FROM HARM TO HARMONY

Designing Reformative Principles For Missionary Work
FROM HARM ➔ TO HARMONY
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface p 04
Design Thinking Process p 06

1. RESEARCH p 07
Thesis Statement p 24
Community Partner p 25

2. DESIGN p 27

3. IMPLEMENT p 34
Theory of Change p 40
Take Aways & Next Step p 41
Acknowledgement p 42
Hello, Friends!
I’m Sohoon Yi, designer who believe in God

**THIS PROJECT BECAME MY LIFE-LONG MISSION.**

At first, my thesis was started from a missionary-care service. I saw missionaries suffering from burnouts and mental issues while they were in difficult positions to ask help. So, I thought there’s some problem in the ecosystem and this group of people needed care. But, while I was researching I encountered some problems around the history of bloodshed and controversies around Christianity in the wider perspective. Above all, I got to know there are many people who feel uncomfortable with Christianity.

Especially here in the US, diversity and equality are the most important topics. Because of Christian dogma, people have come to think that Christianity block people from seeing the diverse cultures, creating the perception that Christianity is harmful. Also Christian evangelism by missionaries in the indigenous area has been considered as white supremacy and colonization which was harmful to the local communities and those in other religions.

Honestly speaking, I felt very lost as I know more about others’ perspective about Christianity because it seemed there’s no way to communicate with them about missionaries. But at the same time, I thought it could be a great opportunity to shift my topic from thinking internally to externally, seeing in non-believer’s perspective towards Christianity, such as ‘How might we build the better principles of missionary work, so that it is open to communicate with the people who feel uncomfortable and think it needs to improve?’ That was the starting point of this project, ‘From harm to harmony’, and now it became my life-long mission.
Including myself, Christians believe in God, His realm and order. However, we usually rely on our decisions and follow the secular rules for money and success.

The place where God occupied was replaced by myself.

Therefore, ‘I’ become the one who decides the right and wrong and justify the way ‘I’ took. Not only that, but also judging others who have different ideologies than me.

It causes all the conflicts and tragedies around Christianity.

It’s the time we reflect on ourselves, and as we realize which side we stand, we see the fundamental things that are deeply rooted in us.
DESIGN THINKING PROCESS

1
RESEARCH
 DISCOVER - EXPLORE - DEFINE

2
DESIGN
 IDEATE - PROTOTYPE

3
IMPLEMENT
 TEST PROTOTYPE - FINAL INTERVENTION
RESEARCH
MISSION WORK BECAME HARMFUL TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES
- GIVING OR FORCING UNNECESSARY HELP -

# Different_ImmuneSystem

PEOPLE IN A TRIBE DIED WHEN AN ORGANIZATION GET THEM TO WEAR CLOTHES.
When native people neglected to change or wash their clothes, they became a potential health risk, especially for the undernourished people who are already more susceptible to infection and disease.

# ToxicCharity # Creating_Dependency

ONCE THEY GET RELIEF SUPPLIES, THEY CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT RECEIVING THEM CONTINUOUSLY.
Even though they live in the land where double or triple-cropping is available with the climate there, once they receive food or supplies, they become dependent.
This project became my life-long mission. It started from missionary care service, I learned controversies around Christianity and mission work in the wider perspective, and finally I am here to tell the story of missionary Park who is the true practitioner of 23-year-mission work in Panama with his sustained effort for not causing harm but being the practical helper to Kuna tribe.

The outcome from this project is aiming to leave his practice behind as examples of the fundamentals of mission work. Through this project, I hope more discussions and debates around mission work will take place publicly, which will open an opportunity for the public to engage in building better principles.

But there are still 41% of the world’s population that have not encountered Christianity which means Christian Missionaries still want to reach out to those areas. In other words, it is still possible to cause harm with these false ideas.

Missionaries interpret the local people’s need with their own assumptions and think the way they give help will be helpful to the people based on the false ideas.

Without knowledge about the culture and traditions of the communities they visit, consciously or unconsciously missionaries can keep hurting people.
The value of believing GOD is decreasing,

54% say it is NOT necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values

Pew Research Center, 2019

The number of adult church members also has declined sharply,

69% 52% -17%

1998-2000 2016-2018

The rate of U.S. church membership has declined sharply in the past two decades. Thousands of U.S. Churches are closing each year.

