2017

One Thousand Wednesdays: Transnational Activism from Seoul to Glendale

Vera Mackie

University of Wollongong, vera@uow.edu.au

Publication Details
One Thousand Wednesdays: Transnational Activism from Seoul to Glendale

Abstract
Every Wednesday at lunchtime a group of demonstrators gathers in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. For over twenty years they have protested against the Japanese military's wartime enforced military prostitution/military sexual slavery system.2 To mark the 1,000th demonstration in 2011, a statue was erected on this site. (See also Chapter 9 by Seung-kyung Kim and Na-Young Lee in this volume.) The statue depicts a young woman in Korean ethnic dress seated on a chair, facing the Embassy. Beside her is an empty chair, inviting demonstrators to sit beside her in solidarity. Duplicates of the statue have been installed in the War and Women's Human Rights Museum in Seoul, in Glendale in suburban Los Angeles, and in Detroit—with others planned. Plaques commemorating the women who suffered under this system have also been erected in Manila, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia.

Keywords
activism, seoul, glendale, one, wednesdays:, transnational, thousand

Disciplines
Arts and Humanities | Law

Publication Details

This book chapter is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/lhapapers/3486
One Thousand Wednesdays: Transnational Activism from Seoul to Glendale

Vera Mackie

Introduction

Every Wednesday at lunchtime a group of demonstrators gathers in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. For over twenty years they have protested against the Japanese military’s wartime enforced military prostitution/military sexual slavery system.⁵ To mark the 1,000th demonstration in 2011, a statue was erected on this site. (See also Chapter 9 by Seung-kyung Kim and Na-Young Lee in this volume.) The statue depicts a young woman in Korean ethnic dress seated on a chair, facing the Embassy. Beside her is an empty chair, inviting demonstrators to sit beside her in solidarity. Duplicates of the statue have been installed in the War and Women’s Human Rights Museum in Seoul, in Glendale in suburban Los Angeles, and in Detroit—among others planned.⁶ Plaques commemorating the women who suffered under this system have also been erected in Manila, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia.⁷ The campaigns for redress have included demonstrations, litigation, a people’s tribunal, petitions to the United Nations and the International Commission of Jurists, and petitions to national and local governments asking them to put pressure on the Japanese government for apology and reparations. The movement has also deployed cultural politics, bringing the issue into public discourse through research, collecting testimonies, producing documentaries, and through various forms of artistic representation, not least the recently created statues. The campaign has been a global one, bringing together activists from Europe, Asia, the Pacific, and North America, including diasporic communities.

This is a transnational issue by its very nature, involving the history of military conflict between nations and involving women who were transported across national borders and subjected to militarized sexual violence. It can only be understood through an intersectional analysis which considers gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, racialized positioning, the dynamics of militarism, imperialism and colonialism, and discourses of history and memory.⁸ There has also been a complex interplay of local, regional, transnational, and global concerns. In this essay, I survey activism around
then forcibly transported from one battlefield to another. Survivors were discovered by the Allied troops throughout Asia and the Pacific toward the end of the war.17

