

# REMEMBERING THE “COMFORT WOMEN”

A Teacher's Guide and Source Set  
for Educating High School Students  
About the Japanese Imperial Military's  
“Comfort Women” System  
Before & During World War II  
& The Ongoing Fight for Justice



Column of Strength Memorial to “Comfort Women”  
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St. Mary's Square, San Francisco, CA

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## SPECIAL THANKS & DEDICATIONS

In October 2020, the Mitte District, a borough in Berlin, Germany, retracted its previous approval to a local organization. The approval had been for a year-long public art display of a statue symbolizing “comfort women” victims near a busy intersection of Berlin. The retraction came just 10 days after the initial installation ceremony, after the Japanese government openly expressed its displeasure and complained to local and federal German officials that it disagrees with the history represented by the statue. The Mitte District Council had approved the installation of the statue, despite warnings from the sponsoring organization about possible backlash from the Japanese government. The basis for the approval was the statue’s educational purpose – to remind the local community of the relatively unknown history of the state-led system of sexual slavery and trafficking in the Asia-Pacific in the years prior to and during WWII – and its connection with sexual and gender-based violence that continues to occur during and around conflict zones today. Outraged and ashamed by the Council’s decision to remove the statue under pressure from the Japanese government, Berliners came out in droves and protested. Their civil disobedience and pressure on local representatives resulted in a second reversal by the Council, this time reinstating the statue’s display to the original one-year period.

This is just one of numerous examples of the Japanese government’s far-reaching campaign to deny or diminish its commission of wartime atrocities, such as the “comfort women” system (a problematic euphemism for sexual slavery), the Nanjing Massacre, Unit 731 and the human experimentation conducted there, which included bacteriological warfare, the Bataan Death March, the Battles of Manila and Hong Kong, and the Bangka Island Massacre, among others.

In 2016, the California Board of Education approved a revised framework for the History/Social Science high school curriculum that included the “comfort women” issue as institutionalized sexual slavery that affected tens or possibly hundreds of thousands of women and children from more than thirteen countries. Four years have passed since the issue was incorporated into California’s 10<sup>th</sup> grade world history curriculum, but this topic appears remote and daunting to many educators. One reason is the lack of reliable and easily readable primary sources; most source materials are only available in Japanese, Korean, and Chinese languages or have been destroyed by the Japanese government or complicit parties.

Thanks to funding provided by the Research Institute on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery (RIMSS) of the Women’s Human Rights Institute of Korea, during 2020, Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education (CARE) collaborated with Korea University’s Law Center and the UCLA Center for Korean Studies to translate the annotations for 50 Japanese military documents and 30 Allied Forces documents from WWII, as well as testimonies of the survivors and witness, and other materials. These documents provide ample evidence of the Japanese Imperial Military’s direct role in establishing, operating, controlling, and recruiting women for the “comfort station” system, and its soldiers’ exploitation of “comfort” stations throughout the Second World War as military strategy. This guide includes just a few of these translated documents, along with additional materials that will be helpful for readers to gain a better understanding of the “comfort women” system and how the issue remains alive and relevant today.

All of these sources will become available online for public use through the UCLA Center for Korean Studies in the spring of 2021.

The credit for original annotations for the Japanese Imperial Military documents goes to the Northeast Asian History Foundation’s archive and Dr. Hye-in Han, who also wrote annotations for this project. The annotations for the Allied Forces documents were created by the team of researchers led by Professor Jin-sung Chung of Seoul National University, with support from the City of Seoul, and the annotations in Korean are available on the Seoul Metropolitan Archive website. Dr. Jimin Kim and Sunghee Shin did the first draft of the translation, and Krisanne Snider designed the questions for the

teachers and edited the layout of this guide. This project is heavily indebted to our Korean advisors, Dr. Hye-in Han, Byeong-joo Hwang and Sang-kyu Kim; our Japanese advisors, Mina Watanabe of Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM), Professor Akihisa Matsuno; our U.S. advisors, Professors Peipei Qiu, Alexis Dudden, Bonnie Oh; and the project manager from the American Law Center of Korea University, Professor Kyung-shin Park.

The "comfort women" system is an oft-overlooked dimension of World War II, but it was one of the largest institutions of governmental violence against women and children committed in the name of war and military strategy. When the elderly survivors finally broke the silence in the 1990s, they created a movement that continues to have global repercussions today, from human rights instruments and enforcement mechanisms, to international law, policy, and diplomacy, to discussions around post-colonial reparations, and to transitional justice efforts. There is an invisible and underserved history that, following decades of silence, finally began to come to light.

Survivors and victims often say that their only hope is to share with the younger generations what they endured, so that no one will experience the same horrors ever again. We humbly dedicate this book to the courageous survivors, often called "grandmothers" as a term of respect, who broke the silence at tremendous personal cost, repeatedly telling their stories and standing up against the insidious and persistent efforts of the Japanese government to revise and erase their humanity and history.

December 2020

Phyllis Kim

Executive Director, Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education

## “COMFORT WOMEN” MEMORIALS IN THE UNITED STATES



Palisades Park, NJ (2010)



Bergen County, NJ (2013)



Glendale, CA (2013)



Fairfax County, VA (2014)



Union City, NJ (2014)



Brookhaven, GA (2017)



San Francisco, CA (2017)



Fort Lee, NJ (2018)

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## FOREWORD BY PROFESSOR ALEXIS DUDDEN

The term, “comfort women,” refers to the system of militarized sexual slavery perpetrated by the Japanese government during the 1930s and 1940s in areas under its colonial and wartime command. Beginning with Japan proper and extending to Korea, China, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and numerous Pacific Islands, the system’s estimated tens to hundreds of thousands of victims, along with the structural history involved, are euphemized as “the comfort women.”

At best, the expression is incorrect and hurtful. At worst, it denies what happened: to begin, there was no “comfort” for those trapped against their will and raped up to 40 times per day in buildings established by the Japanese state for its soldiers and civilian employees of the military throughout the Japanese Empire. As Eika Tai explains, “According to military records, the purposes of the creation of comfort stations were to prevent soldiers from committing rape in occupied areas and contracting sexually transmitted diseases [from local prostitutes]. However, Yoshimi (Yoshiaki, a leading historian on the issue), found that soldiers never stopped raping local women.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, there are recorded accounts throughout Southeast Asia of young boys and men ensnared into a historical system that numerous international lawyers, judges, human rights activists, and victims’ advocates have determined as a state-sponsored crime against humanity.

How as teachers do we make sense of all of this? While we cannot fully come to grips with the ugliness of atrocities such as these in our histories, with most of us having never dealt with such horrors, we must learn to examine and describe this history to students as the criminal act it was in order to actively prevent or halt the occurrences of similar crimes against humanity.

To begin our students’ journey into the history of “the comfort women,” one of the tasks we face is teaching the meaning of the words involved with this history: often, these vocabularies are difficult in that they are controversial in nature and can often be emotionally charged. As educators we must take time to make the distinction that rape is always, and forever, an act of violence: it is not sex. I have had students use the Oxford English Dictionary among others to understand that the verb “rape” refers to an act of force, most often with violence involved, and against the will of the person to whom it is happening. For decades, deniers of the “comfort women” history have tried to distract from this basic element by quibbling over whether or not the victims involved were “coerced” or “forcibly coerced” into the system. International lawyers have strongly disputed this line of argument by demonstrating that the legal notion of “coercion” incorporates “deception” and “trickery” in addition to “force,” both of which were also used as tactics of recruitment of “comfort women.”

Put differently, if, for example (as many cases demonstrate), a 16-year old girl from what we now would call South Korea found herself sold by a local official into the Japanese military, that means she was “coerced” against her will and knowledge regardless of the local official’s ethnicity. When this young woman would then find herself in some far-flung outpost of the Japanese empire such as Saipan or Rabaul or even within Japan proper, she was housed against her will at what international law now defines as a site of “sexual slavery” — regardless of the term used at the time.

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<sup>1</sup> Eika Tai, *Comfort Women Activism: Critical Voices from the Perpetrator State* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2020).

Survivors make clear that this is how they would like current and future generations to learn about what happened to them on an individual and collective level in order to end the ongoing practice of targeted sexual violence during wartime. For this reason, above all, survivor groups and their supporters work together today with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in areas such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Iraq, Myanmar, and other zones where similar histories are recurring. As teachers, it is essential to listen to survivors teach us how their history should be taught.

Alexis Dudden

Professor of History, University of Connecticut

## MAP OF THE COMFORT STATIONS



Map is provided courtesy of Women's Active Museum for War and Peace (WAM)

Website: <https://wam-peace.org/en/>

Address: 2-3-18 Nishiwaseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-0051 AVACO bld. 2F

Revised in 2019

# JAPANESE MILITARY DOCUMENTS

## JAPANESE MILITARY DOCUMENTS

In this section we review the annotations of various official Japanese Imperial Military documents that were previously unavailable in English.

By exploring these Japanese military documents, you and your students will have the opportunity to examine the underlying attitudes and motives that led to the implementation and widespread adoption of the “comfort” system by the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces across the Asia-Pacific arena during World War II.

In this section we will present the early planning and discussions among government officials and leaders within the Japanese Imperial Military before the first “comfort” stations were installed. The Armed Forces of the Empire of Japan was comprised of the Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Japanese Navy. The term “Japanese Imperial Military” will be used throughout the guide as a reference to either or both branches.

The resources within this section promote critical thinking and reflection about the many elements that influenced the Japanese Imperial Military’s reasoning, attitudes, and actions, and will also provide evidence of the military’s direct role in the implementation, operation, oversight, and spread of “comfort” stations and how the captives were held in conditions amounting to slavery.

## SECTION I: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Document: Ordinance No. 4, Regulations controlling brothels and prostitutes

Date: March 31, 1916

Annotation by: Hye-in Han, Ph.D. Researcher, Sungkyunkwan University

**ANNOTATION** | This document was proclaimed by the Police Chief of the Japanese Government-General of Korea as the order no. 4 on March 31, 1916. It was proclaimed along with the orders no. 1, Regulations controlling the lodging business; no. 2, Regulations controlling restaurants; no. 3, Regulations controlling female professional entertainers, prostitutes, and recreation business. By proclaiming these four orders, a state-regulated prostitution system was established by the Japanese Government in colonial Korea.

The significance of the order no. 4, Regulations controlling prostitutes, is that it provides a clear legal basis for the government's control of brothels and 'prostitutes,' which had been left in a grey area in the past, with vague and unclear terminologies such as 'second-class restaurants' or 'second-class entertainers' to refer the brothels and prostitutes, for the sake of saving-face for the country. With this order, however, the government made it clear that the government will be in charge of controlling women's sexual status, going forward.

The notable differences of this law in Japan and colonial Korea were the facts that the minimum age for prostitution in Japan was 18, whereas it was set as 17 in colonial Korea (Article 17); and the provisions relating to the human rights protection of the women, such as her freedom to quit, her right to review documents, and her freedom to possess personal items were not as rigorous in Korea as they were in Japan. This ordinance also provides that the brothel businesses employing Korean prostitutes are allowed a leniency from the strict rule that limited the operation of the business within a brothel. Thus, this document shows that while the government controlled women's sexual status, the legal protection of women in terms of their safety and health was not sought after, especially in the colonial Korea. This attitude was clearly reflected in the "comfort women" system for the Japanese military during the war.

Title: Regulations controlling recruiting agents (Police Department Order no. 1)

These are the regulations controlling recruiters who procure female entertainers and prostitutes for businesses (Article 1, Section 1). It was first proclaimed as the Japanese Empire's Police Department Order no. 1 in 1918 and was consecutively issued by the police offices in each region in Korea. Although the specifics varied depending on the jurisdictions, the common elements were as follows: If an agent recruiting women for professional entertainment or prostitution wants to send the women out of the area, the recruiter needs to obtain a written consent of the parents (if there aren't any parents, 2 or more relatives), a document containing the woman's address of family register, home address, name and age, and submit it to the police station in the area 5 days before the departure along with a document indicating the business owner's name, address, occupation, and an abstract of the employment contract (Article 21). Recruiters were not allowed to take out any kind of advertisement, nor were they allowed to lure women into becoming a professional entertainer, or to make others do so (Article 22). These regulations were applied to recruiters who procured "comfort women" for the Japanese military. However, most of the Korean "comfort women" victims have testified that they were deceived by the recruiters through false promises of job opportunities. In colonial Korea, these regulations were enforced more as a measure to accommodate the recruiting activities of the brokers, than as a measure to control their illegal recruiting activities.

## Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. This document provides insight into the Japanese military's attitudes towards the status of women and girls and control over their sexual status and activity. Ask your students to write a paragraph that evaluates how the Japanese Government's attitudes reflected in this annotation could have led to the broader implementation of the "comfort women" system across Japanese-controlled territories during World War II.
2. Is Japan a patriarchal society? To better understand how a government-sanctioned system of sexual slavery began, it is important for learners of this topic to understand the existing attitudes surrounding women's rights. As an activity, have your students conduct their own research regarding patriarchal societies, presenting two societies that are considered patriarchal and elements within these societies that signify that they are in fact, patriarchal.
3. As in the Question 2 above, ask your students to provide a few examples from this document that signify that Japan was a patriarchal society at this time. Ask them to write a reflection on how these patriarchal elements within the society could have contributed to the Japanese military's treatment of women in their occupied territories during World War II.
4. Throughout history, the Japanese Government has consistently attempted to hide many acts that they feel would bring shame to their nation. So, it is significant that in the regulations annotated here, they finally, and officially, took control of women's rights to control their own sexualities and bodies. Have your students take note of the annotation, which reflects the Japanese Government's pivot from leaving control of women's sexuality in a grey area, to outright taking control of it. What might this change say about the attitudes of the Japanese Government, and its society as a whole, towards women's rights?
5. The laws regarding minimum age requirements differed between Japan and colonial Korea. As an activity, have your students conduct their own research into another situation where a government has issued laws or regulations that differentiate between the citizens of its own country versus the citizens of those that it controls or occupies. By logical extension, have them research and identify situations where a government issues laws or regulation that differentiate between or among citizens *within* its own country. What are the effects of those laws and regulations? How have those differences been justified or rationalized?
6. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

## SECTION II: ESTABLISHMENT

### Document: Revision of the Regulations on the Field Canteens

File: The Grand Records of the Ministry of Army (Rikugunsho Dainikki), Collection A (Kou-juu)

Date: September 21, 1937

Annotation Source: Northeast Asian History Foundation

Annotation Link:

- [http://contents.nahf.or.kr/search/itemResult.do?levelId=iswc.d\\_001\\_0010\\_2600&setId=73740&position=0](http://contents.nahf.or.kr/search/itemResult.do?levelId=iswc.d_001_0010_2600&setId=73740&position=0)

**ANNOTATION** | This document contains a very important revision of the regulations that laid the foundation for the establishment of military “comfort” stations as part of the Imperial military system. This is an excerpt from the Collection A (Permanently preserved documents Vol. A of 1937) from the Grand Records of the Ministry of the Army (Rikugunsho Dainikki).

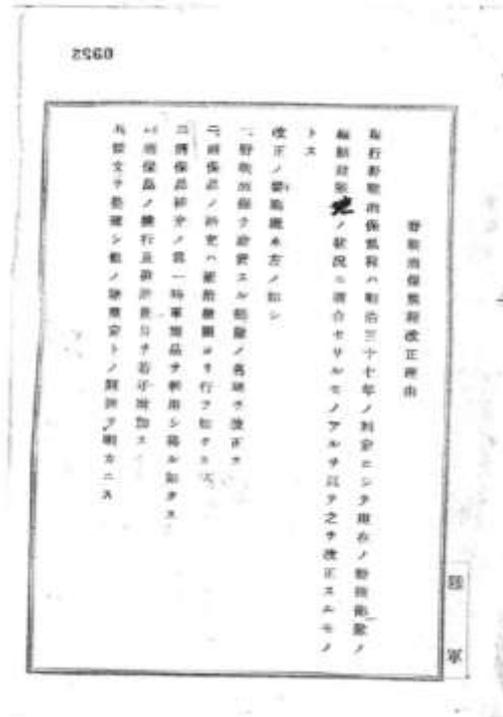
It serves as a revision of the regulations on the field canteen, enacted in 1904, according to the Army Ordinance no. 48 on September 29, 1937. Attached to this document is an explanation for the revision such as the reasons and purposes of the revision, and comparisons between the new and the existing provisions. The reasons for the revision are as follows:

1. Name change of the unit that will install field canteens,
2. Supplements to field canteens are to be filled by the supply agency,
3. Military supplies may be used temporarily to supplement field canteens,
4. Some increase in the quantity and kinds of supplies for field canteens, and
5. To clarify the relationship between regulations for field canteens and other regulations.

An additional provision in Article 1 specifies that “Comfort facilities may be created at the field canteens if necessary, in addition to what is previously provided” which enabled installation of “comfort” stations at field canteens. Further, Article 6 provides the contractors of field canteens to be treated as civilians attached to the military, allowing the “comfort station” operators to have the status of civilians attached to the military. In sum, this document proves that the “comfort” stations were part of the military supply base, established by the Japanese military.

### Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. “Comfort” stations were installed in many different settings during World War II, from hospitals, restaurants, homes, schools, and in this case, field canteens. Discuss this with your students briefly, and have them start a list called Places where “Comfort” Stations Were Set-Up. Throughout their study of the Japanese Imperial Military’s “comfort women” system, they will encounter many of these settings mentioned.



2. Upon reading this document's annotation, ask your students to describe, in their own words, the role in which the Japanese Imperial Military made possible the installation of "comfort" stations during the Second World War.
3. This document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation of the "comfort women" system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the "comfort women" victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the "comfort women" system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the "comfort women" system."
4. This document provides insight into the Japanese military's attitudes towards the status of women and girls. Break your students into groups and ask them to come up with one paragraph that evaluates how these attitudes could have led to the broader implementation of the "comfort women" system across Japanese-controlled territories in the Asia-Pacific region during World War II – most specifically, the treatment of women as mere commodities during the time of war.
5. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (J\_001)

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, C01001469500

**Document: Request to facilitate the incoming travel of the “comfort women” for the Imperial Japanese Force**

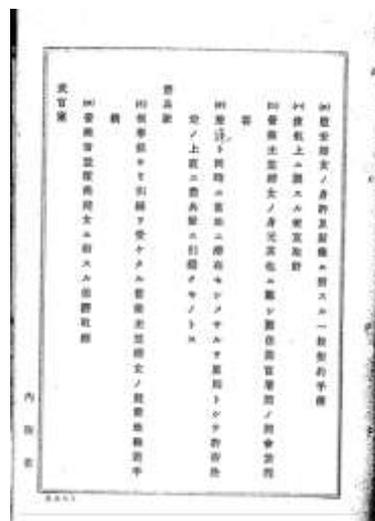
File: Documents for Approval by the Secretary of Internal Affairs (1937, 1st)  
Issuing Party: Consular Police of the Japanese Consulate General in Shanghai, CHN  
Date: December 21, 1937

Annotation by: Hye-in Han, Ph.D. Researcher, Sungkyunkwan University

**ANNOTATION** | This is a document prepared by the consular police of the Japanese Consulate General in Shanghai, China, on December 21, 1937. It was an attachment to the documents relating to the “Concerning the Case Involving an Alleged Abduction of Women in Taking Advantage of the Current Situation” in Wakayama Prefecture, dated February 7, 1938.

It is an important document that reveals the manners in which the Japanese military and the administration controlled every aspect of the establishment of the “comfort stations,” including the recruitment, overseas transportation, employment, and the management of the “comfort women” and the “comfort stations.”

Following the “Revision of the regulations on the field canteens,” dated September 21, 1937 that allowed installation of “comfort” stations in connection with the field canteens, the Japanese government authorities came together to discuss the role division and recruitment plan with respect to the establishment and management of “comfort stations.”



According to this document, the Consulate General would be in charge of the overall aspects of recruitment, employment and transportation of the “comfort women”: it would handle the business permissions for the “comfort” stations and the “comfort women,” background check with other government agencies to facilitate their contract and voyage, the approval of their stay in Shanghai, and transfer of them to the Military Police. The Military Police would be in charge of managing the operators and the “comfort women” in Shanghai, including their transportation to the location of their business. The Office of the Army Attaché would be in charge of preparing the business premises, as well as the general health examinations and STD tests.

Also, this document says that the initial plan is to recruit 3,000 women, and in fact, the first recruitment has been conducted in Japan and Korea. The fact that this document was attached to “Concerning the Case Involving an Alleged Abduction of Women in Taking Advantage of the Current Situation” in Wakayama Prefecture, dated February 7, 1938, shows that the plan was executed as described in this document, and forced recruitment (abduction) did occur during the recruitment.

**Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. Upon reading this document’s annotation, ask your students to describe, in their own words, the role of the Japanese Consulate General (in Shanghai, CHN) in helping to facilitate the transport of “comfort women” from Japan and Colonial Korea to occupied territories in Shanghai, CHN, and how they worked to support the Military Police in the management and transportation duties involved in the “comfort women” system during the Second World War.
2. As with other documents in this section, this document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the “comfort women” system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: “Would this document support or contradict the

Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the "comfort women" victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the "comfort women" system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny having an official role in the "comfort women" system."

3. As you go deeper into this unit, you'll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers or entertainers by trade. Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - origin regions where "comfort women" were recruited from
  - number of "comfort women" involved
  - locations of "comfort" stations that were installed during WWII
4. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (Police\_007)

Collection of the Asian Women's Fund, Vol. 1, p. 36-44

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, A05032040800

Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, and Tonomura, Vol. 1, p. 136-138

## Document: Issue of “Comfort” Stations in the Military Canteens that may be used by civilians

File: History of the Foreign Ministry Police attached to the Consulate General in Nanking

Issuing Party: Japanese Consulate General in Nanjing, China

Date: 1938

Annotation Source: Northeast Asian History Foundation

Annotation Link:

- [http://contents.nahf.or.kr/search/itemResult.do?levelId=iswc.d\\_001\\_0020\\_1090&setId=73928&position=0](http://contents.nahf.or.kr/search/itemResult.do?levelId=iswc.d_001_0020_1090&setId=73928&position=0)

**ANNOTATION** | This is a report of a meeting of the officials from the Ministry of the Army, the Navy, and Foreign Affairs regarding permissions and control of various businesses run by Japanese residents in China. The attendees include [from the Army] Col. Senda (Commanding Officer of the Supply Department), Lt. Col. Kuris (Staff Officer, the 3<sup>rd</sup> division), Lt. Col. Takahara (medical officer/Lt. Col., Division of medical officers, the 3<sup>rd</sup> division), Major Onishi (Secret Military Agency in Nanjing), Lt. Col. Oyama, Captain Horikawa and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Kitahara (Military Police); [from the Navy] Col. Nakahara (Navy attaché), Lt. Col. Ueno (Captain of the gunboat ‘Saga’); and [from the Consulate General Office] Hanawa (Consul General), Tanaka (Consul), Shimizu (Chief of Police), and Sasaki (Assistant Police Officer).



Among the decided matters, Clause no. 6 refers to “the matter of military canteens and “comfort” stations that non-military may use.” It says, “The Consulate shall not intervene in the matters relating to the military canteens and “comfort” stations which exclusively belong to the Army or the Navy, because they are directly managed and supervised by the Army and the Navy. However, the Consulate shall be in charge of the control of canteens and “comfort” stations in general, used by civilians; and military police shall control the soldiers and the civilians attached to the military who use those facilities. When necessary, the Military Police may conduct an on-site inspection at any time and use other controlling methods” (...)

