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# Looking Backwards

So much of the news these days appears to be with certain groups looking back rather than looking forward. That is to say, they are more preoccupied with addressing paste perceived wrongs, whether real or imagined, than putting them behind them and looking forward in a more positive manner. The most obvious example of this to me has been the inability of Koreans to assign the tragedies of the past to history and instead move forward to creating a more positive relationship. History cannot be changed, though there are those who try to do so that reminds me of the way history was frequently rewritten to appease current attitudes in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-four.* In my opinion Koreans are too preoccupied with the actions of prewar Japan when it occupied Korea, dwelling on the comfort women issue and forced wartime labor than considering ways to overcome and improve relations. Instead those issues remain festering sores that inevitably lead to strained and damaged relations.

Similar attitudes and behavior can be seen clearly in America, too. Slavery was indeed a dark part of American history as was the segregation and discrimination towards blacks even after it was abolished. Currently America is preparing for another presidential election scheduled for next year and the opposition Democrat party has some 20 hopefuls seeking to be that party’s presidential candidate. Several of these hopefuls have made race an issue and some have proposed that blacks be given reparations – money – because many are descended from slaves. It is true that during the Civil War the Union promised blacks “a mule and 40 acres” if they served in the Union forces, which many did. But after the war the US government failed to keep its promise and this was pointed out during a recent Democratic hopefuls’ debate. That candidate calculated that the mule and 40 acres calculated in today’s money and distributed among descendants of those former black soldiers in the Union army would be billions of dollars.

We are told that those who do not know history are destined to repeat it. I have always believed that studying and understanding history is key to not repeating the same mistakes that were made in the past. An understanding of history is essential in formulating policies for the future. How that is done indeed directly affects current events as witnessed by the worsening relations between Japan and Korea that are obviously based on past historical events.