Post–Second World War military tribunals

After its surrender, Japan was occupied by the Allies from 1945 to 1952. The Far Eastern Commission set up the International Military Tribunal of the Far East in Tokyo from April 1946 to November 1948. As the Allied troops administered the surrender in different parts of Asia and the Pacific, they interrogated Japanese soldiers and sailors, their combatants, internees, prisoners of war, laborers, and members of local communities. Many of these interrogation records included reference to the Army and Navy setting up the military brothels, asking local leaders to provide women, the kidnapping of local women, or instances of sexual assault.18 Sexual enslavement and forced prostitution were barely mentioned during the Tokyo Tribunal, despite extensive knowledge and documentation. Charges were, however, brought against defendants for war crimes committed during the Nanjing invasion under the 1907 Hague Convention IV and the 1929 Geneva Convention. Although there were no prosecutions in Tokyo for the sexual enslavement of women, this issue was mentioned in some of the other regional tribunals.19 In February 1948, the managers of such facilities received sentences of five to twenty years in the Dutch War Crimes Tribunal in Batavia.20 They were indicted for forcing European and what were then known as “Eurasian” women into prostitution in the Japanese city of Semarang.21 Later critics have pointed out that the Dutch tribunals did not address the situation of the many Indonesian women who were enslaved. Although the Tokyo Tribunal did not prosecute the issue, the interrogation records have provided resources for later generations of scholars, activists, and lawyers who have read the documents from a new perspective. After the end of the occupation in 1952, Japan paid reparations to some former combatant nations and provided development assistance to several neighboring countries. In these agreements, there was no further reflection on the question of what crimes had or had not been prosecuted in the various tribunals in the Immediate post–Second World War years. The President of the Philippines pardoned Japanese war criminals and their Philippine collaborators in 1953.22 Relations with Indonesia were normalized in 1958, with war debts deemed to be settled at this time. In 1965, Japan and South Korea signed the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Under the normalization treaty the grants and loans provided at this time foreclosed any future claims against the Japanese government. When relations were normalized with the People’s Republic of China in 1972, the Chinese government also waived claims for reparations.23

Private trauma and public discourse

While commentators often refer to the decades of “silence,” there was in fact widespread knowledge of the wartime system in Japan and in the territories occupied by Japan. The encounters in the military “brothels” lived on in the memories of the
military personnel and the enslaved women, not to mention all of the officers, doctors, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs who facilitated the system. Early female memoirs and literary works also mention the system and, as noted above, ample evidence appeared in interrogation reports prepared for various military tribunals. Several books on the issue appeared in the Japanese language in the 1970s. Nonetheless, a changed understanding of the issue of militarized sexual violence was necessary before this issue could become the subject of international human rights discourse. The feminist movements of the 1970s and beyond were vital to this changed understanding, as were coalitions between feminists in different countries in the Asian region. In the case of South Korea, the democratization movement of the 1980s also opened up spaces for discussion. In the early post-Second World War years, the existence of military "brothels" was not really problematized and the question of coercion was rarely raised. By the late twentieth century, however, feminist commentators were talking about the issue in terms of a "war crime" and a "crime against humanity." From the 1970s, feminists from South Korea and Japan collaborated in protests against contemporary forms of prostitution, in particular the purchase of sexual services by Japanese tourists travelling to Korea. More recently, they have connected this issue with the provision of sexual services for the US military stationed in South Korea and Japan. In order to put these contemporary issues into historical perspective, they also explored the history of enforced military prostitution/sexual slavery. In April 1988 at the International Conference on Women and Tourism at Jejudo in South Korea, Yun Chung-ok of Ewha University presented a paper on the wartime system. In January 1989, women staged a demonstration in Seoul, protesting plans to send a Korean representative to the funeral of Emperor Hirohito (1926–89), for they ultimately held the wartime Emperor responsible for the actions of the Japanese military. In May 1990, when President Roh Tae Woo was planning a state visit to Japan, women's organizations wrote to him demanding that he raise the issue with the Japanese government. At a state banquet in honor of Roh's visit, Emperor Akihito expressed regret for the suffering of Koreans under Japanese colonial rule. At this stage the official Japanese government position was that military brothels had been privately run. Korean women's organizations wrote to Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki prior to his visit to South Korea in October 1990, demanding an admission, an apology, and compensation.

The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery (Hanyug Ch'ongindae munje tae'ak hyö bölhwoe) was founded in November 1990 as an umbrella group for several dozen feminist organizations in South Korea. It was also allied with feminist groups in Japan, Taiwan, Burma, the Philippines, and North Korea. The Council has been at the forefront of research on the issue and in campaigns for redress for Korean survivors. In Japan, the Asian Women's Association (Ajia no onnatchi no kai) and the Violence Against Women in War Network Japan (Senso to josei e no boryoku Nihon nettowakun/VAWW-Net-Japan) have been important. In the early stages of campaigns on this issue, it tended to be framed as an issue between the Japanese state and its former colony of Korea. As more and more women from other countries came forward, though, it could no longer be framed as a bilateral issue between Korea and Japan. The issue was also complicated by the division of the Korean peninsula into North and South.