Gallup, 2019
even the people who were raised in the religion, one-in-five of them dislike their religion and they have left their church saying:

"I think that more harm has been done in the name of religion than any other area"

"Too many Christians doing un-Christian things"
Christian Devils: How the Bible Was Used to Mobilize Oppression of Native Americans

C. Silvar
Feb 20, 2018 • 7 min read
AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY’S WHITE-SUPREMACY PROBLEM

History, theology, and culture all contribute to the racist attitudes embedded in the white church.

It’s Time to Talk About Violent Christian Extremism

There’s a “strong authoritarian streak” that runs through parts of American evangelicalism, warns Elizabeth Neumann. What should be done about it?

By Michael Luo
September 2, 2020
Christian Devils: How the Bible Was Used to Mobilize Oppression of Native Americans

History of Bloodshed

Traumatizing people

Brutality
Judging people not embracing "Christian Extremism"

It's Time to Talk About Violent Political Conflicts

There's a "strong authoritarian streak" that runs through parts of American Evangelicalism, warns Erikson.
Christian Devils: How the Bible Was Used to Mobilize Oppression of Native Americans

Even though I am not part of those movements, I saw people get uncomfortable or frustrated when people heard the words like 'Missionary' or 'Christianity', those words remind people their hurt or trauma Christians caused.
Judging people not embracing Christianity when people hear the words like 'Missionary' or 'Christianity', those words remind people their hurt or trauma Christians caused.
Christian Devils: How the Bible Was Used to Mobilize Oppression of Native Americans

Assuming the local’s needs

Doing the mission work as a feel-good-activity

History of Bloodshed

I am right, you are wrong

This is good news to me, so it is for you as well

I feel good NOT because I’m helpful to you, BUT because I’m doing good

These are the FALSE IDEAS that Christians easily fall into, and I believe many of their harmful actions are derived from these false ideas.
Judging people not embracing

Political Conflicts

that Christians easily fall into, actions are derived from these false ideas.

I am right, you are wrong

This is good news to me, so it is for you as well

NOT because to you, BUT in doing good

I feel good NOT because I'm helpful to you, BUT because I'm doing good

I am correct so you should join and follow me

My way is right so you need to change your way

Imposing people to believe

Intimidate by saying, “You will go to hell if you don’t believe”
I used to be a missionary. I would go on short term mission trips to Eastern Europe or Africa for the sole purpose of “saving souls for Christ”. We kept count of the number of people we “saved”. We put on a play or volunteered for a little while to show our love for Jesus. Then after praying with them and adding their soul to the tally marks, we would never see them again.

I thought I was doing God’s work. But if I’m being honest, I was doing work that made me feel good. I would volunteer in an orphanage or help clean out a house, both tasks requiring that the people who lived there had to teach me what to do. This actually took their time away from their family or their work. Yet I believed I was serving them.

Ask me what their names were. I must have worked with and met hundreds of people. Do I remember who they were? Did I even attempt to keep in contact with them or show them that I still care after they’d been added to the notches in my cross? No. Not even once.

I prayed over their houses of worship, that they would repent and see that their faith was dead. Yet I never once sat down and asked to learn what they believed. Why did I assume that my faith was the right faith? Why did I assume that my presence was so precious that it would change their hearts and lives? Why did I assume that they were lost, living their beautiful content lives right where they were? Why did I assume their lives needed changing?

This is white supremacy. This is colonization. White people entering a foreign land under the guise of caring to turn people into followers of the white peoples god and life. Do not pretend colonization doesn’t happen anymore. It just lives under a new name: mission trip.

Do not victimize the missionary that was killed for not following the laws of the tribe he claimed to love. Do not demonize the tribe that simply tried to protect their children from disease and violence. If he cared he would have already known their beliefs and laws and would not have disrespected them. But he didn’t care. They were just going to be another notch on his cross.

If you’ve gone on mission trips before, and this feels like an attack, sit with that feeling for awhile. Is it good to help people? Yes. Is it good to insert yourself into someone else’s life without asking based on your own assumption that you are the most important person in the room? No. It’s time for us to reflect on that notion and change our ways.

Colonization needs to end.
How did mission work turn to white supremacy and colonization?

**HOW**
- People who have different ideology were judged and excluded: Non-christian, LGBTQ communities, and more.
- “Christians --> Conservative people --> Institutions --> Whites”: By this thought process, people tend to perceive Christianity as a white people’s religion covered by white privilege and supremacy causing harm and excluding others.

**WHY**
- [EXCLUSION & CONFLICTS] US is the country of immigrants. Although this country was built upon Christian Faith, increased diversity produced religious and cultural pluralism, amid monotheistic Christianity. In many areas Christianity exerted influence over not only in religious issue but also in political and social issues, generating conflicts.
- [COLONIZATION] Christianity has a history of destroying native people while oppressing them to convert their religion to Christianity. Also missionary actions brought some unexpected negative consequences.

