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North Korea:  
How Fear is Used to Control a Nation

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## Abstract

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, more commonly known as North Korea, is most commonly known for its possession and testing of nuclear weapons and threatening to use these weapons of mass destruction. Less commonly talked about are the human rights violations that are being experienced by the citizens of North Korea. Most, if not all, of the information regarding North Korean human rights that have been reported on comes from individuals who have escaped the Kim regime. There is very limited information traveling in and out of North Korea that is not heavily monitored by the government. These individuals who have escaped the Kim regime tell of horrible conditions and abuses North Korean citizens face every day. The North Korean government has tight control over the lives of every citizen living within the borders by using fear to control their movements, actions, and beliefs. The government implements fear into the lives of its citizens by implementing public displays of power to show the nation's strength to its citizens, use secret police to spy on its citizens, displays of violence and executions by the military or law enforcement are not uncommon, as well as the use of inhumane treatment and torture of individuals who are imprisoned in political prisons, and repercussions an action can have on one's family for a crime committed by a family member. Literature written by Michael Taussig, Alexander Hinton, Achille Mbembe, and many other authors will be used to further explore how fear is being used as a method of control by the North Korean government.

## Introduction

North Korea is known as being notoriously isolated which makes retrieving information about human rights violations and learning what life is like for the ordinary citizen very difficult. Most of the information the world does know about living in North Korea comes from previous citizens of North Korea who have since escaped. The primary reasons individuals try to leave North Korea is to start a better life for themselves and their families, get a job to send money back home to their families in North Korea, and/or escape violence, abuse, and punishments they might be subjected to by the regime. According to Amnesty International reports, another reason people are risking their lives to leave North Korea is because of the "severe restrictions of civil and political rights and harsh human rights abuse suffered by political prisoners inside North Korea " (Lee 2000, 115). The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, more commonly known as North Korea, has been designated one of the worst countries in matters concerning humanitarian issues and human rights (Jiho, Surkan, Kim, Yoon, Robbinson, Cardozo, and Lee 2018, 271). The individuals living within the borders of North Korea are constantly being influenced and controlled by the government. The North Korean government uses fear as a major instrument of control which is used on its citizens. Fear is a powerful emotion that is often exploited by governments who use state violence and impose state authoritarianism, which restricts the freedom of a people. Living under constant fear can affect the behaviors and social order of those living under this kind of government. The fear felt by citizens living under these circumstances could stem from constant threats from the government, public displays of violence/executions by the military or law enforcement, stories of terrible treatment individuals have faced while in political prisons, repercussions an action could have on one's family, etc.

The literary works of Michael Taussig, Alexander Hinton, and Achille Mbembe will be used to examine how fear is being manipulated and used as a method of control by the North Korean government. These three authors illustrate the different ways fear can be used to

manipulate, influence, and morph an individual's decisions and ideas. The primary literature written by these authors that will be examined are Michael Taussig's *The Nervous System*, Alexander Hinton's *Why did they Kill?: Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*, and Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*. By looking at the theories presented by Michael Taussig, Alexander Hinton, and Achille Mbembe in their written works and looking at first-hand accounts of North Koreans who have experienced human rights abuses, I can further discuss the role fear plays in the social context of North Korea. Especially by looking at the struggles and experiences faced by those who illegally left North Korea, I am able to get a better sense of why these people decided to leave North Korea. Fear is also commonly used against these escapees while traveling through some foreign countries knowing the fate that will await them if they are returned back to North Korea, especially in China.

To fully understand how and why fear is being used by the North Korean government to control its citizens it is important to know about the development and significant historical events that have shaped the country of North Korea. Having a better understanding of the historical significance these events have had on the lives of everyone living in North Korea, the theories presented by Taussig, Hinton, and Mbembe and the testimonies from individuals who have escaped North Korea will better support how fear is being used to control a nation. This primary literature will help support the different ideas of how fear can be used by a government and the implications this can have on a group or individual. To future expand on this, I will be researching into four subcategories discussing executions in North Korea, imprisonment in North Korean political prisons, torture in these North Korean political prisons, and being a North Korean woman living in China. When looking at these four subcategories, I will be using many different testimonies of North Korean individuals who have lived through or witnessed these experiences. From these testimonies and the theories presented by Taussig, Hinton, and Mbembe, I will be able to present how fear is being used to control the people of North Korea.

With all of this information, we will look back at the main argument of this paper to fully understand what is being discussed.

## Background

Throughout the past one hundred years, the Korean peninsula has gone through a lot of changes as a people and a nation. From 1910 to 1945, the country of Korea was amalgamated into the Japanese Empire (Pembrook 2019, 13). While under the occupation of the Japanese, Korea was mostly used for its raw materials and as a supplier of laborers (Pembrook 2019, 13). During this time, the Korean people (and nation) were being stripped of their cultural identity and having it replaced by Japanese ideals and culture (Pembrook 2019, 13). The Korean people were treated terribly while being tightly controlled and policed by the Japanese military (Pembrook 2019, 13). Still to this day, there is a lot of mistrust between the Korean peninsula and Japan. This occupation and the forced change of ideas and beliefs the Korean people went through could very well be what influenced future political and social changes of the Korean peninsula.

After World War 2 ended, Japan surrendered its control over the Korean peninsula to the Allied forces, who then split Korea at the 38th parallel line, creating a North and South Korea. North Korea was controlled by the Soviet Union under a socialist government where the Soviets put Kim Il Sung in charge (Pembrook 2019, 14). South Korea was controlled by the United States under a democratic government where the United States put Syngman Rhee in charge (Pembrook 2019, 14). These two leaders were put in power by the Soviet Union and the United States to represent these nations' ideologies and beliefs. The goal of the United States from instating Syngman Rhee as president of South Korea was to prevent communist ideologies from spreading throughout the entire Korean peninsula (Pembrook 2019, 14). Both Kim Il Sung and Syngman Rhee were intent on one day having a reunified Korea, by any means necessary

(Pembrook 2019, 15). This urge to reunify the Korean peninsula led to the Korean War, when North Korea invaded South Korea to forcibly unite the two Koreas. North Korea's plan did not succeed, as Korea is still split at the 38th parallel line into its North and South counterparts today.

The development of the Republic of Korea, also known as South Korea, which was established in 1947, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, also known as North Korea, which was established shortly after the Republic of Korea, have grown as a people and a nation to become quite different from each other (Pembrook 2019, 15). In particular, North Korea has become an isolated society run by a *juche* ideology while South Korea has become a centralized democratic republic with a strong economy (Kurbanov 2018, 297). A rough translation of the word *juche* into the English language would translate to 'self-reliance' (Park 2014, 6). *Juche* can better be described, in the case of North Korea, as an ideology that has been influenced by the beliefs that stem from communistic and socialistic governments (Kurbanov 2018, 297). The *juche* ideology is often described as not an expression of communism but an aspect of 'Kim-il-sungism' (Kurbanov 2018, 298). Kim-il-sungism is used to describe the systems of power that were utilized while Kim Il Sung was Supreme Leader (Cheong 2000, 135). Kim-il-sungism also shows the connection between the time of North Korea's socialist revolution and state construction (Cheong 2000, 135).

