

Thousands join hands across L.A.

By Cheryl An
Korea Times

The event was over before you knew it, but for almost an hour on June 14, there was some semblance of racial unity in Los Angeles.

Over 10,000 people, including more than 120 religious congregations representing 20-plus denominations, came out to participate in "Hands Across L.A.: All People. One City."

People of all races and many faiths lined 121 blocks of Western Avenue, from Florence to Franklin avenues. In a show of peace and unity after the riots, Angelenos were dressed in cultural and religious garb. Elderly Korean women could be seen in traditional Korean costumes and Buddhists from Korean temples in their saffron robes.

Representing the Korean American Coalition, Dan Yoo, 18, said, "It was really good to see people get together



Choirs from the L.A. Young Nak Presbyterian Church and the First A.M.E. Church sing "Hand in Hand" at Western Avenue and 7th Street in Koreatown.

after the riots. It shows that this is not just a city of hate and frustration. It's also a

city of love."

When asked why she came to the

event, Ellen Hwang, 18, of the Federation of Korean Buddhist Temples in Southern California said, "I wanted to prove I'm part of this community."

On that same note, 21-year-old Joseph Yi of KAC and president of UC Berkeley's Project Korean Resolve said, "We are, after all, brothers and sisters. We should try to make it work. This is our home, our family."

Many Koreans, young and old, held hands near the HK and California markets, places that were once guarded by armed KA men during the riots.

While there appeared to be irony in seeing people of multi-ethnic backgrounds holding hands and singing together in front of a mini-mall still lying in ashes, participants seemed sincere in their motivations.

Laura Tekosky, 36, came out with her two children, Marianna, 8 and Carr, 5, simply because, "We wanted to show our support for the many good people in

L.A."

Organized by the Interfaith Coalition to Heal L.A., "Hands Across L.A." attracted a considerably smaller crowd than the hoped-for 100,000. The human chain seemed to have little effect on the traffic on Western Avenue, which remained open during the event.

"We are trying to demonstrate that we are one neighborhood, intertwined with one another, and that what happens in South-Central and North Hollywood and Koreatown affects all of us," Rabbi Harvey J. Fields told the Los Angeles Times. Rabbi Fields is chairman of the coalition and president of the Interreligious Council of Southern California.

Broadcast live over News Radio KNX-AM (1070) and Radio Korea, an announcer called it, "Civil rights at a human level."

The event ended at exactly 3:30 p.m. with the singing of "We Shall Overcome."