A shocking FB post written by a former missionary
MY THESIS JOURNEY

STARTED WITH MISSIONARY-CARE

Primary research
- Cultural Probe
- Interviews

Secondary research
- Article
- Books

FOUND A FACEBOOK POST
that describing mission work as violence of white supremacy and colonization based on the real experience that describing mission work as violence of white supremacy and colonization based on the real experience

MET MISSIONARY PARK
Through my community partner, GMT, I met missionary Park and heard his 23-year mission work story of harmonizing with the locals

RESEARCH
- History of bloodshed
- Conflicts around Christianity
- Harm caused by Missionary (especially in Jungle or tribal areas where isolated or protected by the government)
MY TOPIC TOOK NEW TURN
The topic was shifted from Missionary-care to building the better principles of mission work

RESEARCH
- Problems of charity when missionaries go into the developing countries
- Sustainable way / any improved practices that is verified in the mission field

PROTOTYPE - MAKING
PROTOTYPE 1
- Missionary Park’s stories (as the example of making harmony & causing harm)

PROTOTYPE 2
- Discussion Guidebook that helps self-learning or group discussion

PROTOTYPE - TESTING
Paired contents of videos and discussion guide
- Not only Missionary Park’s story, but also in other cultures where missionaries should be mindful especially of cultural difference

YouTube Channel and Webpage
- For the public access, all the contents are gathered on the Webpage and the video contents can be accessed on YouTube for the open discussion using comments section

DEVELOP
DELEVER
DESIGN
How might we build the better principle for missionaries so that their mission work does not hurt people but harmonize with the local communities?
THESIS STATEMENT

With Global Mission Team (GMT),

I am building reformative principle for missionaries
to achieve better understanding in both the fundamentals of mission works and the cultures of their engaged population
GMT reaches out to the multi-ethnic people currently living in New York who are willing to participate in the training program of GMT. Afterwards, they go back to their home countries to help out their own people. Typically, mission agencies here send out Americans to other countries, but GMT sends the LOCAL PEOPLE to THEIR own countries. That’s because they know that the local people can understand their communities better than anybody else. GMT knew about the potential harms from missionaries and GMT realized this was the only way to prevent the further harms in their ministry.
HE STAYED WITH THE KUNA TRIBE OVER 20 YEARS, AND NOW HE IS CALLED “FATHER” BY THEM
I met missionary Park through Global mission team (GMT).
He has been in Panama 33 years and working as a missionary in jungle area called IPETI for 22 years.
Now he is called “Father” by Kuna tribe.

I FOUND HOPE IN HIS MISSION WORK
and his practices became my directions for my thesis.

HIS MISSION WORK WAS ALWAYS BASED ON HIS FAITH IN GOD
which led him to sincerely love the local people and truly help them with what he can offer.

“Don’t try to change anything. We shouldn’t change anything.
I waited for them until they asked me for help.
Likewise, I taught them Gospel when they wanted to hear.

We are helping in the way for them be/become their own solutions.”
DIRECTIONS
- WHAT MISSIONARY PARK DID IN PANAMA(IPETI) -

HE INFORMED KUNA PEOPLE
THE BENEFICIAL SERVICES
THEY DON’T KNOW
They are a very protective and cohesive group; they usually don’t accept anything from outside. So they have no idea even the national service they could get. So missionary Park informed them of free medical services when they needed them.

HE BOOST THEIR PRIDE ABOUT
CULTURE, NATURE RESOURCES
AND COMMUNITIES THEY HAVE
He didn’t give anything to them, because they already have abundant resources so they actually don’t need anything else. But he let them know how amazing the things they have. So that the people there do not rely on relief supplies, but try to work things out on their own.

HE HAS WORSHIP WITH THEM
WHEN THEY ASK AND TEACH
THEM IN THE TIMELY MANNER
When they want to have worship, they come to missionary Park’s place and ask him to do it. When they want to save their family member from a shaman’s curse or they want to know about Gospel

I HOPE HIS PRACTICE WHICH IS THE BIBLICAL WAY OF NOT CAUSING HARM BUT MAKING HARMONY CAN BE KNOWN WIDELY SO OTHER PEOPLE CAN LEARN FROM HIM
Through my research work, knowing that I’m working with international communities via zoom during pandemic, I came up with an idea to provide resources through an online platform. And as we all know, video content is way more powerful than texts on papers.