Until the 1990s, very few individual survivors had provided public testimony of their experiences. A Japanese woman, Mihara Yoshie (1921–93), published an autobiography under the pseudonym "Shiota Suzuki" in 1971, and she was interviewed on a radio program in Japan in 1986. In 1979, filmmaker Yumatanai Tetsuo made a documentary and published a book about a Korean survivor, Pae Pae Yong-gil (1915–91), who lived out the post-Second World War years in Okinawa. In August 1991, a Korean survivor, Kim Hekun (1924–97), held a press conference to tell of her wartime experiences. She was soon joined by other survivors from Korea, Jan Ruff O'Herne, a Dutch woman now residing in Australia, came forward in 1992 and published her autobiography in 1994. Maria Rosa Henson (1927–97) from the Philippines also came forward in 1992 and published her autobiography in 1996. By 1993 in South Korea, 103 women had identified themselves as survivors of the enforced military prostitution/military sexual slavery system, and it was reported that there were 123 survivors in North Korea too. In 1992, Taiwanese survivor Huang A-Tao told her story. In Taiwan a total of fifty-eight women came forward, with only three surviving in early 2016. In the Philippines there were an estimated seventy survivors in early 2016.

On March 4, 1992, the Korean Council submitted a petition to the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) requesting that it investigate atrocities committed against women during the Second World War and pressure the Japanese government to pay reparations. The UNHRC placed the issue on the agenda for its August 1992 meeting. The UNHRC's Subcommission for the Protection of Minorities described the system as a "crime against humanity that violated the human rights of Asian women and the international agreement against forced labor that Japan signed in 1932." The movement also mandated the South Korean government to put pressure on the Japanese government for redress.

In the meantime, nongovernmental organizations conducted a fundraising campaign to support the survivors. The South Korean government of President Kim Young-sam (1927–2015) chose not to bring claims against the Japanese government, but passed a special bill in August 1993 to support the survivors. Each survivor was to be paid a one-off payment of five million won (about US$6,250 at that time) and monthly support of 250,000 won. In Taiwan, the government pays monthly social welfare payments and medical insurance for the survivors and provides financial support for the Taipei Women's Rescue Foundation.

The Japanese government's response

The initial response of the Japanese government was to deny direct military involvement. In January 1992, however, historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki went public with documents he had found in official archives. The "Taiwan Army Telegram 602," March 12, 1942, contains the following passage.

In regard to the Secret Telegram of Army No 63, we've been asked by the Southern Army General Command to dispatch as soon as possible 50 native comfort women to "Borneo." On the basis of Secret Telegram of Army No 623, we request travel
permits for the 3 operators named below [names deleted by Japanese authorities], who have been investigated and selected by the military police.  

In all, Yoshimi revealed six documents from the military archives which incriminated the Japanese government. After the release of these documents in 1992, the Japanese government initially issued a statement by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Kōno Yōhei, known as the “Kōno statement,” which admitted government involvement. The government investigated the issue and released a report in 1993, which acknowledged that there had been military "comfort stations" in "Japan, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, the then Malaya, Thailand, the then Burma, the then New Guinea, Hong Kong, Macao and the then French Indochina."  

With respect to compensation, the Japanese government stuck to its position that all claims for reparation had been settled in the treaties signed from the 1950s to the 1970s. Rather than take responsibility by providing compensation or reparations, it facilitated the creation of a private organization generally known as the "Asian Women's Fund" (the full title is the Asian Women's Friendship and Peace People's Foundation/ Josei no tame no Ajia Heiwa Kukumin Kikin). The Fund sought donations from private individuals, and in July 1996 it announced it would pay US$18,500 each to around 300 survivors in Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. This has been a bone of contention among the survivors and their supporters in several countries, with many seeing the money as tainted. In Indonesia, for example, the funds were used by the government to set up nursing homes for the survivors rather than being disbursed to individuals.  

