

Relief checks on the way for KA riot victims

Donations total \$2.5 million

By Kay Hwangbo
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The first checks from a major Korean American relief organization were made available for KA victims of the Los Angeles riots.

Last week, the Koreatown Emergency Relief Committee handed out \$500 checks to 600 victims for food, transportation and other basic needs, according to committee chairman Eui Young Yu, a sociology professor at Cal State Los Angeles.

As of Tuesday, \$2.5 million had been collected by three major groups to aid victims of the violence: \$1.5 million by the committee, \$895,000 by Radio Korea and \$160,000 by the Korean American Coalition.

Community groups continued to help riot victims by providing food, clothing, legal services and other professional services.

Victims are encouraged to go to Radio Korea, where a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) center has been established to accept applications for financial assistance. The money can be used to pay rent or make mortgage payments, said Steve Han, an organizer of Radio Korea's relief efforts.

Korean physicians, nurses and pharmacists have been volunteering their services at Radio Korea's relief center. Also on hand were advisers dealing with questions about immigration visas, business permits and insurance.

Radio Korea's center, which has a food distribution program, is located at 2001 W. Olympic Blvd. For more information, call 213/487-1300.

The relief committee's initial payout

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is "the first stage relief," said Yu. He said the next steps will be helping Korean small-business owners, rebuilding Koreatown in conjunction with Peter Ueberroth's Rebuild L.A. effort, and aiding the black and Latino communities.

After collecting community donations, the Oriental Mission Church turned over \$105,930—\$25,000 from its own congregation—to the relief committee. Wells Fargo Bank contributed \$25,000. Earlier, the Atlantic Richfield Oil and Gas Co. had donated \$50,000.

"As a church we want to emphasize emergency relief to rebuild business and Koreatown," OMC executive pastor Joseph Y.S. Ahn said.

Also, a relief center at the church has been dispensing food, clothing and legal advice. For help, go to 424 N. Western Ave. or call 213/466-7101.

Other Korean organizations that have raised funds for riot victims are:

Korea Central Daily, KCB Radio, KTE-TV, Young Nak Presbyterian Church, California Korea Bank and the Westwood United Methodist Church.

Yu, Han and the Korean American Bar Association's John S.C. Lim said that the various funds should be merged into one to avoid duplication of grants. So far that hasn't happened, they noted.

Radio Korea, Korea Central Daily, KCB and KTE have committed to combining their funds. The Koreatown Emergency Relief Committee has not done so, Yu said, because the media coalition has not yet appointed a team of fund administrators "with leadership, management skills and who have no vested interest in distributing the money."

But Yu added, "We're going to (join). It takes a while to get together."

Jerry Yu, executive director of the Korean American Coalition, said: "We are waiting to see what those different community groups decide (regarding disbursement) of funds. If we can agree with that purpose, then we will join in."

The coalition has been talking with politicians and government agency representatives to make sure that Korean Americans get their fair share of governmental assistance and private donations, Yu said.

It will also organize the community to protest the slow deployment of the Los Angeles Police and National Guard troops during the riot.

In another development, Korean Americans spoke about the riot at a forum sponsored by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center last Monday.

Speakers included:

Eui Young Yu, Jai Lee Wong, a consultant with the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission; Bong Hwan Kim, executive director of the Korean Youth Center; and Jin Ho Lee, a Korean American merchant whose store was burned down.

"I think it was good to sensitize the UCLA community about what is going on at community level," Wong said later.

At a new conference held by the Black-Korean Alliance, Koreans and African Americans called for an end to the violence between their two communities.

They also said it is unhelpful for the two groups to scapegoat each other, and demanded that the U.S. Justice Department pursue a civil rights lawsuit against the four LAPD officers in the Rodney King case.

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