The Video contents are about missionary Park’s story and each video contains a principle according to his practice. Also, several questions follow with each video that help people to think deeply. Every video has a simple discussion guide, and this guide can be used for self-learning as well as group discussions.

**VIDEOS**

Each video is under 5 minutes working as a tool to provoke the thoughts and opening up the discussions. His short stories lead people to think what went well and what went wrong, and how it could have been done in a better way.

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

It provides a simple guide so anybody can refer to and apply this to their workshop. Or, for someone who just want to learn alone, he/she can use this to check the questions and have time to think about.

**THESE CONTENTS HELPS TO INCREASE THE UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND OPEN MORE SPACES FOR DISCUSSION AROUND MISSION WORK**
SYNOPSIS OF VIDEO CONTENTS

- The video contents will be animation.
- Each video will show a principle of missionary work from missionary Park that are not commonly practiced or practiced in the potentially harmful way.

[REFLECTION QUESTION]

- The Kuna tribe is a very cohesive and protective group. Did you get any sign or reaction from the Kuna that showed their above characteristics?
- How did Missionary Park approach them and did it proper? What could have been better? or what went well? 1) To Kuna / 2) To missionary Park
- Was there any specific sign that showed from Kuna? Was there anything missionary Park misunderstood?

Quick Survey

1. How much did you enjoy with the reflection questions?
   - I didn't enjoy at all
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6
   - 7
   - I was so much enjoyed

2. Please tell us why you think like above.

3. Do you have any other question you want to discuss?

Reflection Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Isolated Tribe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Title: The Guna (Kuna) in Ipeti, Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**COLLECTING DATA**

- Weekly Scheduled Meeting (zoom)
- Recording the meetings and organizing the main contents

**DATA COLLECTION**

**STORY FRAMING**

- Framing the stories and make synopsis
- Select the stories with missionary Park

**VIDEO MAKING**

- Making videos: 3-5 clips of each culture
Deciding discussion questions
Deciding relevant activities that can connect and amplify the reflection questions more thoughtful (Discussion guide)

Sharing contents
- Uploading Videos and Discussion Guides on Web & YouTube

Checking the contents
IMPLEMENT
## Testing Prototype

### One On One Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self Learning</th>
<th>Group Discussion</th>
<th>Join As A Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director, GMT</td>
<td><strong>Jaehee Lee</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missionary in Pakistan</td>
<td><strong>AMJAD SHAKIR</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missionary in Japan</td>
<td><strong>SANO YUMI</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missionary in India</td>
<td><strong>JEONGHWAN OH</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prototype Explanation**

**Survey**

Satisfaction/Intention to use feedback & comments

**Keep Them (partners) Posted**

About the progress

Building relationship & Setting schedule for the next interview

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**Thesis 2021**

From Harm To Harmony

**Sohoon Yi**
I got feedback about my prototype from four GMT missionaries. Through the survey they answered, they all wanted to use these contents for self-learning and group workshops. And they wanted to be partners to inform me about their cultures, so the videos and guide contents about their areas can be made.

“

JAEHEE LEE  
Mission dept. director of GMT, USA

I suggest to use this contents for kids as well at the Sunday Bible School

“

PASTOR AMJAD SHAKIR  
Pakistan

That’s the one that I really wanted and would be happy that I can participate as a partner

“

MISSIONARY SANO YUMI  
Japan

It’s so meaningful to hear not from books but from the locals and their true stories and experiences
WEB + YOUTUBE CHANNEL
with the missionary-partners

The contents will contain various cultures with the missionary partners.

When you select one of them, videos and guide contents will be provided.

The discussions will be extended to the public through the comments section from both the website and YouTube channel.

WEB
When you select a culture on the main page, corresponding videos and guide contents will be provided. And anybody can watch the video contents and download discussion guide for their use.

YOUTUBE CHANNEL
Videos uploaded on the YouTube channel will be a great way to make it accessible to the public that have interest in mission work or the missionaries who didn’t have such critical point of view before.

THE DISCUSSIONS WILL BE EXTENDED TO THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE COMMENTS SECTION FROM BOTH THE WEBSITE AND YOUTUBE CHANNEL.
DIVERSITY

Culture category (more cultures will be added according to the missionary partners’ location)
- Hindu & Islam
- Isolated Tribe
- Anti-Conversion Law
- Religious Rituals
- and more

Click to see the videos and discussion guides

Collaborators

Display the missionary-collaborators who partner with
Variety in India

There are about 690 tribes in India with each unique tradition and culture. How those cultures are interrelated and what separates them from each other and what characteristics are prevailing among those diversity?

