

KYUNG SEOK PARK, South Korea.

Before Kyung Seok Park developed paraplegia following a hang-gliding accident in August 1983, he never thought about the lives of people with disabilities. He was 22 years old and busy studying at university, playing guitar and having fun with friends. When Kyung Seok attempted to live as a person with a disability, he soon found daily life for people with disabilities in South Korea was unacceptably difficult, even dangerous.

His life as an activist began. Representing Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination (SADD), a disability rights movement, Kyung Seok focuses his activism on public transportation. Without measures to eliminate obstacles and barriers to access public transport, people with disabilities are cut off from being able to participate fully in all aspects of life – travelling to a job or school and living independently. Numerous wheelchair users in Seoul have been killed or injured when utilizing unsafe wheelchair lifts at train and subway stations.

Demanding an increase to the public budget for disability rights, in 2021 Kyung Seok and SADD activists began peaceful protests, during which many wheelchair users simultaneously boarded and disembarked subway trains during busy commuting hours. Authorities in Seoul have reacted negatively, including with violence. The protests have been repressed and activists forcibly dragged out of stations by police. Politicians have conducted smear campaigns, painting disability activists as a public nuisance. Seoul Metropolitan Government has filed multiple “blockade lawsuits” against peaceful protesters, further attempting to quash their activism.

Despite being almost strangled by police and Seoul Metro staff during a peaceful protest, and facing multiple lawsuits because of his activism, Kyung Seok continues to fight, declaring: *“We refuse to wait any longer. We demand a world where no one is left behind.”*

SHOW KYUNG SEOK PARK THAT YOU SUPPORT HIS ACTIVISM:

Send your messages of strength and hope in a card or letter, and show Kyung Seok Park and SADD activists that they are valued and respected.

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