In 1965, Kim Il Sung gave a speech outlining the three fundamental principles of this *juche* ideology (Park 2014, 6). These were, independence in politics, self-sufficiency in the economy, and self-reliance in national defense (Park 2014, 6). With these three principles of *juche*, Kim Il Sung also stated that the state would not succeed unless everyone in North Korea followed these fundamental principles (Park 2014, 6). Article Three of the 2016 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Constitution states that "the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is guided in its activities by the *juche* idea and the *songun* idea, a world outlook centered on people, a revolutionary ideology for achieving the independence of the masses of

the people” (Kurbanov 2018, 297). In simpler terms, this quote is stating that these ideas are the fundamentals to being a free citizen of North Korea. The *songun* idea mentioned in the quote above is the belief in a ‘military first policy’ which prioritizes the Korean People's Army over all things (Heo & Heo 2020, 536). It should be noted that all North Korean men must enroll in the military for a minimum of 10 years at the age of 17 for their mandatory military enlistment (Tooth 2017). North Korean women can also serve in the military but are chosen through a selective process (Tooth 2017). “The North Korean leadership has also given full rights to the military to closely monitor the movements of the population, and the daily installation of the military spirit into ordinary people has been enforced as part of its attempt to reinforce ideological control” (Park 2014, 8). This gives very little room, if any, for an individual to have their own political opinions about the Korean People's Army or the Korean government. This heavy motoring of the North Korean people and the ideas that have been incorporated into North Korean policy and government have shaped this nation and its people into what we call North Korea today.

Since the split of the Korean peninsula, North Korea has faced many environmental and economic hardships. When North Korea was first created, it was heavily influenced and supported by the Soviet Union and China (Pembroke 2019, 14). When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, North Korea lost its main distributor of fuel, materials, fertilizers, and equipment which severely damaged their economy (Liem 1999, 329). China has replaced the Soviet Union to become the main contributor of goods and resources for North Korea (Liem 1999, 328). China’s aid was especially important to North Korea during the mid to late 1990s where during this time North Korea was experiencing an extreme environmental disaster known as the Arduous March (Heo & Heo 2020, 535). The Arduous March was a famine that lasted for 4 years, from 1994 to 1998. During the summer months of 1995-96, North Korea experienced unusual flooding which destroyed 40% of the agricultural land as well as creating half a million homeless people (Liem 1999, 325). Without having any time for this land to recover, the following summer North Korea experienced an extreme drought that destroyed 60% of produce



that was able to grow after the flooding of the previous year (Liem 1999, 326). North Korea already was struggling with their ineffectiveness of collective farming and difficulties distributing food before the Arduous March began and destroyed the majority of food grown in North Korea (Heo & Heo 2020, 541). Due to the lack of food, many people had to resort to eating leaves, grass, roots, and even bark to try and obtain as much nutrients they could to survive (Liem 1999, 326). During this crisis, all 23 million people residing in North Korea were heavily affected by this famine (Liem 1999, 326). There was no divide between the classes of rich and poor to decide who had food and who did not. Every citizen was given rice rations to live off of. These rations kept getting smaller and smaller as this famine progressed to stretch the food that had survived the environmental disasters (Liem 1999, 326). In January 1998, every individual received 300 grams of rice per day (1,080 calories) (Liem 1999, 327). By February 1998, rations were cut to 200 grams of rice per day (720 calories) and in March 1998, they were cut again to be reduced to 100 grams of rice per day (360 calories) (Liem 1999, 327). With such small rations, it was inevitable that the Arduous March was going to severely impact North Korea as a nation and a people. It is unclear how many people died during this time but it is estimated to range from about 500,000 to 5 million people (Liem 1999, 327). Food shortages stemming from the Arduous March are still experienced by the lower class, which is the majority of the North Korean population, today.

During the Arduous March, the North Korean government tried to implement multiple different economic plans which were meant to help the North Korean people but all of these economic plans failed (Heo & Heo 2020, 541). As a result of these failures, North Korea's GDP fell by more than 30% from 1990 to 1998 (Heo & Heo 2020, 541). This, along with the ongoing famine, resulted in a decline in the willingness to work, international competitiveness, and technological progress (Heo & Heo 2020, 541). Instead, there was an increase of poor living conditions, cheap goods, and the deterioration of mechanical equipment (Heo & Heo 2020, 541). These factors did not allow for the North Korean economy to improve. The North Korean

government also forced people to carry out revolutionary tasks instead of working to improve the economy and work to produce more food (Heo & Heo 2020, 541). These economic hardships reinforced the food crisis and some people's increasing dissatisfaction with the North Korean regime (Heo & Heo 2020, 541).

The lasting effects of the Arduous March and the economic hardships individuals living in North Korea are experiencing are some of the reasons why many people want to leave North Korea to provide a better life for themselves and their families (Lee 2000, 111). The problem with leaving North Korea is that only people with permission from the North Korean government are legally allowed to leave the country. This permission is very hard to receive, so individuals have resorted to illegally leaving North Korea, usually by crossing into China. It has been reported that since the 1950s, over 6,000 North Koreans have fled and resettled in South Korea (Kim, Jungin 2010, 77). According to the United States Department of State, of these 6,000 North Koreans who fled and resettled in South Korea, almost three quarters of these individuals relocated between the years 2002 and 2004 (Kim, Jungin 2010, 77). Even more individuals have fled and resettled in China and Russia with an estimated number of North Koreans resettling in China varying from being in the tens of thousands to 300,000 (Kim, Jungin 2010, 77). There are multiple different ways people have tried to leave North Korea but the most common of which is to travel across the North Korean - Chinese border. Others have also fled North Korea across the Tumen River into Russia and even across the North Korean - South Korean border, also known as the demilitarized zone (DMZ), into South Korea.

To prevent the defection of its citizens, in article 47 of the North Korean Criminal Code of 1987, North Korea states that "a citizen of the Republic who defects to a foreign country or to the enemy in betrayal of the country and the people shall be committed to a reform institution for not less than seven years. In cases where the person commits an extremely grave offense, he/she shall be given the death penalty" (Lee 2000, 118). This still has not stopped many individuals from leaving their home country. Most of these individuals who have escaped North

Korea have complained of human rights violations and food shortages (Lee 2000, 112). There is evidence to back up these claims of human rights violations from reports by Amnesty International that refer to a number of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience being held in North Korea where these individuals' human rights are being violated (Lee 2000, 115). According to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, prisoners of conscience are “people imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their political, religious, or other conscientiously held beliefs, or for their identity, even though they have neither used nor advocated violence” (Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, n.d.).