It goes on to say, “In the future, the new exclusive “comfort” stations will be set up under the guidance of the Supply Department and they will be controlled by the Military Police. With respect to the “comfort” stations that already exist, the Supply Department will handle them in a way to incorporate some of them into the group of the exclusive “comfort stations,” considering the civilian residents’ convenience. These matters will be decided by agreements between the relevant agencies. Once the canteens and the exclusive “comfort” stations for the military (both for the Army and the Navy) are approved, for the convenience of the Consulate Office, the Military Police of the applicable unit should frequently report to the Consulate Office regarding the business conditions and the business operator’s other notable change of status such as the original address in the family register, address, name, age, birth, and death.”

### Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. This document shows the division of roles and cooperative system between the Japanese Imperial Military and the Consulate Office in terms of supervising and controlling the “comfort” stations for the Japanese military. Upon reading this document’s annotation, ask your students to describe, in their own words, the role that the Japanese Imperial Military played in the supervision and control of the “comfort” stations they installed during the Second World War.

2. Ask your students to review and research the titles of the meeting attendees. What does their attendance at the meeting tell us? What are some of the typical responsibilities of the divisions or departments named?
3. As with other documents in this section, this document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the "comfort women" system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the "comfort women" victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the "comfort women" system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the "comfort women" system."
4. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (Foreign Affairs\_109)

Collection of the Asian Women's Fund, Vol. 1, p. 479-482

Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, Tonomura, Vol. 1, p. 111-112

Sourcebook by Yoshimi, p. 177-180

**Document: Opinions At the meeting held by the Adjutant (Commissioned Officer of General Affairs) and questions and answers (Addition)**

File: Secret Documents relating to China, Ministry of the Army, no. 39, 1942

Issuing Party: General Headquarters, China Expeditionary Army

Date: September 1942

Annotation Source: Northeast Asian History Foundation

Annotation Link:

- [http://contents.nahf.or.kr/search/itemResult.do?levelId=iswc.d\\_001\\_0010\\_0740&setId=74117&position=1](http://contents.nahf.or.kr/search/itemResult.do?levelId=iswc.d_001_0010_0740&setId=74117&position=1)

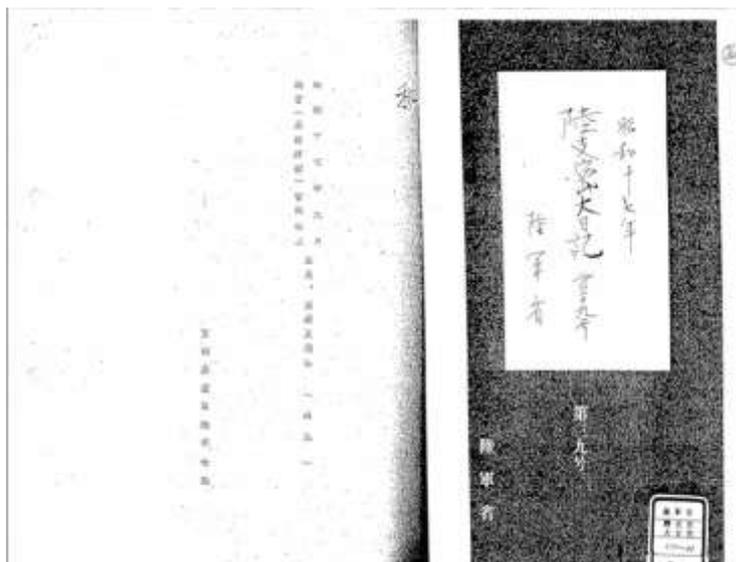
**ANNOTATION** | This is a report produced by the General Headquarters, China Expeditionary Army in 1942. It says that the number of “comfort” facilities in the Shanghai area is relatively small and that it is desired to increase the number in Shanghai. It says it is particularly desired to increase the number of the wholesome entertainment facilities, considering the large number of the civilians attached to the military for this specific unit.

Existing recreation facilities in Shanghai indicated in this report are as follows:

1. 16 exclusive “comfort” stations for the military with 140 prostitutes,
2. 7 rest and recreation facilities, such as rest areas and restaurants exclusively for the military.

Included in this facility are:

- 4 billiard tables,
- 3 table tennis tables,
- 2 tennis courts,
- 1 archery field,
- 1 sumo field,
- 10 go boards and 10 Asian chess boards,
- a showroom,
- 6 record players and radios



**Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. Upon reading this document’s annotation, ask your students to describe, in their own words, the role that the Japanese Imperial Military (in this case, the China Expeditionary Army) played in fueling the spread of the “comfort” stations during the Second World War.

2. As you go deeper into this unit, you'll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers or entertainers by trade. Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - origin regions where "comfort women" were recruited from
  - number of "comfort women" involved
  - locations of "comfort" stations that were installed during WWII
3. As with other documents in this section, this document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the "comfort women" system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the "comfort women" victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the "comfort women" system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Analyze and consider the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the "comfort women" system."
4. With the background knowledge that the Japanese Imperial Military did not grant leave to soldiers and internal discipline was an ongoing issue, ask your students to consider and discuss the other details in the document:
  - What do they think about the inclusion of other recreational facilities?
  - Could the military have created other programs or benefits that offered relief from battlefield conditions that didn't involve "comfort" stations? What might those programs involve?
  - What are the potential effects on young men and women, if they are sent to war without opportunities to explore other options, such as education, careers, or family life?
  - In what ways do internal military policies, which are aimed towards regulating its own troops, have an external impact on civilians or prisoners of war?
5. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (Military\_088)

Collection of the Asian Women's Fund, Vol. 3, p. 17-20

Sourcebook by Yoshimi, p. 269-272

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, C04123834600

### SECTION III: CONSCRIPTION/RECRUITMENT

#### Document: Concerning the case involving an alleged abduction of women in taking advantage of the current situation

File: Documents for Approval, Office of the Minister of Internal Affairs (1938), Vol. 1

Issuing Party: Governor of Wakayama Prefecture (Chief of prefectural police)

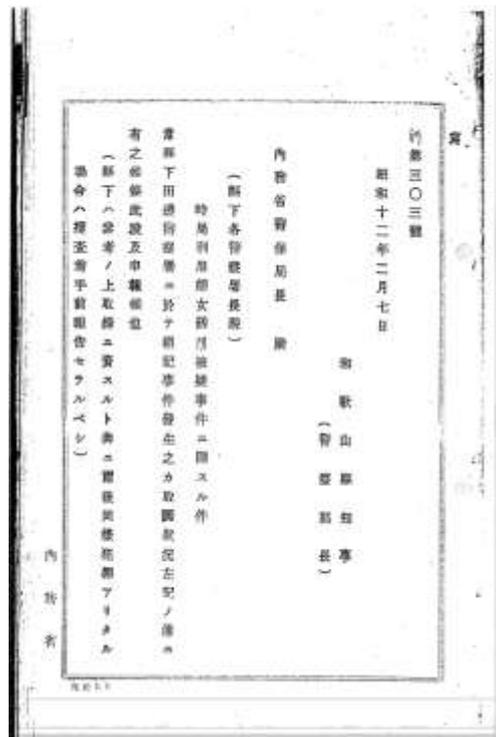
Date: February 7, 1938

Annotation Link:

- [http://contents.nahf.or.kr/search/itemResult.do?levelId=iswc.d\\_001\\_0040\\_0050&setId=74555&position=0](http://contents.nahf.or.kr/search/itemResult.do?levelId=iswc.d_001_0040_0050&setId=74555&position=0)

**ANNOTATION** | This is a letter (no. 303) from the Chief of prefectural police of the Governor's office of Wakayama Prefecture to the Director of the Police and Security Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Chiefs of Police Offices in the Prefecture, dated on February 7, 1938. The summary of the letter is as follows:

On January 6, 1938, three suspicious men were arrested in the restaurant district in the prefecture. Two of them told Policeman Minakami of the Mori Police Office, Wakayama Prefecture that they had come to Wakayama to recruit prostitutes for the "comfort" stations of the Imperial Military in Shanghai. They said they were requested to procure 3,000 women, 70 of whom already have left from the Nagasaki Port under the escort by the Military Police via a vessel for official use on January 3, 1938. As their statements were suspicious, it was requested that an intelligence officer investigate it. The three suspects were interrogated at the police station because they were suspected of kidnapping due to their recruitment method involving persuasion of the ignorant prostitutes to go to Shanghai, appealing them with such job description as high income, the exclusive nature of their "services" for the military only, and their food being supplied by the military, etc.



According to the formal statement by Kanazawa, Konishi (a high executive of a company in Osaka city), Nakano (a businessman of licensed brothel in Kobe city), and Fujimura (a businessman of licensed brothel in Osaka city) came to the City with a government contractor so-and-so, to meet with Captain Araki and Mitsuru Touyama via Major Tokuhisa's introduction, and decided to send 3,000 prostitutes within this year to Shanghai to boost morale of the Imperial military in Shanghai. Fujimura Konishiwa sent 70 women to China, and at that time, the chief of Kujō police of Osaka Fu and the External Affairs Division of Nagasaki Prefecture provided convenience to him for the process.

Fujimura brought two women Koyanagi (age 26, advance money 470 yen) and Tomie Fujito (age 28, advance money 362 yen) through Hiraoka, who knows the circumstances in Wakayama Prefecture well, after paying the women their advance money and left them at Hiraoka's house.

Upon inquiring to the External Affairs Division of Nagasaki Prefecture and the Kujō police office in Osaka Fu, the three suspects' identities have been verified and it turned out to be true that the Kujō Police Office indeed have issued a certificate to recruit prostitutes, and the suspects were released, although it is not clear whether the "comfort station" for the Imperial army actually exists or not.

The fact that the Governor (Chief of prefectural police) of Wakayama Prefecture was instructed to make a report first before the police begins an investigation, in case these kinds of crimes happen again, indicate that the local authorities learned about and had knowledge of the relationship between the military and the “comfort women” recruiting agents.

### **Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. This document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the “comfort women” system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the “comfort women” victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the “comfort women” system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the “comfort women” system."
2. As with all the documents that illustrate the lack of understanding or regard for women's rights or status, this document, too, is important, to illustrate to students that there were attempts by non-military leaders to stop criminal activities involving trafficking women for the purpose of unauthorized sex work. Have your students describe, in their own words, this author's concerns.
3. The document references two jurisdictions, Wakayama Prefecture and Nagasaki Prefecture. In one prefecture, the suspects' activities were authorized by the police. In the other prefecture, the suspects' activities caused the Chief of police to file a report. Ask your students to consider each activity and the reasons for why they may have been interpreted differently by police from different areas or jurisdictions.
4. As you go deeper into this unit, you'll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers or entertainers by trade. Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. This document is one of the first in which deception is mentioned as a form of recruitment. Have your students write one paragraph reflecting on the potential ways women in those days could have been deceived into going to work at a “comfort station.”
5. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - o origin regions where “comfort women” were recruited from
  - o number of “comfort women” involved
  - o locations of “comfort” stations that were installed during WWII
6. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

#### Sources:

WAM Collection (Police\_005)

Collection of the Asian Women's Fund, Vol. 1, p. 27-33

Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, and Tonomura, Vol. 1, p. 133-135

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, A05032040800

**Document: Compilation of NEFIS Interrogation Reports Nos. 1590~1630 (Not Issued Separately)**

Issuing Party: Netherlands East Indies Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS)

Date: November 1944

Annotation source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/55>

**ANNOTATION** | In December 1941, Japan carried out a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and quickly advanced to occupy the regions of today’s Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. Before being occupied by Japan, those areas were Dutch colonies, called Netherlands East Indies. Immediately after Japan occupied those areas, the Dutch forces established an intelligence agency, *Netherlands East Indies Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS)*, to conduct intelligence operations for those regions. It is noteworthy that Japanese Forces persisted in the former Netherlands East Indies, except for some places such as Borneo Island, that the Allied Forces arrived to take over Japan’s Regional Headquarters only after the Japanese emperor announced Japan’s surrender. For that reason, NEFIS’ “comfort women” related documents do not include interrogation reports of surrendered Japanese soldiers, which are common in similar reports from other regions.

NEFIS collected and published various information regarding “comfort women” and “comfort” stations in those regions in the form of interrogation reports. The information was gathered from residents who were the forced laborers, escaped from the Japanese military bases, or those who were rescued from the sea. These interrogation reports include various information, such as the enemy’s strategy, political and economic condition, propaganda, and psychological warfare. Information regarding “comfort women” and “comfort” stations is mostly found in the ‘General’ section. This is Compilation of NEFIS Interrogation Reports, Nos. 1590-1630, dated May 5, 1945. These reports were based on interrogations of 41 refugees from Halmahera and adjacent islands. It states that shortly after the occupation of Ternate island, Japanese troops established a center to conscript and distribute “comfort women.” It states that two large “comfort” stations “were organized and women of various races, including Menadonese, Javanese, Sumatrans, Chinese and Eurasians, were dispatched to Halmahera, Ambon, and other locations.” It also states, as local young women were forcibly conscripted and only single women were targeted, the marriage rate in the island increased rapidly.



**Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. This document presents an opportunity for you to illustrate the widespread implementation of “comfort” stations by the Japanese Imperial Military during World War II. Ask your students to make a list of all cultural backgrounds that made up the group of “comfort girls.” Then, ask them if they were surprised by anything they learned from this notice -- and if so, what it was, and why.
2. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - o origin regions where “comfort women” were recruited from
  - o number of “comfort women” involved

- locations of “comfort” stations that were installed during World War II
3. Another class activity that can emphasize the breadth of the Japanese Imperial Military's use of "comfort stations," have your students mark on a blank map of the Asia-Pacific Arena three locations where they have learned that “comfort” stations were installed. As an additional challenge, ask your students to label on the map, the distance of these three locations from one another, in kilometers or miles.
  4. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Source:  
NARA, National Archives and Record Administration  
<https://catalog.archives.gov>

**SECTION IV: TRANSPORTATION**

**Document: Concerning women traveling overseas to China for “comfort station” of the Army's Amaya Unit**

File: Concerning the Limitation and Regulation of Japanese Citizens Traveling overseas to China at the Time of the Sino-Japanese Incident; Regulation in Relevant Districts in China (Vol. 1)

Issuing Party: Kichisaburō Nomura, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Annotation Link:

- [http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=iswc.d\\_001\\_0020\\_0070](http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=iswc.d_001_0020_0070)



**ANNOTATION** | This is a telegram from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Japanese Consul General in Hankow, China (no. 323, 1939). It says, the Amaya Unit of Japanese Army in Fanchuan, Hankow, China is recruiting 50 women to open a “comfort station” for the military. Someone has applied to travel to China to bring those women. The relevant town authority in the Kagawa Prefecture has notified the Ministry of Internal Affairs that they had to approve it unofficially, because it was related to a request for arranging (prostitutes). Therefore, we ask for a kind understanding on the part of the Consul General’s office in Hankow, and please give us your opinion immediately because the group will be departing within this year.

**Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. Upon reading this document’s annotation, ask your students to describe, in their own words, the role that the Japanese Imperial Military helped to facilitate the installment of “comfort” stations, and the recruitment of women for those “comfort stations,” during the Second World War.
2. As with other documents in this section, this document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the “comfort women” system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the

Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the "comfort women" victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the "comfort women" system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the "comfort women" system."

3. What items are missing from this inquiry, on the topics regarding the safety, identity, and understanding of the women regarding their travel plans, should the authorities have included in their communications regarding the transport of "comfort women"? What does the omission of these elements say about the attitudes of authorities in those times towards women and women's rights?
4. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - origin regions where "comfort women" were recruited from
  - number of "comfort women" involved
  - locations of "comfort" stations that were installed during World War II
5. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (Foreign Affairs\_007)

Collection of the Asian Women's Fund, Vol. 1, p. 131-132

Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, and Tonomura, Vol. 1, p. 187-188

Sourcebook by Yoshimi, p. 121-122

## Document: Name list of Taitaku-related personnel traveled to Hainan Island

Issuing Party: Taitaku personnel traveling to Hainan Island

Date: June 19, 1939

Annotation by: Hye-in Han, Ph.D. Researcher, Sungkyunkwan University

**ANNOTATION** | This is a list of travelers to Hainan, China, in relation to Taitaku (Taiwan Development Co., Ltd). It seems that this list was created by Taitaku and reported to the Japanese military authority or the Government-General in Taiwan. As Taitaku was in charge of the matters such as immigration to colonies, this document demonstrates that the Taitaku was involved in the “comfort women” mobilization, which further indicates that not only the brokers but also colonial governments were involved in the mobilization of the “comfort women.” The list includes the names of 20 “comfort women” under the title “Comfort Corps,” including their last name, address, date of birth, age, and qualification. It’s an indication that the women were transported in groups in an organized manner.



### Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. This document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the “comfort women” system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the “comfort women” victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the “comfort women” system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the “comfort women” system."
2. Ask your students to think back to the earlier recruitment documents they've reviewed regarding alarms raised by local officials on the recruitment process and have them provide a hypothesis for why a company name such as “Comfort Corps” would be created for women being transported overseas for work at comfort stations.
3. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - origin regions where “comfort women” were recruited from
  - number of “comfort women” involved
  - locations of “comfort” stations that were installed during World War II
4. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (J\_tw\_023)

Sourcebook by Delan Chu (朱德蘭), p. 93-121

**Document: Matters concerning comfort women's travel to occupied territories in the Southern areas**

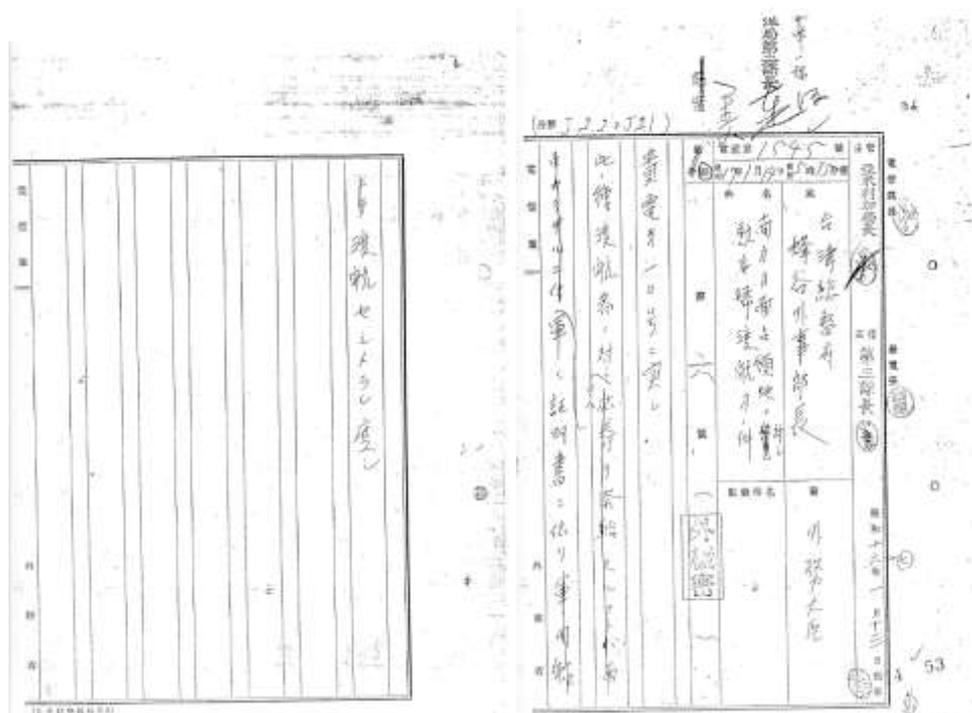
Issuing Party: Shigenori Tōgō, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Date: January 14, 1942

Annotation by: Hye-in Han, Ph.D. Researcher, Sungkyunkwan University

**ANNOTATION** | It is a reply from the Minister of the Foreign Affairs to the Foreign Affairs Department Director in the Government-General in Taiwan (no. 6), responding to the manager's previous inquiry to the Minister (no. 10).

The Minister's instruction to the consulate office in this letter is to allow the overseas travel of the people who are traveling to or to be employed at the military "comfort stations," with the certificates issued by the military, instead of treating them as part of the consulate business. This document indicates that the "comfort women" traveling overseas were treated as military supplies, not as travelers, because they weren't issued passports that would've been otherwise required to board passenger boats heading overseas. Therefore, the fact that phrases such as "... issuing passports is not desirable" and "... travel via military ship" do not appear means that it was already implied in the instruction to let the "comfort women" travel using "certificates issued by the military." They were not traveling on passenger boats; they had no need of passports since they were to travel via military vessel.



**Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. This document provides another piece of evidence showing the direct role of the military in the establishment and continued operation of "comfort stations." Having already reviewed quite a few documents on this topic, have your students begin a list of documents that serve as evidence for the Japanese military's direct role in the establishment, operation, and maintenance of "comfort stations." Have them include the dates and locations (if known) that are tied to the documents on their lists, as this information will later come in handy for an end-of-unit map activity.

2. As with other documents in this section, this document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the "comfort women" system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the "comfort women" victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the "comfort women" system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the "comfort women" system."
3. This document provides insight into the Japanese military's attitudes towards the status of women and girls. Break your students into groups and ask them to come up with one paragraph that evaluates how these attitudes could have led to the broader implementation of the "comfort women" system across Japanese-controlled territories in the Asia-Pacific region during World War II.
4. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (Foreign Affairs\_016)

Collection of the Asian Women's Fund, Vol. 1, p. 165-166

Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, and Tonomura, Vol. 1, p. 388

Sourcebook by Yoshimi, p. 142-143

## SECTION V: SUPERVISION & MANAGEMENT

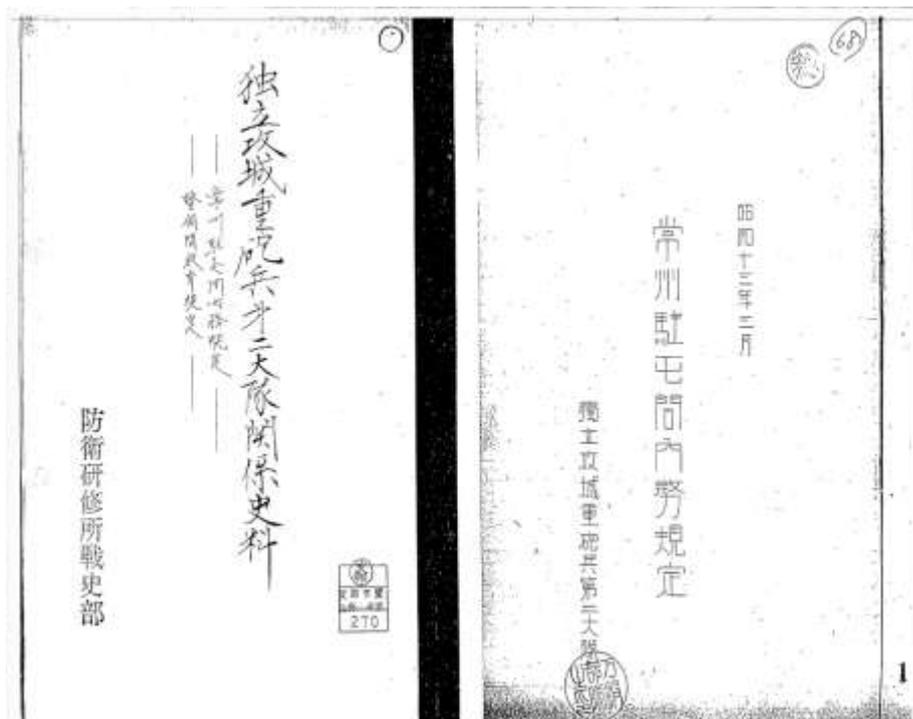
### Document: Interior duty regulations while stationed in Changzhou, 2nd Independent Siege Heavy Artillery Battalion

Date: March 16, 1938

Annotation by: Hye-in Han, Ph.D. Researcher, Sungkyunkwan University

**ANNOTATION** | This is a document containing the regulations on internal duty of the 2nd Independent Siege Heavy Artillery Battalion, dated in 1938. This document was published in the Historical Records Related to the 2nd Independent Siege Heavy Artillery Battalion, along with “Regulations of training security personnel.” This was one of the records that the Japanese government released in 1992, categorized as a document submitted by the Defense Agency. The same document was included in the Compilation of documents related to the “comfort women” for the military, published by the Asian Women’s Fund (Vol. 2, p. 251-258).

