for new
immigrants to get to their jobs.

53 Pyong Gap Min, "The Immigration of Koreans to the United States: A Review of Forty-Five Year (1965-
2009) Trends," in Pyong Gap Min, Korean in North America: Their Twenty-First Century Experiences (Lanham:
54 Christopher Smith, "Asian New York: The Geography and Politics of Diversity," The International
55 Smith, 63.
56 Smith, 66.
57 Smith, 68.
By the time the KWVMA started planning the memorial in 1999, Asians already dominated Flushing. The KWVMA was aware of this fact when they were looking for the
location for the memorial and that was one of the reasons they wanted the memorial in Kissena Park. The green shaded area right below Flushing is Kissena Park. The memorial would commemorate the veterans' service in the Korean War and the location of the memorial would also prove that their efforts in the war were fruitful since many Koreans from the Republic of Korea had the freedom to move to the United States. In Queens the Asian population consists of Indian, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Filipino, Korean and Nepalese immigrants and their descendants.58 As shown above on the map, compared to other districts in Queens, Flushing has the highest density of Asians. There are 72,000 people living in Flushing—92.2 percent Asian, 14.9 percent Hispanic, 9.5 percent White and 4.2 percent African American.59 Downtown Flushing is also known as a satellite ethnic enclave from Chinatown; since many immigrants and Asian ethnic groups have moved there, it can now be seen as its own unique Chinatown in its own right.

Recently, there has been a surge in Korean businesses in Downtown Flushing. Korean beauty products have become very popular in the U.S., and many Korean beauty stores that originated in Korea have opened up on Roosevelt Avenue in downtown Flushing such as The Face Shop, Nature Republic, and Skin Food. Also around the block from Roosevelt Avenue, there is a new Korean beauty store that is opening on Main Street, Flushing, and it is taking place of a Pizzeria that has been at that location for almost 50 years.60 Last year was the first time the Republic of Korea exported more beauty products ($1.067 billion) than imported ($978 million). The total export value of Korea's beauty products to the U.S. was $52 million, a 60% increase

It is clear that Americans are buying into the Korean beauty trends and this is reflected in Downtown Flushing.

Beyond the beauty trend, Flushing is also known for Korean cuisine and recently their Korean cafes. The most recent South Korean franchises are Paris Baguette, Caffe Bene and Tous Les Jours, which opened within the same block, one over street from the Korean beauty stores. Since there are more Korean businesses around this neighborhood, the Korean community around the business seems to be growing as well. All of these businesses have opened within the last ten years, showing that Korean businesses have now entered this ethnic enclave. The Asian immigrant community has revitalized Flushing, an area that appeared to be heading towards an economic downturn in the 1970s. The businesses in Flushing are starting to change and there are more brand name stores competing with ethnic businesses for a spot in Flushing. In the last ten years, Korean businesses in Downtown Flushing are more visible, indicating that there is an interest in Korean products and cafe culture. Kissena Park is two miles away from Downtown Flushing, which has been rapidly changing into a heterogeneous Asian neighborhood in terms of businesses. According to the 2010 census, Korean was the third most spoken language in Flushing of the top languages spoken other than English.

Northern Boulevard from 220th street to Main Street, Flushing also has a substantial Korean business community along this strip. Although there are other stores, Korean churches, clothing stores, restaurants, and markets are most prevalent in the area. Kissena Park is just two miles away from this booming Korean community as well. Both of these locations are popular

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62 Smith, 76.
places where Koreans buy their groceries, spend their leisure time or eat authentic Korean-food. It is clear that Kissena Park is surrounded by a Korean business community. When the KWVMA was planning out the location, they knew that Flushing had one of the densest Korean populations in New York and thought that since Kissena Park is so close to the Korean community, those who were affected by the war, meaning Korean Americans, could appreciate the memorial as well.