In 1996, UN Special Rapporteur, Radhika Coomaraswamy, described the system as "military sexual slavery" and recommended that the Japanese government pay compensation. This prompted another wave of denials from members of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and other public figures on the political right. Although there were fears that Prime Minister Abe Shinzō (the LDP incumbent in 2016) would retract the Kōno Statement, for the moment the Kōno Statement still stands. Abe's statement on the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 2015 stopped short of repudiating the Kōno Statement, although this statement has been criticized as historically inaccurate in other ways.  

Litigation and international political pressure  

In December 1991, Kim Hak-soon was part of a class action against the government of Japan sponsored by the Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families. A separate suit was filed by four women at the Shimono-seki branch of the Yamaguchi District Court. In the late 1990s, sixteen women from China sued the Japanese state for compensation and an apology, supported by a team of Japanese and Chinese lawyers. Their claims were denied due to the statute of limitations and to the individuals' lack of standing to sue the state. In August 1999, nine Taiwanese women brought a suit in the Tokyo District Court, which turned down the case. Appeals were subsequently lost in the Tokyo High Court in February 2004 and the Tokyo Supreme Court in February 2005. Another case was brought in the United States in September 2000 by eighteen survivors. The US court system allows litigation where human rights abuses have occurred, even if the events did not occur in the United States. This case went as far the Supreme Court, but was unsuccessful.  

Democratic Congressional Representative Mike Honda from California submitted a nonbinding resolution to the Congressional Committee on Foreign Relations on January 12, 2007. The resolution called on the government of Japan to formally apologize and accept historical responsibility "in a clear and unequivocal manner for ... the coercion of young women into military sexual slavery." The House Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment held a public hearing where Japanese survivors Yi Yong-su and Kim Kun-ja and Dutch-Australian Jan Ruff O'Herne testified. The US House of Representatives approved House Resolution 121 in July 2007. Similar resolutions have been passed in the Netherlands, Canada, and the European Parliament. There was a similar campaign in Australia, with a few local governments passing resolutions, but none at the national government level. In each of these places, diasporic communities played an important role. In parallel with these transnational campaigns, local activities in support of the survivors continued in each country.  

The House of Sharing  

In South Korea, Buddhist organizations and other NGOs conducted fundraising campaigns to support the survivors. From 1992, a group of elderly survivors shared a rented house in Seoul, known as the "House of Sharing" (the Korean name "Nam-un-ui Jip" literally means "our house"). The House of Sharing moved to the suburbs of Seoul in 1995. As well as housing the survivors, the complex also includes a museum, a gallery of paintings by the survivors, and memorial statues to those who have passed away. The survivors and their supporters participate in the weekly Wednesday demonstration outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul (discussed below). Similar support activities are carried out for survivors in other countries, although there are no doubt countless others who have not come forward with their stories of wartime abuse.  

The Wednesday demonstration  

In January 1992, Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi visited South Korea. On Wednesday, January 8, 1992, Kim Hak-soon, other survivors, and their supporters gathered in front of the Japanese Embassy in downtown Seoul. They demanded that the Japanese government make an official apology and provide compensation, chanting "Apologize!" "Punish!" "Compensate!" There has been a "Wednesday demonstration" every week since then. Survivors and their supporters hold placards in Japanese, Korean, or English. The elderly survivors sit on portable stools, facing the Japanese Embassy, flanked by their younger supporters. When international supporters visit Seoul, they often join in the demonstrations. Demonstrations are
carried out in other places, too, such as demonstrations in front of the Japanese Embassy in Manila on the occasion of the Japanese Emperor's visit in 2016. Taiwanese survivors and their supporters have demonstrated outside the Japanese representative office, the "Interchange Association" in Taipei.56

The demonstrations have a performative effect in the sense developed in Judith Butler's writings. Butler adapted the notion of performativity from Austin's linguistic speech act theory. Performative sentences are those that do something: make a promise, sentence someone, or perform a marriage, for example. Through the repeated iteration of performative acts, "sex," "gender," and other social categories are produced. Here I argue that the repeated iteration of the act of demonstrating in public space produces the citizenship of the elderly survivors.43 Through their embodied presence in public space, the survivors are asserting their citizenship in the modern South Korean nation-state. Their first assertion of citizenship was in coming out publicly to tell their stories of wartime abuse and to charge both the South Korean government and the Japanese government to do something about their situation. The first actions—holding press conferences and contributing their testimonies to various publications—were about bringing their stories into public discourse. In their weekly attendance at the Wednesday demonstrations, they are making their demands visible in a literally public space on a Seoul street. Their placards in Korean, Japanese, and English show that they are addressing multiple audiences: the South Korean government and the South Korean public, the Japanese government and the Japanese public, and an international community which often communicates in the English language.