This document contains the regulations on the usage of the “comfort” stations for the 2nd Independent Siege Heavy Artillery Battalion as of March 1938. It also requires preventive measures be taken to prevent venereal disease (VD) of the “comfort women,” designating the Military Police Detachment as the supervising organization. This record shows different aspects of the usage and management of “comfort” stations by the battalion.



### Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. This document provides another piece of evidence showing the direct involvement of the military in the establishment and continued operation of “comfort stations.” Having already reviewed quite a few documents on this topic, have your students begin a list of documents that serve as evidence for the Japanese military’s direct role in the establishment, operation, and maintenance of “comfort stations.” Have them include the dates and locations (if known) that are tied to the documents on their lists, as this information will later come in handy for an end-of-unit map activity should you choose to do one.

2. As with other documents in this section, this document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the "comfort women" system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the "comfort women" victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the "comfort women" system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the "comfort women" system."
3. As previously seen, prevention of contracting venereal disease (VD) from local sex workers was one of the main arguments for the installment of "comfort" stations for soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Military. What role did the Military have in ensuring prevention of the spread of VD? Whom are the preventive measures intended to protect?
4. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

**Document: Regulations to use the facilities outside the camp**

Issuing Party: 7th company, 219th infantry regiment guard unit

Date: 1948

Annotation by: Hye-in Han, Ph.D. Researcher, Sungkyunkwan University

**ANNOTATION** | This is a document that provided regulations relating to the establishment, management and the usage of the facilities outside the camp, according to the Army’s guidelines on the expansion of the facilities outside the camp. This indicates that the Commanding Officer of the unit in the occupied area had the authority to manage, operate and supervise the facilities outside the camp, even if they were operated by the local notables or organizations.

The outside facilities that were governed by these regulations include the recreation facilities for the military (restaurants, game rooms) operated by the association for veterans or local organizations, as well as the special “comfort” stations exclusive for the military’s use that employ “comfort women.” According to the regulations, the military unit is to consign the operation of the special “comfort stations,” instead of running them directly. However, the fact that the military unit was supposed to lease the “comfort station” building for free, and to supply the necessary items and food to the “comfort station” from the military field canteens show that it was, in fact, the military that managed the “comfort stations,” even though it made it appear on the paper that the military consigned the “comfort” stations to civilians, in order to avoid liability.



**Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. Create small groups within your class and ask them to discuss why this document is important in proving that the Japanese Imperial Military had a hand in the installation, maintenance, and oversight of "comfort stations." Ask them to list actions taken by the Japanese Imperial Military that would lead to this conclusion.
2. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (Military\_097)

Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, C13010769700

**Document: Active measures to prevent VDs**

Issuing Party: Tetsuo Aso, second lieutenant, medical officer of the Army, the 14th logistics hospital, the 11th corps  
 Date: June 26, 1939

Annotation source: [http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=iswc.d\\_001\\_0010\\_0030](http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=iswc.d_001_0010_0030)

**ANNOTATION** | This is a report by Tetsuo Aso, a medical officer of the 11th corps (the Expeditionary Army in Shanghai) on June 26, 1939. In this report, he talks about his experience of performing venereal disease (VD) testing for women (80 Koreans and 20 Japanese) who had been brought to a newly established “comfort station” called ‘Yang Jiazhai’(楊家宅) in January 1938.

Its main contents are as follows: ‘Suspected VD cases are very rare among the Korean women’ because ‘most of them are new to this work’ and ‘it seems that they were mobilized during the Sino-Japanese War, and replenished without any training. In general, the quality of the prostitute is the younger, the better. Therefore, the age of the prostitutes sent to the battlefield should be lower in the age.

Aso also described the special “comfort station” for the military as ‘sanitary public toilet.’



**Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. There are many opponents of those who are seeking justice for “comfort women,” who state that these women were all voluntary “prostitutes” by trade. Ask your students to consider this opinion and have them write a response to those claiming all “comfort women” were well-paid, willing “prostitutes” while citing this document.
2. In 1939, Tetsuo Aso proposed that a different type of “comfort station” be implemented, with leisure facilities for music, libraries, movies, and sports, but his plan was never implemented. With this background information, ask your students to consider and discuss whether the military could have created other programs or benefits that offered relief from battlefield conditions that didn’t involve “comfort stations.” What could those programs involve?
3. Have your students research the duties of combat medics and military medical officers. What does Tetsuo Aso’s title indicate about the role of, and attitudes toward, “comfort women” in

Japan's Imperial Military? In his observations about venereal disease, with whose health and safety is he concerned?

4. As you go deeper into this unit, you'll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers or entertainers and were not informed about the actual conditions at the "comfort stations." Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. How does this document support or refute the Japanese government's frequent assertion that the "comfort women" were all "prostitutes" or "entertainers" by trade when they were recruited for work at "comfort" stations?
5. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (Military\_007)

Sourcebook by Suzuki, Yamashita, and Tonomura, Vol. 1, p. 159-168

Tetsuo Aso, *From Shanghai to Shanghai* (Ishifura, 1993)

Compilation of battlefield reports by a medical officer, p. 53-86

## Document: Mandalay Garrison Headquarters: "Garrison Comfort Stations Rules and Regulations"

Issuing Party: Mandalay Garrison Headquarters

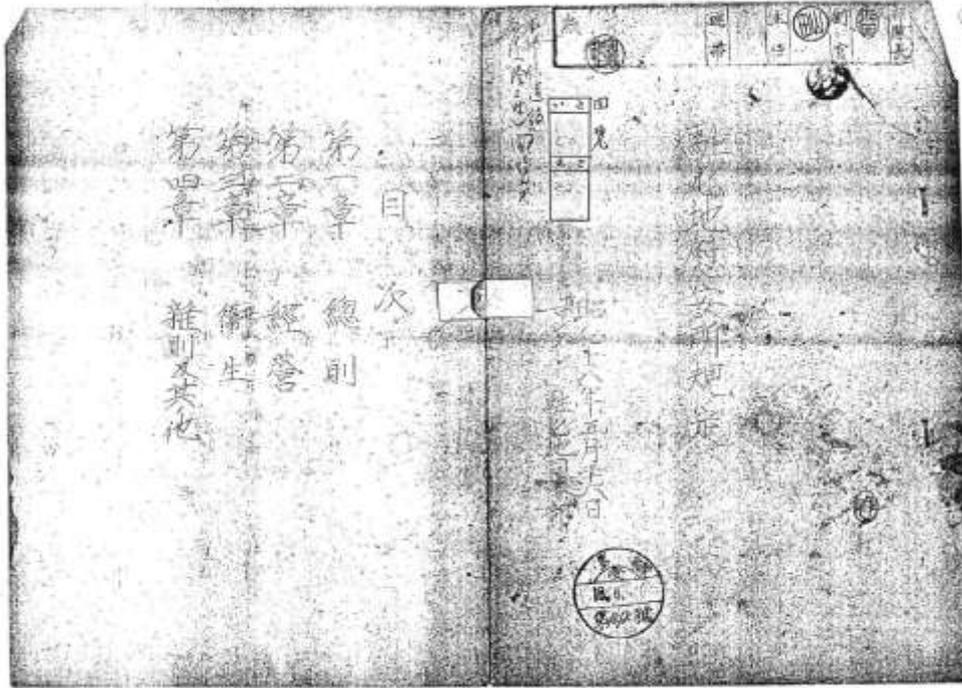
Date: May 26, 1943

Annotation source: [http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=iswc.d\\_001\\_0030\\_0250](http://contents.nahf.or.kr/item/item.do?levelId=iswc.d_001_0030_0250)

**ANNOTATION** | This is one of the rare documents that shows the complete set of rules and regulations for the "comfort station" at the garrison. Its main contents are as follows:

The rules are as follows:

- While the "comfort station" is for Japanese soldiers and civilians attached to the military in principle, Japanese citizens residing in Mandalay are permitted to visit the "comfort station" after 24:30, as an exception, as long as their visits do not disrupt the use of soldiers and civilians attached to the military. Non-military citizens' visits are strictly prohibited until 24:30. The rate for officers is applied to non-military Japanese.
- Noncommissioned officers and soldiers may visit the "comfort station" only on the off days of their unit.
- Only the noncommissioned officers and soldiers who have the pass may visit the "comfort station."
- In the case of an unfair treatment by the "comfort station" operators or "comfort women," it should be immediately reported to the commander. Beating or violence is prohibited.
- Those who do not follow the "comfort station" regulations will be banned immediately.
- Service fees should be paid with military scrips only, as set by the military.
- "Comfort station" operators should put up wooden nameplates somewhere conspicuous and on the door of each room of the "comfort women," to display their nicknames and VD testing result.
- The cost for equipment installation and the medical treatment of patients should be paid by the operators.
- The operators should submit monthly revenue report to the headquarters of the garrison by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the next month, in the format required by the authorities.
- Food supplies and any other necessities should be requested to the garrison headquarters one month before they are exhausted.



### Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. Ask your students to fill in their “Establishment, Oversight, Operation, and Management” table with details from the regulations specified within this document.
2. Have your students review the rules, and write down which they found most interesting or surprising, and why.
3. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Sources:

WAM Collection (Military\_268)

Collection of the Asian Women’s Fund, Vol. 4, p. 281-293

Sourcebook by Yuji Hosaka, Vol. 1, p. 348-353

## **ALLIED FORCES DOCUMENTS**

## DOCUMENTS FROM THE ALLIED FORCES

In this section we review several primary source documents written by members of the Allied Forces.

By examining these documents, students will have the opportunity to analyze the “comfort women” system from another perspective and to learn more about the conditions under which “comfort women” suffered at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Military, as well as the role of the Allied Forces in these women’s eventual escape from captivity and circumstances after the war.

The resources within this section promote critical thinking and reflection about the true nature of the “comfort women” system, and will also expose them to underlying gender biases that were present across the globe at the time.

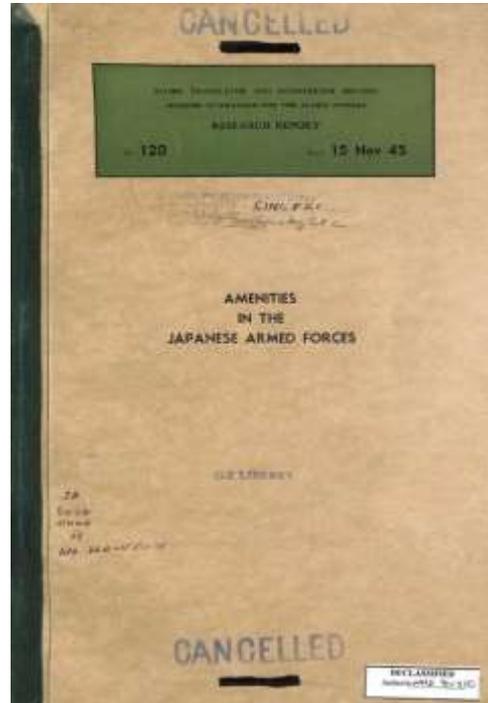
## Document: Summary annotation of the ATIS Research Report No. 120

Author: Byeongju Hwang, a Research Officer, National Institute of Korean History

Original annotation: <http://www.kyeol.kr/node/168>

**ANNOTATION** | Among the materials relevant to the “comfort women” for the Japanese military issue, one of the important types of documents is the record produced by the Allied Forces who were fighting against Japan. Research Report No. 120, written by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) is the most detailed document with massive contents among the Allied Forces’ records (by the U.S. and other countries) that have been discovered so far.

This record was disclosed to the public in 1992 for the first time, soon after Hak-sun Kim first publicly testified of her ordeal in 1991. Angered by the Japanese government’s denial of the “comfort women” system, Grant K. Goodman, a professor from University of Kansas, released this report that he had obtained while he was in the military. Earlier than this, the National Institute of Korean History (NIKH) acquired this record from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) collection in the United States on January 28, 1992, through Dr. Seonju Bang, a Korean American historian.



ATIS Research reports were usually the best materials reported to the top-level leaders of the general headquarters of the Southwestern Pacific Area Allied Forces and the Supreme Commander for the Allied Forces. There are two versions of the Research Report, No. 120. It was first published in February and then republished in November 1945. In the November version, the description relating to the “comfort women” system has been greatly reinforced and expanded, with the addition of the seized Japanese military documents that includes the description of the establishment and operating rules of the “comfort” stations as an appendix. While the February version was to collect information to defeat the enemy during the war, the purpose of the November version seems to have been to prepare for the war crimes tribunal, an essential part of the postwar settlements.

One important difference between the two versions is that the former mostly relied on POWs’ statements, while the latter contained more substantial and specific information such as the “comfort station” regulations in the seized documents and the statements gathered from former “comfort station” owners. In particular, “comfort station” section in the November version has a subsection on regulations (a. Regulations), a compilation of “comfort station” regulations from 5 locations that provides the outline of the Japanese military “comfort station” system. Out of the five locations, regulations from Manila “comfort station” are the most extensive and detailed. This regulation booklet is one of the most representative among the “comfort station” regulations discovered so far, because it contains every regulation in overwhelming detail with respect to the establishment and overall operation of the “comfort stations.” The Manila “comfort station” regulations are composed of 52 provisions. The text in the general regulations (p.9) prescribes that all aspects relating to the “comfort stations,” such as the establishment, suspension, closing of the business and the damage compensation, will be controlled by the Japanese military that it clearly indicates that the “comfort” stations were part of the Japanese military’s subsidiary facilities.

The second item in the report deals with Burma (now Myanmar), based on the statements given by a former business owner, who was captured as POW. This record clearly shows that the entire Japanese authorities, not only the military but also the Japan's Government-General in Korea, were involved in the establishment and the operation of the "comfort stations."

This research report no. 120 is the most extensive and detailed material among the documents relating to the "comfort" stations in English that have been discovered thus far. It also indicates that the Allied Forces were very much interested in this issue, to the extent that they published the report in two separate versions. In addition, it is an important document in the sense that it was written by the Allied Forces, but it also contains the records produced by the Japanese military. In sum, this is a rare document that includes the perspective of the Allied Forces as well as the reality of how the Japanese military managed the "comfort stations."

URL to ATIS Report: <http://bit.ly/cwalliedATIS> (case sensitive)

### **Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. This document provides another piece of evidence showing the direct involvement of the military in the establishment and continued operation of "comfort stations." Having already reviewed quite a few documents on this topic, have your students begin a list of documents that serve as evidence for the Japanese military's direct role in the establishment, operation, and maintenance of "comfort stations." Have them include the dates and locations (if known) that are tied to the documents on their lists, as this information will later come in handy for an end-of-unit map activity.
2. This document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the "comfort women" system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the "comfort women" victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the "comfort women" system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the "comfort women" system."
3. In their own words, have your students summarize how this document arrived in the public eye. Then, have them consider why it took more than 30 years for these war atrocities to come to light.
4. This document also provides your students with the opportunity to tie history to the present day. Have them write a prompt that draws similarities between another recent movement in which crimes against humanity have taken years to come to light and be brought to justice. Then, have them provide two potential solutions that would allow victims to feel empowered to come forward sooner about the injustices they've experienced. Do they think our society in the United States fosters a supportive community that empowers victims to come forward? Have them justify their answer with examples showing that the United States is, or isn't, a supportive/empowering community for victims of injustices.
5. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Source:

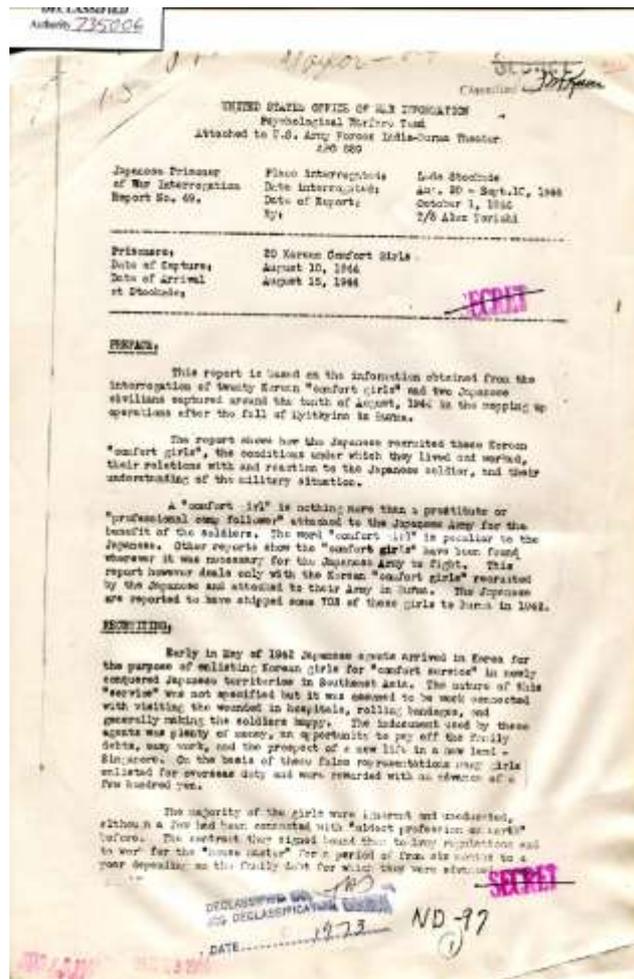
U.S. NARA. Record Group 165, Entry (NM84) 79, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs. Military Intelligence Division. Publications Files, 1940-1945, Box 340  
[http://archive.history.go.kr/id/AUS043\\_57\\_00C0411](http://archive.history.go.kr/id/AUS043_57_00C0411)

**Document: Summary annotation of the Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report No. 49: Korean Comfort Women**

Author: Byeongju Hwang, a Research Officer, National Institute of Korean History

Original annotation: <http://www.kyeol.kr/node/196>

**ANNOTATION** | This is an interrogation report produced by the Psychological warfare division, Office of War Information (OWI). It is one of the two important documents produced by the Allied Forces regarding the “comfort women” issue, along with the ATIS no. 120 report. This report summarizes the interrogations of 20 former Korean “comfort women” who were captured as POWs in Myitkyina area, northern Burma (today’s Myanmar). It is the only case where as many as 20 “comfort women” were captured at once and recorded in an interrogation report.



The report no. 49 is consists of the following: Preface, Recruiting, Personality, Living and working conditions, Price system, Schedules, Pay and living conditions, reactions toward the Japanese troops, reactions of Japanese soldiers, Reactions to Japanese soldiers, Soldiers’ reactions, Reaction to the military situation, Retreat and capture, Propaganda, and Requests. Attached as appendix includes the list of Korean names of the 20 “comfort women,” and names of the owner couple. The 7 pages in total include the body text of 6 pages and 1 page appendix.

This document provides much information regarding “comfort station” management and living conditions of “comfort women.” It introduces specific information such as business hours, rate system, and income of “comfort women.” However, this document shows a very subjective judgment about life and standing of the “comfort women.” For example, the author writes that the “comfort women” were not pretty from the Japanese and Caucasian standards, and the women were ‘childish and selfish’

from his very personal and subjective view. Also he writes that “comfort women” lived a relatively abundant life, even ‘near-luxury’ compared to other areas of Burma. These descriptions were very attractive to the forces and the individuals hostile to the “comfort women” issue, and thus have been frequently utilized by many history deniers and Japan’s extreme right-wing forces to attack the basis of the “comfort women” issue.

In order to fully understand the report no. 49, an analysis of the interrogator and the context is necessary because this is not a transcript of the statements and testimonies of the 20 Korean “comfort women,” but a separately produced report based on the author’s interpretation who put together the interrogation reports of the 20 women. The author of this report is Alex Yorichi. Yorichi was one of the second generation Japanese immigrants who were called Nisei. While their families and the fellow Japanese-Americans were interned in the US as enemy subjects, many Nisei joined the US military, believing that their sacrifice would prove their citizenship and loyalty to America.

Another important point to remember in order to understand the report no. 49 is that it probably does not reflect the real voices of the Korean “comfort women” due to the language barrier. Yorichi did not speak Korean at all, and it is highly probable that the Japanese language skills of the “comfort women” were less than fluent. Consequently, it is very likely that the interrogations of those women were conducted through the former “comfort station” owners, whom those women called “mama-san” and “papa-san” (mama and papa). The owners were a husband and wife couple, Kitamura, and it seems that they played the role of an interpreter and a spokesperson for the “comfort women.” If that was the case, it is highly possible that what was relayed during the interrogation would’ve been favorable for the owners.

The prejudice and the problems of this report becomes clearer when it is compared to the SEATIC bulletin no. 2. The case of 20 Korean “comfort women” at Myitkyina was recorded in various records, as it was an important case that showed the reality of the “comfort station” system for the Japanese military. Unlike the report produced by Yorichi, SEATIC bulletin no. 2 is mostly a dry description of facts.

### **Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

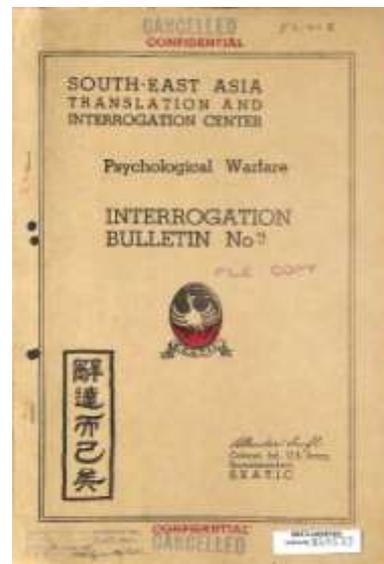
1. This is a complicated source, since it combines interesting first-hand details with a subtle patriarchal and judgmental tone that was very common at the time. It might be beneficial to explain to students that the people did not talk or write about sexual matters freely then, and the soldiers who wrote this report were likely embarrassed and half-joking, half-condemning, as they interrogated these women and wrote this report. They might have had some sympathy or pity for the women, but they did not have any respect. It is also important to keep in mind that this frequently cited report is used by people who wish to minimize the criminal and inhumane aspects of the “comfort women” system, despite the fact that it was an account from just one of the many Japanese “comfort” stations that existed around the Pacific. Thus, a valuable exercise would be to challenge your students to evaluate the varying points of views reflected in this report: the 1) “comfort girls,” 2) the U.S. military officers, and 3) the “house masters.” Ask your students to consider what (if any) underlying biases and motivations each group or narrator might have had, that drove them to say or do the things they did.
2. As homework, have your students pay attention to the U.S. military officers’ perception of the “comfort girls” on page 2 (see: PERSONALITY), and have them consider how the officers’ observations are similar or different from how today’s authorities and/or the media judge and portray rape victims.
3. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading. You may also ask your students to identify things that they found were contradictory within the report.

