

INTRODUCTION TO SAY IT

'Comfort Women' were young women of various ethnic and national backgrounds who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Government between 1932 and 1945. Some were minors; others were deceptively recruited by middlemen; still more were detained and forcibly abducted. Estimates of the number of 'comfort women' range between 50,000 to 200,000. In the early 1990s, Korean victims of Japan's military sexual slavery broke their silence and came forward nearly a half century after WWII, followed by other survivors in China, Taiwan, North Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and Timor L'Este.

Today, the surviving "comfort women" are between 70-90 years of age. As they are slowly dying off, their wish is for an official apology from the Japanese government, acknowledging what was done to them. The Japanese government still denies legal responsibility and last year, the stories of these horrific war crimes against women were removed from Japanese history and text-books.

The V-Day 2006 Spotlight raised over \$250,000 from V-Day organizers around the world to continue awareness raising activities and to fund a planned museum honoring the Comfort Women. In addition to educating audiences at thousands of local V-Day events, highlights included a college campus tour and visit to the US Congress by two comfort women during which they shared their stories. In response to the briefing, more than 30 Congressional representatives joined Rep. Lane Evans and Rep. Chris Smith (R -NJ) to co-sponsor House Resolution 759, that highlights the atrocities committed against the 'comfort women' and demands that the Government of Japan formally acknowledge and accept responsibility for its sexual enslavement of these young women during its colonial occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II. It also calls for the historical evidence and documentation of this enslavement to be placed back into school textbooks to educate current and future generations about this horrible crime against humanity. Although the resolution was defeated in 2006, the effort gained new momentum and new supporters. One year later, Rep. Mike Honda has scheduled a briefing in February 2007 with a renewed effort to pass the resolution. V-Day is monitoring and following very closely, working with the Congressional members to ensure the resolution is consistent and persistent with the demands for justice for 'comfort women.'

Given the 21st century's escalating armed conflicts, the precedent of impunity for wartime sexual violence cannot be tolerated. The experience of the comfort women essentially set the stage for the patterns of systematic rape and sexual violence that continue today in places of armed conflict such as Sudan, Congo, and Iraq, and thus recognizing the human rights atrocity committed against women during WWII is paramount.

SAY IT

For The "Comfort Women"

Our stories only exist inside our heads
Inside our ravaged bodies
Inside a time and space of war
And emptiness
There is no paper trail
Nothing official on the books
Only conscience
Only this.

What we were promised:
That I would save my father if I went with them
That I would find a job

That I would serve the country
That they would kill me if I didn't go
That it was better there

What we found:
No mountains
No trees
No water
Yellow sand
A desert
A warehouse full of tears
Thousands of worried girls
My braid cut against my will
No time to wear panties

What we were forced to do:
Change our names
Wear one piece dresses with
A button that opened easily
50 Japanese soldiers a day
Sometimes there would be a ship of them
Strange barbaric things
Do it even when we bleed
Do it young before we started bleeding
There were so many
Some wouldn't take off their clothes
Just took out their penis
So many men I couldn't walk
I couldn't stretch my legs
I couldn't bend
I couldn't .

What they did to us over and over:
Cursed
Spanked
Twisted
Tore bloody inside out
Sterilized
Drugged
Slapped
Punched

What we saw:
A girl drinking chemicals in the bathroom
A girl killed by a bomb
A girl beaten with a rifle over and over
A girl running head first into a wall
A girl's malnourished body dumped in the river
To drown.

What we weren't allowed to do:
Wash ourselves

Move around
Go to the doctor
Use a condom
Run away
Keep my baby
Ask him to stop.

What we caught:
Malaria
Syphilis
Gonorrhea
Stillbirths
Tuberculosis
Heart disease
Nervous breakdowns
Hypochondria

What we were fed:
Rice
Miso soup
Turnip pickle
Rice
Miso Soup
Turnip Pickle
Rice Rice Rice

What we became:
Ruined
Tools
Infertile
Holes
Bloody
Meat
Exiled
Silenced
Alone

What we were left with:
Nothing
A shocked father who never recovered
And died.
No wages
Scars
Hatred of Men
No children
No house
A space where a uterus once was
Booze
Smoking
Guilt
Shame

What we got called:
Ianfu-Comfort Women
Shugyofu-Women Of Indecent Occupation

What we felt:
My chest still trembles

What got taken:
The springtime
My life

What we are:
74
79
84
93
Blind
Slow
Ready
Outside the Japanese Embassy every Wednesday
No longer afraid

What we want:
Now soon
Before we're gone
And our stories leave this world,
Leave our heads

Japanese government
Say it
Please.
We are sorry, Comfort Women
Say it to me
We are sorry to me
We are sorry to me
To me
To me
To me
Say it.
Say sorry
Say we are sorry
Say Me
See Me
Say it
Sorry.

[Based on The Testimonies of The Comfort Women]