Since Asians are the most prevalent group in Flushing, it seems that a memorial built in this area in the last 20 years would reflect that. However, the Korean War memorial in Kissena Park does the opposite. Although this is a Korean War Memorial, Koreans are barely represented in the memorial. The only thing that includes Korea in the memorial is the South Korean flag found at the base of a flagpole, which is about six feet away from the monument. Even though many Korean businesses contributed to the monument, it does not pay tribute to the Koreans that fought in the Korean War, but only focuses on the American narrative.

**Investigating Local Reactions**

As noted above, the two parks the KWVMA had in mind when finding a location for the memorial were Daniel Beard Park and Kissena Park, both located in Flushing. Putting the memorial in a densely Korean populated community was one of the goals for the veterans. They claimed that this memorial is for veterans and the community that surround the park, meaning the Korean Americans. Korean Americans' home country's history would overlap with the veterans' history and it would create a connection between the two groups. Therefore, I interviewed eleven Koreans living in Queens to see if they know about the memorial, what their
impression of the memorial is, and if they feel that veteran narrative in Kissena Park's memorial conflicts with how they feel about the war.

The Korean Americans I interviewed are in close proximity to the park either through their residence or through their commute to work or school. The age range is from 23 to 67, and they all grew up in either lower or middle-class situations. I separated the interviews according to generations; three Korean Americans who immigrated to America, three 1.5-generations, and five second-generation Korean Americans. When I conducted the interviews with them, either at their homes or cafes, I recorded and transcribed them.

Before I discussed the Korean War Memorial, I asked about their upbringing, what activities they participate in that make them feel closer to their ethnicity and whether they think they have stronger ties to their nationality or ethnicity. Many of them noted that they did not live in a predominately Korean neighborhood and they had to go to certain institutions such as church or spend time with their Korean friends and family in order to feel closer to the ethnic roots. Around the park, there is not an area in which an ethnic group dominates the neighborhood, making it harder for 1.5 and second generation Korean Americans to retain their culture because there is not a bounded area that has a tightly knit Korean community. Although Flushing has a large Korean community, they do not all live within the same area. Therefore, Koreans use social settings in order to practice and retain their Korean culture.

Most of the participants identified as Korean American because they practiced both American and Korean culture. However, when they saw the pictures of the Korean War Memorial, they were offended that the Korean War was portrayed through an American soldier’s perspective and wondered why there was nothing "Korean" about it. Since they identified with both American and Korean culture, they began to feel confused about how they should feel.
Although they were offended that the twelve-foot soldier was not Korean, they also did not want to disregard the American veterans who helped in the Korean War. Overall, discussing the way the history of the Korean War has been constructed through the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park was inconsistent for them because their ethnic and national identities were conflicting with one another. While the memorial highlighted the history of the American soldier in the Korean War, it has left out their ethnic history. The KWVMA were targeting this ethnic group because both groups have a shared past with Korea but those who were ethnically Korean were both thankful for the memorial and confused as to why their ethnic history was not conveyed.

**A Disparity in Identity and History**

Korean Americans, meaning people who are of Korean decent and are either living in America for several years and identify with the American culture or who are of Korean ethnic descent but were born in America, have two types of histories to identify with: American and Korean. However, when these histories overlap, it can become difficult because both sides of their narratives of identity conflict with one another. Aaron, a second-generation Korean American, identifies as Korean American based on his exposure to both cultures. As he was growing up, his father always told him to remember where he came from, meaning that his roots were somewhere else. When asked about which country's history he identified with, Republic of Korea or America, Aaron said both. As we were discussing the memorial, he had conflicting views on how the memorial was portrayed.

From his American perspective, he thought that there was nothing wrong with the memorial; it fulfilled its purpose of commemorating the American soldiers who fought in the
Korean War. However, from his Korean perspective, he felt that this memorial was lacking a Korean perspective. Since he identified with both American and Korean history and culture, as he was explaining his thoughts on the memorial, he was conflicted by two sides. From his American side, he felt that the memorial was fine because it is on American soil and America is going to frame it according to their experiences. However, on his Korean side, he thought the memorial lacked context because it didn't refer to what the war was about. Aaron's opposing opinions of the monument convey the difficulty of having two histories that diverge from one another and his experience reflects many Koreans who identify both with their ethnicity and nationality but have a hard time choosing one over the other when these two identities overlap.

