

Comfort Women

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.” The comfort women included girls as young as 12 and women separated from their own children.



Japanese soldiers waiting their turns outside of a room in a Comfort Station.



Girls and women drafted as Comfort Women.

As many as 200,000 Asian and Western young women were abducted from their homes and forced to serve Japanese soldiers. However, an exact number is not known because most documents detailing the number of comfort women by the Japanese Government were destroyed during the bombing of Tokyo or on purpose.

This government-sanctioned program created untold numbers of comfort stations or military brothels throughout Japanese-occupied territories in the Pacific Rim. The victims kept in the comfort stations were subjected to inhumane and degrading forms of sexual violence. They endured repeated rape – up to 50 times a day – mutilation, and diseases. Many did not survive the brutality and horror of their captivity. Others were executed after the war or never made it home. Those who did survive lived in shame and obscurity for decades, until early 1990s.

In response to sworn testimonies of the survivors, as well as irrefutable historic documentation, Japanese officials have issued ambiguous statements that fail to acknowledge the precise nature of these crimes in order to sidestep legal obligations resulting from violations of international law. Japan has never taken full responsibility for this crime and it has never made a clear apology.

Bergen County Comfort Women Memorial Committee

144 Main Street, Suite 203
Hackensack, NJ 07601
Tel. (201) 488-4201 Fax. (718) 961-4603



(Former Korean American Voters' Council)
NJ: 144 Main Street, Suite 203, Hackensack, NJ 07601
NY: 3520 147th Street, Suite 2D, Flushing, NY 11354
Tel. (201) 488-4201 Fax. (718) 961-4603

August 13, 2012

The Honorable John D. Mitchell
Chair of Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders
One Bergen County Plaza
Hackensack, NJ, 07601

Re: Proposal for a Comfort Women Memorial in front of the Bergen County Justice Center

Dear Chairman Mitchell:

The Korean American Civic Empowerment, a nonpartisan, nonprofit community organization based in Hackensack, NJ, respectfully submits this proposal for a Comfort Women Memorial in front of the Bergen County Justice Center to the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Human Rights are one of the foundational principles of the great country of the United States of America. The United States has been at the forefront in promoting and defending human rights throughout the world. In addition, human rights are one of the basic values among Americans. To promote and defend human rights, Bergen County has a tradition of commemorating human rights violations by erecting memorials in front of the Bergen County Justice Center: Holocaust, perpetrated by Nazi Germany; Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Turks; the Irish Great Hunger by the British Government; and the Slavery & Segregation of African Americans by the United States.

The proposed Comfort Women Memorial will be a strong measure to show Bergen County's commitment and support for human rights and women's rights because the Comfort Women System by the Imperial Japan was the largest human trafficking in 20th century, victimized at least some 50,000 to 200,000 women from Korea, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Holland and Indonesia to provide sex to Japanese soldiers during World War II. It became a symbol of government organized war crime against women and illegal human trafficking for sex slavery or forced prostitution.

The Comfort Women Memorial in the Bergen County Justice Center will be a milestone in fighting against the ever increasing activity of sex trafficking. A 2011 paper published in Human Rights Review, "Sex Trafficking: Trends, Challenges and Limitations of International Law," reported that in 2008, 12.3 million individuals were classified as "forced laborers, bonded laborers or sex-trafficking victims" and approximately 1.39 million of these individuals worked as commercial sex slaves, with women and girls comprising 98%, or 1.36 million, of this population.

Bergen County's financial burden on building the proposed memorial will be nominal. We only request Bergen County to designate a strip of land for the memorial in front of the Bergen County Justice Center and donate a boulder that can be picked up from a county property. The residents will donate a plaque, expenses to attach the plaque to the boulder, and landscaping.

The memorial will be a great example of cooperation between a government and citizens for promoting and defending human rights to the world. Also, most of the Asian American residents and human rights supporters strongly support this memorial. We respectfully request the Board of Chosen Freeholders to listen to the residents' opinion and have a memorial built as soon as possible.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Chejin Park at 201-488-4201 or kaceinfo@kace.org.

Sincerely,

Dongchan Kim
President



(Former Korean American Voters' Council)
NJ: 144 Main Street, Suite 203, Hackensack, NJ 07601
NY: 3520 147th Street, Suite 2D, Flushing, NY 11354
Tel. (201) 488-4201 Fax. (718) 961-4603

PROPOSAL

1. COMFORT WOMEN

Historical records show that the Japanese government organized the enslavement and rape of 200,000 girls and women during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from 1932 through the end of World War II. The victims were referred to as "comfort women," but they were mostly girls under eighteen, some as young as twelve. They were "acquired" from Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Netherlands by kidnapping or deceiving. They were kept in military "comfort stations" and subjected to inhumane and degrading forms of sexual violence. They endured repeated rape – up to 50 times a day –, disease, forced abortions, humiliation, and torture, sometimes resulting in mutilation, and even death. By some estimates only 30% survived the ordeal. Those who did survive lived in shame and obscurity for decades, until reports of organized rape camps during the war in Bosnia prompted survivors to begin coming forward in the early 1990s.