The Women's Tribunal

The movement for redress has also been supported by research. As noted above, the first books on the issue appeared in Japanese in the 1970s. A team in South Korea has been collecting survivor testimonies since 1993.44 The Korean Council's collection of survivor testimonies from 1993 was translated into English in 1995.45

At an Asian Women's Solidarity Conference in Seoul in 1998, members of VAWW-Net Japan proposed holding a People's Tribunal.46 The South Korean team conducting research for the Tribunal was formed in April 1999, with similar teams based in other countries.47 Preparations for the Tribunal took two-and-a-half years and involved preparatory meetings in Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai, Manila, and Taipei, with a judges' meeting in The Hague. North and South Korean teams cooperated in preparing a joint indictment, which also included mention of ethnically Korean survivors living in China and Japan. Survivors from the newly independent nation of East Timor also participated.48 The Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery was held in Tokyo during December 8–12, 2000. This was a people's tribunal with no legal force, but which followed international legal protocols. The judges had experience in the International Criminal Court in The Hague, professional lawyers prosecuted the case, and amici curiae ("friends of the court") presented defenses on behalf of the Japanese government, which did not participate in the hearing. Sixty four survivors attended—from South Korea, North

Korea, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, the Philippines, the Netherlands, Indonesia, East Timor, and Japan. Twenty survivors testified (some by video). Expert witnesses and former military personnel also testified.49 The Tribunal indicted the Emperor of Japan, ten high military officials, and the Japanese government for crimes against humanity.

The Women's Tribunal drew on the papers of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (the Tokyo Tribunal, 1946–48) and other research carried out by historians, lawyers, and activists in several countries. The judgment was handed down one year later in December 2001. The findings were that the Japanese Emperor, the Japanese government, and the other accused individuals were liable for criminal responsibility for crimes against humanity committed through the system of sexual slavery.51

The move for the Women's Tribunal was led by activists in Japan, but they worked in collaboration with teams from the countries whose nationals were represented at the Tribunal. Kim Puja, one of the organizers, has commented on this.

The efforts of all those involved serve, I believe, as a model of how the power of women and citizens can create a tribunal for the investigation and prosecution of war crimes. Moreover, as the result of a cooperative alliance between women from both perpetrator and victimized countries, the realization of the Tribunal offers one model for a form of feminism that transcends national borders. By foregrounding the concepts of gender and people's justice, this historic event also contributed to the development of international law, which has traditionally been male dominant and Eurocentric in orientation (and had therefore neglected the crime of the "comfort women" system).52

In the absence of any official legal redress, the Wednesday demonstrations and other campaigns continued.

The Peace Monument in Seoul

To mark the 1,000th Wednesday demonstration on December 14, 2010, a commemorative statue was erected on the site of the demonstrations. The statue depicts a young woman in bobbed hair and Korean ethnic dress seated on a chair, facing the Embassy, with an empty chair beside her. On the platform beside the statue is a plaque with inscriptions in Korean, Japanese, and English. The English inscription reads:

December 14, 2011 marks the 1,000th Wednesday demonstration for the solution of Japanese military sexual slavery issue after its first rally on January 8, 1992 in front of the Japanese Embassy. This peace monument stands to commemorate the spirit and the deep history of the Wednesday demonstration.

The figure depicted in the bronze statue wears Korean ethnic dress (hanbok, or ch’ima chogori); her hair is bobbed, suggesting that she is a young unmarried woman; her fists are clenched on her lap, and she has bare feet. She does not smile but stares
steadfastly ahead. A small bird is perched on one shoulder. Behind her, at pavement level, is a mosaic, suggesting the shadow of an old woman. The mosaic also includes a butterfly. The statue and its "shadow" suggest the different stages of life of the survivor—the young woman before her ordeal, and the old woman who refuses to forget. The bird is an icon of peace and of escape, while the butterfly has spiritual connotations. The empty seat suggests those who are missing, but also provides a site for a performative participation in the installation, as demonstrators or visitors have their photographs taken beside the seated young woman.