As Aaron was explaining his point of view about the Korean War, he stated, "From an American's point of view... who is not Korean, they would probably look at this and be like they respect and honor the American soldiers who participated in the war. But from the Korean side, I feel like those who participated or who have memories while they grew up in Korea... this really is not important to them." He was trying to describe the two different ethnic and national groups who would view this the Korean War differently, but what about Korean Americans who embrace both their nationality and ethnicity? Alex, who came to the U.S. when he was eight, thought that the memorial was narrow-minded because it only commemorated the American soldiers and had left out the Korean soldiers who also lost lives too. But like Aaron, he went back and forth between feeling appreciative of American veterans and offended. While both Alex and Aaron felt grateful towards the American veterans, this memorial also made them reflect on how muted their ethnic history is in the Korean War.

Throughout all the interviews conducted, the common questions asked were: (1) Is that a Korean solider? (2) Where is the Korean flag? Although they were grateful that there was even a
Korean War Memorial at all in Queens, they felt that the Korean side of the memorial was left out of the narrative. The 1.5 and second generations in particular have a hard time grappling with the two histories that conflict. They all either identified as American or Korean American and when they were first saw the memorial, the first thing they looked for were signs of Korea in the memorial because they felt that the memorial should honor both the American and Korean service. When Richard, a second generation Korean American, saw the pictures of the twelve-foot statue he said, "He doesn't look Korean. Is he supposed to be Korean or American?" He expected there to be some sort of "Korean-ness" into the memorial and was surprised that there wasn't a sign of Korea besides the small flag on the base of the flagpole. After all, this is the Korean War Memorial, but it does not include Korea into its narrative. The respondents had a hard time articulating why Korea should be incorporated into the memorial, but most of them felt that it should. But at the same time, they felt that this memorial is on American ground and it is typical to commemorate only a certain part of a war that the U.S. was involved in. To the 1.5 and second generation, acknowledgement of the Korean War was more than what they had expected from the U.S. Only two of the eleven participants were aware of the memorial and many were amazed that the Korean War was even acknowledged.

The 1.5 and second generation went to school in the U.S. and were aware that Korean War history was largely ignored. In high school, Julia observed her history classes would always end with WWII. She remembers a reference of the Korean War but nothing more than that. Aaron also states that in school, the Korean War "was never really talked about. It was only mentioned as a very minor thing because America was involved." Alex said that he remembers learning about the Korean War in high school but all the focus was on General MacArthur. He chuckled as he stated that Korean War history was more focused on this American general rather
than the war. It is clear that even in school settings, Korean Americans are largely left out of their own history and the respondents were not surprised when they saw that their history was left out again through this memorial.

I asked all the participants what they wanted to change about the memorial and the majority stated that they at least wanted a South Korean flag to fly alongside the American flag, especially since South Korea generously donated so much to the memorial. In total, the construction of the site and the memorial itself cost $1,011,000. Together, Council Member Liu, Mayor Bloomberg and Queens Borough President Helen Marshall funded the construction of the plaza, which was a total of $430,000. The sculpture was made possible by $153,000 from the South Korean government, $50,000 from the State, and $166,000 in private donations. Of the total cost of the sculpture ($369,000), the South Korean Government provided 41% of the funding and one of the stipulations for their donation was that a Korean Flag be incorporated into the memorial. Although the initial planning of the monument had the Korean Flag flying with the America Flag, by 2007, the only flags flying at the memorial were the American Flag and the POW-MIA Flag, representing fallen soldiers or those who did not return.

