SOUTH KOREAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE 20TH CENTURY WITH GEORGE KATSIAFICAS

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This transcript is of our 2012 interview with Dr. George Katsiaficas, author and contributor to over a dozen books on Peoples Movements and the elucidator of the Eros Effect. For over a decade, Dr. Katsiaficas has been studying the culture and history of South Korea and its culture and has published the a two volume set, the first of which is entitled *Asia’s Unknown Uprisings: South Korean Social Movements* in the 20th Century from PM Press.

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TFSR: This week we’re joined by Dr. George Katsiaficas – the author of over a dozen books on social change and people’s power movements. For decades, Dr. Katsiaficas has been presenting these people’s movements and their apparent synchronicities alongside other contemporary but distant movements in the framework of what he calls the “Eros effect”. Most recently, Dr. Katsiaficas has published a book – a decade in the making – through PM Press called *South Korean Social Movements* in the 20th Century, part one of a two-part series entitled “Asia’s Unknown Uprisings.” Dr. Katsiaficas, it’s a pleasure to be speaking with you.

GK: Thank you for inviting me.

TFSR: How would you describe the “Eros effect”?

GK: Well, history is normally written about great men and great women, and major events like wars and catastrophes that occur. And the “Eros effect” is a way to try to understand history through the power of love, through the power of human solidarity, through the emergence of hundreds of thousands and millions of people as actors, as shapers of history. The most recent example is the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement, which overnight out of nowhere, involving millions of people from the grassroots, has really changed the discourse in the world. We now talk about the 1% and the 99%. We now understand the limits of many of the US-imposed regimes in the Arab world, and also ones that the US opposed. Through millions of people acting without leaders, without any party, without central organization, history has been changed.

The ”Eros effect” refers to these moments when suddenly, without any organization or leader calling for it, millions of people go into the streets and change history. They massively occupy public space, they refuse to go home, and they change their everyday lives. They live according to different norms and values than previously. Instead of living according to the values of just doing your job, making money, and doing the best you can, all of a sudden, hundreds of thousands of people are going to occupy city squares around the world, and talk about the need for a better social system, better economic system than capitalism, than corporate capitalism, than the finance capital-run system that we have today. How does that occur? It’s a very interesting process. So the “Eros effect” tries to speak to that and says: that phenomenon in history occurs much more often than we understand. In fact, it is one of the great resources that social change initiatives can draw upon.

I first was able to articulate the notion of the “Eros effect” when I had a eureka moment after spending years researching what had happened in the 1960s. As I specifically looked at notes that I had taken in four languages, in terms of what has happened at different demonstrations, what had motivated the demonstration, and where has it come from, I came to understand that specific movement events in
different parts of the world had stimulated people in other parts of the world to act. And the people acted more in response to social movements, and uprisings than they had to national, political, or economic conditions.

What do I mean by that? Specifically, the Tet Offensive and Vietnamese heroic resistance to American Imperial domination led to the Tet Offensive in 1968, when every major American base overnight had surprise attacks launched on. At that very same time, there was a student conference in West Berlin, Germany, that activists from many parts of Europe attended in solidarity with the Vietnamese struggle. That conference inspired students, especially from France, who went back to France and became involved in the March 22nd Movement and helped to spark what’s called the May Events, the May’68 in France, when there was a new revolution. The new revolution in France in May’68 stimulated general strikes as far away as Senegal and Spain. Germany experienced its worst crisis since World War II, and a major uprising, emergency laws were passed. The movements in Mexico were stimulated by what had happened in France, as of course were movements around the world, including at Columbia University in 1968. In Mexico, students were inspired by the French uprising, and they organized against the Olympics, which was there in 1968. And the Mexican authorities used overwhelming force, killing some 400 Mexican students at Tlatelolco Plaza in the 1960s.