**Document: Summary annotation of the South East Asia Translation and Interrogation Center (SEATIC) Interrogation Bulletin no. 2, a Secondary report based on the original reports**

Author: Byeongju Hwang, a Research Officer, National Institute of Korean History

Original annotation: <http://www.kyeol.kr/node/195>

**ANNOTATION** | This 13-page report, dated November 30, 1944, has 9 sections: Effect of Allied Propaganda upon the Japanese Army in Burma; A POW's essay; Detailed Criticism upon one issue of the "Gunjin Shimbum" by a POW; The notorious Colonel Maruyama; Disregard of troops' welfare by Japanese officers; Difficulties due to reinforcements from different Depots; Average age of reinforcements to Burma; A pacifist in the Japanese Army; and, A Japanese Army Brothel in the forward area. Two sections – section 4 on the notorious Colonel Maruyama and section 9 on "comfort" stations in the frontline – are relevant to the "comfort women" issue.



The producer of this document is the South East Asia Translation and Interrogation Center(SEATIC), a similar organization to ATIS (Allied Translator and Interpreter Section). The Allied Forces established several organizations with different names like these for psychological warfare and POW interrogations in various areas. This SEATIC Interrogation bulletin no. 2 is the most well-known document regarding "comfort women" issue among the SEATIC records.

The author is in the psychological warfare division of SEATIC. This report is a secondary report based on various documents such as interrogation reports and other information such as the OWI's Interrogation report no. 49, whereas the OWI's report no. 49 is a document based on direct interrogations of 20 Korean "comfort women."

Colonel Maruyama was the Japanese army's captain of defense in Myitkyina, thus the "comfort station" in Myitkyina was under his control. Maruyama was viewed negatively, both by the Japanese soldiers and the "comfort women." According to the reports, he was a regular at the "comfort station" and was well-known as a drunkard. Rumor had it that he took with him and spent hours in the shelter with his favorite "comfort woman" even when he had to evacuate. Maruyama appears to have made a negative impact on the operation of the "comfort" stations by cutting the fees charged at the "comfort" stations and decreasing the proportion allotted to the "comfort women" from 60% to 50%.

Section 9, A Japanese Army Brothel in the forward area, contains the essential information related to the "comfort women" issue." This section is entirely based on two sources: the interrogation of a former "comfort station" owner Eibun Kitamura, labeled here as M.739, and the OWI interrogation report no. 49. The latter has been known widely now, but the former report, unfortunately, has not been discovered yet.

The overall description of the "comfort station" in this document is not too different from the OWI report no. 49. The SEATIC bulletin no. 2 is 4 pages long, and the OWI report no. 49 is 6 pages long. The SEATIC bulletin no. 2 contains numbers and the nationalities of the "comfort women." It says, 22 Koreans at Kyoei "comfort station"; 20 Koreans at Kinsui "comfort station"; and 21 Chinese at Momoya "comfort station." This information is not found in the report no. 49.

Another difference between the two reports is the description of the "comfort women's" return home. The no. 49 report says that some "comfort women" were able to return home at the military's order in late 1943. However, the bulletin no. 2 says that even though the "comfort women" were supposedly

able to return home once they paid up the debt, however, no one from the “comfort station” operated by M.739 actually returned home due to the war situation.

The most notable aspect in this report, when compared to the no. 49 report, is that it does not contain any subjective judgment based on prejudice that was shown in the no. 49 report. It writes only the factual information drawn from the statements by Kitamura and the no. 49 report in a dry tone. This document is meaningful in the sense that it shows the limits and the problems of the no. 49 report, in addition to the fact that it is an important record with valuable information in itself.

### **Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. This document provides another piece of evidence showing the direct involvement of the military in the establishment and continued operation of “comfort stations.” Having already reviewed quite a few documents on this topic, have your students begin a list of documents that serve as evidence for the Japanese military’s direct role in the establishment, operation, and maintenance of “comfort stations.” Have them include the dates and locations (if known) that are tied to the documents on their lists, as this information will later come in handy for an end-of-unit map activity should you choose to do one.
2. This document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the “comfort women” system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the “comfort women” victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the “comfort women” system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the Japanese government would deny an official role in the “comfort women” system."
3. The document references the behavior and reputation of a senior military officer. Have your students compare this document with the "Garrison Comfort Stations Rules and Regulations" in Mandalay. What do these documents indicate about military rank, discipline, and recurring issues at the “comfort” stations?
4. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

**Document: SA Korean "comfort women" in Burma**

Author: Allied Forces – United States of America

Date: August 14, 1944

Annotation source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/134>



Image depicts the captured "Comfort Girls" of the Japanese garrison at Myitkina, Burma.

**ANNOTATION** | This is a scene depicting a Chinese-American intelligence officer Captain Won-Loy Chan and other officers with "comfort women" who were captured and became prisoners of war. The officers were in charge of the POWs in Myitkyina, Burma. This was photographed on August 14, 1944 by Shearer, a member of the Army's 164th Telecommunications Photographic Corps. Japan, which started war with the Allied Forces in 1941 with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, began to take over Burma (now Myanmar), as well as Southeast Asia colonies of the Allied Forces such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. In May 1942, Myitkyina, a major city in northern Burma, was captured, putting the entire Burma under Japanese occupation.

Burma was a strategically important area for both the Japanese and Allied Forces, as the only supply route (Rangoon, Burma; Kunming, China) was located here through which the Allied Forces could support China's Chiang Kai-shek. After Japan occupied the area in 1942, more than 100,000 Japanese troops entered Burma, and the "comfort" stations were established in almost all major cities. Just to count the number of the "comfort" stations that appear in the diary of a former "comfort station" manager, the total comes to 27, including 8 in Rangoon, 1 in Moulmain, 5 in Pegu, 6 in Fromm, and 3 in Aqap in Burma. It is estimated that many of the "comfort women" there were Koreans. When the Allied Forces began to attack Burma in 1944, not only the Japanese soldiers but also Korean "comfort women" were captured as prisoners.

The women in the photo are Korean "comfort women" captured by the Allied Forces in Myitkyina, Burma in August 1944. Captain Chan wanted to obtain enemy military information from these women, but most of them did not speak Japanese fluently, so he did not get much help from them. He detailed several episodes of the interrogation process in his memoir, *Burma: Untold Story* (1986). The photo

was taken at a temporary camp installed at the airfield west of Myitkyina where these women stayed. The U.S soldiers on the left in the photo are, from the front, Lieutenant Won-Roy-Chan, Sergeant Robert Honda, Sergeant Grant Hirabayashi and Sergeant Howard Hurumoto. The 20 women sitting on the right are Korean “comfort women,” and there are other pictures of them. They were captured on August 10, stayed here for five days, and sent to Redo on August 15.

The results of the interrogation of these women were written in two reports. One is 〈Japanese Prisoners Interrogation Report No. 49〉 , produced by the U.S Office of War and Information Services (OWI), and the other is 〈Psychological Warfare Bulletin No. 2〉 by the British Southeast Asian Translation Interrogation Center (SEATIC). According to the two reports, these women were brought to Burma in 1942 without knowing that they were going to a “comfort station” by employment fraud or coercion by the contractors who were commissioned by the Japanese military, and stayed at the Kyoyai “comfort station” (also known as the Maruyama comfort station) among the three “comfort” stations in Myitkyina.

### **Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. As you go deeper into this unit, you’ll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers or entertainers and were not informed about the actual conditions at the “comfort stations.” Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. This document is one of the key pieces of evidence in which deception is mentioned as a form of recruitment. Have your students write one paragraph reflecting on the potential ways women in those days could have been deceived into going to work at a “comfort station.”
2. As you go deeper into this unit, you’ll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers or entertainers and were not informed about the actual conditions of the “comfort stations.” Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - origin regions where “comfort women” were recruited from
  - number of “comfort women” involved
  - locations of “comfort” stations that were installed during WWII
3. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Source:

NARA, National Archives and Record Administration <https://catalog.archives.gov>

**Document: Chinese “comfort woman” found in Rangoon, Burma**

Author: Allied Forces - Britain

Date: August, 1945

Annotation source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/98>

**ANNOTATION** | Japan, which started war with the Allied Forces in 1941 with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, began to take over Burma (now Myanmar), as well as Southeast Asia colonies of the Allied Forces such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. In May 1942, Myitkyina, a major city in northern Burma, was captured, putting the entire Burma under Japanese occupation. Burma was a strategically important area for both the Japanese and Allied Forces, as the only supply route (Rangoon, Burma; Kunming, China) was located here through which the Allied Forces could support China’s Chiang Kai-shek.



After Japan occupied the area in 1942, more than 100,000 Japanese troops entered Burma, and the “comfort” stations were established in almost all major cities. Just to count the number of the “comfort” stations that appear in the diary of a former “comfort station” manager, the total comes to 27, including 8 in Rangoon, 1 in Moulmain, 5 in Pegu, 6 in Fromm, and 3 in Aqap in Burma. The women in the “comfort” stations in Burma included many Koreans, as well as Chinese and Japanese. “Comfort women” were in the “comfort stations.” Meanwhile, the Allied Forces began the offensive in Burma in 1944, and the war continued until July 1945 when Japan was defeated.

British and Indian forces re-occupied Burma by crossing the Sittang River in central Burma into Thailand (Siam, Thailand’s former name). In the process, many Japanese soldiers were captured near Sittang River, along with a small group of Chinese women who had been forced to work as “comfort women.”

This is a photograph of Chan Lai Cham, one of the Chinese women captured by the British forces, providing information to a British officer in Rangoon, Burma. The photo was taken by the British forces but it was shared with the Office of War Information (OWI), a U.S. intelligence agency, that this photo is also in the possession of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

**Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. As with other documents in this section this document provides an opportunity for you to discuss with your students the Japanese government's history of refusal to admit direct responsibility for the operation and command of the “comfort women” system. As homework, have them write a response to the prompt: "Would this document support or contradict the Japanese government's claims that it bears no legal or official responsibility for the “comfort women” victims? If you don't think it's sufficient evidence of the government's establishment, operation, or control of the “comfort women” system, what other types of evidence would you require in your investigation? Consider and analyze the potential reasons for why the government would deny an official role in the “comfort women” system."

2. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - origin regions where “comfort women” were recruited from
  - number of “comfort women” involved
  - locations of “comfort” stations that were installed during World War II
3. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

Source:

NARA, National Archives and Record Administration <https://catalog.archives.gov>

## Document: Korean “comfort women” in Okinawa Temporary Camp

Author: USS Ponaganset

Annotation source: Seoul Metropolitan Archive <https://archives.seoul.go.kr/item/119>

**ANNOTATION** | Okinawa Prefecture, commonly referred to as Okinawa, is located in the southwestern tip of Japan and is made up of over 100 islands, including the main island of Okinawa, which is home to the largest population. It was in March 1944 when major Japanese forces began to be stationed in Okinawa. In February 1944, when U.S. troops attacked Truk Island in Micronesia and Guam, Saipan, and Tinian in the Mariana Islands, feeling pressured, the Japanese military created the Okinawan Defensive Forces, the 32nd Army, to defend the southwestern side of the Japanese mainland. Accordingly, in 1944, at the end of the war, more than 100,000 Japanese troops gathered in Okinawa from Manchuria and mainland Japan. Since soldiers who had already used “comfort” stations in China moved to Okinawa, the Japanese military decided that they needed “comfort women” for the soldiers, and started to mobilize “comfort women” by creating “comfort” stations in various locations in Okinawa. As a result, more than 100 “comfort” stations were built in Okinawa from 1944 until the end of the war in 1945.

The Kerama Islands (Tokashiki Island, Zamami Island, Aka Island) on the west side of the main island of Okinawa were no exception. According to Bong-gi Bae, who served as a “comfort woman” in the Japanese military in Tokashiki Island, arrived in Okinawa on a Japanese military transport ship from Kagoshima, Japan with 51 women in November 1944. Among them, seven women were assigned to Tokashiki Island, Zamami Island, and Akashi Island, respectively. The next year on March 22, 1945, the U.S. forces began attacking Okinawa, starting with the Kerama Islands, and made their way into the main island of Okinawa on April 1, 1945 from Yomitan, the central Okinawa, and occupied the northern and southern regions.

It is unknown how many more “comfort women” were in Kerama Islands besides the women who were deployed in November 1944, and how many of them would have survived the Battle of Okinawa. However, considering the result of the survey conducted by the Okinawa Women's History Research Group, which reported in 1992 that there were 121 “comfort” stations all over Okinawa, based on the testimonies of the residents who lived in the same community with the “comfort women,” we may surmise that there were a large number of Korean “comfort women” in Okinawa.



This photograph shows 6 Korean “comfort women” who were detained in a temporary camp in Zamami Island, Okinawa. It was taken on May 18, 1945 by a U.S. Navy soldier, whose identity is unknown. There is a description of the photo that says, “Natives of Zamami Island in the Ryukyu

Islands,” but it is likely that the women in this photo are 6 Korean “comfort women” who were in the temporary camp in Zamami Island because some experts believe that they are the same women in the photo taken by Captain Sokerson of the U.S. Navy on April 21, 1945. Captain Sokerson referred to them as “Geisha Girls” and left a description in the picture that “Jap Koreans were found on Zamami Island in the Ryukyu Islands, and the Japanese soldiers brought them to the island.” This shows that the women in the photo were Korean “comfort women” who were mobilized by the Japanese military to Okinawa. However, no further information is available about these women, whether they returned safely to Korea, or what kind of life they lived afterward.

### **Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. Many “comfort women” were as young as 12 years of age when they were put to work in “comfort” stations by recruiters working for the Japanese Imperial Military. As you go deeper into this unit, you’ll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers or entertainers and were not informed about the actual conditions at the “comfort stations.” Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - origin regions where “comfort women” were recruited from
  - number of “comfort women” involved
  - locations of “comfort” stations that were installed during World War II
2. Have your students research and identify the number of military bases currently on Okinawa and the countries to which they belong. Ask them to consider, and write a response or discuss in a group, the information in juxtaposition with the overall size of Okinawa (463 square miles) and the number of “comfort” stations:
  - What does the information convey about the significance of Okinawa during World War II?
  - What does the information convey about the significance of “comfort women” and how they were viewed by the Japanese Imperial Military?
  - Have any of those attitudes or assumptions carried over to military forces from other countries or other military conflicts?
3. Have your students write a paragraph or discuss the phrases that Captain Sokerson uses to refer the women.
4. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this reading.

## TESTIMONIES

## TESTIMONIES

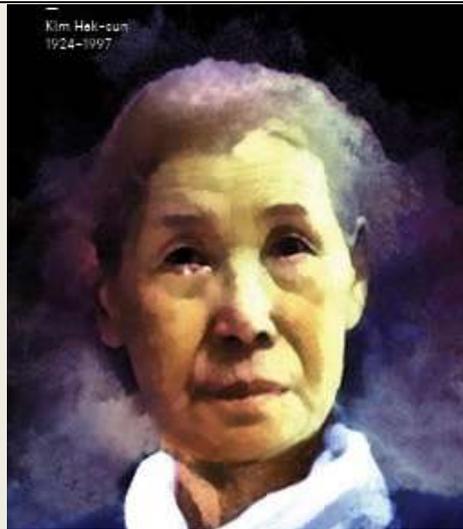
In this section we review first-hand accounts by former “comfort women.”

Students will get to read, watch, and listen about the harrowing experiences of victims of the Japanese Imperial Military’s “comfort women” system, and learn about their struggle to endure and transcend the inhumane and unimaginable conditions that they experienced while in captivity. Students will also reflect on the political, social, and economic context and circumstances that facilitated their victimization under the “comfort women” system and post-war lives.

**Testimony: Hak-sun Kim, Korea (News Tapa Video)**

Author: Interviewed and produced by News Tapa

Date: July 1997



Hak-sun Kim, the first “comfort woman” to publicly speak about her captivity under the Japanese Imperial Military during World War II

Excerpt from Video:

“I’m afraid that there will be no one to tell the truth, after I die... if we all die... Now I’m pretty old, but I am still extremely fearful of the Japanese... killing people. That was the most terrifying thing to me. Always. Since I saw it too many times... when I had been taken away, I saw them killing too many people...”

“I dreaded that they might kill me... When I was young, I couldn’t speak out even if I wanted to because I was too scared.”

“I can’t believe I couldn’t talk about it all these years. Now that I’ve talked, the Japanese might kill me, but I was determined to speak out before I died. I began speaking out because there wasn’t anyone else who was going to.”

“I couldn’t come out and speak out when I was young, because of the shame. Shame was the first thing in my mind then. Now I’m older and it’s easier for me... since I’ve overcome those thoughts. But when I was younger, I was ashamed... Wouldn’t you feel the same? The fact that I was taken to the Japanese military and used as a “comfort woman” instead of leading a life as others do... Is it acceptable? No, never!

It’s ridiculous. Then the Korean people should’ve understood it and the high officials should’ve have done something about it. But instead, people disdained us, ignored us, treating the victims to be disgraceful and worthless. That’s why I kept weeping day and night behind the closed doors. I wept in secret; I had no one to talk to. That’s how we lived... Because we survived, now the whole world (will know) ...”

“Now my mind is simple. All I want is revenge. To hear the words of repentance from those Japanese... that they are truly sorry for what they did to us. That is my only wish. I have nothing else.”

Narrator: Japan's proposed 1 billion yen from the Japanese government budget is not government reparations but an assistance or charitable fund. Japan has proposed in the past financial assistance with privately raised funds.

"They are trying to cover it up with a small amount of payment to each victim. What we're demanding from the Japanese government is their apology and reparations. Their response to our demand is that, they cannot apologize, and pay the proper reparations as well. So what they're saying now is that, instead, some Japanese women's organizations will raise money and give us 2 million yen or so each, as a 'consolation money.' That's what Keiko Usuki (from the Asian Women's Fund) is saying, but we can never... never accept such an offer. No way! Consolation money? Why the hell would we accept 'consolation money'? 'Consolation money' for what? No, we can never accept such a thing. You should properly make an official apology and reparations."

### Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. Have your students read the full transcript of the documentary news piece produced by News Tapa, or watch the video if accessible. Then, as homework, ask them to reflect on the late Hak-sun Kim's last wish. What was it? Do they think it is feasible to grant this wish within the next decade? How?
2. In her testimony, Hak-sun Kim criticizes her own government and her country. Have your students write one to two paragraphs reflecting on other forms of justice and reconciliation that citizens or civil society can, or should, offer when governmental responses are inadequate.
3. Many "comfort women" were as young as 12 years of age when they were put to work in "comfort" stations by recruiters working for the Japanese Imperial Military. As you go deeper into this unit, you'll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers and were not informed about the actual conditions at the "comfort stations." Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following:
  - a. origin regions where "comfort women" were recruited from
  - b. number of "comfort women" involved
  - c. locations of "comfort" stations that were installed during World War II
4. Have your students write a reflection about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction from this testimony.

## Testimony: Seo-woon Chung: *Herstory* animation, Korea

Author: Directed by Jun-ki Kim

Date: July 1997

Source link: <https://youtu.be/CVY0SI2kyR4>



Seo-woon Chung, the “comfort woman” whose story was depicted in the *Herstory* Animation by Jun-ki Kim

Excerpt from Video:

“I had a comfortable life. I was born into a wealthy family. My father was so against what the Japanese government was doing in Korea.

One day, the Japanese police came to our house and hassled my father for refusing to contribute our brassware. “Over my dead body! When I’m dead, you can. I will not!” he told them.

My father took all the brassware and buried them in the rice field with the servants. Tens of rows. At night. They dug rows and rows and buried them in the field. But, someone went and told the police about it. And that’s how my father got taken away.

I went to the prison to see my father one day with the town foreman. My father yelled and scolded me. He told me, “This is no place for you to visit! Do not come back here! If you come back again, I will not see you. You must not come back here.” He was very upset.

A few days later, the town foreman came to our house and told me “If you go to work at the Thousand-Person-Stitches factory in Japan, for just two to two and a half years, in exchange, your father will be released from prison the same day you leave for Japan.” I believed him. I even volunteered to go.

I was taken to Semarang Indonesia through Jakarta. I ended up in Semarang with 13 other girls. I realized then that I was not in Japan but in another country farther away.

That night, a Japanese officer came in first. He was very drunk. So scared, I was shaking in fear. Was just 15, I was. I was the youngest of the 13 girls there. I was raped. That’s how it began.

I resisted, kicking and pushing. Then, the soldiers injected me with opium. So, I became addicted.

I can't even count how many soldiers came in, especially on the weekends, lining up, still in their uniform. There's just so much to tell.

Two of the girls died. The soldiers buried those girls like they buried dogs. No funerals.

They were giving out Malaria pills. I managed to gather 40 of them. Two, three pills at a time from a medical officer because he was Korean. I swallowed all 40 pills at once. But, even dying, I couldn't even kill myself. I woke up 3 days later. People told me that I was bleeding everywhere through my mouth and ears.

Once a week, we were taken outside for a medical check-up. There was a field hospital on the compound but there was a regular and bigger hospital outside. There I would see the local Indonesians. I liked that very much. They looked different, darker skinned, but still I was so glad to see them. Man after man. Seeing others just made me so happy, made me want to cry.

We did not know Japan had surrendered. 3 of the 13 girls were dead by then 10 were left to be taken to the bomb shelter. They only took a few girls. The shelter wasn't big enough. I learned later that they were taken there to be slaughtered. Out of the ten, four or maybe three that were taken to the bomb shelter first were killed.

There was a local Indonesian who comes to pick up the officers' laundry. a soldier, Korean, who was drafted by the Japanese military wrote a letter to the allied forces. He rushed the laundry man to deliver the letter to the allied forces. That's how the allied forces found where we were. If they had come any later we would have all been killed in that bomb shelter.

I became an orphan. My father had passed away. My mother had passed away. all the servants were gone. I went home and there I quit opium. It took me about 4~5 months. All by myself, there. Alone at home.

I kept telling myself that I just have to stay alive they may have killed my body, but not my spirit. That is how I survived."

### **Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. This autobiography provides an opportunity for your students to conduct historical research on their own, and to review the Kono Statement as a class. The Kono Statement, issued in 1993, was the Japanese government's first official response in which they accepted partial involvement and responsibility of the military. However, the subsequent Japanese administration, led by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has repeatedly denied and attempted to revise this statement, mostly blaming the victims and the private recruiters, such that the statement no longer carries authority and has led to victims' continued demands for a comprehensive official apology ratified by Japan's Parliament. As homework for the week, have your students find the original Kono Statement and have them answer the question, "Does the story of Seo-woon Chung as narrated in the Herstory video align with the Japanese government's latest assertion that all the blame was on the recruiters and "comfort station" managers? Provide your explanation of why or why it does not align with this assertion."
2. As homework, have your students write a response to the prompt: "Do you think the testimony conflicts with or is consistent with the documents of Japanese Imperial Military or the Allied Forces? What information about the "comfort" stations and the Japanese Imperial Military does the testimony provide that cannot be gleaned from the governmental records?"

What other research, if any, would you conduct to verify the information provided in the testimony?"