When I told all the participants of the interview about the large sum of money that the Republic of Korea donated to this Korean War Memorial, they were shocked at how little South Korea was incorporated into the monument. As they were flipping through the pictures of the memorial, they were looking for something Korean, a flag, a soldier or a symbol; anything that would resonate with the public that this memorial was about the Korean War and not just another typical monument. Few were able to spot the Korean Flag at the base of the flagpole and were surprised at how small it was considering the large donation from South Korea. After finding out

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how much South Korea donated, they had a heightened sense of "Korean-ness" and felt justified enough to say that this memorial was not done in a way that honors the Korean War in its entirety; instead it is narrowly focused on American veterans.

Julia, a second generation Korean American, looked at this memorial and thought it just looked triumphant, although that is the opposite of what Crozier intended for the memorial. As she browsed through the photos of the memorial, she stated, "I don't understand. It could even [possibly be] that this isn't even about a war. It could just be about soldiers." She thought that this memorial was just a representation of soldiers instead of the Korean War, which in a way is what the veterans wanted to show. They wanted the memorial to show their harrowing journey through the war, but it implies nothing about the war besides those who fought in it. Aaron also stated that nothing about the memorial distinctly distinguished itself from any other war memorial. He stated, “it just looks like regular army soldier.” He also noted that if the titles were switched around for WWII no one could have told the difference. The KWVMA tried to show that this war was like any other big war the U.S. was involved in but that is what makes this memorial ordinary. Grace, a first generation Korean American, also thought that this sculpture could depict any war such as WWI or WWII. She noted that if the memorial did not state "The Korean War" then it would blend in with other war monuments. Alex said that if people were looking at this memorial from afar, they would not know that this is a Korean War memorial. He stated, "I understand this is American soil but I feel like if you want to depict a war that happened in Korea, you should promote Korea into it." Paul, a 1.5 generation Korean American, noted that if he took his grandma here she would never recognize that the memorial was honoring the Korean War until someone informed her about it and then she would begin to feel
happy that her history had been documented in America too. Paul stated that there should be "a Korean flag, Korean soldier... or something Korean! There is nothing Korean about this."

**Reactions of the First Generation**

At first I assumed that the first generation would feel the most disappointed about how the American memory of the Korean War had left out the Koreans from their own war. I thought Koreans who were closer to their ethnic roots would be the most upset at the American narrative. However, the generational explanation should not be correlated with ethnic identity. On the contrary, their views of the Korean War also deals with how their family, including older generations such as grandparents, had experienced the war and how it has affected their current lifestyle.

Matthew moved to New York in 2008 when he was 25 years old. As a child, he had to move to a new home every four years because of his father's career. This came to his advantage later on in life because he learned to adapt quickly to new settings. When he first arrived in New York, the first thing he wanted to do was get to know American culture. His first job was in a Japanese restaurant in the West Village as a waiter/delivery boy.

Currently, he is in his last semester at Baruch College and hopes to find a job that can sponsor his citizenship. Although he does identify as a Korean, he is aware that American culture is now a part of him and enjoys his American lifestyle. Since he does not have any family here, he relies on friends for socialization and has many different friend groups, which consist of many different ethnicities, Korean being one of them. He did not have a lot to say about the Korean War but overall described the war as sad because his country is separated due to politics. He went to school in Korea during the 1990's and stated that he did not learn much about the Korean
War. Instead his history classes were more focused on Korean ancient history and less about modern history. His family was not badly hurt from the war because his grandfather owned ports; therefore, they were financially stable during the aftermath of the war. Even when he was in the army for the required Korean military service, he notes that the Korean War was never really talked about, although he and the other soldiers understood that a war was possible.

When I showed Matthew the Korean War memorial he said, "I don't really know what it stand[s] for... I don't think they really wanted to talk about it." By they, he meant the creators of the memorial. Although he gives credit for Americans paying recognition to the Korean War, he thought that it was no different from a piece of rock. He also points out that was no background information about the memorial. “Without background information, it doesn't mean anything.” While the memorial does commemorate American veterans who fought in the Korean War, Matthew is right to state that this memorial is taken out of context and only focuses on values of duty and sacrifice on the part of American soldiers but does not give any information as to why soldiers had to be sacrificed in the first place.