North Korean citizens who have escaped North Korea and are living or traveling through China are at risk of being sent back to North Korea where they will be subjected to severe punishments. North Korean citizens are unable to apply for asylum in China and are not recognized as refugees by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) so they are not protected by international law (Kim 2010, 424). According to the UNHCR, to have refugee status someone must have been “forced to flee his/her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group” (USA for UNHCR. n.d.). Since North Koreans who have illegally left North Korea are not considered refugees by the United Nations, the aid these people can receive is very limited. The Chinese government considers North Korean’s living and traveling within their borders to be illegal residents and are also referred to as economic migrants (Lee 2000, 117 & Kim 2010, 428). According to the European Commission, an economic migrant is “a person who leaves their country of origin purely for economic reasons in order to seek material improvements in their livelihood” (European Commission. n.d.). Being labeled an economic migrant means the Chinese government can deny these individuals the right to seek and apply for asylum (Kim 2010, 428). Any North Korean citizen caught living or traveling in China by the Chinese authorities are forcibly returned to North Korea (Kim 2010, 428). North Koreans living in China live in constant

fear of being caught and forcibly returned to their home country where they will be imprisoned and be subjected to severe punishments such as violent beatings, forced labor, inhuman treatment, physical, mental and emotional torture, and even the possibility of being executed (Kim 2010, 428).

As previously stated, North Koreans who have successfully escaped North Korea have complained of human rights violations (Jiho, Surkan, Kim, Yoon, Robinson, Cardozo, and Lee 2018, 271). Findings from the UN's Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights, state that "North Koreans frequently experience torture, inhumane treatment, discrimination, arbitrary arrest, detention, executions and disappearances, and forced labor; as well as complete denial of freedom of thought, expression, and religion and freedom of movement and residence" (Jiho, Surkan, Kim, Yoon, Robinson, Cardozo, and Lee 2018, 272). Many of the human rights violations experienced while living under the North Korean regime, including the ones listed above, have been so normalized into everyday life that individuals living under the Kim regime don't know the proper way they should be treated as a human being (Jiho, Surkan, Kim, Yoon, Robinson, Cardozo, and Lee 2018, 272). North Korea is known to be extremely isolated from the outside world and is often referred to as the hermit kingdom because of this. The North Korean government also heavily monitors the information and media that is shared with the public to influence people's beliefs and ideas (Kim, Whitten-Woodring, and James 2015, 1035). Due to this isolation and the monitoring of information, everything the people of North Korea know and understand about life is taught to them by the government. From the testimony of someone who used to live in North Korea, "I was taught there was no richer country than North Korea. I believed that my country was the best in the world. I had no idea what the outside world looked like" (Piedboeuf 2018). North Korea is believed to have "the most repressive media environment in the world" since all of the media is produced and distributed by the North Korean government (Kim, Whitten-Woodring, and James 2015, 1035). No international media, movies, or music is allowed in the country and those who are in possession of this media will be

punished if caught by the authorities (Kim, Whitten-Woodring, and James 2015, 1035). From the personal accounts of North Korean escapees, it is a shock for them when first leaving North Korea to see what the rest of the world is like and what it has to offer.

## Methodology

The North Korean regime has long been known as a restrictive and controlling regime. Fear is used as a primary method of control by the North Korean government to control and regulate the lives of its citizens. This fear does not just control the lives of those living within North Korea, it also affects the lives of North Koreans who are currently living or traveling in China. The fear of imprisonment, violence, death, capture and return to the North Korean regime, etc have imprinted a deep control over these people's lives and their beliefs. Fear is a common topic talked about by scholars who study war, genocide, state violence, and state authoritarianism. Authors like Michael Taussig, Alexander Hinton, and Achille Mbembe study how fear is used by a government to assert control over an individual or group of people. Michael Taussig in his written work, *The Nervous System*, looked at how fear is used within authoritarian governments and how violence is used to ensure order. Alexander Hinton in his written work, *Why did they Kill?: Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*, explored the concept of 'why do we kill' and how loyalty and fear relate to this. Achille Mbembe in his written work, *Necropolitics*, discussed the topic of who should live and who should die, who decides this, and how these questions relate to an authoritarian government.

I am using works written by Taussig, Hinton, and Mbembe to study the power fear has against an individual or a group of people. Combining the works of these three authors, I will illustrate that fear is used as a prominent controlling mechanism by the North Korean government directed towards its citizens by looking at the way people are treated. Particularly, I will be looking at the different punishments individuals are exposed to in prisons and the

repercussions individuals face when they try to illegally leave the country. This data will come from multiple primary source interviews with North Korean's who have successfully escaped North Korea and currently living in a country where they do not face the risk of being returned back to North Korea. We will be looking at the lives and experiences of Shin Dong-Hyuk who saw his family executed in front of him, Jo Eun who tried multiple times to escape North Korea, each time ending up in prison where she was brutally abused and attacked, Lee who experienced regular torture, and Yoon Ha who was sold into marriage after crossing into China. These individuals' stories are just 4 out of the 11 accounts that will be discussed. These first-hand accounts come from multiple different news, NGO, and government websites. These websites are Vice News, BBC News, Daily Bruin, NBC News, ABC News, Amnesty International, Liberty in North Korea, and U.S. Congress. The information gathered from these first-hand accounts will help show the power fear has on a person, especially when it is used in the way the North Korean government wields this emotion.

After discussing the theory present in the written works of Taussig, Hinton, and Mbembe, I will be looking at how fear is wielded as a method of control in 4 subcategories. These subcategories focus on discussing executions in North Korea, imprisonment in North Korean political prisons, torture in these North Korean political prisons, and being a North Korean woman living in China. The inhumane treatment of prisoners and the abuse these prisoners face on a daily basis is not a secret within North Korea. Knowing the implications of what might happen to someone who goes against the regime can be enough to scare people into submission and not act on any urges that go against the regime's beliefs. These subcategories provide important details of how fear is imposed onto everyone living in North Korea and onto North Korean citizens living in China. With North Korea being such an isolated nation, the main bit of information the international community has on what life is like for an ordinary North Korean citizen and how the North Korean government uses fear to control its people are from individuals who have successfully escaped North Korea. I will be using data collected from

these first-person accounts of what they saw and experienced while living in North Korea to support my argument that the North Korean government is using fear as a method of control. There is very limited information that comes out of North Korea due to its isolation but these first-person accounts of their experiences is the appropriate data to use while examining my argument.