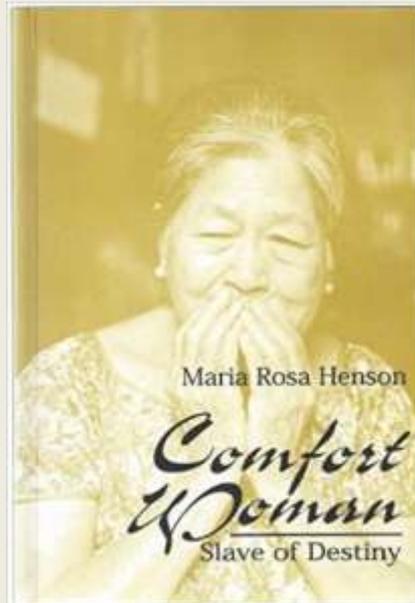
3. What cultural values can you infer by the decision of Chung Seo-woon's father to refuse to give the brassware to the Japanese soldiers. What were the circumstances that led Chung Seo-woon to leave her family and when did she realize that she had been deceived by the Japanese?
4. Many "comfort women" died while held as prisoners in the camps. Ask your students to provide examples of tactics the Japanese used to control them, and what the "comfort women" had in common with victims of modern slavery or trafficking.
5. Locate the testimony of a survivor from a modern occurrence of mass sexual violence in armed conflict (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Iraq). After reviewing the testimony to ensure it is appropriate for your students, ask them to consider the testimony alongside that of Seo-woon Chung and write a reflection on the emotions and experiences that survivors share, and why it is important for survivors to learn about and communicate with other survivors.

## Testimony: Maria Rosa Henson, The Philippines

Author: Summary of her autobiography

Date: 1996

**BACKGROUND** | Maria Rosa's autobiography tells of a horrific sequence of events that led to her captivity under Japanese imperial soldiers stationed in her home country, The Philippines, and follows her journey during captivity at a comfort station as a young girl, and her eventual release to freedom. The following is an excerpt from her autobiography, *Comfort Woman: Slave of Destiny*.



Maria Rosa Henson, *Comfort Woman: Slave of Destiny*

Excerpt from Autobiography:

"For one week, I went every day with my uncles to gather wood. I was happy to have fuel for cooking even though I got ant bites and bruises from walking past thorny trees and grass.

One day in February 1942, at about eleven a.m., as I was preparing to bundle some dry branches that I had gathered, I was surprised by two Japanese soldiers who grabbed each of my arms. I cried out, but they refused to let me go. Then I heard someone shout, "Baka!" I thought the word meant cow, because baka is the Tagalog word for cow. It was only later that I found out it was a Japanese swearword that meant stupid. The shout came from another Japanese soldier who approached us and slapped the two soldiers who held me. He looked like an officer because he carried a long, curved saber. I thought he would save me, but he grabbed me from the soldiers and raped me.

When he was done, he passed me on to the two soldiers, who took turns raping me. Then they just walked away...

[After two weeks pass] I again joined my neighbors and my uncles in gathering wood. "I will not get out of the sight of my uncles and neighbors," I told myself. But as we reached the place where we usually went, we saw Japanese soldiers. One of them was the same officer who had raped me. He grabbed me in full view of my uncles and neighbors. They could not do anything because they could get killed.... After raping me, the officer just walked away.

... One morning in April 1943, I was asked by my Huk comrades to collect some sacks of dried corn from the nearby town of Magalang.

I went with two others in a cart pulled by a carabao... As we approached the Japanese checkpoint near the town hospital of Angeles, the man beside me whispered, "Be careful, there are some guns and ammunition hidden in the sacks of corn." ... I Became very nervous, fearing that if the Japanese soldiers discovered the weapons, we would all get killed....

Finally, he allowed us to pass, but after we had gone thirty meters from the checkpoint he whistled and signaled us to return... [he] signaled that I was the only one to come back... I thought that maybe they would rape me. The guard led me at gunpoint to the second floor of the building that used to be the town hospital. It had been turned into the Japanese headquarters and garrison. I saw six other women there. I was given a small room... Japanese soldiers kept watch in the hall outside.... The following day was hell. Without warning, a Japanese soldier entered my room and pointed his bayonet at my chest... And then he raped me. When he was done, other soldiers came into my room... Twelve soldiers raped me in quick succession, after which I was given half an hour to rest. Then twelve more soldiers followed..."

### Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. Many "comfort women" were as young as 12 years of age when they were put to work in "comfort" stations by recruiters working for the Japanese Imperial Military, and Lola Rosa was nearly as young. As you go deeper into this unit, you'll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers and were not informed about the actual conditions at the "comfort stations." Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - a. origin regions where "comfort women" were recruited from
  - b. number of "comfort women" involved
  - c. locations of "comfort" stations that were installed during World War II
2. "Comfort" stations were installed in many different settings during World War II, from field canteens, restaurants, homes, schools, and in this case, a former hospital. Discuss this with your students briefly, and have them start a list called Places where "Comfort" Stations Were Set-Up. Throughout their study of the Japanese Imperial Military's "comfort women" system, they will encounter many different settings mentioned.
3. If your students read the book, have them write a response to the Japanese government's statements that the women who were working as "comfort women" were "prostitutes" or entertainers by trade before they were recruited for work at "comfort stations." Lola Rosa's book is accessible via some local libraries, Kindle, Amazon, and Barnes & Noble.
4. This autobiography provides an opportunity for your students to conduct historical research on their own, and to review the Kono Statement as a class. The Kono Statement, issued in 1993, was the Japanese government's first official response in which they accepted partial involvement and responsibility of the military. However, the subsequent Japanese administration, led by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has repeatedly denied and attempted to revise the statement, mostly blaming the victims and the private recruiters, such that the statement no longer carries authority and has led to victims' continued demands for a comprehensive official apology ratified by Japan's Parliament. As homework for the week, have your students find the original Kono Statement and have them answer the question, "Does this book by Maria Rosa Henson align with the Japanese government's latest assertion that all the blame was on the recruiters and 'comfort station' managers? Provide your explanation of why or why it does not align with this assertion."

5. Many “comfort women” died while held as prisoners in the camps. Ask your students to provide examples of tactics the Japanese used to control them, and what the “comfort women” had in common with victims of modern slavery or trafficking?
6. Locate the testimony of a survivor from a modern occurrence of mass sexual violence in armed conflict (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Iraq). After reviewing the testimony to ensure it is appropriate for your students, have them consider the testimony alongside that of Maria Rosa Henson and write a reflection on the emotions and experiences that survivors share, and why it is important for survivors to learn about and communicate with other survivors.

## **Testimony: Jan Ruff O'Herne, Dutch Indies**

Source: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asia, The Pacific, and the Global Environment of the Committee On Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, One Hundred Tenth Congress, First Session, February 15, 2007, Serial No. 110-16. P. 23-28.

**BACKGROUND** | Jan Ruff O'Herne was born in 1923 in the Dutch East Indies, a former Southeast Asian colony of the Dutch Empire. The Japanese captured the Dutch East Indies in 1942 and occupied it until 1944. They imprisoned all people of Dutch nationality in prisoner-of-war camps. In her testimony, O'Herne describes her experiences both as a "comfort woman", and as a lifelong advocate for obtaining a formal apology from the Japanese government for their crimes against humanity.

### **Jan Ruff O'Herne Testimony**

I was born in Java, in the former Dutch East Indies (now known as Indonesia) in 1923 of a fourth-generation Dutch colonial family... When I was 19 years old in 1942, Japanese troops invaded Java. Together with thousands of women and children, I was interned in a Japanese prison camp for three and a half years... I had been in the camp for two years, when in 1944 high ranking Japanese officers arrived at the camp.

The order was given: all single girls from seventeen years up, had to line up in the compound. The officers walked towards us, and a selection process began. They paced up and down the line, eyeing us up and down, looking at our figures, at our legs, lifting our chins. They selected ten pretty girls. I was one of ten. We were told to come forward, and pack a small bag, as we were to be taken away. The whole camp protested, and our mothers tried to pull us back. I embraced my mother not knowing if I was ever going to see her again. We were hurled into an army truck. We were terrified and clung to our bags and to each other...

The truck stopped in the city of Semarang, in front of a large Dutch Colonial house. We were told to get out. Entering the house, we soon realized what sort of a house it was. A Japanese military told us that we were here for the sexual pleasure of the Japanese. The house was a brothel. We protested loudly. We said we were forced to come here, against our will. That they had no right to do this to us, and that it was against the Geneva Convention.

But they just laughed at us and said that they could do with us as they liked. We were given Japanese names and these were put on our bedroom doors... The house was completely guarded, there was no way to escape. At times I tried to hide, but was always found, and dragged back to my room. I tried everything, I even cut off all my hair, so I was totally bald. I thought if I made myself look ugly; nobody would want me. But it turned me into a curiosity object; they all wanted the girl that had cut off her hair. It had the opposite effect...

The war never ended for the "comfort women." We still have the nightmares. After the war I needed major surgery to restore my body... In 1992 the Korean "comfort women" broke their silence. Ms. Kim Hak Sun was the first to speak out.

I watched them on TV as they pleaded for justice, for an apology and compensation from the Japanese government. I decided to back them up. I broke my silence at the International Public Hearing on Japanese War Crimes in Tokyo in December 1992 and revealed one of the worst human rights abuses of World War II, the forgotten holocaust...

For the past 15 years, I have worked tirelessly for the plight of "comfort women" in Australia and overseas, and for the protection of women in war. Now the time is running out. After sixty years the "comfort women" deserve justice. They are worthy of a formal apology from the Japanese government,

from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe himself. The Japanese government must take full responsibility for their war crimes...

In 1995 they established the Asian Women's Fund, to compensate the victims. This Fund was an insult to the "comfort women" and they, including myself, refused to accept it. This fund was a private fund, the money came from private enterprise, and not from the government. Japan must come to terms with its history and acknowledge their wartime atrocities. They must teach the correct history of the mistakes made in the past...

### **Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers**

1. After your students read O'Herne's testimony, call your students' attention to the fact that much like Asian "comfort women," the Dutch "comfort women" also kept silent about what they had experienced until other women spoke out about their treatment and demanded justice in the 1990s. Have them discuss, in groups, how the "comfort women's" experiences and struggles might be similar to those of the victims who spoke out during the #MeToo Era of the 21st Century.
2. Have them write down any similarities between the "comfort women's" experiences of breaking their silence and the #MeToo movement of today.
3. Have them reflect on, and discuss, the perception of the rape victims today and 1990s: "What has changed and what hasn't? Do they see any positive changes? If so, what are they and what are the reasons for those changes?"
4. Locate the testimony of a survivor from a modern occurrence of mass sexual violence in armed conflict (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Iraq). After reviewing the testimony to ensure it is appropriate for your students, have them consider the testimony alongside that of Jan Ruff O'Herne and write a reflection on the emotions and experiences that survivors share, and why it is important for survivors to learn about and communicate with other survivors.

## Testimony: Ines Magalhães Gonçalves, East Timor

Interviewed by: Akihisa Matsuno

Date: 2006



Ines Magalhães Gonçalves in Lasaun, 2006

Excerpt from Interview:

“Before the war I lived with my parents growing corn and cassava. I also wove Timorese traditional textile called tais as I learned how to weave it from my mother.

When the Japanese troops came here, our village chief captured me. Later I heard that the village chief was exiled to Atauro after the war. I was taken to the village of Oat where I was forced to work to build a road. I also had to cut trees and the grass and carry them to the town of Bobonaro to build houses for Japanese troops. In Oat, I lived in a house with some others. We had to work during the day and at night we had to serve Japanese soldiers. I was still a child and did not have periods yet. Japanese soldiers took off my clothes and mounted me. I had to serve about four soldiers at one night, sometimes eight. They treated me like an animal. I could not stand up and had great difficulty even in walking. I was lying on the bed like a dead person.

Women like us had no power. We couldn't do anything because we were afraid that we would be killed. We just surrendered. We were given no foods nor were allowed to go back home... It was the village chief who managed the comfort station. Some women attempted to escape, but they mostly did not succeed. I even could not try to escape as I thought my parents would be killed if I did. The village chief knew me well. The women whose names were not known to the Japanese as they were captured on the road could probably escape. The Japanese soldiers did not know where their houses were.

I was at the comfort station in Oat for about four months. Then I got sick.

So, I was allowed to go back home. I had pain in many parts of the body, especially around the sexual organ. I could not walk well because of the pain. I had pain in the lower abdomen, too. I felt as if I would die. I arrived at home, and my mother called a traditional healer. He scrubbed my body with herbs. My mother also bought medicine from a Chinese. I recovered with these treatments.

I don't remember the names of the Japanese soldiers who abused me because they came one after another. Also, I cannot read. I became pregnant one day, and I gave birth to a girl at the comfort station. I named her Kaibuti. When three months passed, the Japanese troops had to leave. I wanted to bring my baby back home. But they assaulted me on the way and took my baby away. I don't know what has become of her. I was sad. I also continued to feel shameful. I want the Japanese government to apologize.”

## Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. Many “comfort women” were as young as 12 years of age when they were put to work in “comfort” stations by recruiters working for the Japanese Imperial Military, and Ines was nearly as young, since she did not have her period yet. As you go deeper into this unit, you’ll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers and were not informed about the actual conditions at the “comfort stations.” Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - a. origin regions where “comfort women” were recruited from
  - b. number of “comfort women” involved
  - c. locations of “comfort” stations that were installed during World War II
2. This testimony provides an opportunity for your students to conduct historical research on their own, and to review the Kono Statement as a class. The Kono Statement, issued in 1993, was the Japanese government’s first official response in which they accepted partial involvement and responsibility of the military. However, the subsequent Japanese administration, led by the former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has repeatedly denied and attempted to revise this statement, mostly blaming the victims and the private recruiters, such that the statement no longer carries authority and has led to victims’ continued demands for an comprehensive official apology ratified by Japan’s Parliament. As homework for the week, have your students find the original Kono Statement and have them answer the question, “Does this testimony by Ines Magalhães Gonçalves align with the Japanese government’s latest assertion that all the blame was on the recruiters and ‘comfort station’ managers? Provide your explanation of why or why it does not align with this assertion.”
3. Describe what the “comfort women” have in common with victims of modern slavery or trafficking.
4. Have them write a response to the Japanese government’s statements that the women who were working as “comfort women” were “prostitutes” or entertainers by trade before they were recruited for work at “comfort stations.”
5. As homework, have your students write a response to the prompt: "Do you think the testimony conflicts with or is consistent with the documents of Japanese Imperial Military or the Allied Forces? What information about the “comfort” stations and the Japanese Imperial Military does the testimony provide that cannot be gleaned from the governmental records? What other research, if any, would you conduct to verify the information provided in the testimony?
6. As your students go through this testimony, have them write about things that shocked, confused, angered, or caused a particular reaction.
7. Locate the testimony of a survivor from a modern occurrence of mass sexual violence in armed conflict (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Iraq). After reviewing the testimony to ensure it is appropriate for your students, have them consider the testimony alongside that of Ines Magalhães Gonçalves and write a reflection on the emotions and experiences that survivors share, and why it is important for survivors to learn about and communicate with other survivors.

## Testimony: Yukio Omata, war correspondent for Yomiuri Newspaper of Japan

Author: Yukio Omata, Excerpts from *Battlefield and a Journalist* (1967)

Date: 1942, 1967

Excerpt from transcript:

Yukio Omata was a war correspondent from Yomiuri Newspaper of Japan, dispatched to Yangon, Myanmar in 1942. Among other things, Omata recorded stories of the women who had been sent to “comfort” stations by means of false promise that they would be working at military supply factories. Former soldier of the Japanese Imperial Army, Masaru Kajikawa, also recorded their memories at “comfort stations.” He recalled that “comfort women” were unmarried women who had been recruited or forcibly taken from rural villages of Korea.

40-50 Korean women disembarked from a cargo ship that arrived this morning and went to the lodging. ... The one that I met was about twenty-three or -four years old. She spoke fluent Japanese. She said she was a public school teacher. “How come a school teacher ended up in a place like this?” I asked.

... she answered with fury, “We were deceived. They recruited women to work at an armaments factory in Tokyo. I applied only because I wanted to go to Tokyo. We went aboard a ship at the Incheon port, but the ship did not head to Tokyo, but to the south, and further down to the south, and then finally arrived in Singapore. Half of the women got off there and the rest of us were taken here to Burma. We can’t go home now by foot nor can we run away. We just gave up. The most pitiful are the young women who have no idea what’s going on. There are 8 such girls in the age of sixteen and seventeen. They hate this work so much ... Is there any way you can help us?”

Omata, Yukio. *Battlefield and a Journalist* (1967). A report from Yangon, Myanmar in 1942: Facts about forced conscription in memoirs of war correspondent and soldiers

### Guiding Questions and Topics for Class Discussions for Teachers

1. Many “comfort women” were as young as 12 years of age when they were put to work in “comfort” stations by recruiters working for the Japanese Imperial Military, and Ines was nearly as young, since she did not have her period yet. As you go deeper into this unit, you’ll find more military documents and other primary sources that point to the fact that many women who were recruited were not originally sex workers and were not informed about the actual conditions at the “comfort stations.” Many were civilian women and girls taken either by force, or deceptive means, from their homes by agents working for the Japanese Imperial Military. Have your students start, or continue, making a 3-Column table with the following details:
  - a. origin regions where “comfort women” were recruited from
  - b. number of “comfort women” involved
  - c. locations of “comfort” stations that were installed during World War II
2. This autobiography provides an opportunity for your students to conduct historical research on their own, and to review the Kono Statement as a class. The Kono Statement, issued in 1993, was the Japanese government’s first official response in which they accepted partial involvement and responsibility of the military. However, the subsequent Japanese administration, led by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has repeatedly denied and attempted to revise this statement, mostly blaming the victims and the private recruiters, such that the statement no longer carries authority and has led to victims’ continued demands for a comprehensive official apology ratified by Japan’s Parliament. As homework for the week,

have your students find the original Kono Statement and have them answer the question, "Does this record by the journalist align with the Japanese government's latest assertion that all the blame was on the recruiters and 'comfort station' managers? Provide your explanation of why or why it does not align."

3. As homework, have your students write a response to the prompt: "Do you think this account conflicts with or is consistent with the documents of Japanese Imperial Military or the Allied Forces? What information about the "comfort" stations and the Japanese Imperial Military does the testimony provide that cannot be gleaned from governmental records? What other research, if any, would you conduct to verify the information provided?"
4. Describe what the "Comfort Women" have in common with victims of modern slavery or trafficking.

## **TRIBUNALS**

## The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal (IMTFE): A Legacy of Failed Justice

Date: 1946-1948

Region: Tokyo, Japan

Author: Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education

Following the end of World War II, the Allied Powers established the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg under the London Charter and the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE or Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal) under the Tokyo Charter. The purpose of the tribunals was to address the full spectrum of war crimes committed by the Nazi regime and the Japanese Empire; however, the Japanese imperial government's creation, operation, and concealment of the "comfort women" system and widespread practice of military sexual violence were neither fully investigated nor prosecuted.

From the outset, the IMTFE was handicapped in addressing the magnitude of crimes committed by Japan's Empire. Prior to the Tribunal, U.S. General Douglas MacArthur preemptively granted immunity to Emperor Hirohito and several high-ranking officials from all charges. Other parties escaping indictment included the Japanese secret military police (*Kempeitai*), the Japanese medical officers who had conducted horrific experiments on Chinese civilians at Unit 731 in Harbin, China, and Japanese industrialists who had profited from forced labor and property seizures in occupied or colonized territories.

The broad miscarriage of justice was rooted in ulterior motives among the Allied Powers. U.S. General MacArthur was concerned about the future threat of Communism and believed that leniency toward Japan's government would facilitate its support of Western dominance in the region and its recovery from America's devastating atomic bombs. The U.S. government was further interested in the results of Unit 731 and granted secret immunity to Japanese medical officers in exchange for that information. The Allied Nations also sought to occupy, or re-occupy, the vast territory ceded by the Japanese Empire.

The Tribunal initially charged nine senior Japanese political leaders and eighteen military leaders with three classes of crimes. "Class A" charges were for crimes against peace committed by Japanese leaders who had planned and directed the war. "Class B" charges were for war crimes and "Class C" charges were for crimes against humanity; these charges could be brought against any Japanese individual. The charges included the rape of prisoners, nurses, and civilians throughout China, particularly during the Nanking Massacre:

"Even girls of tender years and old women were raped in large numbers throughout [Nanking], and many cases of abnormal and sadistic behavior in connection with these rapings occurred. Many women were killed after the act and their bodies mutilated. . . . Approximately 20,000 cases of rape occurred within the city during the first month of occupation."

The Judgement noted Japanese soldiers' reports about the culture of military rape:

"One company commander unofficially gave instructions for raping as follows: 'In order that we will not have problems, either pay them money or kill them in some obscure place after you have finished.'"

"[W]e captured a family of four. We played with the daughter. . . . But as the parents insisted that the daughter be returned to them we killed them. We played with the daughter as before . . . and then killed her."

"In the half year of battle, about the only things I learned are rape and burglary."

The Judgement also identified numerous incidents of sexual and gender-based violence during massacres at Manila, Hong Kong, and Blora (Indonesia). At the oil fields in Blora, Japanese soldiers killed all male personnel and raped women in front of their commanding officer. At the German Club in Manila, Japanese troops killed infants in their mother's arms, then raped, burned, and mutilated the women. During the fall of Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941, Japanese forces bayoneted patients in the Military Hospital at St. Stephen's College and raped British and American nurses on duty. Throughout these campaigns, the violations extended to the burning, electronic shock, and mutilation of men and boys.

During ground maneuvers during the war, Allied Forces had learned about the "comfort women" network and its troops had encountered survivors who reported being deceived, pressured, and forced into sex work and transported from country to country. Despite the ample evidence, the Judgement made only a single reference to these incidents, noting the trafficking that occurred in Guangxi Province in southern China.

"During the period of Japanese occupation . . . they committed all kinds of atrocities such as rape and plunder. They recruited women labor on the pretext of establishing factories. They forced the women thus recruited into prostitution with Japanese troops.

In contrast, the Tribunal adopted a broader purview in other areas; for instance, it considered the role of public education in Japan in fostering militarism and ultra-nationalism under Education Ministers Koichi Kido and Sadao Araki, each of whom also served as War Ministers at various times.

Ultimately, the Tribunal convicted 25 defendants as Class A war criminals, applying "the law of nations" concerning the humane treatment of prisoners of war and civilians, as established through international law customs, treaties, and conventions. The Justices also incorporated findings from the Nuremberg Judgement, including the principle that state or sovereign immunity should not apply to certain acts "condemned by international law." Further, a defendant's assertion that he acted under the orders of the government or superiors did not absolve his responsibility, but could be considered towards mitigation of punishment, since "[t]he true test which is found in varying degrees in the criminal law of most nations is not the existence of the order but whether moral choice was in fact possible."

Seven of the defendants received death sentences. The remainder were sentenced to imprisonment from seven years to life, but the Allied Powers later reduced many of the terms. Some of the convicted Class A criminals later ascended to political office, as well as other suspected individuals who were not tried, among them former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi. (Incidentally, Kishi's grandson is former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has repeatedly denied that "comfort women" were forcibly taken and complained about memorials to "comfort women.")

The IMTFE is widely considered to exemplify victors' justice, in that the victorious Allied Powers dictated the terms of justice, rather than objectively adjudicate the crimes. Of the eleven nations represented by the thirteen justices, only three were from the Asia Pacific. In his notes of the Tribunal, Chinese Justice Mei Ju-ao observed that foreign prosecutors considered the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 to be the starting date of Japanese aggressions, which ignored events dating back to the Manchurian Incident in 1928, and he pushed for recognizing the scope of atrocities at Nanking, which Chinese prosecutors had assiduously investigated. Indian Justice Radhabinod Pal eventually dissented from the majority and questioned the neutrality of the proceedings; he also opined that the accounts of rape in Nanking were exaggerated and questioned the witnesses' accounts. In a concurring opinion, Filipino Justice Delfín Jaranilla, who had endured the Bataan Death March and recused himself from hearing crimes committed in the Philippines, stated that the convictions were overly lenient.