Henry and Grace are also first generation Americans. However, they experienced living in the aftermath of the Korean War and saw how the war affected their family; therefore they thought the memorial was pointless. They moved to New York from Seoul, Korea in the middle of the 1980s. At first they were both working for a Korean international bank, which is how they met and married later on. Both planned to go back to Korea eventually. They only had work visas but when Henry had a stroke that paralyzed half his body in the early 1990s, he became handicapped. With his disabilities in Korea, he could not walk, could not drive a car and the Korean policies for the disabled treated him as if he were incapable of doing anything. Therefore, he moved to Queens because he would have more opportunities and a better life.
Henry's mother and father died when he was young. His family lived in the countryside of South Korea. He grew up in a modest household; his family was financially well-off before the war, but after the war, his father was accused of associating with a communist. Henry's father treated a man to dinner, who would later be a high-ranking officer in North Korea. Once the South Korean Government found out, they arrested Henry's father for socializing with a communist and the family had to use up most of their money to go to court. In the end, his father came home but his family's financial stability was gone. At an early age, Henry was exposed to the chaos in the aftermath of the war and was angry that America had left South Korea in a state of confusion. Although Henry was born three years after the war ended, he had to endure the aftermath of the war. Henry grew up during a time when the fear of the war starting again was still prevalent. When he was in school or in the army, the threat of North Korea invading was strong.

His wife, Grace lived in Seoul in the aftermath of the War. Like her husband, Grace was born in 1961, several years after the fighting ended. Although she did not live lavishly in Korea, her mother owned a restaurant in Seoul so Grace always had enough clothes to wear and food to eat. As she was describing her childhood, Grace said that many kids were not as lucky as she was because they came to school with lice, did not have any lunch, and many children had ringworm due to Korea's contaminated water at the time; it was common for teachers to give out medication in order to treat this. When she was in school they were taught to fear communism and understood what to do in case North Korea invaded again. She said, "When I went to high school, we were trained in basic nursing skills. It was like the future women's army!"

When Grace was in her twenties, she felt that she had been "too educated" that it had traumatic psychological affects on her. She had dreams of communists invading her house and
shooting guns. She said that this did not just happen to her, but all her friends and everybody her age. They were taught to fear North Korea and invasion so that they became hyper-sensitive and anxious whenever they thought about North Korea.

It has been several years since Grace and Henry visited Kissena Park and even when they were there, they could not walk around too much because of Henry's disability. Therefore, they did not know there was a Korean War Memorial in the park and were happily surprised that a war they were familiar with was memorialized nearby. However, once they saw the memorial, they felt that their history has been disregarded for someone else's history. As they looked through the pictures of the memorial, Henry and Grace were not impressed and even a bit angry that the memorial had done nothing to commemorate the history of the Korean War. After all, this memorial is a reflection of the Korean War; therefore, they thought Korea should be incorporated into the monument's narrative in someway. Henry thought that the memorial is meaningless because it shows nothing about the Korean War. He stated, "A memorial is for remembering but what are you going to remember from that?" He wanted more background information on the Korean War; a memorial that would help the public understand what happened during the Korean War, not a memorial that shows the usual signs of sacrifice and loss.

The education Grace, Henry and Matthew received were completely different due to their age. In the late 1980s, South Korea no longer taught their citizens to see North Korea as their enemy. Instead of fearing North Korea, the Republic of Korea began to construct a new history. The Cold War narrative focused on the North Korean invasion and brutality but by the 1990s they began to practice "collective forgiveness" by changing the Korean War narrative into one of victimization rather than one revolved around hate toward North Korea. They wanted to create a
pan-Korean tragedy of the war.\textsuperscript{65} Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Jiyul Kim state that the Republic of Korea began to "shift from remembering the start of the war to commemorating its provisional end." By focusing on the end of the war, South Korea wanted to solely focus on the fact that their nation has been torn apart and needs to be repaired.\textsuperscript{66} Therefore, Grace and Henry grew up during the time when the Republic of Korea was teaching its citizens to view North Korea as their enemy while Matthew was educated during the time when they were trying to refocus the war on pan-Korean identity. Grace pointed out that her generation, meaning people who were born in the 1950-1970, received a different education about the Korean War from the generations who were born in the 1980-1990s.