## Theories Which Insight Fear

The use of state violence and state authoritarianism by a government or nation affects the behaviors and social order of those living under these governments or in these nations. Living within the realm of these particular types of governments, fear, by the use of violence, is an important tool used to either implement control over its citizens and/or compose an authoritarian government. By composing an authoritarian government, this nation is restricting the freedoms of its people. To clarify, an authoritarian government or state is “a governmental or political system, principle, or practice in which individual freedom is held as completely subordinate to the power or authority of the state, centered either in one person or a small group that is not constitutionally accountable to the people” (Dictionary.com, n.d.). Many people who live under an authoritarian government or who are victims of state violence may try to leave their home country for a better life elsewhere. North Korea, who has an authoritarian mindset and continuously uses violence against its citizens, is a prime example of the migration of people to escape violence and authoritarian rule. To further investigate how state violence and state authoritarianism relates to using fear as a method of control, theories from Michael Taussig, Alexander Hinton, Achille Mbembe, and many other authors will be examined. Michael Taussig has demonstrated that fear can be used within a nation as a system of nerves that flow throughout the body. These nerves are in constant contact with each other, meaning that these feelings of fear are felt nationwide (Taussig 1992). Other scholars like Alexander Hinton and

Achille Mbembe also demonstrate how fear is connected to the reasoning behind an individual or government's actions. Alexander Hinton focuses on the reasoning behind why people kill and commit acts of violence to accentuate fear. Achille Mbembe discusses the reasoning behind an individual or government's decision of who should live and who should die and also who can decide this (Mbembe 2003). This section will be broken into three parts to expand on the theories listed above and to critically look at the use of state violence and state authoritarianism as a method to invoke fear.

To understand how Taussig relates a nervous system to a government or state, it is important to understand how a nervous system works. According to the National Cancer Institute, "the nervous system is the major controlling, regulatory, and communicating system in the body. It is the center of all mental activity including thought, learning, and memory. Together with the endocrine system, the nervous system is responsible for regulating and maintaining homeostasis" (National Cancer Institute n.d.). The brain is the central part of the nervous system which sends out signals and messages to the rest of the body. In terms of transferring the idea of a nervous system to politics, the brain would become the government or ruling power of a particular state which implements laws and sends messages to its citizens. For example, the North Korean government, or the Kim regime, would be the brain of the nervous system while military personnel, prison guards, and supportive citizens would be spreading the messages of the regime. By a government pushing a singular belief onto its people, this government can use this to its advantage of implementing complete control. For example, North Korea pushes the idea that they are the most powerful nation in the world by displaying their weapons and military personnel in parades where the public can witness their military power. With North Korea's strong military-first policy, these displays create a strong belief in the military and the government. Especially since the North Korean government has complete control over the media and blocks all outside media from entering the country, the only thing people know about the world is what the Kim regime tells them (Kim, Whitten-Woodring, and James 2015,



1035). The government restricts all news that does not show North Korea in a positive light and does not support the North Korean government. This control over the media lets the government push specific ideas and beliefs about the outside world onto its citizens which in turn lets the government have complete control over what its citizens believe and support (Lee 2000, 115). In the words of Hinton, if you “localize its ideological pronouncements so that they make sense, are compelling, and “take” among its followers”, these followers are easily controllable” (Hinton 2005, 287).

There are many reports of people trying to illegally leave North Korea to either create a better life for themselves and/or escape the tightly controlled, authoritarian North Korean regime. According to Amnesty International reports there are “severe restrictions of civil and political rights and harsh human rights abuse suffered by the political prisoners inside North Korea” (Lee 2000, 115). These abuses of human rights and restrictions of civil and political rights are also presumed to be some of the reasons North Korean citizens are risking their lives to leave North Korea. As I stated before, the North Korean government restricts and monitors the flow of information that is distributed to the North Korean people (Lee 2000, 115). To keep this stable authoritarian state, the North Korean government needs to monitor its legitimation, repression, and co-optation (Dukalskis & Lee 2020). Daniel Byman and Jennifer Lind in their article, *Pyongyang’s Survival Strategy*, have developed a ‘toolbox’ that governments rely on to stay in power (Byman & Lind 2010, 46). This ‘toolbox’ consists of the following instruments; restrictive social policies, manipulation of ideas and information, use of force, co-optation, manipulation of foreign governments, and institutional coup-proofing (Byman & Lind 2010, 47). Of these instruments, the Kim regime heavily relies on three of these tools which are restrictive social policies, manipulation of ideas, and the heavy use of force to deter any kind of resistance against the government (Byman & Lind 2010, 47). The use of these three tools clearly shows the tight control North Korea has over its people. The use of force to deter any and all resistance towards the North Korean government also implements the use of fear and Taussig’s

idea of the nervous system to control a people. By using force to subdue and make an example out of an individual who went against the regime, advertising these punishments one might be subjected to would influence people's decisions. This would discourage others from going against the regime out of fear of what could happen to them or their family. Punishing those who do something wrong, in the eyes of the government, is a good way of creating fear in the general public. An interesting quote from Taussig's, *The Nervous System*, discussed how he "came to feel that terror dissolved certainty every bit as much as it preyed on one's heartfelt desire to find its secret order. Yet the more one looked for the order, the more one was caught in its sticky web of evasions, bluffs, and halls of mirrors" (Taussig 1992, 9). This quote shows how the use of fear and governmental influence in everyday life alters one's perception of what to believe and what is true. Also the more someone searched for the truth, the more this person would be entangled in the clutches of the government's imposed terror. The use of fear in North Korea is implemented to control the movements, actions, and beliefs of its citizens. In the words of Elaine Scarry, "for the person whose pain it is, it is "effortlessly" grasped while for the person outside the sufferer's body, what is "effortless" is *not* grasping it (it is easy to remain wholly unaware of its existence; even with effort, one may remain in doubt about its existence or may retain the astonishing freedom of denying its existence; and, finally, if with the best effort of sustained attention one successfully apprehends it, the aversiveness of the "it" one apprehends will only be a shadowy fraction of the actual "it")" (Scarry 2004, 365). In simpler terms, Scarry is describing how the pain an individual feels or is being subjected to can not be fully understood by anyone who has not experienced this same pain. It is also sometimes hard to become aware that someone is suffering and is in pain. The international community receives very little information about what life is like for an average citizen living in North Korea. The information we do receive tells of a life lived in fear and in pain. The outside world can not comprehend the pain these individuals feel, as Scarry said, we can only feel a "shadowy fraction of the actual "it"" (Scarry 2004, 365).