We could go on and on. But I think it’s fair to say that those events were all related to each other much more than they were related to any specific national, political, or economic condition. When I realized that had been the reason for these uprisings, I hit upon the concept of Eros. Because as a friend and student of Herbert Marcuse, whose writings about Eros and civilization were so important to me, I struggled with coming to name these phenomena that I have now seen and witnessed. A friend of mine, Rick Nadal [00:05:53], helped me to name the “Eros effect” at that moment, it was the “Eros phenomenon” – that’s it, we’ll call it “Eros effect.” That’s what I’ve called it ever since.

Since 1968, I’ve checked five other outbreaks of this phenomenon where hundreds of thousands or millions of people go into the streets without central organization to try to realize greater freedom. One would be the Disarmament Movement of the 1970s and early 1980s, when suddenly, without warning, millions of people were in the streets of Europe and the United States, demanding an end to the Cold War. ... Soviet Union, American threats to wipe out the world through nuclear war. The Disarmament Movement culminates at the end of the Cold War with Gorbachev surrendering to the West. It was, according to his memoirs, the millions of people who protested, especially in Germany, that convinced him that the West was not going to invade Russia again. And that the buffer states in Eastern Europe, which the Soviet Union had constructed at the end of World War II, were no longer needed. It was the protesters who helped change history in that period.

The second episode of the “Eros effect” is what I’ve written my most recent book about – Asia’s Unknown Uprisings, we have volume one in hand on
Korea. But volume two deals with uprisings in nine other places. The Philippines in 1986, which overthrew the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, has inspired us with the words “people power”, which of course has much earlier attributes to the Black Panther Party slogan “All power to the people”. But there was a string of uprisings that occurred again without central organization. So when we look at the world, ‘86 in the Philippines, ‘87 in South Korea, ‘88 in Burma, ‘89 in Tibet and China, ‘90 in Bangladesh, in Nepal and Taiwan, ‘92 in Thailand, ‘98 in Indonesia. All of these movements, in one form or another, identified as people-power movements. They were all not led by a political party. They were all spontaneous, in some form or another grassroots attempts to overthrow local dictatorships. And they were very successful in doing so. Not always, in China and Burma, in other places, there was no success. In Indonesia, the Philippines, and South Korea, there was a success in a democratic transition that led to the imposition of neoliberal policies. We can talk about that in a moment.

The third outbreak of the “Eros effect” in this period would be in 1989, with the overthrow of the Soviet regimes, and the “Eros effect” in Eastern Europe, which was predated and influenced by the Asian movements I was talking about.

The fourth wave of anti- or alter-globalization struggle, which is most famously known as the Battle of Seattle in 1999, but which has a much earlier provenance, and which goes back to the 1970s with anti-IMF food riots in Africa and Latin America. In 1987 in Venezuela, hundreds of people were killed rising against the IMF austerity measures there. There were protests in Berlin, Germany in 1988, that compelled “the bankers of the world to adjourn early”. 11 years before Seattle, in Berlin, Germany, there were similar protests that similarly compelled the bankers to close up shop. But this culminates in a wave of elite summits being confronted – from the IMF, World Bank, G8, Davos, Switzerland gathering of the world economic elite. There was a period around the year 2000-01 where all of these events were continually being protested by hundreds of thousands, tens of thousands, or more people.

And finally, of course, with the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement, we see again, grassroots people by the hundreds of thousands, by the millions making history. Most historians write these events out of history. Their accounts are about great men, great women, wars, catastrophes, and disasters. I’m part of what in South Korea is called Nujiang history, people’s history, which was pioneered in the United States. We’re trying to understand history based on ordinary people’s aspirations, dreams, and accomplishments through the struggle in the streets.

TFSR: Oftentimes when I hear about people talking about people’s histories and people’s movement histories, it frames them within the certain style of the Otpor (in Serbia) of these mass movements that are non-violent and resistance is very Gandhian. But you make a point of talking about how, in Gwangju and in other uprisings that happened, there was actually
armed resistance and people took many different means to enact the “Eros effect” and try to liberate themselves. Can you talk about that?