Beyond education, Grace, Henry and Matthew’s memory of the Korean War also differ because of their family’s experiences of the war. Matthew’s family’s finances were not as badly affected by the war as Grace and Henry's family. Grace and Henry’s financial situations influenced their impression of the war and left scarring memories. While Grace and Henry had to grow up in modest conditions due to the aftermath of the war, Matthew’s family financial stability was not affected by the war. Even within the same ethnic group, the memory of the Korean War differs because of how the Korean War had affected their lives overall. Although this is a shared history among Matthew, Grace and Henry, they each have a different memory of it.

At first, I tried to understand the Korean War memory from a generational standpoint but midway through I found out that this was too general and did not encompass the complexity of how memory and identity worked hand in hand. In order to understand the memory of the


\textsuperscript{66} Jager and Kim, 251.
Korean War for Korean Americans, class, family structure, Korean community setting and self-identity need to be considered. Although America has branded the Korean War as the forgotten war, the Korean community still has memories of the war and for them it was never forgotten. Even though most of the succeeding generations do not have a clear idea of what the Korean War was about, they understand that this is the war that has torn up families, split up their people, separated their home country, and caused hardships for their neighbors’ families.

**Trauma Passed Down to 1.5 and Second Generation**

One of the biggest concerns I had for this project is whether the 1.5 or second generation Korean Americans would even have an opinion about the Korean War because they are several generations removed from it. It is assumed that the further removed a generation is away from a war, the less they care about it. However, memories of the war that are passed down from one generation to the next can keep the memory of a war alive. For example, succeeding generations of Holocaust survivors still study the traumatic experience that their families went through and the succeeding generations have incorporated their families’ history into their own identity.

While the subsequent generations will be less experienced with the war, they will still have a personal connection with the memory because it is connected to their ethnicity and family.

Experiencing the war or living through the aftermath is not the only way for Koreans and Korean Americans to have a personal opinion of the war. Even though Aaron was two generations away from the war, he still remembers hearing tragic stories from his families about the Korean War. Korean movies and books are another way to understand the war because they paint a vivid picture of the tragedy of the Korean War. James, who is a second generation

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Korean American, said that most of his knowledge about the Korean War came from movies that depicted the Korean War as difficult for Koreans because they had to watch their country and family separate. Although he does not have personal family stories, these movies resonate the Korean tragedies of the war and have left an emotional impression on him. James specifies that these movies are made in Korea and not put into American movie theaters; instead America focuses more on Vietnam War movies rather than Korean War movies. He recognizes that American history has put an emphasis on WWII and the Vietnam War, which have overshadowed the Korean War.

Ramsay Liem, a psychologist, studied the way the Korean War trauma has been passed down from one generation to the next--"an intergenerational transmission of social trauma." Even though the Koreans who experienced the war were silent about their connection to the war, trauma was still passed on from one generation to the next. Alex, who moved to America when he was eight, stated that his parents would mention the war briefly; not about the politics of the war itself but the effects it had on his family. Alex's parents, born in 1964, still remember the scarcity of food. Since the food supply in Korea was in short supply after the war, Alex's parents remember the feeling of hunger. Alex was always taught to finish everything on his plate and not waste food. As he was describing the eating habits taught by his parents, he realized his parents' lessons are not only from their "Korean" values but also from the trauma of living in the aftermath of the war.

