

Making History Real: Testimony from a Former Comfort Woman by Kathryn Tanaka, Michiko Fukuda, Shirley Ando (Otemae University, Hyogo)

A Special Guest Speaker

On Saturday, May 20th, Junior Seminar and Senior Thesis Research Seminar taught by Kathryn Tanaka welcomed a peace activist and former comfort woman to our class. The speaker was arranged through a group called *Lila Pilipina*, an organization of Filipino survivors of rape and military sexual slavery by Japanese troops during World War II. The women are collaborating with the project 'Dialogue for peace with the grandmas' organized by a Japanese activist group *Pamana Tayo*. For 90 minutes, we listened to her testimony and asked her questions about her experiences.

Before the talk took place, students expressed some nervousness about the session. One student remarked they were curious but afraid of asking questions. Another wondered if the contentious-ness of the issues surrounding the comfort women were just a problem of differences in how history is understood in different countries, and wondered what the difference was between comfort women and sexual violence that happens everywhere. A third student expressed surprise at the nationality of the speaker, saying they thought it was only an issue between Korea and Japan. Going into the talk, students had strongly mixed feelings but were in general interested and wanted to learn more.

The testimony was done in Tagalog with English translation provided by our university's very own Professor Shirley Ando, although *Lila Pilipina* can provide translators of Tagalog to English or Tagalog to Japanese. It was at times difficult to listen to the experiences of our speaker, but her message was an important one. Today, survivors are working for peace and have three main goals: First, they want a public apology from the Japanese government. Second, they want the correct history, including their stories, represented in textbooks and in history. Finally, they want compensation from the Japanese government.

Student Responses

Students had many questions for our speaker, and the session ended far too quickly for all of them. It was challenging in many ways, but it was an incredibly important and valuable 90 minutes.

After the session, students were uniformly positive about the experience. One remarked that it was a valuable "chance to know about something that wasn't write on book" or included in their history classes. Many noted that the testimony made historical issues "real" for them: "I couldn't

believe what Japanese soldiers done to comfort women before hearing her experience." Many said that Lola's story made them aware of how history was personal, national, and global.

In general, student feedback revealed a deeper understanding of the issue, as revealed in the following comments:

Student A: "I didn't know comfort women was exactly exist, because Japanese government don't teach us at all. Even media too. But, comfort women was exist and they were really suffered from it... I must know about it, as Japanese"

Student B: "It was an really good and rare opportunity to know about history which we can't know in our daily life."

Student C: "In Japan, there's no information in history book. I think we need to know comfort women problem after we listened her talking."

Student D: "When Japanese think about sex slavery, we only think about Korean women sexual slavery. But we must think and consider Philippines and more... All Japanese students should know about the history of sex slavery."

Student-Created Teaching Materials

One common thread the comments revealed was that students strongly felt the materials should be taught in Japanese textbooks. As an extension activity, Kathryn asked students to choose one cultural keyword studied in class and relate it to the issue of comfort women to create a textbook page for junior or senior high school students in Japan. One group of students specifically included the story of the Lola as shown in the box below:

~ The Story of Lola E ~

She was born in Negros. Her father was a farmer and her mother run a small shop. In 1944, she was 14 years old. One day, a man in the Japanese army watched and chased her. She thought that's strange, so she run away. But the Japanese soldier caught and kissed her. The Japanese soldier beat her head and she lost consciousness. After 3 weeks, she escaped. But during 3 weeks, she was raped everyday and she kept silent because if she against the soldiers, they behave violently. She wanted to forget this. But she decided to join an NGO, called *Lila Pilipina*. Their aim is three points. Public apology, Accurate historical inclusion. Compensation from Japanese government.

Another group of students decided to describe the relationship between comfort women and colonialism as shown in their textbook page below.

In the end, students described the experience of hearing Lola speak directly to them as "vivid" though "confusing" and "frightening" as well. The majority of students expressed a desire to learn more. As one student noted, the history is "so negative, sad," but we have much to learn from it. We join the students in hoping that the lessons of the past become a way to build a peaceful future.

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Information about online testimony sharing

This educational project is organized by "Pamana Tayo" in collaboration with *Lila Pilipina*, a Filipino "comfort women" survivors' organization. "Pamana" is a Filipino word that means *legacy* and "~tayo" means "Let's ~". Thus, the group's name expresses its mission to learn from survivors and hand the lessons to future generations. Since 2015, Pamana Tayo and Lila Pilipina have held online sessions with Japanese universities to reach out to Japanese youth.

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www.facebook.com/groups/665031626920569/

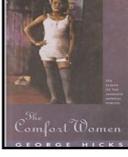
Colonialism and Comfort Women

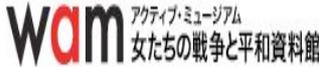
Definition
Colonialism is the control or governing influence of a nation over a dependent country, territory or people.

Comfort women is women who provided sexual services to Japanese imperial Army troops during Japan's militaristic period that ended with World War II and who generally lived under conditions of sexual slavery. The main of them were from Japan, Korea (then a Japanese protectorate) and Taiwan. The average of age of them were young women.

Relation between Colonialism and comfort women
From 1910 to 1945, Korea had been annexed by Japan empire. It was substantially colony of Japan. Korean people had been in poverty because of a colonial policy, and especially young women could not get an education for male-dominated society. Therefore they had to work while World War II. At the time, Japanese soldier needed comfort women, and

<p>Comfort Women: A History by Wallace Edwards (2013) \$8 used</p>  <p>This book relates the history of Japanese forced prostitution during World War II as well as documenting and discussing post-war denials and apologies.</p>	<p>Unfolding the Comfort Woman Debates by Maki Kimura (2015) \$75</p>  <p>This book analyzes the comfort women debates in terms of gender, class and race as well as colonialism based on the testimonies of the victims themselves.</p>	<p>Comfort Woman: A Filipina's Story by Maria Henson (2016) \$27</p>  <p>This auto-biography, by the first-ever Filipina to step forward and break the silence, recounts the ordeals of comfort women in the Philippines.</p>
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<p>Silenced No More: Voices of Comfort Women by S. J. Friedman (2015) \$11</p>  <p>This book tells the stories of the victims and explores themes of suffering, forgiveness and hope.</p>	<p>The Comfort Women: Sex Slaves of Japan by George L. Hicks (1995) \$26</p>  <p>This pioneering text was one of the first books in English to expose the comfort women issue.</p>	<p>Other Important Books</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>The Comfort Women</i> – C. Soh ▪ <i>Comfort Woman</i> – Nora Keller ▪ <i>Comfort Women</i> – Y. Yoshima ▪ <i>Chinese Comfort Women</i> – Qiu ▪ ある日本軍「慰安婦」の回想 ▪ 日本軍「慰安婦」問題
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<p>Women's Active Museum < http://wam-peace.org/en/ ></p>  <p>This activist peace museum in Tokyo runs a great website with tons of info on comfort women and Japan's role in World War II</p>	<p>Fight for Justice <http://fightforjustice.info/></p> <p>FIGHT FOR JUSTICE 日本軍「慰安婦」—忘却への抵抗・未来の責任</p> <p>This site is a rich source of news, stories and inspiration in the struggle to raise awareness and action on comfort women issues.</p>	<p>Other On-Line Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wikipedia: "comfort women" ▪ Youtube: "comfort women" ▪ Asian Women's Fund (AWF) <http://www.awf.or.jp> ▪ Google search: "Teaching about Comfort Women"
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