GK: Gwangju is a very special case, because the citizens of Gwangju and of that surrounding region – Jeolla Province, today divided into North Jeolla and South Jeolla, and Jeju, in the three provinces in South Korea – have a long history of resisting central authority. The Jeju women divers, anarchistic organization in South Jeolla. A thousand years ago, there was a slave uprising, and the vast flocks of Jeolla were liberated and have a free Republic in which slaves were free, they freed themselves. Because people could choose whatever professions they wanted, however, they wanted, they survived until they were ultimately overwhelmed by the Silla Dynasty, which conquered all of the Korean Peninsula and ruled it for centuries thereafter. There’s a long tradition of the dissident intellectuals from Seoul being exiled to Jeolla and having schools in which they brought up young scholars to think likewise about freedom, autonomy, about local self-governance.

In the period of the American-imposed dictatorships in South Korea, the upside was that the US economy was able to help build up South Korea into an industrial power, which the Japanese had also done in northern Korea. Left out of that development in South Korea, however, was the southwestern portion of the country, where the Jeollas are located. It was the corridor from Seoul to Ulsan that was built up, and the Jeollas remained largely agricultural. So the communitarian values of the past remained more or less intact in Jeollas.

Then, in 1979, Park Chung-Hee, the Korean dictator, was assassinated by his own CIA chief and Koreans thought, “My goodness, the time has come for democracy again in South Korea.” Within a couple of months, a new general seizes power in South Korea, Chun Doo-hwan, on December 12th, 1979. When the spring came, and students began protesting against Chun, he said after 100,000 students protested: “If you go back into the streets, I’m gonna use the military against you.” Students met in Seoul and decided to call off the demonstration. The only place in South Korea where students went back into the streets was Gwangju and the military, the American commanders in South Korea agreed to release crack paratrooper units from the frontlines with North Korea to be used against the people of Gwangju. They went in with utmost brutality bayonetting defenseless students, raping women, stripping people naked, and herding them like cattle into the backs of trucks. Cab drivers who stopped to aid students who have been bayonetted were killed by the military. The police chief of Gwangju refused to order his men to go along with what the military was doing. He was taken away and tortured in Seoul. The commanding general of the local military, general Ahn Byung-ha three times refused to order his man to open fire, even though he received orders from Seoul telling him to tell his men to use live ammunition. Special forces landed behind his lines and took him away. So the people of the Jeollas rose as one, and in a few days of fighting, drove the military out of the city. This is a military that
was terribly bloody and killed dozens of people. At the time Human Rights Watch counted 3000 deaths, we’ll never know how many people died.

In any event, what’s remarkable is that, first of all, the students began the uprising. But when fighting became very intense, the military was using flame throwers, machine guns, and helicopters on civilians, and hundreds of thousands of people were remaining in the streets. There was a moment when defeat seemed to be coming. At that moment, in the back of the mammoth crowd, honking could be heard and as the honking came closer, as people parted so that the honkers could come through, it was a dozen big buses and over a hundred taxis, that had formed a procession and went up against the military with trucks and buses. Citizens set fire to vehicles and drove them into the ranks of the military. The military held control that night. The next day at 1 p.m. when 100,000 or more citizens gathered on the central plaza, and the military was right across the street. The national anthem played, and the military opened fire killing dozens more people. At that moment, people raided the National Guard armory, raided police stations, and many policemen took off their uniforms and joined the protesters. And they drove the military out of the city by that evening in an armed confrontation that ended the violence in Gwangju.

That remarkable occurrence ended crime in the city. The military surrounded the city. Citizens shared food, citizens governed themselves through direct democracy, meeting in groups of 50 to 150,000 in downtown Gwangju in front of the province hall, in a circular area, a traffic circle today with a fountain. They used the circular fountain as the stage, and anyone was allowed to speak. The differences were tolerated. You can imagine the older distinguished community citizens, businessmen, and politicians standing up and saying: “This is crazy, we should surrender all our weapons. We’re all going to be killed.” The younger, more militant activist stood up and said: “The reason we picked up these weapons is that we were being killed. The military should apologize! The military should compensate the families of the dead and pay for the hospital bills for the wounded, and Chun Doo-hwan should be in prison for crimes, for having sent the military in here.” This is all in the book. They sent 3000 guns on some of the captured trucks to the military, the military released dozens of prisoners. The rallies continued.