In response to sworn testimonies of the survivors, as well as irrefutable historical documentation, Japanese officials have issued ambiguous statements that fail to acknowledge the precise nature of these crimes in order to sidestep legal obligations resulting from violations of international law. In short, Japan has never taken full responsibility for this crime, nor have they ever made a clear apology to these women.

2. U.S. House of Representatives Comfort Women Resolution: H.Res. 121 of 110th Congress

The Comfort Women Resolution, which was introduced by Rep. Honda and cosponsored by 167 Congress members of both parties, expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan 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.

The Resolution was unanimously passed on July 30, 2007. It is a landmark human rights framework that inspired many similar resolutions that were passed in the Netherlands (11/8/2007), Canada (11/28/2007), E.U. (12/13/2007), and the Philippines (3/11/2008).

The Resolution asks the Government of Japan (1) to 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; (2) to 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) to 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) to educate current and future generations about this horrible crime while following the recommendations of the international community with respect to the 'comfort women'.

3. Japan's Continued Denial

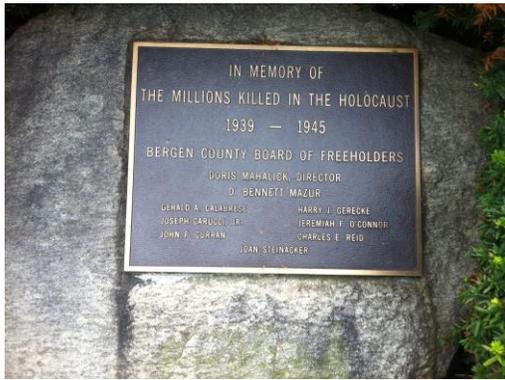
Far from doing what was asked by the Resolution, for the last 5 years, the Japanese Government has been downplaying this issue, and it has only been getting worse. In May 2012, Japanese legislators visited the borough hall of Palisades Park, NJ, and asked the municipal government to remove the memorial dedicated to "comfort women" victims. The Japanese legislators denied all claims, labeling the "comfort women" as "commercial prostitutes" who followed the soldiers to earn money. In June 2012, Japanese citizens started a petition to repeal the "comfort women" Resolution (H. Res. 121), calling it a lie.

4. Memorials in front of the Bergen County Justice Center

Bergen County Justice Center where Bergen County court house is located is a symbolic place for defending human rights and bringing justice. Therefore, Bergen County has a tradition of commemorating human rights violations by having memorials in front of the Bergen County Justice Center: Holocaust by the Nazi Germany, Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Turk, the Irish Great Hunger by the British Government, and the Slavery & Segregation of African Americans by the United States.



Bergen County Justice Center



Holocaust



Armenian Genocide (1990)



Irish Great Hunger (1995)



African American Slavery (2009)

In 2010, the Borough of Palisades Park, Bergen County, and the Korean American Civic Empowerment built a comfort women memorial in front of the Palisades Park Public Library. It was a result of close cooperation between community-based organizations and local governments.



The Comfort Women Memorial in front of the Palisades Park Library (2010)

5. Proposed Comfort Women Memorial

The memorial we would like to erect in front of the Bergen County Justice Center will be the same format with already existing memorials --- a bronze plaque on a boulder. We already asked multiple artists to design the plaque. The language on the plaque will be decided after a review of the Board of Freeholders. Following is a draft of the language:

“In Memory of hundreds of thousands of women and girls from Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, the Netherlands and Indonesia who were forced to sexual slavery by Imperial Japan before and during World War II.”

were forced into prostitution to "comfort" military personnel.

Tens of thousands of “comfort women” in Asia were forced into prostitution at military brothels

. Its military is accused of forcing roughly 200,000 women, mainly from Korea and China, to serve as sex slaves -- they were known euphemistically as "comfort women" -- for soldiers in the Imperial Army.

Historians have said the “[comfort women](#)” were largely Korean and Chinese women and while Japan has apologized for any mistreatment the women suffered, it has denied that women were forced to act as prostitutes or sex slaves.

The euphemism "comfort women" (*ianfu*) was coined by imperial Japan to refer to young females of various ethnic and national backgrounds and social circumstances who were forced to offer sexual services to the Japanese troops before and during the Second World War. Some were minors sold into brothels; others were deceptively recruited by middlemen; still others were forcibly abducted. Estimates of the number of comfort women range between 50,000 and 200,000. It is believed that most were Korean.