In hindsight, the all-male and Western-dominated court was not ideally positioned to consider all of the nuances of gendered crimes against mostly Asian women and children. At the time of the victims' trafficking and detention, many of their respective homelands had lacked sovereignty, as colonies or territories occupied by Japan's imperial military and burdened by Japanese governance and discriminatory policies. In the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, Western nations had facilitated Japan's expansion and economic interests under bilateral agreements as imperialist powers. These included the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in which Britain and Japan recognized each other's respective interests in China and Korea as a bulwark against Russian expansionism, and the Taft-Katsura Memorandum confirming America and Japan's understanding about their respective interests in the Philippines and Korea, following Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War.

In establishing the "comfort women" system, Japan's imperial government and military had exploited existing social mores that catalyzed the targeting and silencing of victims, who were mostly women and girls, but also included Dutch boys interned in Indonesia. Young women and girls in occupied or colonized territories were especially vulnerable to trafficking and recruitment through false promises of work and wages, because they tended to hail from impoverished rural areas, where those opportunities were scarce. The concept of an organized gang-rape system that incorporated medical personnel and procedures and trafficked victims across borders would not have occurred to most ordinary civilians as a horror to be avoided. Many of the survivors did not disclose what they endured for years, even to family members, because of fear and internalization of shock, stigma, and shame. They refrained from relationships or marriage or had difficulty bearing children due to the damage inflicted on their bodies.

It was not until the 1990s that the survivors – several hundred elderly women from South and North Korea, China, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, East Timor, and the Netherlands – chose to come forward publicly, beginning with Korean survivor Kim Hak-sun. Their testimonies revealed that the Japanese imperial military had committed a spectrum of violations, including mass rape, torture and murder of victims (in part to erase their existence as evidence of war crimes), infanticide (i.e., soldiers' killing newborns after pregnant victims carried to term), and forced abortions, sterilizations, and hysterectomies. These acts often involved racial discrimination arising from Japan's imperialistic rhetoric that it was superior to other cultures.

The IMTFE's legacy of stunted justice has underscored the Japanese government's position today that it bears no legal responsibility for the "comfort women" system. Japanese right-wing politicians and constituents persist in labeling the victims as "prostitutes" – perpetuating the fallacy that victims are capable of knowingly entering into the conditions of slavery – and insisting that liability rests with lesser accomplices or collaborators. These equivocations sidestep the primary crimes of the government's masterminding and endorsement of a system that embodied human trafficking, gang-rape, reproductive harm, and severe emotional trauma.

In 1978, the Japanese government secretly memorialized fourteen of the convicted Class A criminals at Yasukuni Shrine, where it had previously memorialized Class B and C war criminals. The shrine was founded in 1869 as a symbol of the Japanese Empire and the Meiji Constitution, which designated Shintoism as the state religion and the Emperor as both the political and religious head of state. The Yūshūkan museum, which accompanies the shrine, entirely omits mention of Japan's wartime atrocities.

In December 2000, in response to the Japanese government's backsliding, a coalition of legal, human rights, and history experts, along with civic groups and activists, convened the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery. This was a people's tribunal that did not have legal authority, but it supplanted the IMTFE in moral authority. It provided a public forum for survivors to testify directly about their ordeals and for international law jurists to comprehensively gather and

analyze historical records and evidence, ultimately rendering judgement against the Japanese imperial government under the command of Emperor Hirohito (posthumously, Emperor Shōwa).

Today, the Japanese government not only exploits impunity for the “comfort women” system but also seeks to eviscerate transitional justice efforts and to suppress statues, films, art exhibitions, textbooks, and educational programs memorializing the survivors and victims. Their aggressions have ranged from withholding funds to U.N. organizations to litigating against academics, journalists, artists, and activists seeking to illuminate the issue.

In the face of these well-heeled maneuvers by the Japanese government, openly discussing the history of “comfort women” and the repercussions of delayed justice take on even greater significance when examining the legacy of militaristic policy and culture and their effects on vulnerable communities. Failure to punish perpetrators contributes to an environment of impunity in which sexual violence and exploitation, both in and around conflict zones, continues to proliferate. As has happened in the case of the “comfort women,” when such crimes are rendered invisible in legal and political processes, the repercussions inevitably hinder the enforcement of human rights norms and diplomatic relations for decades to follow.

## APPENDIX A

### Justices:

William Flood Webb (Australia)  
 Edward Stuart McDougall (Canada)  
 Mei Ju-Ao (China)  
 Henri Bernard (France)  
 Radhabinod Pal (India)\*  
 Erima Harvey Northcroft (New Zealand)  
 Bernard Victor A. Röling (Netherlands)  
 Delfin Jaranilla (Philippines)  
 Maj.-Gen. Ivan Michyevich Zaryanov (Soviet Union)  
 William Donald Patrick (U.K.)  
 John P. Higgins (U.S.)  
 Myron C. Cramer (U.S.)

## APPENDIX B

### Convicted Class A War Criminals:

LAST NAME, First Name	Sentence	Memorialized at Yasukuni Shrine
ARAKI Sadao (War Minister 1931-34; Education Minister 1938-39)	Life imprisonment; released 8 years later	
DOHIHARA Kenji	Death sentence	*
HASHIMOTO Kingoro	Life imprisonment; later released	
HATA Shunroku (War Minister, 1939-40)	Life imprisonment; later paroled	
HIRANUMA Kiichiro	Life sentence	*
HIROTA Koki	Death sentence	*
HOSHINO Naoki	Life imprisonment; later released	
ITAGAKI Seishiro (War Minister 1938-39)	Death sentence	*
KAYA Okinori	Life imprisonment; later released and appointed Minister of Justice	
KIDO Koichi (Education Minister, 1937-38; Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, 1940-45)	Life imprisonment; later paroled	
KIMURA Heitaro	Death sentence	*
KOISO Kuniaki	Life imprisonment	*
MATSUI Iwane (General and Commander of troops, 1937-38, including during Nanking Massacre)	Death sentence	*
MATSUOKA Yosuke	Died pre-trial	*
MINAMI Jiro	Life imprisonment; later paroled	
MUTO Akira	Death sentence	*
NAGANO Osami	Died during trial	*
OKAWA Shumei	Avoided trial due to mental illness	

LAST NAME, First Name	Sentence	Memorialized at Yasukuni Shrine
OSHIMA Hiroshi	Life imprisonment; later paroled	
OKA Takazumi	Life imprisonment	
SATO Kenryo	Life imprisonment; later released	
SHIGEMITSU Mamoru	7 years' imprisonment; later served as Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and ambassador to the Soviet Union, the U.K., and China	
SHIMADA Shigetaro	Life imprisonment; later released	
SHIRATORI Toshi	Life imprisonment	*
SUZUKI Teiichi	Life imprisonment; later paroled	
TOGO Shigenori	20 years' imprisonment	*
TOJO Hideki (served as Prime Minister, War Minister, and head of the Home Ministry simultaneously from 1941-44)	Death sentence	*
UMEZU Yoshijiro	Life imprisonment	*



International Military Tribunal for the Far East court chamber

Image: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Military\\_Tribunal\\_for\\_the\\_Far\\_East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Military_Tribunal_for_the_Far_East)

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## The Batavia Trials: A Partial Precedent towards Redress

Date: 1946-1948

Region: Batavia, Indonesia

Author: Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education

One of the few post-WWII trials in which Japanese military officers and civilians were convicted of war crimes regarding “comfort women” were the Temporary Courts Martial in Batavia in the former Dutch East Indies (now Jakarta, Indonesia). The Batavia trials established that Japanese military officials and civilians could be prosecuted and found guilty under customary international law for operating “comfort stations” and forcing “comfort women” into sex work through pressure, threats, or deception, either acting alone or in concert with local traffickers.

Following the end of the war, the Allied Powers established the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE or Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal) to prosecute three classes of crimes. Subsequently, the Allied Powers established national military courts in various locations, including Manila, Singapore, Saigon, Khabarovsk, Rabaul, and Hong Kong. The IMTFE purported to focus on “Class A” charges against Japan’s major war criminals, despite granting immunity to Emperor Hirohito and certain high-ranking officials. The subsequent trials, including those in Batavia, focused on “Class B” and “Class C” charges against minor Japanese officials or civilians.

The Batavia trials began in 1946 and charged more than a dozen individuals -- military officers and “comfort station” operators -- with the war crime of “enforced prostitution” against thirty-five Dutch women. In March 1948, the courts convicted most of the military officers and four of the civilian operators. One was sentenced to death, and the remaining defendants received prison terms ranging from two to twenty years. (Colonel Asao Okubo committed suicide after learning that he was being prosecuted by Dutch authorities.)

In 1949, the United Nations War Crimes Commission published a summary of one of the Batavia trials, in which a civilian operator, a Japanese hotel entrepreneur named Washio Awochi, was convicted and sentenced to prison for ten years for operating a “comfort station” called the “Sakura Club.” The case summary reveals crucial aspects of the legal framework that was applied to Awochi and pertain to the Japanese government’s current stance regarding “comfort women.”

Awochi had operated a hotel and restaurant in Jakarta and pressured twelve Dutch females, including girls from 12 to 14 years of age, into working at an attached brothel that he owned, together with his Dutch girlfriend, Lies Beerhorst. The measures he used to pressure, recruit, and deceive the victims included threats of intervention, beatings, imprisonment, and deportation by the Japanese military police (*Kempeitai*). The victims were forced to receive at least three Japanese civilian males and earn a minimum of 450 guilders every night. Awochi pleaded before the court that he had taken these actions under orders of the Japanese authorities.

The Awochi case was brought under a series of ordinances passed by the Lieutenant Governor General of the liberated Dutch East Indies in 1946, which authorized the Batavia courts to adjudicate war crimes in accordance with the norms of international law. The ordinance in the Awochi case (Ordinance No. 44) provided the Batavia courts with jurisdiction over crimes of sexual violence that were not expressly codified in existing international treaties or instruments but drew upon their principles and aims. Specifically, the ordinance stated:

Under war crimes are understood acts which constitute a violation of the laws and usages of war committed in time of war by subjects of an enemy power or by foreigners in the service of the enemy, such as. . . [a]bduction of girls and women for the purpose of enforced prostitution.

In the Awochi case and other subsequent Batavia trials where Japanese military personnel and civilians were convicted, the courts focused on whether the “prostitution” arose from “compulsion in all its possible forms” and determined that whether or how the victims had been “abducted” was not the proper focus of inquiry. The courts found that the victims had been unable to act voluntarily based on their surrounding circumstances, including Japan’s military occupation of Indonesia, the defendants’ exploitation of poverty, internment, and threats of retaliation in order to exert pressure and fear upon the victims, and the victims’ inability to leave the surroundings or travel of their own free will.

Even when victims could arguably be said to have “agreed” to prostitution, the inhumane conditions they faced were “so contrary to morality and humanity” that they excluded any possibility of consent. The Awochi judgement also noted that the Japanese military’s treatment of victims was tied to racial discrimination against non-Japanese.

During Japan’s occupation of Indonesia, Japanese military officers had rounded up Dutch women from internment camps into “comfort stations” across the country. Before being taken and even during their captivity, some of the Dutch victims had had the presence of mind to protest that the acts violated the 1929 Geneva Convention, which Japan had signed (but not ratified). Dutch authorities in the camps also raised the alarm directly with Japanese officers. The Japanese military’s awareness and knowledge that they were violating international law norms contributed to the closing of “comfort stations” with Dutch victims after several months.

The rape and detention of Indonesian victims continued, however, until the end of the war – a clear example of colonial discrimination that overlapped with Japanese occupation. The Netherlands had colonized Indonesia beginning in the 19th century, and thousands of Indonesian women under Dutch jurisdiction were raped and forced to become “comfort women,” but they did not receive equivalent protection during the war or the Batavia trials, which focused only on women of Dutch or European descent.

Today, various Japanese right-wing officials and politicians continue to claim that the Japanese government has no responsibility regarding “comfort women” who “agreed” to sex work or were trafficked or sold into “prostitution” by family members or local brokers, and that there is no evidence that such “comfort women” were “forcibly taken.” That position contradicts the reasoning behind the Batavia judgments, which convicted Japanese military personnel and Japanese civilians for operating “comfort stations,” regardless of whether the victims earned money or local accomplices were involved.

Following the Batavia trials, “enforced prostitution” was not consistently included in international legal instruments, but it was named as a war crime and a crime against humanity in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), together with acts of rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization or “any other form of sexual violence also constituting a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions.” The Rome Statute, a treaty among signatory nations, establishes the ICC as a forum for prosecuting individuals responsible for grave human rights violations. (The U.S. has not ratified the Rome Statute.) Its inclusion of sexual crimes was directly influenced by the international community’s growing awareness of “comfort women” in the 1990s and mass sexual crimes and genocide in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

The Batavia cases suggest that “enforced prostitution” could be and was adjudicated as a serious war crime under international criminal law, based on a lack of voluntariness that also exists in “sexual slavery.” The judgments appear to encompassed the range of violations and conditions found across the “comfort women” system, which arose from an existing and exploitative sex work and trafficking network that was adjacent to military operations and devolved further into a cross-border practice of rape that was authorized and condoned as part of military strategy.

The term “enforced prostitution,” however, is undeniably problematic, imbued with connotations of consent and social stigmatization that diminish the criminal nature of the act. During the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery held in Tokyo in 2000, the Judges noted that the survivors strenuously objected to any characterization as “prostitutes” and found that the conditions which “comfort women” endured were more accurately termed as “sexual slavery” – a “long overdue renaming” that was warranted by the facts and evidence at hand, the ostracization which survivors were continuing to experience, and the Japanese government’s demonstrated history of gaslighting the crimes.

The Women’s Tribunal included testimony by Jan Ruff O’Herne, a Dutch survivor of one of the “comfort stations” in Semarang who did not take part in the Batavia trials. She had come forward in 1992, after seeing Korean “comfort women” break the silence. In addition to giving voice to her own ordeals, O’Herne understood that her visibility as a white European victim would support the Asian victims’ claims and increase pressure on the Japanese government, which had categorically denied any involvement in the “comfort women” system. Her decision also caused other Dutch survivors, including her high school classmate Ellen van der Ploeg, to come forward.

The full records of the Batavia trials, including the names of all the defendants and victims, have been sealed by the Dutch government until 2022 to 2025. In addition, the records of the subsequent trials that were held at Ambon and Makassar, Indonesia, and Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, concerning rape and “forced prostitution” have been sealed. The details that have emerged, however, indicate that Japan’s wartime policy and practice of military rape targeted victims from more countries than previously known, including American nurses taken from the Philippines to “comfort stations” in New Guinea, Australian nurses on Sumatra (e.g., during the Bangka Island massacre witnessed by the late Vivian Bullwinkel), Vietnamese, Cambodia, Laotian, and French women in the former Indochina, and German women and girls captured in Indonesia.

These discoveries underscore the need for full disclosure by, and research in the archives of all countries involved in World War II, particularly given the Japanese government’s deliberate destruction of wartime records after its surrender in 1945 and the Allied Powers’ failure to investigate and prosecute the “comfort women” system. Until the full records are made publicly available, the Japanese imperial government’s responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity remains shrouded, and the legacy of violence against women and children arising from ongoing militaristic influence throughout the Asia Pacific cannot be thoroughly examined nor resolved.



Interned Dutch women forced to bow at roll call at a Japanese camp in Indonesia, c. 1945

#### APPENDIX

**Known Convictions at Batavia Trials (others under sealed or unlocatable records):**

Case No.	LAST NAME, First Name	Rank / Status	Sentence
40/1946	AWOCHI, Washio	Civilian Mil. Employee (operator)	10 years penal servitude
72/1946	MITSUHASHI, Hiromu	Army – Colonel	Not guilty
72/1946	OKADA, Keiji	Army – Major	Death sentence
	KAWAMURA, Ohimatsu	Army – Major	10 years' imprisonment
72/1946	MURAKAMI, Kuizo	Army – Major	7 years' imprisonment
72/1946	NAKASHIMA, Shiro	Army – Captain	16 years' imprisonment
72/1946	ISHIDA, Eiichi	Army – Captain	2 years' imprisonment
72/1946	SAI Taranosuke	Army – Sergeant Major	Not guilty
72/1946	IWAO, Furuya	Civilian Mil. Employee (operator)	20 years' imprisonment; released after 11 years
72/1946	SHIMODA, Shinji	Civilian Mil. Employee (operator)	10 years' imprisonment
72/1946	MORIMOTO, Yukio	Civilian Mil. Employee (operator)	15 years' imprisonment
72/1946	TSUTAKI, Kenjiro	Civilian Mil. Employee (operator)	7 years' imprisonment
72A/1947	SHOICHI, Ikeda	Army – Colonel	15 years' imprisonment; paroled after 6 years
34/1948	SEIJI, Nozaki	Army – Major General	12 years' imprisonment; paroled after 5 years

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Image: By permission of NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (Image ID 53839)

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## **MOVEMENTS**

## GLOBAL MOVEMENT TOWARDS JUSTICE FOR THE “COMFORT WOMEN”

### Introduction to the Global Movement

No one knows exactly how many women, girls and boys were victimized as sex slaves by the Japanese Imperial Military during and prior to the Second World War, but estimates range from as few as 50,000 to as many as half a million. The vast majority of these victims did not survive the war. The small number of survivors who were able to return home, and those who remained in the distant regions where the Japanese military had transported and later abandoned them, lived in silence, privately dealing with the unspeakable trauma of physical and psychological wounds.

With the growth of the international women’s rights movement in the 1980s, sex tourism became a significant social issue in South Korea and Japan that led to renewed interest in the “comfort women” survivors who were still living in silence throughout Asian countries.

In 1990, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan was formed; and in 1991, a survivor Hak-sun Kim came forward to publicly testify about her ordeal as a sex slave for the first time. Encouraged by Hak-sun Kim’s courageous testimony, numerous survivors who were living in silence in South Korea and other countries began to come out and identified themselves as victims.

In South Korea, a protest in front of the Japanese Embassy began on January 8, 1992, in response to the Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa’s upcoming visit. This protest, dubbed as the “Wednesday Demonstration,” continued every Wednesday in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, with the surviving “halmonis” or “grandmothers” and their supporters, rain or shine, marking it as the longest continuous demonstration recorded at the Guinness Book of the Record. It is still continuing to this day.

The survivors and supporting civil organizations came together in solidarity to form the Asian Solidarity Conference, a biannual gathering held in Seoul, Tokyo, Manila, and Taipei, where the survivors and advocates from South Korea, North Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, the Philippines, East Timor and other affected nations assembled and discuss strategies for realizing justice for the victims. At the same time, multiple lawsuits against the Japanese government were initiated by the survivors.

The seven demands to the Japanese government that were adopted at the Asian Solidarity Conference are as follows:

1. Admit the “comfort station” system was sexual slavery and a war crime committed by the Japanese government
2. Thoroughly investigate and disclose the documents relating to the “comfort station” system
3. Offer an official apology
4. Pay governmental reparations
5. Punish those responsible for the “comfort station” system
6. Include the “comfort station” system in textbooks and educate the Japanese public about it
7. Build memorials and museums

Japanese journalists and scholars performed the lion’s share of exposing evidence of the deep involvement of the Japanese government and the military in every aspect of the “comfort” system, which led to the Japanese government’s first acknowledgement of its role in the “comfort women” system. In 1993, then Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan, Yohei Kono, announced a statement – Kono Statement – that acknowledged partial involvement and responsibility of the Japanese military in the “comfort women” system and expressed sincere apology and remorse, and promised to teach this history to Japan’s youth forever.

The international community, including UN, responded to the courageous testimonies of the survivors and declared that mass rape during wartime was a crime against humanity. In 2000, civil society organizers, international law experts judges and lawyers of international law came together with surviving victims in Japan to hold the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal in Tokyo. The judgment found Emperor Hirohito, as well as senior Japanese officials, guilty for creating and failing to the widespread human rights abuses committed under the "comfort women" system during WWII.

In subsequent years, however, the Japanese government has taken a hard-right turn towards history revisionism, abandoning the promise in the Kono Statement to forever engrave this painful history in the memory of the Japanese people. By 2000, references to "comfort women" disappeared from all Japanese middle school textbooks. In the early 2000s, the movement seemed to have reached a dead-end when all lawsuits raised by the survivors against the Japanese government failed in both Japan's High Courts and Supreme Court.

Global attention to the "comfort women" received new momentum in 2007, when the U.S. Congress unanimously passed House Resolution 121, led by Japanese-American Congressman Mike Honda, which urged the Japanese government to formally acknowledge responsibility and unequivocally apologize for the wartime atrocity of "comfort women," and to educate the Japanese public so that similar crimes would never recur. The European Council and Japanese local governments also passed similar resolutions. Memorials honoring the victims began to go up in public sites in American cities, as well as in private locations.

The Japanese government, led by then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his second term, engaged in heavy lobbying activities to block and stymie all efforts to remember and reach the "comfort women" issue in the United States, dubbing its efforts a "History War." In 2014, history deniers filed a federal lawsuit against the City of Glendale to remove the city's newly erected memorial – the Peace Monument. Glendale fought the lawsuit and prevailed. In 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case, after the plaintiffs lost at the District Court and then the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, despite the Japanese government's submission of an *amicus curiae* (or "friend of the court") brief.

A year later, in 2018, Osaka's mayor severed a 60-year sister-city relationship with San Francisco, in protest of the city's designation of a newly built "comfort women" memorial in a city square. Today, the Japanese government is continuing its -- mostly unsuccessful and widely criticized -- efforts to remove and politicize the "comfort women" memorials and education around the world, often utilizing its embassies and consul generals' offices, with a more than 500 million-dollar annual "soft diplomacy" budget.

Ironically, the more ardent that the cries for history denialism become, the more controversy they create through a "Barbra Streisand" effect, yielding more opportunities to educate the public. That is what happened in Palisades Park, New Jersey, Glendale, California, and San Francisco, California and with a freedom of speech controversy in 2015, where Japanese diplomats demanded that U.S. publisher McGraw-Hill delete a passage about the "comfort women" from one of its textbooks.

At the eleventh hour of their multi-layered and difficult lives, the survivors' wishes for the public remain the same – to witness the acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the perpetrator government and to receive a sincere, direct, and unequivocal apology for it. Apology or not, our collective duty is to remember the survivors' resilience and humanity and to continue teaching this dark chapter of human history in all its nuance and complexity.

**Movement: Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/95 Report on the mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan on the issue of military sexual slavery in wartime**

Author: Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, UN Human Rights Commission

<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/commission/country52/53-add1.htm>

**OVERVIEW** |To this day, there is continuing debate between the Japanese government and the international community about the nature of "comfort women", and the government's role in perpetuating the "comfort women" system during the Asian-Pacific War.

In 1992, the Japanese government conducted an investigation and concluded that the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces were directly and indirectly involved with the "comfort station" system and the use of force in the recruitment. In 1993, then Chief Cabinet Secretary (equivalent to the Secretary of State in the US) Yohei Kono issued a statement acknowledging some responsibility for the "comfort women" victims and through it, expressed regret and apology for what the "comfort women" went through. However, the Kono Statement was limited in that it stopped short of acknowledging Japanese government's legal responsibility, and the apology offered in the statement was never ratified by Japan's Diet.

To this date, Japan's Diet, which is the official governing body of Japan, has never approved a resolution of apology or compensation for the "comfort women" victims. In 1995, the Japanese government set up a private fund – Asian Women's Fund – that collected donations from private citizens and corporations in order to provide medical assistance and "atonement" money to the surviving victims, in exchange for a promise not to demand legal compensation from the Japanese government. This fund was rejected and heavily criticized by the activist survivors who viewed it as insulting and evasive.