I should mention that the largest employer in Gwangju, then called Asia Motors, today Kia. The workers almost to the man supported the uprising, not only in work, they stopped work. They delivered to the uprising dozens of brand-new vehicles, including about 15 armored trucks that they had built. It’s very interesting, you had the people who built armored cars, driving those cars and using them to drive the military out of the city. The factory also got their heavy equipment downtown and cleared out the streets of the rubble of the fighting, the burnt out husks of vehicles. And you can imagine this, in the streets buildings have been burned, the labor office was burned, the tax office was burned, scientifically selected buildings had been burned. And the media office of NBC was burned because it
had reported falsely that citizens were rioting and that the military had killed no one, it was remaining above the fray of these communists and rioters in Gwangju going to the streets.

The citizens of Gwangju responded – after they drove the military out - by forming what’s been called “the beautiful community.” They shared food. They cleaned up the streets together, they made decisions democratically. The high school girls came forward without anyone asking. They picked up the corpses, cleaned them, and they assembled them in a martial arts studio near the province hall so that families could come and identify them. When nurses and doctors put up the call for blood, saying “We don’t have enough blood!”, hundreds of people rushed to the hospital to give blood, not for money just to give blood voluntarily. Even the city’s mafia, the two gangs came to some of these meetings at the town’s hall and swore allegiance to the people’s uprising. It was the whole city– a truly remarkable event, the city united. Prostitutes said this was the first time they felt like full and equal citizens of the city of Gwangju.

This type of occurrence embodies a form of the “Eros effect” – people’s love and solidarity with each other, which is most important. Important to the future of human civilization, because it shows the remarkable capacity that people have for self-government and self-organization. This 20th century has produced knowledge of the universe that is far beyond what people have had in the past. And any third-grader could tell you today the world is round and goes around the sun. Galileo and Copernicus had to struggle to make those facts known to people in Europe. The fact is, ordinary citizens today are capable of self-government and it’s shown time and again in places like Gwangju. We see in Gwangju the future of humanity.

**TFSR: What have been the lasting effects of “the beautiful community” in current Korean culture and current concepts of struggle in South Korea?**

**GK:** After the uprising, when the U.S. essentially ordered the South Korean military and dozens more were killed, or the so-called order was restored, and seven long years of repression – more than seven, but seven particularly harsh years of repression. The Chun Doo-hwan government sent over 300,000 of its citizens to re-education camps. Many people died, and many were physically disfigured for the rest of their lives from beatings and torture. Anyone who tried to talk about the Gwangju uprising was arrested. Many people committed suicide calling for the truth about Gwangju to be known. In 1985, a book finally appeared about Gwangju, and militarily confiscated hundreds of thousands of copies of it, but it kept being reprinted. Once the cat was out of the bag, students again took the lead in protesting, demanding that the U.S. acknowledge its role in the suppression of the Gwangju uprising, demanding that the South Korean government talk about what really happened in Gwangju.
In 1987, finally, the opposition groups were able to organize a nationwide uprising against the military dictatorship. 19 consecutive days hundreds of thousands of people have illegally taken to the streets. On the very first day, June 10, 1987, so many people went into the streets that they overwhelmed the riot police in Seoul. They captured them, took away their weapons, took away their uniforms, and burned them in the streets, the tear gas guns, the masks, the helmets, the clubs. And of course, the military police were called to counterattack. But for 19 days this went on. Over the course of the 19 days, the United States government changed its position from “Chun Doo-hwan should remain in power” to “well, maybe it’s time for a democratic transition as these people are calling for”. On June 29, Chun stepped aside and permitted a direct presidential election, the release of thousands of prisoners, and promised greater liberty – which occurred. South Korea is today a democracy largely because of the Gwangju uprising and the June uprising, cause their main slogan was “Remember Gwangju.”.