There are many different reasons why someone might kill. In general, some of these reasons could be out of revenge, out of rage, by necessity or 'kill or be killed' in time of war, or to gain someone's favor. When looking specifically at North Korea, someone might kill or commit acts of violence to please their superiors, take revenge on non-supporters, fulfill their duties, gain face, or rise in rank (Hinton 2005, 279). Guards and military personnel, in general, show an immense amount of obedience toward their superiors. This obedience could be fueled by their loyalty to the Kim regime, fear of the repercussions of not fulfilling orders to commit these acts of violence, or both of these (Hinton 2005, 287). Max Weber, a German sociologist, believed "obedience is determined by highly robust motives of fear and hope, fear of the vengeance of magical powers within the power-holder, and hope for reward in this world or in the beyond" (Aretxaga 2003, 400). North Korea is reliant on the physical show of support and loyalty by its citizens as a way of controlling them. North Korea holds many military parades where military personnel will sing praise of North Korea and the Kim regime. Military weapons will also be displayed in these parades to show their power while also fastening their hold on the citizens of North Korea. Seeing such power and strong support for the government is both intimidating and increases one's patriotism. This intimidation from the government reinforces the fear individuals may already have either of the government or what might happen to them by the government. Living with this constant fear of doing something that could potentially put yourself in a dangerous situation has become so constant and widespread that people just don't think about it anymore and it becomes part of life.

With the increasing public awareness of the situation surrounding North Koreans trying to leave the authoritarian regime of North Korea, questions are being raised as to why the North Korean regime is allowed to choose who can live and who can die in terms of North Korean citizens wanting to leave North Korea. This question relates back to Mbembe's article, *Necropolitics*, where he discusses the topics of sovereignty and "who may live and who must die" (Mbembe 2003, 11). Through article 47 of the North Korean Criminal Code of 1987, the

declaration of imprisonment and/or death to anyone who is caught trying to leave North Korea expresses the extreme feelings of authoritarianism imposed onto the people of North Korea. North Korea has such a tight authoritarian grip on its people that this government believes they have the right to decide who should die. With the citizens of North Korea understanding that the government controls this decision of their life and death, the fear of doing something against the government increases. This relates to Michel Foucault's idea of the power of life and death. Having the ability to control someone's life and death insights fear which Mbembe describes as living under a "late modern occupation" and experiencing a permanent condition of "being in pain" (Mbembe 2003, 39). From looking at some of the examples Mbembe used to describe living in a late modern occupation, some of these examples directly relate to the living conditions and the environment of living in North Korea. These examples are, "fortified structures, military posts, and roadblocks; buildings that bring back painful memories of humiliation, interrogations, and beatings; parents shamed and beaten in front of their families; bones broken; shootings and fatalities" (Mbembe 2003, 39). From looking at these examples and learning what living in an area of "late modern occupation" is compared too, it is easy to see why so many people are trying to leave North Korea.

## Living in Fear

Fear is being used by the North Korean government as a method of control to regulate the lives of North Korean citizens living within and outside its borders. As previously stated the North Korean government implements control over its citizens in many ways. Some of these methods include, but are not limited to, the use of violence against anyone who goes against the regime, public executions, imprisonment of individuals where inmates face inhuman conditions and are physically, mentally, emotionally, and sexually abused, and torture. The North Korean government's use and the threat of these punishments result in the government having

more control over its people by the fear this produces. When looking at how the North Korean government uses fear to control its people, it is important to look at the experiences individuals went through in their attempts to leave North Korea. These first-hand accounts illustrate many of the same experiences in which these individuals were imprisoned, human trafficked, and punished for this crime. Even though many of these accounts share similar experiences, each of these stories are unique. To show how fear is used as a controlling method by the North Korean government, I am going to focus on ways the government sparks fear into its citizens. To do this I will be looking at testimonies of individuals who have experienced or witnessed executions, imprisonment, torture, and sex trafficking.

Many individuals who escape North Korea usually travel through China as crossing the North Korea - South Korea demilitarized zone (DMZ) is dangerous and well guarded. However, this can be the fastest route to freedom as South Korea allows citizens of North Korea to apply for asylum. Even though it is much easier and safer to escape by way of China, there are a few individuals who have successfully escaped North Korea by crossing the demilitarized zone. As of 2017, only 6 North Korean citizens have defected to South Korea by way of the demilitarized zone (Lee 2019). A famous example of one of these individuals, Oh Chong Song, escaped across the demilitarized zone in 2017 where his escape was caught on security video and seen worldwide (The New York Times 2017). Song was shot five times as he ran across the South Korean border and medical officials in Seoul, South Korea stated that he is very lucky to be alive (Kim & Smith 2019). Song also stated that if he had been caught by the North Korean guards he would have been either sent to a concentration camp for political prisoners or worse, executed by firing squad (Kim & Smith 2019). Even with the fear of knowing what would await Song if he were to be caught, he still thought crossing the demilitarized border was the decision to make. Another individual who escaped North Korea by crossing the demilitarized zone was Kim Kang Yoo. Yoo, who was enrolled in his mandatory military enlistment when he escaped, was stationed at the demilitarized zone. Kim stated that "he chose to escape the communist

regime's military service and flee to South Korea, where he could live a life with the freedom to choose" (Lee 2019). To successfully make it across the demilitarized zone without getting injured, Kim traveled by foot for hours to find cracks in the electrified fences that runs along the North Korean - South Korean border (Lee 2019). Even after successfully passing through this row of fences, he had to cross a river and then climb over more fences to enter South Korea (Lee 2019).

## Executions

Another North Korean defector who successfully made it to South Korea by crossing the demilitarized zone stated that before he defected, "I witnessed a soldier, not so different from myself, being executed by firing squad when he was caught trying to flee" (Lee 2019).

Unfortunately, public executions are not a rare occurrence for individuals imprisoned and many prisoners are forced to watch these executions. Shin Dong-Hyuk, who was born in a political prison camp and lived there with his family for 23 years, was forced to watch the public executions of his mother and brother (Amnesty International 2011, 4). They were sentenced to be executed because they were caught attempting to escape the prison. Shin describes the day of his mother's and brother's execution as follows, Shin and his father had been taken to a public square where executions were usually held. A crowd of people had gathered to watch that day's execution. Shin and his father were sat in the front row of the crowd where they could clearly see two convicts, a man and a woman, being dragged to the execution site (Amnesty International 2011, 4). It was not until the convicts got closer that Shin realized who these people were. An indictment was read aloud, the final words of which stated "Chang Hye-Kyong (mother) and Shin Ha-Kun (brother), enemies of the people, are sentenced to death" (Amnesty International 2011, 4). Without any delay, Shin's mother was executed by hanging and then Shin's brother was executed by firing squad (Amnesty International 2011, 4).