Richard, whose grandmother had fled from the North during the Korean War, carrying her son across the border while leaving her two daughters behind, understood that the Korean War had torn a part of his family apart. Julia always thought her mother was anxious because she was...
was the typical tiger mom and she also inherited her mother’s anxious behavior. However, once she heard her mother’s anxiety stemmed from her past growing up in a period of political unrest, Julia began to understand that her mother was conditioned to be hyper-sensitive to her surroundings. Therefore, one does not need to experience trauma in order to comprehend it; it can be passed down from generation to generation. Throughout the interviews, all of the participants in this project described the war as tragic -- but more of a personal pain than just a sadness about war. This war had torn not only their people apart, but at times it had made the living condition for their relatives and family worse off and unbearable. Although specific memories are not always passed down, emotions and behavior from the war can be passed down to the succeeding generations. It is clear that the Korean War history is still active in the memories of Korean Americans because the 1.5 and second generation are still emotionally affected when they hear or see stories about the Korean War.

The recent generations might not have experience with the war but they know people who lived through the aftermath of the war, read or watch movies about the war or see South and North Korean families reunite for the first time on the news. Overall, while Korean Americans understand that the outcome of the Korean War had in some way given them their freedom, it does not negate the fact that this war that had affected their people and has left scars on the Korean memory. Therefore, it is less about experiencing the war and more about the way trauma has been passed down.

**Distant Ethnic Roots**

Of the eleven participants, there were three interviewees who ignored their Korean culture because either felt rejected by it or thought it held them back. Julia and Daniel are second
generations Korean Americans and were embarrassed in Korean settings because they could not speak the language. Julia does not practice the Korean cultural norms and when she meets older Korean adults, they think she is rude because she does not speak or act formally, but she is unaware of the Korean mannerisms because those values were never imposed on her. Daniel has lived in Queens all his life but moved around to five different neighborhoods, each ethnically diverse. Lastly, Paul immigrated with his parents at a young age. He speaks the language conversationally and lives near Northern Boulevard in Flushing with many other Koreans around him. At first Paul tried to retain his Korean culture and language but as he got older and started high school he began to drift from his ethnic culture. He felt that his parents were not immersed in American culture and that held them back.

Before the interview, none of them were aware of this memorial in the park, although they have all visited the park since the memorial was erected. Even though these participants felt distant from their ethnic roots, in the end Daniel and Paul thought the memorial in Kissena Park should have something that represents Korea since this memorial is about the Korean War. Paul stated that "all these soldiers look like American soldiers," and by pointing this out, he sensed that something was off. When asked if he wanted to incorporate a Korean soldier, he said, "Yes... but this is technically America, so it should celebrate American veterans." By the end, he noted that Koreans from the homeland and Korean American businesses contributed to this monument but it seems to only celebrate American veterans. He could not decide whether this monument should be more "Korean" or if it should only celebrate America. Paul, on the other hand, was convinced that the memorial should have had a Korean soldier standing next to the American soldier so that they can be shown as allies.
Daniel, Julia and Paul were even more surprised to find out that the Republic of Korea had donated a large sum to the memorial and it gave them even more reason to state that the memorial should have a Korean quality to it. They suggested that the South Korean Flag should fly along the American flag or that a Korean soldier should stand next to the American soldiers. Although Paul and Daniel identified as solely American, when they had to explain their thoughts on the memorial, they were perplexed as to whether the memorial should commemorate soldiers who fought in the war or if the Korean narrative should be displayed more proudly. Julia thought that this war memorial was like any other war memorial. It only focuses on what the soldiers have done, but it does not focus on the tragedies of war from different perspectives.

**The Location of the Memorial**

Grace thought that this memorial was put in a good location because there are many Koreans who live around the neighborhood and it would be good for them to reflect on the past through the memorial. However, she stated that Korean Americans cannot even recognize that this memorial is for the Korean War. Therefore, it defeats the purpose of putting it in a Korean dominated neighborhood if they can't even understand what the memorial is trying to commemorate. Julia understood the agenda of the KWVMA and stated "they must have looked at the highest density of Koreans and found that [this] was a good site... because who else would care... besides the people that were affected." However, she also thought this memorial does nothing for the Korean community because "it was barely portrayed."