It was in this context that the report by Special Rapporteur R. Coomaraswamy was issued as part of a UN report in 1996, and established that "comfort women" were indeed sex slaves. The Special Rapporteur made recommendations to the Government of Japan to make apologies and pay compensation to all "comfort women." The report provides guidelines for the measures that will resolve the war crime and crime against humanity relating to the Japanese military's "comfort women" system. It also explains what constitutes a proper apology.

## **I. DEFINITION**

The Special Rapporteur would like to clarify at the outset of this report that she considers the case of women forced to render sexual services in wartime by and/or for the use of armed forces a practice of military sexual slavery.

In this connection, the Special Rapporteur is aware of the position of the Government of Japan conveyed to her during her visit to Tokyo, which states that the application of the term "slavery" defined as "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised" in accordance with article 1 (1) of the 1926 Slavery Convention, is inaccurate in the case of "comfort women" under existing provisions of international law.

The Special Rapporteur, however, holds the opinion that the practice of "comfort women" should be considered a clear case of sexual slavery and a slavery-like practice in accordance with the approach adopted by relevant international human rights bodies and mechanisms....

Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur notes that the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, at its twentieth session, welcomed information received from the Government of Japan on the issue of "women sex slaves during the Second World War" and recommended that such practices as "treatment akin to slavery" be settled through the establishment of a Japanese administrative tribunal.

Finally, for the purpose of terminology, the Special Rapporteur concurs entirely with the view ... that the phrase "comfort women" does not in the least reflect the suffering, such as multiple rapes on an everyday basis and severe physical abuse, that women victims had to endure during their forced prostitution and sexual subjugation and abuse in wartime. The Special Rapporteur, therefore, considers with conviction that the phrase "military sexual slaves" represents a much more accurate and appropriate terminology.

## **Movement: House Resolution 121, the Background**

Author: Mindy Kotler, Director of Asia Policy Point, Washington, DC

**OVERVIEW** | In the late 1990s, the U.S. Congress worked on legislation reflecting a new international awareness of women's rights, human rights, and war crimes. The Bosnian War (1992-1995) persuaded many that sexual violence in warfare was criminal. The 50th anniversary of the end of World War II compelled a reexamination of both Nazi and Imperial Japan's war crimes. As a result, members of Congress became involved in new movements toward historical justice both in Europe and in Asia.

Prisoners of War (POW), civilian internees, and Asian Americans harmed by Imperial Japan attempted to gain the same recognition as the victims of Nazi Germany and Vichy France. Starting in 1996, a series of resolutions and bills were introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives for restorative justice. They called on the U.S. government to advocate for its war victims. The legislation ranged from funding the declassification of war crimes records to calling on Axis governments to expand their restitution regimes.

In regards to the "comfort women," from 1996 to 2006 there were six resolutions put forth asking the Japanese government to recognize and apologize for the trauma and suffering of the "comfort women." All were introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives as "House Concurrent Resolutions." These resolutions are neither bills or laws. They are "used merely for expressing facts, principles, opinions, and purposes of the two Houses." They need to be approved by the House and Senate to be considered an official congressional statement. None of the resolutions was reported out of the House Committee on International Relations (HIRC) for a vote by the full House. None was ever introduced in the Senate.

### The Six Concurrent Resolutions

1. During the 104th Congress (1995-1996), California Republican Representative Robert K. Dornan introduced H. Con. Res. 176: "Expressing the sense of the Congress concerning the maltreatment of United States military and civilian prisoners by the Japanese during World War II." The resolution focused mainly on POWs, and only one clause out of 18 noted "comfort women." The relevant clause identifies "comfort women" as "sex slaves of the Japanese military during World War II." It states that they "deserve compensation of at least \$40,000 for each individual" for "extreme pain and suffering."
2. Dornan's resolution was reintroduced in the 105th Congress (1997-1998) as H.Con.Res.126 by Illinois Democratic Congressman William O. Lipinski: "Calls upon the Government of Japan to: (1) formally issue an apology for the war crimes committed by the Japanese military during World War II; and (2) pay reparations to the victims."
3. In the 106th Congress (1999-2000), Illinois Democratic Congressman Lane Evans reintroduced the same text as H. Con. Res. 357. This resolution, as others, were not reported out of the House Committee on International Relations chaired by New York Republican Ben Gilman.
4. In the 107th Congress, Congressman Lane Evans introduced the first congressional resolution focused exclusively on "comfort women" as H.Con.Res.195-- "Expressing the sense of Congress that the Government of Japan should formally issue a clear and unambiguous apology for the sexual enslavement of young women during colonial occupation of Asia and World War II, known to the world as 'comfort women.'"
5. In the 108th Congress, Congressman Lane Evans reintroduced the same resolution as H. Con. Res. 226 – "Expressing the sense of Congress that the Government of Japan should formally issue a clear and unambiguous apology for the sexual enslavement of young women during colonial occupation of Asia and World War II, known to the world as "comfort women", and for other purposes."
6. In the 109th Congress, Congressman Lane Evans tried for the fourth time to convince Congress to consider a resolution seeking justice for Imperial Japan's military "comfort women." On

February 16, 2005, he again introduced the text of past three failed resolutions as H.Con.Res.68.

### Building Momentum

One year later, 2006, still in the 109th Congress, Congressman Lane Evans introduced a new, cleaner version of his “Comfort Women” resolution as H. Res. 759 – “Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge and accept responsibility for its sexual enslavement of young women, known to the world as “comfort women”, during its colonial occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, and for other purposes.” This resolution, unlike the others, was a “simple resolution” and therefore did not need to be considered by the Senate. It was the first resolution on “Comfort Women” to be reported out of the House Committee on International Relations. It was never scheduled, however, for a vote by the full House.

In the first session of the 110th Congress, Congressman Mike Honda, a California Democrat and the new head of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, rewrote the resolution. He introduced it as a simple resolution on January 30, 2007: H.Res. 121.

The House Resolution 121 called upon the Government of Japan to do the following:

- (1) should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces' coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as “comfort women”, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II;
- (2) would help to resolve recurring questions about the sincerity and status of prior statements if the Prime Minister of Japan were to make such an apology as a public statement in his official capacity;
- (3) should clearly and publicly refute any claims that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the “comfort women” for the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces never occurred; and
- (4) should educate current and future generations about this horrible crime while following the recommendations of the international community with respect to the “comfort women”.

The Resolution sought to be a roadmap toward a solution for redress for the “comfort women.” No Japanese war apologies included the “comfort women.” Only three of these apologies at the time had been Cabinet approved. The Kono Statement was not Cabinet approved. Without Cabinet approval, a government statement is more opinion than policy. Thus, no unequivocal Japan government apology exists for the “comfort women.” House Resolution 121 had hoped to resolve this.

### Opposition

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, selected in September 2006, was committed to revising critical accounts of Japan’s war history. He opposed H.Res.121 and stated that the women were nothing other than prostitutes. Contrary to what was stated in the 1993 Kono Statement, he denied the direct and forceful involvement of the Japanese military in the “comfort women” system, and he claimed that the Kono Statement needed to be revised. Furthermore, he and his cabinet members stated, “There is no evidence to prove there was coercion against the women to make them prostitutes.” On March 1, 2007, he told a parliamentary panel, “I have to say that even if the resolution [H. Res. 121] passes, that doesn’t mean we will apologize.” He added that the U.S. resolution contained factual errors.

During the same month, former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone (1982-87) validated Abe's denial of Japan's military responsibility by contorting a previous statement in his memoir, *Commander of 3,000 Men at Age 23* (1978) that as an Imperial Navy lieutenant he set up a "comfort station" for his men in wartime Borneo by acquiring three local girls. Nakasone told reporters at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan that "he had actually set up a 'recreation center,' where his men played board games."

#### Passage of H.Res.121

Despite opposition from the Japanese Government and the Bush Administration, H.Res.121 was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives on July 30, 2007. There were a number of revisions to soften the language. Two "whereas" clauses were added to focus on the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance. One "resolved" clause was muddled to make it unclear as to what the prime minister of Japan needed to do. Overall, the intent and focus of the resolution did not change—Japan needed to offer an unequivocal government apology.

Successful passage of H.Res.121 was the result of collaboration among many diverse Asian American groups coordinated by Coalition 121, the Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issues (WCCW), Korean American Civic Empowerment, Amnesty International, and many women's groups, scholars and civic leaders. The resolution is an example of successful civic engagement of a new American political group—Asian Americans.

House Resolution 121 became an international catalyst for similar resolutions in the States General of the Netherlands, Canada's House of Commons, and the European Parliament in 2007. In the United States, it paved the way for the installation of the first U.S. memorial dedicated to "comfort women" in Palisades Park, New Jersey in 2010. Two years later, New Jersey State Senator Loretta Weinberg introduced New Jersey Senate Concurrent Resolution 124 "commemorating the suffering endured by "comfort women" during their forced internment in Japanese military camps." It passed the New Jersey State Assembly on June 30, 2013 as Assembly Concurrent Resolution 159.

#### Aftermath

Just before Shinzo Abe's second Administration (2012-2020), he said the Kono statement disgraced Japan and that he would issue a "new statement" on the issue. Instead, he convened a commission in 2014 to examine and review the background to the Kono Statement. Its intention was to diminish and marginalize the Kono apology. The testimony of the victims was questioned and the definition of the word "force" narrowed. The government panel found that there had been behind-the-scenes political bargaining with Korean diplomats to determine the language used in the Kono Statement. The final report implied that the Statement was not based solely on historical evidence, but also on foreign policy considerations.

Following the release of the review's outcome, the Abe Administration repeated that it would not change the Kono statement. Japanese Embassies now around the world protest and lobby against all resolutions and memorials to the "comfort women." Although qualified, the Kono Statement remains for a more forward-looking Japanese government to complete its repairing ties with Imperial Japan's victims.

#### **[Text of House Resolution 121]**

Whereas the Government of Japan, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, officially commissioned the acquisition of young women for the sole purpose of sexual

servitude to its Imperial Armed Forces, who became known to the world as *ianfu* or “comfort women”;

Whereas the “comfort women” system of forced military prostitution by the Government of Japan, considered unprecedented in its cruelty and magnitude, included gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death, or eventual suicide in one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century;

Whereas some new textbooks used in Japanese schools seek to downplay the “comfort women” tragedy and other Japanese war crimes during World War II;

Whereas Japanese public and private officials have recently expressed a desire to dilute or rescind the 1993 statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the “comfort women”, which expressed the Government’s sincere apologies and remorse for their ordeal;

Whereas the Government of Japan did sign the 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children and supported the 2000 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security which recognized the unique impact on women of armed conflict;

Whereas the House of Representatives commends Japan’s efforts to promote human security, human rights, democratic values, and rule of law, as well as for being a supporter of Security Council Resolution 1325;

Whereas the United States-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of United States security interests in Asia and the Pacific and is fundamental to regional stability and prosperity;

Whereas, despite the changes in the post-cold war strategic landscape, the United States-Japan alliance continues to be based on shared vital interests and values in the Asia-Pacific region, including the preservation and promotion of political and economic freedoms, support for human rights and democratic institutions, and the securing of prosperity for the people of both countries and the international community;

Whereas the House of Representatives commends those Japanese officials and private citizens whose hard work and compassion resulted in the establishment in 1995 of Japan’s private Asian Women’s Fund;

Whereas the Asian Women’s Fund has raised \$5,700,000 to extend “atonement” from the Japanese people to the comfort women; and

Whereas the mandate of the Asian Women’s Fund, a government-initiated and largely government funded private foundation whose purpose was the carrying out of programs and projects with the aim of atonement for the maltreatment and suffering of the “comfort women”, came to an end on March 31, 2007, and the Fund has been disbanded as of that date: Now, therefore, be it

... That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan— (1) should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces’ coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as “comfort women”, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II;

(2) would help to resolve recurring questions about the sincerity and status of prior statements if the Prime Minister of Japan were to make such an apology as a public statement in his official capacity;

(3) should clearly and publicly refute any claims that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the “comfort women” for the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces never occurred; and

(4) should educate current and future generations about this horrible crime while following the recommendations of the international community with respect to the “comfort women”.



Former Congressional Representatives who spearheaded the passage of H.Res.121, Mike Honda and late Eni Faleomavaega, address the supporters after the resolution passed unanimously, with Korean survivor Yong-soo Lee on July 30, 2007  
(Photo is provided courtesy of Yong-sok Chung)

## **Movement: The Inevitable Coincidence, The first memorial in Palisades Park, NJ**

Author: Chejin Park, Korean American Civic Empowerment

**OVERVIEW** | In the spring of 2009, only two years after the passage of the United States House Resolution 121 (H.Res. 121, the “Comfort Women Resolution”), people in the U.S. started to forget about the “comfort women.” During the two years, Japan kept denying its responsibility for the “comfort women.” The activists in the U.S. were desperate to keep the issue alive and bring justice to the “comfort women” victims.

“Coincidence.” It was a coincidence that one of the staff of the Korean American Civic Empowerment (“KACE,” formerly known as the Korean American Voters’ Council) observed that a group of African Americans were having a ceremony to dedicate a monument to the African American Slavery in front of the Bergen County Court House (“Justice Center”) in Hackensack, NJ, in late April 2009. More than two hundred years after the end of slavery, the African American community was able to dedicate a small monument to the victims of the slavery. They said it took over ten years to erect the monument. Around the monument, there were three other monuments, each dedicated to Holocaust, Armenian Genocide, and Irish Great Hunger. We realized that in the United States, by having a monument, the people remember many historic events, war crimes, heroes, and victims that happened not only in the U.S. but also in somewhere in the world. We also realized that the “comfort women” issue is one of the historic atrocities that we must memorize in the same way.

Swiftly, we started to organize the community and launched a campaign for the “comfort women” memorial. KACE’s high school interns dedicated their summer to develop theories, present the project to local governments, and get petition signatures from people. We could get support from Bergen County and the Borough of Palisades Park, in New Jersey. All local community entities chipped in what they have for the “comfort women” memorial: the land from the Borough of Palisade Park, the boulder from Bergen County, the bronze plaque from the people. On October 23, 2010, the first “comfort women” memorial was dedicated in front of the Palisades Park Public Library.

The “comfort women” memorial is important not only because it is the first “comfort women” memorial outside of Asia, but also because it upgraded the “comfort women” issue to another level of movement.

By having a memorial in a public venue, sponsored by local governments, and erected by people, the “comfort women” issue was officially recognized by the people as one of the crimes against humanity.

With the memorial, we could educate people and our future generations in the U.S. about the “comfort women” that happened far from the U.S. and long time ago. Whatever the Japanese government argues to evade the responsibility, the memorial tells the real story, and refutes the Japanese government’s wrong arguments.

The memorial reignited and maintained the support for the “comfort women.” After the first memorial in Palisades Park, NJ, many “comfort women” memorials were dedicated throughout the United States. Recognizing the importance of the “comfort women” issue, the Bergen County dedicated another “comfort women” memorial next to the memorials of the Holocaust, Armenian Genocide, Irish Great Hunger, and African American Slavery in 2013.

**“We are afraid of being forgotten and being denied,”** said Yong-soo Lee and Ok Sun Lee, “comfort women” survivors, when they visited the memorial in 2011. **“What a relief we get from this memorial! This memorial will keep us being remembered and being recognized.**



Grandmother Ok-sun Lee (left) and Yong-soo Lee (right) stand with the Palisades Park Mayor Rotunda (far left) next to the memorial during their visit to NY to meet with the Holocaust survivors at an event hosted by Kupferberg Holocaust Center and the Korean American Civic Empowerment in 2011.  
(Photo is provided courtesy of Korean American Civic Empowerment)

## **Movement: Lawsuits against the City of Glendale to remove the “comfort women” statue**

Author: Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education

**OVERVIEW** | After the successful installation of the Peace Monument honoring the victims of the Japanese military sexual slavery in Glendale, California, in July 2013, Japanese history deniers did not give up their mission of eliminating the Peace Monument from Glendale Central Park. In a widely reported federal lawsuit initiated against the City of Glendale in February 2014, two Japanese-Americans alleged that Glendale’s approval for the Peace Monument was a violation of the U.S. Constitution’s Supremacy Clause and an infringement of their freedom to use the park.

Upon being served the complaint, the concern of the Glendale city officials was not the lawsuit itself — most lawyers viewed it as an absurd and frivolous action, filed only to intimidate other cities and government entities from erecting a “comfort women” statue, out of fear of a potential lawsuit. However, the fact that the plaintiffs retained a top 20 law firm in the U.S. was worrisome, given that the size and reputation of law firms representing the parties do have an impact on the outcome of the case, and the questionable ethical motives of a purportedly white-shoe law firm in accepting the case. KAFC (now known as CARE) contacted several reputable law firms and successfully secured a pro bono representation from Sidley Austin, LLP, an even higher-ranked law firm, for the City of Glendale.

The City Council members of Glendale vowed to fight to protect the Peace Monument. An alliance of diverse community groups came together in support of the City of Glendale. These supporters, including the Japanese-American community and local Armenian-American and women’s groups, conducted a joint press conference on International Women’s Day in 2014 to express their support for Glendale Peace Monument. (See NCRR’s support of “comfort women”)

The online community for legal professionals also expressed disbelief and became increasingly clamorous when a castigating article appeared in Forbes magazine denouncing the history deniers and the law firm representing them (<http://bit.ly/cwForbes2014>). Two weeks later, the law firm for the plaintiffs suddenly withdrew from the lawsuit, going so far as to offer to refund the retainer fee and to provide free services until the plaintiffs found a suitable replacement, in order to soothe the unhappy client and get out of the case.

Major media outlets around the globe including BBC, Associated Press, CNN, New York Times, Kyodo News, Arirang News, and Al Jazeera flocked to Glendale to interview the city officials and KAFC. In the summer of 2014, KAFC invited two survivors from South Korea — Grandmother Ok-sun Lee and Il-chul Kang, who were living at the House of Sharing shelter and museum in Seoul — to help the City of Glendale in the lawsuit. With these two survivors’ declarations of their life stories, KAFC submitted an *amicus curiae* brief to the court.

As expected, the District Court Judge dismissed the case in the summer of 2014, but the plaintiffs appealed. When the case was dismissed again by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in August 2016, it was obvious that Glendale had definitively won on the merits, which seemed to signal an end to the litigation, unless the plaintiffs were ill-advised enough to pursue a bleak chance of success at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Unfortunately, they were. The plaintiffs appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. Astonishingly, the Japanese government submitted its own *amicus curiae* brief on behalf of the plaintiffs, who until then had been living ordinary lives as residents of Japanese descent in America, stating that the removal of the Glendale Peace Monument was Japan’s “national core interest.” To their collective chagrin, in March 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court summarily denied the plaintiffs’ request for appeal and the District Court’s decision became final.

In 2014, the same plaintiffs, including Koichi Mera, had also filed a separate state lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court. The Superior Court dismissed the case on the grounds that the plaintiffs' action was intended as a "SLAPP" or "strategic lawsuit against public participation" aimed towards intimidate and censoring protected free speech. Again, the plaintiffs appealed the matter, but the state appellate court (Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District) dismissed the case, and the City of Glendale prevailed on its anti-SLAPP motion. The decision resulted in a \$300,000 award for the City of Glendale's legal fees.

State court citation: *Gingery v. City of Glendale*, No. B264209, 2016 WL 6900720 (Cal. Ct. App. Nov. 23, 2016).

Federal court citation: *Gingery v. City of Glendale*, No. CV 14-1291 PA (AJWX), 2014 WL 10987395 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 4, 2014), *aff'd but criticized*, 831 F.3d 1222 (9th Cir. 2016) (plaintiffs had standing but failed to state a claim).



In response to the lawsuit against the City of Glendale, community groups from the Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Thai, Filipino, Armenian and local Glendale came together to condemn history revisionism and in support of the City of Glendale.

(March 8, 2014. Photo by Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education)

**Movement: Glendale lawsuit (Federal District Court decision)**

Author: Honorable Percy Anderson, U.S. District Judge, Central District of California

**OVERVIEW** | The judge dismissed the lawsuit for the plaintiffs’ lack of standing and found their claims that the City of Glendale violated the Supremacy Clause to be baseless: “Glendale’s placement of the Comfort Women monument in its Central Park does not pose the type of interference with the federal government’s foreign affairs powers that states a plausible claim for relief. Instead, even according to the facts alleged in the Complaint, Glendale’s placement of the statue is entirely consistent with the federal government’s foreign policy.”

Federal court citation: *Gingery v. City of Glendale*, No. CV 14-1291 PA (AJWX), 2014 WL 10987395 (C.D. Cal. Aug. 4, 2014), *aff'd but criticized*, 831 F.3d 1222 (9th Cir. 2016) (plaintiffs had standing but failed to state a claim).



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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

CIVIL MINUTES - GENERAL

Case No.	CV 14-1291 PA (AJWx)	Date	August 4, 2014
Title	Michiko Shiota Gingery, et al. v. City of Glendale, et al.		

chosen to adopt a rule that is so antithetical to fundamental principles of federalism and democracy.

*Alameda Newspapers, Inc. v. City of Oakland*, 95 F.3d 1406, 1415 (9th Cir. 1996).

Glendale’s placement of the Comfort Women monument in its Central Park does not pose the type of interference with the federal government’s foreign affairs powers that states a plausible claim for relief. Instead, even according to the facts alleged in the Complaint, Glendale’s placement of the statue is entirely consistent with the federal government’s foreign policy. Plaintiffs have not asked for leave to amend the Complaint to cure the deficiencies identified by Defendant. Nor does the Court believe that any amendment could cure those deficiencies. The Court therefore concludes that Plaintiffs have failed to state a viable constitutional claim and that any amendment would be futile. As a result, the Court dismisses Plaintiffs’ first claim with prejudice. See *Reddy v. Litton Industries, Inc.*, 912 F.2d 291, 296 (9th Cir. 1990). The Court declines to address Defendant’s remaining arguments in support of its Motion to Dismiss.

## **Movement: Campaign against the 2015 Japan-South Korea Agreement**

Author: Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issues

### **Official Statement of WCCW on the 2015 Japan-South Korea Agreement**

After last year's joint agreement issued by the Republic of Korea and Japan on the issues of the "comfort women," WCCW members have been appalled by the Japanese government's continued denial and whitewashing of the historical facts that had already been acknowledged by their previous officials. Their recent statement proves that the agreement was not sincere and genuine. True reconciliation would not be possible without real and perpetual efforts in a clear and unequivocal manner.

WCCW, an organization whose mission is to advocate for the rights of wartime victims -- military sex slaves -- and their lawful reparation, expected and hoped for progress in terms of the lawful reparation and official treatment followed by the agreement of two countries, but the recent activities of the Japanese government failed to reveal this hope is headed for the right direction. We support the recent recommendation by CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women).

1. WCCW envisions "comfort women" issues as a global human rights issue and women's rights movement that stretch over 11 nations who had experienced similar atrocities as well as today's violations of women's rights around the globe. Therefore, we do not narrow down the issue to solely a Korean-Japanese political agenda. Rather, we will continue to advocate, research, and educate the importance of human rights through this history.

2. The agreement made no provisions whatsoever for comfort women survivors from North Korea, China, Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia, Dutch-Indi, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, East Timor, Guam, India, and Vietnam. The agreement must include restitution and sincere apology from the Japanese government for all comfort women of all nationalities.