Individuals who are executed from political prisons could be executed for many different reasons, many, if not all, are crimes that do not fit this punishment. Kim, who was an inmate at a North Korean political prison camp, explained how “everyone in Kwanliso (name of camp) witnessed executions. When I was an inmate in Kwanliso, I saw three executions. Those executed included two inmates who were caught escaping and another inmate. They were interrogated for two to three months and then executed” (Amnesty International 2001, 5). One of the inmates Kim witnessed being executed was imprisoned and executed due to the inmate’s religious beliefs (Amnesty International 2011, 5). Even though having the freedom of religion is technically legal in North Korea, the North Korean government does not follow this law and severely punishes those who are engaged in almost any religious practices through executions, torture, beatings, and arrests (U.S. Department of State 2020). Another inmate executed was Choi Kwang-Ho, who was arrested and sent to a political prison camp for saying he could not live in North Korea any longer (Amnesty International 2011, 4). By alluding that he may try to leave North Korea one day, he was sent to prison where he was forced to work with barely any food (Amnesty International 2011, 4). Kwang-Ho was publicly executed after breaking away from his workgroup, overcome with hunger, to pick and eat berries (Amnesty International 2011, 4).

To find the purpose behind these public executions, we can examine Hinton’s work regarding the overall question of ‘why do we kill’ and Mbembe’s work looking at ‘who decides who can live and die’ and how do these executions invoke fear. In the case of North Korea, the government is making the executive decision of who should live and die when they execute individuals who have committed various different crimes. The government believes they have the right to take a life since these individuals went against the regime. Other than the actual act of punishing these inmates, these executions serve the purpose to induce fear onto the citizens living within and outside of North Korea. Looking back at Byman and Lind’s ‘tool box’ of ideas, policies, and actions that keep governments in power, North Korea is implementing this ‘tool

box' into these executions by using force to deter any kind of resistance against the government and in turn, this is playing on the government's manipulation of ideas (Byman & Lind 2010, 47). With these executions being a public affair, the government uses this platform to publicly denounce the actions of the individuals being executed. These public executions are also used as a warning to anyone who had previously thought about going against the regime or the regime's beliefs. Knowing the possible risks that come with these actions would instill fear into these individuals and make it less likely these individuals will act on their feelings. The combination of the physical executions and the mental impact this has on those who have witnessed them draws on Taussig's idea that fear can be used in a nervous system. Taussig states that by "stringing out the nervous system one way towards hysteria, the other way towards numbing and apparent acceptance" (Taussig 1992,11). When looking at North Korea through the lens of this statement, it becomes more clear as to why the general public has accepted that holding public executions is a normal event and a large majority of the public won't share their own opinions on this matter for fear of what the consequences might be.

## Imprisonment

Individuals who have been caught in North Korea or China trying to defect are sent to North Korean political prison camps. It is in these camps that we can answer the questions of how the North Korean government engrains fear into the lives of its citizens. Getting caught trying to escape North Korea is not the only way someone can end up in a North Korean political prison. These individuals could be imprisoned for "criticizing the Kim regime, officials or cadres who are perceived to have failed in the implementation of policies, individuals who have had contact with the outside world, individuals who have tried or successfully escaped North Korea, North Korean citizens found living in China, individuals who are believed to be part of anti-government groups, criticized the government for its policies on the food crisis, those



caught listening to South Korean broadcasts, etc” (Amnesty International 2004). Looking at the story of Jo Eun, who had many failed attempts of trying to escape North Korea for a better life for herself and her daughter before successfully making it to safety, tells of the abuse she experienced and witnessed while imprisoned. During Jo Eun’s first attempt to cross the Tumen River, which serves as part of the border between China and North Korea, she hired a broker who turned out to be part of the North Korean secret police (LiNK 2019). She was detained and sent to a detention center where the inmates were subject to inhumane conditions. Every inmate worked to gather firewood from 5 am to 11 pm every day with little to no food (LiNK 2019). Due to this lack of food, some inmates had to be dragged from the toilets so they wouldn’t eat their own feces (LiNK 2019). Jo Eun recounted one incident she witnessed where a prison guard forced a pregnant inmate to crawl around in snow and ice for hours whilst mocking her and saying she “got pregnant with the baby of a dog so you have to walk like a dog” (LiNK 2019). When Jo Eun was able to escape this detention facility she immediately tried to leave North Korea for the second time. During her second attempt, Jo Eun successfully made it to China where she connected with a broker who would take her to South Korea (LiNK 2019). Jo Eun was traveling with 12 other North Korean escapees when they were reported to the Chinese authorities who sent them all back to North Korea. Upon her return, Jo Eun was violently beaten and interrogated to gather information about if she was trying to defect to South Korea. She was then sent to a detention facility where she worked 18 hour days to mine gold for the regime (LiNK 2019). After two years of having to suffer in this detention facility, she was allowed to return home to her daughter. During Jo Eun’s third attempt to escape to China, she tried to take her 4 year old daughter with her but they were caught by border patrol guards. These guards brutally beat both Jo Eun and her 4 year old daughter for trying to leave the country (LiNK 2019). It was during Jo Eun’s fourth time trying to escape North Korea she succeeded and made her way to South Korea (LiNK 2019). On Jo Eun’s fourth attempt trying to

escape North Korea she left her daughter behind in North Korea because, if she were to get caught, she did not want her daughter to be beaten like before.

Individuals of all ages and genders are subjected to the same abuses, violence, long work hours, and torture as everyone else. Jun Heo, who was caught in China trying to make his way to South Korea, was 13 years old at the time he was caught by the Chinese authority and returned to North Korea. Heo was sent to a political prison camp where torture, being forced to work, and living in inhuman conditions were daily routines (Piedboeuf 2018). Since Heo was still young, he was taught by the prison that what he had seen in China was a mirage (Piedboeuf 2018). By being taught this new reality of what he had seen, Heo only spent a few months in captivity before he was sent back to his hometown. Heo stated that “I began wondering if I was crazy. If what I had seen was real. Was it a dream?” (Piedboeuf 2018). Even after being released, Heo was followed by the North Korean secret police and told he could not tell anyone about what he thought he had seen while in China otherwise Heo and his family would be severely punished.