The culture of South Korea has also really centered on the so-called “Korean wave” around the world – pop music, movies, and TV shows. Many of those producers, directors, and actors have been banned from participating under the military government in any cultural production. So once South Korea, these very talented people whose talents have been waiting in an incubator, waiting to explode, exploded onto the world stage. I don’t know if you’ve seen any of the South Korean television multipart and I watched one that had 53 parts about that slave revolt in the Jeollas called the “Emperor of the Sea.” These are magnificent productions that show a traditional form of civil society that is very developed and has social relations that are important beyond the relation to the state, and to the government. Much as we look back at Greek tragedy and understand that Antigone defied the king by burying her brother’s body when the king had ordered her brother’s body to rot and be eaten by the dogs, she buried the body and for that took her own life rather than to subject to the authority of the state. Well, this is a recurring theme in Korean drama, in Korean culture. We have the Pansori Chunhyangga, from what is today Namwon, North Jeolla, where she refuses the advances of the new city ruler, appointed by the emperor, and insists upon her own ability to choose the man she wants to be with and beaten to to within a hair of for life until the man that she has been waiting for can return and depose the ruler that had her beaten. So, the Gwangju Uprising is a long tradition in South Korea, understanding that the state is not the final authority on justice and that in fact, it’s people’s movements that bring about justice, not governmental edicts.

TFSR: As far as a focus on the state, Korea’s long history of anarchist organizations – an area of interest to me – can you talk about that philosophy and how it was able to mesh with shamanistic and Donghak systems or belief systems? Also, how does Korean popular culture currently present those histories in terms of nationalism and liberation?
Those are big issues. Jason Adams has written about non-western forms of anarchism. Korean indigenous forms of social organization and civil society are excellent examples of the phenomenon. I mentioned the women divers of Jeju – women who without oxygen tanks, fins, masks or wetsuits traditionally fed the family and were the main source of the island’s economy, because of the rich and abundant sea life in the region around the island. They had their form of organization that would admit their members based upon application and knowing the families of the person and made sure that everyone on the island had enough to eat. In Jeju, to this day, people say: “no thieves, no beggars, no locked doors”. What it means is that the people take care of each other. There’s a form of mutual aid that they’re very proud of.

Now, that particular form was so threatening to the United States when it moved to divide Korea that the refusal of the people of Jeju to participate in the election that the United States called just for the Southern part of the peninsula of Korea, to install a government in South Korea... People in Jeju wanted Korea to remain unified and they refused to vote. It’s a long story, but the sad fact is that from 1947 to 1952, at least 30,000 people on the island of Jeju were massacred. Innocent civilians. The majority of the island was rounded up into what would later be called “strategic hamlets” in Vietnam. But the island’s population was only about 150,000. At least 30,000 of those people were killed under the auspices of the US military government and the South Korean government that had signed over its military authority to the United States. Now, this massacre is not well-known. In Jeju, this left civil society still wounded and trying to rebuild.

The Japanese occupation earlier in South Korea, was a very brutal form, perhaps, not as brutal in Jeju as the United States rule was, but a very brutal occupation and colonization occurred. Korea was made a part of the greater Japanese empire. Queen Min was gang raped and killed, her body burned by a Japanese ninja led by a Harvard graduate. Soon thereafter, the United States and Japan signed a secret Memorandum of Understanding, the so-called “Taft-Katsuro agreement” in 1905 that was kept secret for decades and that gave Japan control of Korea in exchange for American control of certain spheres of influence in Asia. Japanese colonization of Korea meant that more than 100,000 women were taken as sex slaves for the emperor’s army. Millions of people were shipped to Japan to work in the mines and factories of Japan. Hundreds of thousands of Korean men were put into the Japanese military. If you wanted to resist Japanese colonization, your best shot was to leave Korea and fight against the Japanese in Manchuria or elsewhere.

