

“The Assi Tree”: A Trilingual Children’s Coloring Book (in English, Spanish, and Korean)

Created by Chong Ahn, Eurie Chung, Francis Eclevia, Alejandro Lopez, Marc Loresto, Sarah Mamaril, Emily Roh, Cha Viloría, and Ali Wong

This book is dedicated to the Immigrant Workers Union members. They have been fighting for a living wage, benefits, respect and dignity since 2002. Their struggle against the Assi Market owner continues and is part of a greater battle for immigrant worker rights. This book is an effort to educate children and the larger public about this historic coalition of Korean and Latino immigrant workers.

Storyline: “The Assi Tree”

Squirrel Rhee was the boss of the Assi tree. He told every other squirrel, “You will gather acorns for me because I am the one who found the Assi tree. You are each allowed only three nuts; the rest you must return to my hut.” He told every pigeon, “You will give me your bread crumbs, every smidgen. You are only allowed to keep four to yourself; the rest will add to my wealth.”

And so his laws the other animals did abide, even though they didn’t always want to be on Squirrel Rhee’s side. They knew Squirrel Rhee lied, about all the food he would gather from the other animals and hide.

Squirrel Rhee stored all the food in a secret hole, the whereabouts of which he never told. He would eat twenty a day, and they made him fat, while other families worried about being hungry, and Squirrel Rhee yelled and sat.

Squirrel Park was tired of his stomach feeling empty, and decided to talk to the other squirrels about it. "It's not fair that we gather all of these nuts for Squirrel Rhee, while our stomachs go bare. Even though he's big, fat and cruel, if we band together he'll lose like a fool."

But the other squirrels were scared. "You're crazy!" they cried. "Squirrel Rhee found this Assi tree!" And Squirrel Park sighed: "Don't you know that you have every right to ask questions, demand answers and put up a fight?" But the other squirrels worked hard to gather Squirrel Rhee's daily nuts, in fear that if they didn't, he would kick their butts!

Squirrel Park visited his friend Pigeon Jaime who lived up the tree. He brought a basket of bread crumbs for Jaime's family. "I need help!" he exclaimed. "I want to make our work fair, but the other squirrels don't feel the same."

Pigeon Jaime said, "That's exactly what I wanted to do, but when I talked to the other pigeons, they were scared too!" They promised to work together, and even though they were different, they agreed that their friendship would never be severed.

That night, after Squirrel Park left Pigeon Jaime's branch, he hurried home in a dash. He stumbled across Squirrel Rhee's secret stash. He ran back up the tree to tell Pigeon Jaime about

the gluttony of Squirrel Rhee: “He has nuts and bread crumbs galore, so much to eat that it would make your belly sore.”

“Great!” exclaimed Squirrel Park, and the two were off to plan all the ways in which they were going to overthrow the man. They became good friends and Squirrel Rhee overheard. He got nervous and warned all the squirrels of a friendship so absurd.

“Stay away from the pigeons!” he commanded. “They’re too different. They have beaks; we have teeth. They fly; we jump and climb. They have gray feathers; we have brown, bushy tails. Remember that I found this Assi tree, and my name is Squirrel Rhee.”

But when Squirrel Park told them about the secret stash, they got mad. They now knew they had pigeon friends to help them against the selfish and bad. They didn’t know pigeons were so loyal and they were like one another. The pigeons also had stomachs that growled with hunger.

Squirrel Park and Pigeon Jaime continued to work together, even though one had a tail and the other had a feather. Squirrel Park ran all around to gather support of different animals. Pigeon Jaime spent all of his time in flight, asking all the other animals to give all of their might. The two friends knew that if they were going to win the fight, they needed the help of every animal in sight.

One day, Squirrel Rhee went for a stroll, expecting to find lots of food in his hole. Instead, he found the whole park filled with animals in front of his food demanding that Squirrel Rhee stop

being so cruel. They yelled together, “Share the nuts and bread crumbs; we all worked hard for them, and we each deserve to get some!”

For a copy of “The Assi Tree” children’s color book, contact:

Emily Roh <sporkism@ucla.edu>

Glenn Omatsu <gomatsu@ucla.edu>

Cindy Cho of KIWA <choys@kiwa.org>