A majority of the participants thought that this memorial was placed in an appropriate location because Flushing does have a large community of Korean Americans who understand the importance of the Korean War since it drastically affected their lives in one way or another.
However, they note that this memorial does not show the Korean War they way Korean Americans remember it, but instead the Korean War narrative has been overshadowed by the veteran's narrative and it has left the Koreans' history out of that memory. Michael said that it was a great place to put the memorial because there will be people who would appreciate this memorial since it overlaps with their history. But ironically Koreans would not know what this memorial represents because it depicts the Korean War from an American soldier’s standpoint.

Matthew thought that this memorial would be better placed where there are more "Americans" because it would be better appreciated by those who could relate to the memorial. He notes that the soldier looks like an American, which to him meant Caucasian. He said that if the Asian community cannot recognize what this memorial stands for, then what is the use for it? He thought it was ironic that a Korean War memorial from the Caucasians' perspective is in a predominantly Asian neighborhood. Another two participants noted that the soldier was a Caucasian man and felt that their ethnic history was being portrayed through an American nationalistic perspective rather than their ethnic history.

**Conclusion**

These monuments are societies' own permanent mementos to remember certain historical moment but how these historical monuments are constructed influence how the public remembers the past. Seventy-five percent of Korean War memorials are war representational monuments that display how anguish and hard the Korean War was and it justifies the service of the fallen soldiers and veterans. The Korean War memorials in the United States are trying to crystallize an ambiguous American memory. Since the United States involvement with Korea in 1950 had no clear title, it became a contested history. Veterans wanted society to know that the Korean War was actually a war, which is why they would want the Korean War memorials to
display items that represent war. These memorials justify their services in the military and clarify that the United States involvement in 1950 was an act of war. The Korean War memorials are intertwined with feelings of anguish and loss from a soldier’s perspective, which again proves that the Korean War was just as devastating as other wars fought by the United States.

These memorials do not shed light on the causes of war or the outcomes of the war. Instead, these memorials focus on the soldiers who fought the war. The Korean War memorials in the United States are not meant to teach the public about the Korean War, but to shed light on soldiers who were largely ignored and, therefore, forgotten by the public.

While constructing a history for the Korean War, the veterans' narrative came at the expense of displaying the Korean War in a more holistic way. All wars have soldiers and sacrifice; most of the participants in this thesis were frustrated because from a glance they one could tell that the memorial was about the Korean War. Instead this memorial is a symbol of American heroism and veterans' sacrifice in the war. The memorial does not commemorate the Korean War but venerates soldiers of the Korean War.

Examining the Korean War Memorial in Kissena Park sheds light on the process of creating a memorial for the public and understanding the construction of history through a memorial. This case study clarifies why the majority of Korean War memorials are war representational and what kind of narrative this tells about the Korean War. The KWVMA put this memorial in specifically in Flushing so that Korean Americans could appreciate it more because it was a part of their history as well. However, many Korean Americans, while grateful that their history is recognized, did not even know that this memorial was acknowledging the Korean War. For Korean Americans who identify with both American and Korean history, understanding the Korean War through monuments in the U.S. can offend their ethnic identity.
Michael thought that the Korean War was a big part of his history as a Korean American but the veteran-inspired narrative of the Korean War overshadowed his ethnic history. It is ironic that the memorial is titled the Korean War since there is nothing Korean about it. Instead this memorial represents the loss America incurred from the war, the sacrifice America made, but nothing about the war itself other than the fact that it took American lives. As local communities were trying to make up for the fact that the Korean War veterans were forgotten, they left out the "Korean" aspect of the Korean War. As a result of commemorating the Korean War solely through the veterans' perspective, the American narrative of the Korean War has isolated Koreans from their own history.
Bibliography