In Manchuria, thousands of Koreans grew to tens of thousands of Koreans, grew to hundreds of thousands of Koreans fighting against the Japanese in China. Among the Manchurian Koreans arose a tremendous anarchist organization of cooperatives and armed units that fought the Japanese. The history of that entire effort is not well-known, not even in Korea today. It’s certainly not well-known in North Korea. And in South Korea, there’s at least one book out about
it, which I have not had a chance to look at. This history is only now emerging in detail, and much of what happened appears to be that the Stalinists first united with these anarchists to fight against the Japanese and then launched an attack on the anarchists which more or less wiped them out. That shouldn’t be surprising to people as much as it is upsetting, because a similar type of event occurred in Spain, as we know better – for instance, represented in Ken Loach’s movie Land and Freedom, showing the role that the Stalinists played in wiping anarchists out.

**TFSR:** You mentioned the struggle and suppression in Jeju, and Jeju city is currently the sister city to Santa Rosa, California, which is home to KWTF/KRJF, which is one of the stations rebroadcasting this show. Currently, the U.S. government with the South Korean government are trying to build a naval base on Jeju Island that’s facing a lot of resistance from the population there. Can you talk a little bit about that? [It was built and opened in 2016 - editor]

**GK:** In the aftermath of the democracy movement in South Korea, the people of Jeju watched as the people of Gwangju won the right to protest openly against the government and Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo were in prison. Jeju citizens also got a special law enacted that gave them immunity for coming forth and testifying about the massacre that occurred in 1948. Believe it or not, there were still people who had difficulties testifying 50 years later, even after the special law was enacted. So the president of South Korea – 10 years later, at the end of 2007 -Roh Moo-hyun officially went to Jeju and officially apologized for the massacre, named the island a Peace Island, and promised that it would never again be used as a military base, and that war would never again visit Jeju.

Now Roh Moo-hyun left office and he retired, and a neoconservative administration that replaced him launched a counteroffensive against many of the gains of the democracy movement. For instance, one of the things they did was to name the Jeju Uprising of April 3, 1914, as communist and therefore not part of the democracy movement, and therefore not to be considered above immunity. Furthermore, the Lee Myung-bak government, a new neoconservative government, decided to build a giant naval base in Jeju to serve as a frontline base in the United States’ attempt to surround China. And with U.S. encouragement and support, they have begun dynamiting the coral reef around a small part of the island, Gangjeong village, whose citizens overwhelmingly oppose the construction of this base.

Their struggle has proceeded non-violently for several years now. They have been imprisoned, they have been beaten, they have been gassed. Just 10 days ago, a priest was pushed off of a platform or fell off of a platform in a scuffle with riot police and got injured severely, and broke his back. This effort to stop the base has resonated really well with celebrities like Robert Redford and Gloria Steinem. Many activists from around the world have supported the people of Gangjeong and
Jeju in seeking to stop the naval base. And that remains a question.

Interestingly, in South Korea, as I think in China, believe it or not, there is a way in which civil society and citizens’ protests can alter government policy much more easily than in the United States. And it’s my feeling that if the citizens of Jeju persist in a protest and continue to receive international support, there is a chance, maybe even a good chance that this naval base will never open. This is a critical moment not only for the people of Jeju, not only for South Korea, because the military budget and the division system of the peninsula, and the U.S. encouragement of the potential threat posed by North Korea – all of that really serve to the detriment of South Korea, saps its budget, wasteful spending on the military, but also to the world, as we see what can only be understood as a new Cold War being constructed by the United States, in its overestimation of the Chinese military threat, in its attempts to surround China with bases. These are obviously leading nowhere good. This is an obvious problem that one needs to nip in the bud. The struggle in Jeju is a very important struggle for humanity’s future.

I know Jeju well. As you said earlier, I really do love South Korea, and the people of Jeju are especially compassionate and in need of support. They suffered terribly in the massacres that were. After all, condoned or ignited and supported by the United States government, military government, from 1945 to 1948. And thereafter by the South Korean government that the United States set up, which had secretly signed over operational control of its military to the United States. Really, the massacres in Jeju that were so horrendous were done by the United States. Believe it or not, it was not until 1997, only 50 years later, that the first public events in the United States occurred that talked about these massacres.