The treatment of prisoners and the inhumane conditions these prisoners are forced to live in show how the North Korean government views these people. This idea coincides with what Mbembe talks about concerning who should live and who should die, who holds this kind of power, and who is worthy enough to continue living under the Kim regime. The blatant disregard of the conditions and abuses people endure while imprisoned show that the North Korean government does not care about these individuals, especially since the government has complete control over their treatment. The government is not doing anything to improve conditions or reprimand prison guards for how they treat prisoners. These guards are following the orders of their commanding officers and being told to believe something by the government. “Killing is easier when it is authorized by another person or institution” and this is also true when talking about committing violent acts of abuse and torture onto others (Hinton 2005, 279). Even if these acts of violence seem morally wrong to the guards inflicting them, fear and/or loyalty

play an important role in controlling these individuals. "The very concept at the heart of the nation, "the people," becomes an object of fear and violence by a state that wants to have absolute control of a nation it is at once dividing and destroying" (Aretxaga 2003, 397). This quote perfectly sums up the relationship prisoners and individuals who have gone against the government have with the prison guards and anyone who is fiercely devoted to the Kim regime. "The sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring. The right which was formulated as the "power of life and death" was in reality the right to take life or let live. Its symbol, after all, was the sword" (Foucault 1978, 136). Michel Foucault, a french philosopher, illustrates the power a government can have in determining "to take life or let live". With the knowledge of this power comes the fear that follows from the subjects of this particular nation. Knowing the government of this nation has the power and resources to act on these decisions to commit acts of violence or discrimination against a group of people, for example, individuals who have gone against the Kim regime, the majority of the population will want to stay in the good graces of their government. Michel Foucault believed that "the sovereign right to kill and the mechanisms of biopower are inscribed in the way all modern states function", where biopower refers to the technology of power for managing humans in large groups or controlling entire populations (Mbembe 2003,17).

## Torture

Torture is another common occurrence in political prisons. Torture consists of a primary physical act, which is meant to inflict pain, and a primary verbal act or the interrogation question being asked throughout the torture (Scarry 2004, 366). The primary physical act rarely happens without the primary verbal act. Elaine Scarry believes that the "idea that the need for information is the motive for the physical cruelty arises from the tone and form of the questioning rather than

from its content: the questions, no matter how contemptuously irrelevant their content, are announced, delivered, as though they motivated the cruelty, as if the answers to them were crucial” (Scarry 2004, 366). This statement reveals that the verbal part of these ‘interrogations’ can be used as an excuse to inflict pain onto these individuals. The information sought in these interrogations is rarely credited with being a *just* motive for torture but, it is repeatedly credited with being *the* motive for torture (Scarry 2004, 366). The information North Korean prison guards are looking for when torturing individuals who were caught trying to leave North Korea is, who was helping them, how were they or how did they escape North Korea, where were they trying to go, etc. These prisons would go through extreme methods of torture to get the answers to these questions and anything else they wanted to know. For example, a former inmate, Lee, described the torture he experienced by saying, “I saw a big kettle on a small table and a low wooden table with straps, about 20 centimeters high. I was strapped to the table and the kettle was forced into my mouth. I had no choice but to drink the water. After a short while, my mouth was full of water and it started to flow through my nose. Facing sharp pain and suffocation, I fainted. When I woke up after some time (I do not know how long I had lost consciousness), I felt the interrogators were jumping on a board that was laid on my swollen stomach to force the water out of my body. I started vomiting painfully and uncontrollably. I could not get up and so I was taken back to my cell; I suffered from a high fever and fainted often. I was only able to walk after a fortnight” (Amnesty International 2011). Lee was also tortured a second time in a different manner by having, “My arms were tied and hung for half an hour, then brought down and then taken back as many as five times a day. At other times, a black plastic bag was put on my head and then I was submerged in water for long periods at a time. For five months, I was tortured; not every day but off and on. When I was tortured, it was for the whole day. In the end, I confessed what they wanted me to confess” (Amnesty International 2011).

Another past inmate who has been subjected to various kinds of torture while imprisoned in North Korea, Jinhye Jo, recounted her experiences during a U.S. hearing before the

congressional-executive commission on China. Jinhye Jo was found living in China by the Chinese authorities with her mother and sister and was sent back to North Korea where she was imprisoned. While imprisoned Jo was subjected to various kinds of torture, for example, she “was forced to kneel down and a wooden plank was placed between my thighs and between my bent legs; every time I answered “NO” to a question I was kicked and that would cause me to bowl over. The plank that was placed was tremendously painful” (U.S. Congress 2012, 41). Jo was also forced to stand on tip-toes at the same time she was mercilessly being kicked and beaten until she fell unconscious (U.S. Congress 2012, 41). All of the torture she endured was to find out whether she or any of the other prisoners had attempted to eventually escape to South Korea and/or if anyone had been exposed to religion (U.S. Congress 2012, 41).

Examining why torture is used and acts of violence are committed against individuals for the sole purpose of retrieving information, relates back to Hinton’s work on why do we commit acts of violence. From the torturer’s point of view, the pain they are inflicting is made invisible and the morality surrounding these acts are neutralized by the urgency and significance of retrieving the answers to the questions they are asking (Scarry 2004, 367). From the prisoner’s point of view, for example Lee’s, his pain and agony made the significance of any question asked meaningless to him (Scarry 2004, 367). All Lee wanted was for the torture to stop and he would confess anything to have that happen, even if it was untrue. The fear of having to experience this kind of torture is instilled into the lives of everyone living under the Kim regime. With the Kim regime being the brain of the North Korean nervous system, by allowing these methods of interrogations, the North Korean government is indirectly spreading fear to its citizens. Knowing the punishments one will face when imprisoned is one way of discouraging individuals from going against the Kim regime and trying to leave North Korea.

## Life as a North Korean Woman in China

The idea of having the power to control someone's life and death is practiced by the Chinese authorities who catch and send North Korean's who are illegally in China back to North Korea. The Chinese government is well aware of the punishments these North Korean's will face when returned back to their home country (Kim, Melissa 2010, 428). North Korean's who are currently living in China live in constant fear of being caught or turned into the Chinese authorities and sent back to North Korea. Since the Chinese government is not on the side of these North Korean escapees, North Koreans who have been human trafficked and/or sold as a bride or into the sex industry in China have no one they can turn to for help. Crossing into China as a North Korean woman is extremely dangerous, especially alone and with no male companions because the risk of being trafficked is extremely high. Women who try to escape North Korea through China are almost always victims of human trafficking. Eighty to ninety percent of women are victimized by human trafficking before they even cross the Chinese border. Those lucky enough not to be trafficked across the North Korean border are still at risk as "sixty percent of North Korean females in China are trafficked into the sex trade" (Huang, 2019). One victim of human trafficking within China, Joy Kim, stated that "for female North Korean refugees, escaping from North Korea is not the end of their journey, but the beginning of their fight for freedom" (Huang, 2019). Yeonmi Park is just one individual out of many who was tricked into being trafficked and sold in China along with her mother (Connaughton, 2017). Because of her youth, Yeonmi was sold for over \$200 when she was just 13 years old (Connaughton, 2017).