3. WCCW will make sure that these women occupy a prominent place in the annals of history and are provided with legal reparations not only to honor their bravery and endurance but also to commemorate the importance of human dignity. If the agreement is sincere and unequivocal, the world will see that the Japanese government will open their archival records concerning wartime and postwar treatment, create policies to reconcile with the comfort women, and cease to rewrite the past history; the Japanese government will contribute to writing of accurate accounts of the history and will promote educating its own people and the future generation about the war crimes against humanity.

4. WCCW hopes to watch the issue be resolved by a series of gradual, ongoing, and sincere accomplishments toward all victimized nations, not through a single political deal with the expression "finally and irreversibly." Although WCCW promotes a peaceful reconciliation and is eager to see the final and completed resolution, we do not believe that one bilateral agreement cannot and must not cease or delete the whole history of the war or stop activities by human rights advocates and NGO's.

5. WCCW expresses deep regrets to see that the agreement includes the possible removal or relocation of the Girl statue in front of the Embassy of Japan in Seoul that has a huge symbolic value for Koreans, the victims, and importance of civil rights.

6. WCCW would like to see the end of the Japanese government's diplomatic and publicity efforts to humiliate comfort women survivors and to revise the past, or to interfere with people's right to study, research, and speak out about their experiences and opinions. That is precisely the reason that WCCW launched the "Webinar Project" through which we research, archive, and publish the unarguable historical material about comfort women.

WCCW has been so honored to fight for and be the voice for these voiceless women for the last 23 years since 1992. We cannot possibly imagine their sufferings, but we have learned from and been inspired by the survivors. We sincerely hope that these women will finally find what they have been seeking: peace and dignity.



Press conference at the UN Correspondents Association in NY on March 8, 2016.

Survivor Yong-soo Lee condemned the 2015 Agreement as a backroom deal that utterly disregarded the victims and their voices.

(Photo by Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education)

## Movement: San Francisco, CA – First “comfort women” statue in a major city in the United States of America

Author: Comfort Women Justice Coalition

Date: September 22, 2017



Image depicts the inscriptions in English, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and Tagalog for the "comfort women" memorial in St. Mary's Square in San Francisco, CA  
(Photo by Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education)

OVERVIEW | It was September 22, 2017. The cameras clicked, the audience roared and there it was, the first original memorial statue to the “comfort women” in a major U.S. city: San Francisco. In the statue, three young women—Chinese, Filipina, and Korean—face outward. They stand united, their hands clutching each other, sad but strong, looking at the world. They represent both those who didn’t survive and those who lived to tell the truth. Below them stands a life-size replica of Hak Soon Kim, the first Korean woman to break the silence about what happened to hundreds of thousands of women and girls who were sexually enslaved during World War II.

In July 2015, then San Francisco Board Supervisor Eric Mar, introduced Resolution 150-764 calling for the building of a “Comfort Women” memorial. The resolution, which also called for an end to sex trafficking, specifically stated the fact that the Imperial Japanese Forces were responsible for the building and maintaining of the “comfort women” system. It demanded that the Japanese government both issue an official apology and pay compensation to the surviving victims.

Organizers knew that a broad coalition would be necessary in order to get the resolution passed and once passed get the memorial built. Thus, the “Comfort Women” Justice Coalition (CWJC) was born. Led by retired Judges Lillian Sing and Julie Tang from the “Rape of Nanjing” Redress Coalition, CWJC is representative of the international population of the Bay Area. A multi-ethnic, multi-generational coalition of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Filipino-Americans as well as activists from the women’s movement, human rights advocates, peace and Veterans groups, anti-imperialists, scholars and various others.

The coalition came together around a few basic principles and goals:

1. Build a memorial to the “comfort women” and against sex trafficking.
2. Demand from the Japanese government: A full acknowledgement of the crime of sexual slavery, an official apology and reparations to the survivors.
3. The target is the Japanese Government, NOT the people.

The passage of the resolution would not be easy. The Japanese government was determined that no memorial for the “comfort women” victims in San Francisco would be built. Historical denials would fight the statue every step of the way including at every public hearing. But CWJC’s diverse membership insured that hundreds would be present speaking in favor of the resolution when it was presented to the full Board of Supervisors.

Absolutely critical to the resolution’s passage was the presence of “Halmoni” or “Grandmother” Yong-soo Lee, who at age 15 was transported from her village in Korea to Taiwan and sexually enslaved for

the Japanese military. At the age of 86, Grandmother Lee came to SF to speak for the memorial in 2015:

“I came here as a living evidence of history and I want to tell this beautiful city to please lift my sadness and erect a memorial. I came as a witness to history but I am more than that: I came here as an activist who is trying to solve this history, for the sake of women’s rights around the world. And for the sake of these women, I am determined to solve this problem.

Even with this testimony and the hundreds who followed, the denialists fought back. Koichi Mera, a Japanese national and known denialist even went so far as to call Yong-soo Lee a prostitute and a liar! This kind of vicious attack was typical of the denialists’ “fake news” version of history.

Yet despite these and other efforts by the government of Japan and its adherents, the resolution passed unanimously on September 22, 2015.

After more than 30 public hearings on subjects such as its location, inscription and design, the statue was approved and built on September 22, 2017. But the story wasn’t over. Osaka Mayor Yoshimura threatened that he would end the 60-year “sister-city” relationship if the city didn’t remove the now installed memorial. The city refused and, despite the abrogation of the relationship, the statue is there to stay!

Although building the memorial was its main concern, CWJC was also determined to get the true and full history of the sexual enslavement of hundreds of thousands of women and girls during WWII into the curriculum of local and state high schools. So, one of its first tasks was to go to the San Francisco school board and ask to have a resolution passed mandating the teaching of the “comfort women” as part of World History. Again, the denialists tried to oppose the resolution, but the resolution passed unanimously and teaching San Franciscan tenth graders about this aspect of WWII is already under way. Thanks to the vigorous campaign led by CWJC and its partner organization in Southern California, KAFC (now CARE), the California State Board of Education has also included the “comfort women” issue in its revised History/Social Science Framework for California’s 10<sup>th</sup> Grade in 2016. It is now taught in California high schools. CWJC and CARE also developed a Curriculum and Resources Handbook including lesson plans that have been distributed for free throughout California and the nation. Members of CWJC have been involved in numerous conferences and spoken to countless classes and organizations.

CWJC is determined to keep the issue of the “comfort women” alive. Its latest project is to develop an “Eternal Testimony” wherein a computer generated program would allow visitors to ask questions to a “real” Chinese “comfort woman” survivor and get answers back in real time. It is also working to get thousands of “comfort women” documents and artifacts accepted as part of UNESCO’s Memory of the World program.

Throughout all of its work, CWJC understands that the issue of justice for the “comfort women” has to be seen through the lens of women’s human rights, racial justice, and decolonization. CWJC is proud to be part of the worldwide movement for justice for the “comfort women” seeking an end to sex trafficking and fighting for justice and peace.



“Comfort Women” Column of Strength in St. Mary’s Square, San Francisco, CA  
Sculptor: Steven Whyte  
(Photo by Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education)

## Movement: San Francisco, CA – Osaka sister city termination (Letter from the mayor of Osaka)

Author: NPR

Date: October 4, 2018

**OVERVIEW** | This article provides a reporting of the end to the “sister city” relationship between San Francisco and Osaka as a result of the installment of the Column of Strength, a statue of three girls that commemorates the women and girls who fell victim to the Japanese Imperial Military’s system of sexual slavery during World War II.



‘Experts say thousands of women were targeted. "The Japanese military was responsible for the setting up, use, operation and control of the comfort stations," an International Commission of Jurists report found.

Investigators described life at the brothels as "living hell" for women:

"They were beaten and tortured in addition to being repeatedly raped day after day by officers and soldiers. ... When they were brought to the comfort stations, they were healthy in body and spirit. They left the comfort stations, diseased in body and crippled in spirit. In 1993, Japan conceded that the Imperial Army in World War II had enslaved women, and the country expressed "sincere apologies and remorse."

But in recent years, that apology has grown more complex. As NPR's Elise Hu reported last year, some officials in Japan have questioned whether the government was truly involved in a sexual enslavement campaign — or the women volunteered.

Yoshimura added in his letter that the memorial and plaque will only cause "further disruption" between Chinese-American, Korean-American and Japanese communities.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe also objected to the statue, saying in November 2017 that the comfort women memorial "is not only deeply regrettable but it also opposes the views of the Japanese government."

**Movement: Philippines**

Author: Lila Pilipina

Date: June 25, 1994

**OVERVIEW** | Lila Pilipina is an organization of Filipino “comfort women” - victims of Japanese wartime military sexual slavery, advocating for justice and freedom for victims of violence in wars of occupation or aggression. It was founded on 25 June 1994 and has served as a national focal point to mobilize advocates in the country and around the world to promote the campaign for justice, reparations and historical inclusion. It has participated in national and global efforts to prevent and oppose militarism, armed invasion and their attendant war crimes and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.



Image depicts "comfort women" survivors in Baguio City, Philippines (Lila Pilipina)



Portraits of the “Lolas” (“grandmother” in Tagalog) at Lila Pilipina’s office in Manila, Philippines (Photo by Lila Pilipina)

## **Movement: Until Justice is Served: “Comfort Women” and The Reckoning of Japan**

Author: Taina Bien-Aimé, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

**OVERVIEW** | From the dawn of military conflicts and wars, governments and armed forces have counted the bodies of women and girls among their most valuable and effective weapons of war. Systematic rape, sexual enslavement and exploitation, humiliation, and degradation of women have been and remain today key weapons used for political conquests and the destruction of communities.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) were the first international courts that explicitly recognized wartime sexual violence as a crime against humanity and rape as a weapon of war, respectively. The history of the so-called “comfort women” constitutes one of the gravest examples of such government-sanctioned war crimes.

Prior to and during World War II, Japan's Imperial Military established a wide network of brothels, dubbed “comfort stations,” in its zones of combat specifically designed for military use. From the United Nations to the scholarship of historians to the testimonies of survivors, evidence shows that Imperial Japan engaged in systematic human trafficking for the purposes of sexual servitude. Over 200,000 women and girls (estimated) throughout Asia and the Pacific, including the Philippines, Taiwan, Indonesia, Korea and China, were trafficked into such military “comfort” stations specifically built to accommodate the 220,000 Japanese military personnel. On an average day, 10 military servicemen paid, or were offered, to rape the women and girls in these “comfort stations;” that number would increase to 30 or 40 a day before and after battles. The Allied Forces rescued a few of the women in 1945, but others were sex trafficked anew when the U.S. military, which occupied Japan and other regions of the Asia Pacific, perpetuated the “comfort” system for the U.S.’s own systemic sexual abuse, trafficking thousands more women and girls into officially organized sites and districts for sexual exploitation.

The “comfort women” who survived experienced lifelong illnesses and injuries. After 50 years of anonymity, with feelings of shame and fear of exposure, a number of survivors came forth to speak the truth about the mass rapes, physical torture and sexual trauma they endured as “comfort women.”

Inspired by the brave public testimonies of these survivors, the Korean women’s movement, in particular, led international efforts to pressure Japan into accepting legal responsibility for their war crimes. A Japanese journalist, Matsui Yayori, wrote about the “comfort women” in the newspaper Asahi Shimbun, marking the first time any major newspaper had addressed these wartime crimes.

Today, with only a few dozen “halmonis” (“grandmothers” in Korean) still living, they and their families continue pushing for recognition of the crimes they suffered at the hands of the Imperial Japanese government. To this day, the survivors and the families of these enslaved women and girls, the majority Korean, await justice, reparations, and an official apology for the war crimes Japan perpetrated against them. Regardless of our nationalities or countries of origin, we must all care deeply about justice for “comfort women,” bearing witness to injustices that have no boundaries either in space or time. Forgetting is not an option.

The former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced there was no evidence the Imperial Japanese Military had forced Asian women into military brothels during World War II. He ordered the revision of textbooks in Japan and around the world to delete or dilute the sections on “comfort women,” pressured Japanese newspapers to retract articles covering the subject and called on foreign governments to remove references of these war crimes from official documents.

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women launched a change.org petition calling on the Japanese government to end all such efforts including in foreign textbooks, newspapers, historical records, and official United Nations and other government documents. The global petition also urged that Japan affirm and apologize for its wartime engagement in the human trafficking and institutionalized sexual enslavement of women and girls.

A year later, in March 2016, at the occasion of Grandmother Yong-soo Lee's visit to New York City, the UN Correspondents Association hosted a press conference at the United Nations on International Women's Day, where the august Grandmother Lee condemned the backroom deal between Japan and South Korea. In December 2015, the two governments had declared "final and irreversible resolution" of the "comfort women" issue, without any public deliberations. The deal was later incapacitated thanks to the leadership of Grandmother Lee, her sister survivors, and supporters from around the world. The Korean American Forum of California had invited me to present and connect the plight of "comfort women" with the current day scourge of human trafficking and the sexual violence against women during military conflict.

Throughout the years, slight gestures of hope sometimes surfaced from the Japanese government, giving hope to the "comfort women" that a reckoning could soon arrive. Only vague statements and empty apologies would, however, ensue. In 1993, for example, then Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yohei Kono, acknowledged that "the Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the "comfort" stations and the transfer of "comfort women". Known as the Kono Statement, it was not deemed official and didn't offer government reparations to survivors and to the families of "comfort women." It also failed to embrace the magnitude of the crimes committed.

We fear that the new Prime Minister, Yoshihide Suga, will continue this unacceptable denial. When Mr. Suga was Japan's chief cabinet secretary under Abe he condemned memorials dedicated to "comfort women." He said of one of those statues in South Korea, which appeared to depict Abe kneeling and bowing before a "comfort woman," that if the depiction were true, it would be an "unforgivable" breach of international protocol. We will continue to stand in solidarity with the survivors and their families and call for accountability.

In the spring of 2016, I had the immense privilege to join a ceremony at a "comfort women" memorial in New Jersey. Two special guests at the event were Holocaust survivors, Ethel Katz and Anita Weisbord, who movingly spoke of their exceptional friendship with the Korean "halmonis." Holding each other's hands, they said that both groups shared journeys of torture and survival, unfathomable loss and a deep thirst for justice. These nonagenarian women stood before the world in the name of remembrance. To tell us that we are connected. To urge us to hold to account governments for their complicity in unleashing organized rapes, paid for or not, that amount not only to crimes against humanity, but to femicide.

Honor is bestowed upon governments that recognize their role in perpetuating human rights violations and fulfill their responsibilities as members of the international community to work toward democracy and equality for all. A government's honor is based on truth, reconciliation and justice, not denial of inconvenient history. Acknowledging Imperial Japan's role in the human trafficking, sexual servitude, and other atrocities committed against the countless "comfort women" is essential to Japan's national honor.

The WWII "comfort women" survivors are disappearing from this earth as aging requires, but their testimonies resonate as loudly as the first day they rose to speak their truth. We and the generations to come will ensure that their stories reverberate until justice is served.



Grandmother Yong-soo Lee with the Holocaust survivors in Bergen County, NJ  
(Photo by the author)

## **Movement: Democratic Republic of Congo; South Korea**

Speaker: Dr. Denis Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Panzi Hospital Medical Director

Date: July 2, 2019

**OVERVIEW** | In 2018, Dr. Denis Mukwege and Iraqi Yazidi human rights activist Nadia Murad were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for “their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.” Dr. Mukwege was recognized for his pioneering work at the Panzi Hospital, which provides a holistic care model in treating the spectrum of trauma and injuries endured by victims of rape during armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Dr. Mukwege continues to advocate urgently for justice and reparations for survivors and victims of conflict-related sexual violence. In July 2019, he delivered the keynote speech at the 1st International Conference on “Action with Women and Peace,” held in Seoul, South Korea. The below is an excerpt from the speech’s conclusion:

Wherever I go, whether it is among the survivors of Boko Haram, the Yazidis, the comfort women or in Kosovo, it is the same language, the devastation is the same. Whether the rape is recent or old, women are devastated in the same way.

The same deep pain, the feeling that I am no longer a human being after a rape, the same desire for justice for her executioners, are all damage related to rape. Rape as a “weapon of war” sends the same message to victims: “You are not a human being.”

When there is sufficient evidence to establish the existence of rape in conflict, even if major international organisations or the [United Nations] Security Council cannot make decisions, states may decide to take steps and to take action to restore the dignity of its citizens.

We need to do more. Political and military leaders who investigate or allow sexual violence must be held accountable. They must be prosecuted and punished by national or international criminal justice. Sanctions are more than useful even by the Security Council.

If sexual violence is to be stopped, perpetrators should be prosecuted. It is a disgrace to our humanity that men in power get away with committing war crimes. The truth must be told and justice must be done.

Ladies and Gentlemen, [i]n conclusion, let me recall this fundamental and existential truth:

“The similarity between the suffering of women around the world reminds us that our humanity is one and the same everywhere.”

Indeed, the suffering of a woman who is a victim of sexual violence ignores the culture, the language or the colour of the skin.

Also, every man of every culture and colour must stand up and protest every time a woman is sexually abused somewhere in the world.

Every man’s indifference to women’s suffering displays the latent bestial evil in him. But solidarity with women, respect for them, is a testimony to our access to the higher values of refined civilisation, which allows us, men and women, to hold hands, in solidarity with the challenges of the world by saying: “We are equal, we are complementary and the survival of humanity depends on that of women.”

## **Movement: Teaching “comfort women” in California, USA: the campaign to include “comfort women” in California’s public school curriculum**

Author: Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education

Date: Ongoing

OVERVIEW | The “comfort women” issue has garnered a significant measure of public interest in the U.S., starting with the passage of the U.S. House Resolution 121 in 2007, and has attracted media attention due to subsequent controversies surrounding the “comfort women” memorials. The public’s interest grew when two Japanese-Americans filed a lawsuit against the City of Glendale to remove the Peace Monument in 2014. However, until 2014, none of the states in the U.S. had implemented the “comfort women” issue as a separate topic in the curriculum, and most history teachers in the U.S. have not heard of it in relation to the Pacific War or WWII.

The California Department of Education (CADOE) revises its History/Social Science curriculum approximately every 8 years, and public input is reflected in the process. In 2014, CARE (formerly KAFC) lodged its request to include the “comfort women” issue in the curriculum and encouraged the “comfort women” supporters to provide their input to urge the Department of Education to include the “comfort women” issue in the 2016 revision. Some supporters in Northern California attended local hearings where such input was provided.

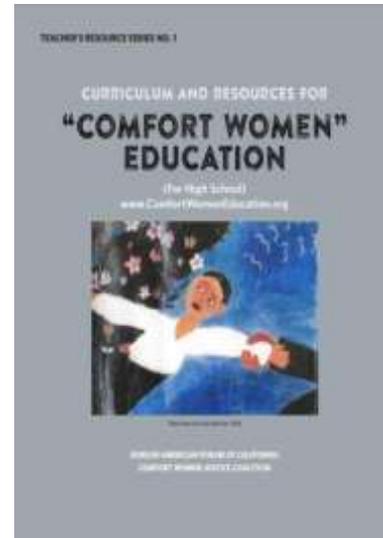


Image depicts the cover page of the first California Teacher’s Resource entirely dedicated to “comfort women” education

The revision draft, including the “comfort women” issue in 10th Grade History/Social Science framework, was published in December 2015 for public input. In January 2016, CARE (known as KAFC at the time) created a website ([comfortwomenpetition.org](http://comfortwomenpetition.org)) in 6 languages (English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Japanese and Tagalog) to lead a campaign to urge CADOE to include the “comfort women” issue, along with other local organizations in Southern and Northern California (CWJC). Soon after, history revisionists in the U.S. who support Abe’s denialism created a Change.org petition to oppose the inclusion of the “comfort women” issue in California’s textbook. At the end of the two-month public input period, 20,000 signatures were collected and 6 boxes of petition were delivered to the Department of Education in Sacramento.

CARE and CWJC attended the public hearing in July 2016 to voice our support for the inclusion of the “comfort women” in the 10th Grade History/Social Science Framework. A team of Japanese opponents also attended it, headed by the late Koichi Mera, the plaintiff of unsuccessful federal and state lawsuits against the City of Glendale to remove the Peace Monument.

At the hearing, after all public comments were completed, the director of the curriculum frameworks unit addressed some of the most contested issues within the revision draft before the Board. He said one of them was the “comfort women” issue and the Committee received great pressures from both sides, for and against the inclusion of the “comfort women” issue. “As a compromise,” he proposed an insertion of a sentence about the 2015 Agreement in the Framework language. The revised version was approved by the Board unanimously as follows:

“Comfort Women” is a euphemism that describes women who were forced into sexual service by the Japanese Army in occupied territories before and during the war. Comfort Women can be taught as an example of institutionalized sexual slavery; estimates on the total number of Comfort Women vary,

but most argue that hundreds of thousands of women were forced into these situations during Japanese occupation. On December 28, 2015, the governments of Japan and the Republic of Korea entered into an agreement regarding the issues of Comfort Women. Two translations of this document can be found at [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/na/kr/page4e\\_000364.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page4e_000364.html) (accessed June 29, 2017) and [http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/ministrynews/20151228/1\\_71575.jsp?menu=m\\_10\\_10](http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/press/ministrynews/20151228/1_71575.jsp?menu=m_10_10) (accessed June 29, 2017).

CARE and CWJC vehemently protested the insertion of the language about the 2015 Agreement, based on: the facts that the insertion of the passage at the last minute was procedurally flawed because the public was not made aware of it in advance, nor was it given a chance to comment on it; the 2015 Agreement was being heavily criticized by the victims and their supporters; the Agreement was made behind closed doors, without knowledge or participation by the victims; the Agreement does not address the victims outside South Korea; and the Agreement is designed to remove the “comfort women” statues and to silence the victims, instead of promoting education and remembrance of this painful history.

The objections raised by CWJC and the supporters were rejected based on the procedural difficulties to revisit the language that would require the Committee to go through the entire process of getting public review/comments and voting by the Board. Instead of spending enormous time and energy to deal with these procedural difficulties, CARE and CWJC decided to focus on the goal of education itself.

CARE and CWJC formed an education committee to create teaching materials for teachers in California. An extensive lesson plan according to the California History/Social Science Content Standard was created in 2018. CARE and CWJC created a one-stop online platform for teaching about the “comfort women” issue at <http://comfortwomeneducation.org>, as well as hard copies of the Curriculum and Resources Handbook for the “comfort women” issue. 1,500 copies of this Handbook were printed and widely distributed to educators in California and beyond for free at teachers’ workshops, seminars, and conferences throughout the U.S.

In 2018, the California Department of Education commissioned The History Project at UC Davis to create Source Sets for the new topics included in the revised History/Social Science Framework. CARE and CWJC have been in communications with The History Project since early 2019 to help them create the best possible Source Set for the “comfort women” issue. CARE and CWJC have recommended including the revised version of the Map of the “comfort” stations created by WAM in Japan. When shown to the teachers, this map could convey the scale and extent of the “comfort women” system and all teachers found the map very helpful to understand and explain the “comfort women” system to the students.

However, according to the Source Set requirements, in order for an image source to be included in the Source Set, the image must come from an archive of an American university or a museum in the U.S. or U.K. Therefore, CARE is now working with UCLA Center for Korean Studies to create an Online Resource Center for the “comfort women” issue that will include the map of the “comfort” stations created by WAM and many other useful sources. The Online Resource Center is scheduled to be completed and open to the public in the Spring of 2021.

# **REMEMBERING THE “COMFORT WOMEN”**

A Teacher’s Guide to Teaching High School Students  
About the Japanese Imperial Military’s  
“Comfort Women” System  
Before & During World War II  
& The Ongoing Fight for Justice

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Front cover photo: “Comfort Women” Column of Strength Memorial in San Francisco, CA, USA