TFSR: There were over 30,000 people who were massacred, right?

GK: Officially, according to the South Korean government, 34,000 and more. Many people say it could be as many as 70,000 or 80,000 people who were massacred. They recently were expanding the new runway to Jeju airport and found so many corpses, they had to get them up and exhume the bodies to get them out of there, bodies literally everywhere. Of course, many of the bodies were dumped into the sea. So we’ll never know how many people were annihilated in that attempt to bring the island under U.S. control.

TFSR: What kind of position would you say that people who are in the sister city in Northern California would be in? What kind of effect can they have on the struggle in Jeju for an end to this military base expansion?

GK: One thing that people could do is to go there and just bring physically with them the energy that they have against the military. Jeju, after all, is a beautiful island. It’s got a big volcano in the center of Mount Hallasan, palm trees around it,
and it is known in South Korea by many people as Honeymoon Island. It’s a great destination to go to. If you’re going in solidarity with the people who are struggling, you’re not going as a tourist. It would be a unique opportunity for people to go, show solidarity, and understand something about South Korea, and about Korea, about Asia, to contribute to this worldwide struggle against U.S. militarism and the emergence of a new Cold War.

The other things that people are already doing in Northern California are writing letters, and petitions, possibly having public events where they invite people, either in particular from Jeju who have been outspoken and vocal in the movement against the naval base, or inviting other people from Jeju to come to the United States, I think it’s a great way for people from Jeju to feel that they have the support internationally that would then inspire them and strengthen them in their struggles in the future. Those are just some of the ways. I don’t know the products that Santa Rosa produces— even symbolic acts like sending a case of wine to the residents of Gangjeong who were fighting would have great symbolic significance. I don’t know if you remember this story about how the people in Occupy Wall Street in New York all of a sudden had pizzas delivered to them. And there was a note saying was from their fellow citizens in Cairo, who was sending the pizza, somebody called up and ordered pizza. That had a great electrical effect on people. These Erotic bonds, these calls of solidarity and love, across borders play a very important role in helping to strengthen social movements.

**TFSR:** Although your second volume hasn’t come out, you’ve talked a bit about the string of uprisings in the late 80s and onward in the Philippines, Burma, Tibet, China, Taiwan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Indonesia. You also do make a point in it paralleling the Arab Spring with the Occupy movement. I know we don’t have that much time, and it’s a big subject. Could you talk a little bit about that?

**GK:** I see these upsurges as related to each other and involving the phenomenon I call the “Eros Effect”. The very significant thing about the Asian uprisings in terms of the future of global movements is that the Asian uprisings succeeded in deposing what the U.S. and European media called “crony capitalism”. People like Ferdinand Marcos, or Suharto, who appropriated for themselves tens of billions of dollars, what they’re being thrown out did, however, that’s what’s opened the door for giant US and Japanese banks and corporations to have access to capital and labor markets that they have previously been denied. Neoliberalism and capitalism expanded into the vacuum left by the overthrow of the local dictators.

In my view, this provides the material basis for a unified global movement in the 21st century. In Africa and Latin America in the 20th century, already, the struggles against American imperialism, neoliberalism, and European imperialism were very pronounced. In East Asia, in the uprisings I described the struggle was
more often against local dictatorships and crony capitalists, as they would call it.
So now, that the Asian movement has gone through this phase and neoliberalism
has become pervasively imposed, the struggle against global capitalism will unite
Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and progressive activists in the North, Europe,
and North America into a unified global movement that might have the chance
to overthrow global capitalism and create a system based on the local autonomy,
local control, and participatory democracy, genuine democracy, not the sham they
call democracy that involves voting for the best candidate that millionaires can buy
every four years.

**TFSR:** Dr. Katsiaficas, thank you so much for joining us.

**GK:** Thanks so much.
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