

THEY SHALL BE REMEMBERED



“Comfort Women”

/ˈkʌmfə(r)t ˈwʊmən/

Noun

Women who were forced to become sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during the Second World War.

This project was created by Claire and Jason from the “Live Well, Take Action” program which aims to engage Asian youth in learning about wellness and how it can have significant impacts on self, others and society. It is a collaboration between ALPHA Education and the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter (CCNCTO). Follow us on Instagram: @livewelltakeaction or Twitter: @lwta_program.

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200 000 women



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During the time period of 1932-1945, the Japanese Imperial Army had attacked many Asian countries and occupied a lot of cities (known as The Pacific War). In those occupied places, the Japanese Imperial Army set up comfort stations or camps where they kidnapped women and coerced them to go to the stations willingly, by pretending to bring them to nursing stations or offering them employment. Once the women were at the stations, they were forced to provide sexual services for Japanese officers and soldiers under brutal, inhuman conditions and lived under conditions of sexual slavery.

Women at comfort stations were forced to provide sexual services to many officers and men all the time. They were brutally raped even when they were pregnant or having their periods. They were being called “gifts from the emperor” and “sanitary public bathroom”.

Holidays came once a month and some of the stations were running without any holidays. Leaving the stations without permission from the officers was also impossible.

The impact on the victims

Many “comfort women” who were ill were executed along with the excuse of disposing evidence that these camps existed. Many women attempted suicide both during the war as well as after the war due to the mental and physical torture they endured.

Many women that were shipped out to other countries could not return to their homeland out of shame and guilt.

Many women could not bear children anymore. They also suffered from mental illnesses and sexually transmitted diseases after being imprisoned and raped for such a long time.

As time goes by, it has been a century since the war started. “Comfort women” are being forgotten as the remaining survivors are very old and unfortunately, most of them have passed away. However, “comfort women” should be an issue that we must not forget as it is very important to make sure that we humans can learn from this experience and not to repeat creating something similar again as well as getting justice for those involved. Moreover, we should not allow people to hide the truth and let everyone know what happened to these poor victims. This is the best way for us to repay the selfless, courageous actions of the survivors - to stand up for them and remind the public of their horrific past.

What is being done by the government(s)?

In 2015, Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, and South Korea’s President Park Guen-Hye met together to discuss this issue of reconciliation. Japan decided to pay 1 billion Yen in order to compensate and South Korea decided to stop denouncing Japan relating to this topic as well as removing a statue remembering the victims located in front of the Japanese Embassy. The issue was deemed resolved by both parties.

However, many of the surviving “comfort women” as well the majority of South Korea’s population disagreed. Their goal wasn’t to receive compensation but instead, a formal public apology from the Japanese government and their Prime Minister.

While in Canada during 2007, the government passed the motion 291 on the issue. This motion was created to push the Japanese government to recognize their mistakes and issue an official apology. The USA and EU also created an alike resolution and motion during the same year.

To this day, people are still waiting for this very apology.

What can we do?

Raise public awareness:

- Organize a charity donation
- Promote WW2 films that highlight comfort women

Get countries’ attention:

- Add to history textbooks
- Educate in schools

Support the organizations:

- ALPHA Education
<https://www.alphaeducation.org>
- Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issues
- And many more...

Online shops:

- Marymond (over 50% of their proceeds are donated to non-profit organizations that work to bring light to these issues)

<https://marymond.kr/main/index>

References

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