Isolated Tribe

The Guna (Kuna) in Ipeti, Panama

Stories from missionary Park who has been doing his mission work in Panama over 39 years and he is called ‘father’ from Kuna people in Ipeti area. How missionaries should approach those isolated area?

Anti-Conversion Law

Nepal, the country of Criminalization Christian Evangelism

A Nepali bill on ‘Forbidding religious festivities and conversions’ has come into force. What missionaries must be mindful and what this law is about exactly?

Religious Rituals

Japan, highly developed nation with 8-million-god

Japan has 8-million-god officially. Why Japanese need so many god in their lives? What people do with the 8-million god? What is behind this culture?

The Guna are very cohesive and protective group

Still, looking around me again, and seeing no possible chance of spending a suitable night anywhere in some other person’s band, I began to think that after all, I might be developing unwarrantable prejudices against this unknown town.
# Theory of Change

**Goal**

Reducing harm to local cultures and its population that is caused by the missionary work

**Thesis Goal**

*With* Global Mission Team, I am building reformative principle for missionaries to achieve better understanding in both the fundamentals of mission works and the cultures of their engaged population

**Pre-Condition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledged harms that missionaries can cause</th>
<th>Understood missionaries’ practices in the perspective of cultural diversity</th>
<th>Realized a better principle based on the true stories of missionaries</th>
<th>Increased understanding of the concept of Biblical mission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased understanding the characteristics of each culture</th>
<th>Recognized the customs and values the local people think crucially</th>
<th>Raised awareness about cultural diversity (traditions, social norm and religions)</th>
<th>Learned what could have been better, what shouldn’t have done and what should we do.</th>
<th>Understood word of God correctly to realize missionaries’ role that God commended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Input**

| Webpage that show videos and discussion guides, and all the contents are categorized in each cultural areas | YouTube Channel that show all the video contents publicly in a more accessible way | Creating 4-5 video clips based on missionaries’ story on each culture that show their practices as the example of making harmony | Following questions with each video that provoke people to think deeply  
  - to understand the culture  
  - to think the missionary’s practice → What could’ve been better & What should have done  
  - to learn the Biblical mission | Discussion guides which are paired with each video and gives guidance for the group discussion |

**Output**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learned cultural diversity and its characteristics that missionaries should know in advance</th>
<th>Deep dive discussions among the people who want to be a missionary</th>
<th>(self or group) Reflection time around the missionaries’ practices after watching the videos on YouTube or webpage</th>
<th>Public discussions through comments sections on YouTube and webpage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Intervention**

Open space for forum with media contents that help to realize the mistakes and harms missionaries can cause and think a better principle for missionaries

**Indicator**

- Number of people who watch the video contents
- Number of people who download the guidebook
- Number of comments that left with each contents
- Number of webpage visitor
- Degree of satisfaction about the questions
- Number of cultural areas the contents cover
- Number of missionary who collaborate with
- Number of YouTube subscription
TAKE AWAYS & NEXT STEP

I noticed Christianity has its own share of harmful and shameful history. Moreover, the history keeps repeating itself by the people who do not care and think only in their own point of view. Christians need to keep reflecting themselves by having open discussion to see what went wrong and how it can be improved. God and the Bible don’t change, but the world we live in keeps changing. So we need to evolve our way of faith towards harmony with our communities. Christians believe that they are saved not by their own capability but by the power of the Savior. Therefore Christians should be thankful and be helpful to the people, not pointing their fingers to those who are not Christians. But I see the hope in that we can still gather together and discuss these matters, both positive and negative. Change hurts. Reformation is not easy. But I believe when we reflect on ourselves and keep building better principles, we can change to bring a better world.

This project will continue with the missionary partners from GMT. Starting from the Panama tribe, Japan and India will follow. I hope this project embraces as many cultures as possible.

I hope these initial pieces open forums and discussions broadly around mission work.

I look forward to seeing more people engaged as the discussions are accumulated so that we get to understand each other better. Togetherness can be spread with respect.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All the glory to God

Pastor John and all the church members
Amazing tutors Song, Goen & I-re, Sarah / The warmest shelter, Jun-Sil couple
Thank you for your love and support, Mom & Dad
My sister & her husband, precious nieces Haram & Hasom / Heoheo / Mina

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Missionary Jaehee, Evangelist Yumi, Missionary Jonghwan

Thank you Mari.
Miya and all the DSI faculty & Staffs
My cohorts, class 2021
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https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/americanchristianitys-white-supremacy-problem


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