Most North Korean women are tricked by the brokers they hire to help them leave North Korea. Since many individuals leaving North Korea do not have the physical money to pay for a broker, they agree to work off their debt, usually, the broker says they will work at a restaurant, but this is usually not the case. This is exactly what happened to Mira who thought she was

going to be working off her debt in a restaurant. Instead, she was sold into the sex industry as a sexcam girl (Hwang 2019). Before Mira was able to escape her captors, she had been confined to an apartment for five years where she was constantly being watched and forced to work as a sexcam girl (Hwang 2019). It is very difficult for these women to escape their captors or the situation they are in as they are constantly watched and kept very busy. Yoon Ha, who was sold twice as a bride in China, had this exact experience. In her first marriage, Yoon Ha had to complete a lot of difficult work on the farm she and her husband's family lived where she was not treated like a human being (LiNK 2017). After managing to leave the farm of her first husband to try and find people who would help her get to South Korea, she was found and sold again to a different Chinese man (LiNK 2017). "Living with the second Chinese man was even worse than with the first one. I still had to do a lot of hard farming work and he was always watching me. He was suspicious that I was going to try to run away. When he went to work he brought me to his workplace so he could still watch me" (LiNK 2017). It was only until Yoon Ha was eight months pregnant that her husband stopped watching her every move. Yoon Ha thought "maybe he thought my body was too heavy to run away" (LiNK 2017). The fear of knowing the fate that awaits these women if they are caught by the Chinese authority is the main reason why many women who are trapped either in the sex industry or an unhappy marriage stay in these situations. Not knowing the local language and having minimal, if any, connections with anyone in China to provide them aid also creates leaving these situations more challenging. Not only is fear keeping these women trapped in their current situations but, some women may have children with the husband they were sold to which makes leaving these arranged marriages even more difficult. If these women try to leave their marriage with a young child, they are now not just putting their life in danger, they are also risking the child's life. Joy Kim had to make the difficult decision to leave her daughter behind in China with the father of her daughter and the man she was sold to when she escaped to South Korea (Huang, 2019). She has not seen or been in contact with her daughter since she left China.

From the many first-hand accounts of witnessing executions, being imprisoned, experiencing torture, and the many struggles faced by men and women, but especially women, who either try or successfully escape North Korea, it has become quite clear as to how fear plays a role in controlling North Korean citizens. Each one of these primary sources offered its insight into what these individuals experienced. The use of violence to punish an individual for going against the government or the regime, public executions that the public must attend, imprisonment where inmates face inhuman conditions and are abused, and torture were all used as punishments as well as a way to discourage North Korean citizens from going against the regime. The act of publicly publicizing some of these punishments is meant to leave a mental imprint in everyone's mind of the implications of going against the regime. This knowledge of what happens to people who go against the regime is also meant to suppress any feelings that go against the government and make these individuals compliant by fear. From the testimonies seen in the multiple primary sources used above, it can be concluded that the North Korean government is using fear as a controlling method to control and regulate the lives of North Korean citizens living within and outside its borders.

## Conclusion

Fear is being used as an instrument of control onto the North Korean citizens living in North Korea and outside its borders. The North Korean government is using the power of this emotion to exploit their citizens and make them comply with any and all wishes of the Kim regime. With the Kim regime also implementing state violence and imposing a state of authoritarianism, the government is severely restricting the freedom of its people. The constant threats from the government, public displays of violence/executions by the military or law enforcement, stories of terrible treatment individuals have faced while in political prisons, repercussions an action could have on one's family, etc, show how these actions are increasing



the fear felt by citizens of North Korea. Michael Taussig, Alexander Hinton, Achille Mbembe, and other literary works provide relevant information and theories that support this claim. When looking at Michael Taussig's *The Nervous System*, Taussig looks into how fear can be spread by a government or power through means of a nation's nervous system. Alexander Hinton in his book *Why did they Kill?: Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*, looks at the reasons and motivations behind someone killing or committing acts of violence. Some of these reasons could be based upon fear, loyalty to a cause, sense of duty, etc. Lastly, Achille Mbembe in his book *Necropolitics* discusses the topic of who decides who should live and who should die. The theories of Mbembe and Hinton directly relate to state authoritarianism and the use of state violence seen in North Korea while also relating to topics in Taussig's work. As Taussig would describe fear, what mattered for terror was how it was passed from mouth to mouth across the nation, from page to page, from image to body (Taussig 1992, 2). The threat or act of violence to implement the feeling of fear is common in authoritarian governments. The use of state violence and state authoritarianism also affected the behaviors and social order of the citizens living under these governments.

Looking at multiple different first-hand experiences of what happened to individuals who were caught trying to leave North Korea, it becomes clearer how fear plays a role in controlling the citizens of North Korea. These individuals are the only people who can truly inform the world of the human rights violations faced while living in North Korea. As well as how North Korea treats those who have been caught trying to leave the country and the inhuman conditions and violence they lived through. Each of these primary sources offers its insight into what these individuals experienced and how the North Korean government uses fear to control its people. With more North Korean citizens successfully escaping North Korea and being able to tell their story of what they experienced and the struggles they were able to overcome, the international community is becoming more and more aware of the violence, human rights violations, and overall horrendous treatment of the North Korean people. Due to this increase of stories and

experiences being shared, individuals and organizations have been actively trying to help people escape North Korea and help North Korean citizens who are trapped in China. The Chinese government has been cracking down on NGOs, non-profit organizations, and religious groups who have been trying to help North Koreans escape from China and North Korea (Lee 2000, 117). Some of the testimonies of individuals we heard from throughout this paper received aid from these different organizations. Liberty in North Korea is a very active NGO whose goal is to help as many North Koreans who have escaped North Korea safely travel through China to countries in Southeast Asia where these individuals can apply for asylum and relocate to South Korea. Some other organizations that are actively working to spread awareness about the living conditions and violence endured in North Korea and help North Korean's escape North Korea and/or China are Crossing Borders, Helping Hands Korea, Durihana, Amnesty International, etc.

As different methods used to generate fear are used by the North Korean regime, looking at Taussig's work, would connect all of these methods of generating fear as branches of North Korea's nervous system. Within the branches of this nervous system that brings information to the general public, the ideas of who should live and die and the motivations behind these atrocious acts of violence from the government would also be passed along to entice more fear into the lives of ordinary North Korean citizens. This could be described as information "dribbling down a kid's sandcastle" to the citizens living under the North Korean government, the head of the nervous system, in charge (Taussig 1992, 2). Living in this kind of environment where fear is an unconscious part of life, the methods used to induce this fear start to become normalized and impress a deep control over people's lives and their beliefs. With fear ingrained into everyday life in North Korea, it takes a lot of courage to go against the North Korean government to try and leave the country. Even with understanding the risks and the potential consequences of their decision, many people still decide this is the best option for them and their family. Having to leave one's home with no idea what the future is going to entail is a scary thing these people opt for because of the fear they feel in their home country.

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