



House of Sharing Museum of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan

OPEN LETTER

To: Professor J. Mark Ramseyer
February 15, 2021

Dear Professor Ramseyer,

Your recent paper “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War” has shocked, offended, and hurt many not only in Korea, but in countries around the world. Describing “comfort women” as “licensed prostitutes” is simply untrue and morally wrong. Your paper grossly ignores numerous historical materials that prove most of the women were taken by force into the system and became sexual slaves. This includes testimonies of survivors, testimonies of former Japanese soldiers, previous research conducted by the international communities and institutes such as the UN Human Rights Committee and Amnesty International, and the 1993 Kono statement, which recognized the forced mobilization of the “comfort women.”

We wish to share some words from Lee Ok-seon Halmoni, a Korean survivor of the comfort station system, in a conversation we had with her recently:

“I was not given a contract, I did not sign anything, and I did not receive any money. I never agreed to become a “comfort woman.” Now, I want the Japanese government to officially apologize for all I had to endure.”

Lee Ok-seon didn’t even know what a “comfort woman” was when she was abducted by brokers while running errands and forcibly turned into one. Jeong Ok-soon Halmoni did not agree to becoming a “comfort woman” when she was kidnapped, beaten, and forced to serve Japanese soldiers, nor did the countless other young girls taken by force and/or misled by Japanese soldiers, brokers, or family members. The Japanese government’s responsibility for the comfort station system is not diminished based on who committed the first wrong against these women.

Another survivor currently living at the House of Sharing, also named Lee Ok-seon, wishes to share the following with you:

“The Japanese controlled everything in Korea at the time, and they could do anything they wanted. If they told us to go to the right, we had to follow their orders. Do you know that?”

As a Professor sponsored by Mitsubishi, a Japanese company recently condemned for the use of forced labor against Koreans during WWII, and given your ties with Japanese right-wing movements and papers, we question your legitimacy in writing on this topic with an independent, impartial stance.

As guardians of the Halmonis’s memory and stories, and as part of a younger generation who wishes to live in a world where these events can never occur again, we state our indefectible support to the victims and our intention to fight against any form of denial and revisionism. We strongly urge you to live up to the title you were granted, and the institution you represent,



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and to conduct research following a non-partisan approach and using ethical principles. We ask you to reconsider your position and apologize to the survivors.

We believe we must always support the women who were forced to endure the comfort station system and make sure that human rights are always respected. We hope every person who comes across these words shares our values and joins us in our endeavor.

Sincerely,

YAJIMA Tsukasa, Beatrix Labbe, Katherine Watson, Misook Shin Marcus, Gabriel Berzinsky, Nicole Barta, Amanda Buck, Tabea Stiehl

International Outreach Team of the House of Sharing and the Museum of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan