As the recent "affective turn" within the humanities and social sciences has emphasized, all social transformations, in order to be effective, must be affective. Building on this insight, this paper examines the lifestyle politics of the so-called "first generation" of South Korean (hereafter "Korean") gay men. By "first generation," I refer to men who became exposed to Westernized discourses of "gay identity" and "community" during the liberalizing period of Korean history in the mid-1990s with the emergence of the gay and lesbian movement. Even now, many of them are struggling to create a hidden but autonomous lifestyle centered around their non-normative identity. Central to this struggle, I assert, is the effort to building jeongful relations between gay men. Popularly known as a "deep sense of affection," jeong is typically seen to emerge from the early mother and child relation and form within the structure of the heterosexual family. In trying to re-appropriate this emotion that has been central to constructing the nation as a family-based state, Korean gay men demonstrate how it is crucial to view social change—and politics—from the perspective of a perceiving, desiring, and fantasizing emotional being.

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