The statue does not simply commemorate the sufferings of the thousands and thousands of women who were subjected to militarized sexual violence. It also commemorates the determination of those demonstrators and supporters who keep the issue alive. Placed at the very site where these demonstrations have now occurred for over twenty years, the statue is a form of petition to the Japanese government and its diplomatic representatives. The face of the statue is composed, steadfastly staring at the Japanese Embassy, an avatar for the elderly demonstrators.

When I visited Seoul in February 2013, I spent a quiet Tuesday afternoon taking photographs of the statue in situ, and came back the next day to observe the Wednesday demonstration. February is the coldest time of the year in Seoul. It had been snowing in the few days before and there was still some snow on the ground. Supporters had dressed the statue in a warm winter coat, woollen hat with ear muffs, a scarf, a long red embroidered winter skirt and socks. On the seat next to the statue were cute stuffed toys—a teddy bear and a puppy. Behind her there was a row of cheerful yellow potted plants. By dressing the statue in protection against the cold, the supporters were symbolically expressing their concern for the "grandmothers", the "grandmothers" who have survived. Perhaps this also symbolizes care for the spirits of the countless women who did not survive.

The Japanese Embassy is like a red brick fortress, protected from the street by a fence. The small windows facing the street have blinds, so that there is no glimpse inside the building. In front of the Embassy are several police buses. By the time the demonstration started on this Wednesday, two busses of police were in the street, the number of police roughly matching the number of demonstrators. Participants in the demonstration were a mix of young and old, male and female. Journalists, photographers, and other media representatives joined the crowd. After the lunchtime demonstration, another demonstration commenced, a march with placards commenting on other current political issues. Behind the site of the Wednesday demonstration there was a series of panels commenting on other contentious issues, such as the Dokdo/Takeshima islands which are under dispute between Japan and South Korea. The statue has been reproduced in other sites, such as the War and Women’s Human Rights Museum in another part of Seoul.

The War and Women’s Human Rights Museum

The War and Women’s Human Rights Museum was opened in May 2012, and was designed by Wee Architecture. It is hidden away in a cul-de-sac west of the city center, in a residential neighborhood surrounded by houses, schools, churches, and shops. The building is a house which has been renovated and extended, and is therefore in proportion to the surrounding houses. The building is clad in charcoal-colored bricks. Unobtrusive signs and plaques in Korean and English indicate that this is The War and Women’s Human Rights Museum. These plaques and signs use a butterfly as the logo of the museum.

One enters from a small door at street level. After purchasing tickets and picking up an audio guide, the tour starts downstairs. A small dark room recreates the feeling of the prison-like conditions the women were subjected to in the wartime brothels. Testimonies are replayed and visuals are projected onto the walls of the room. Visitors then walk upstairs to the next level. The walls of the staircase are lined with photographs and messages from the survivors. There is a balcony whose outside wall is made of the same charcoal bricks used in the construction of the external walls of the museum. The names and photographs of women who have passed away are affixed to the bricks. The open lattice of the brickwork allows visitors to look out at the surrounding residential area, reconnecting the museum with the city.

The next stage is a historical exhibit, where wall panels explain the history of the enforced military prostitution/military sexual slavery system. In this area, there is
a reproduction of the bronze statue that sits across from the Japanese Embassy in central Seoul. The statue is more or less the same as the one in central Seoul, but without the plaque or the mosaic of the shadowy older woman. This statue, too, has an empty seat beside it. The statue faces a video screen which runs footage of the Wednesday demonstrations, a virtual suggestion of the location and context of the original statue. The statue in central Seoul needs a plaque to provide basic information. Here, the museum as a whole provides historical context on the wartime enforced military prostitution/military sexual slavery system, the campaigns for redress, the Wednesday demonstrations, and the commemorative statue.

The museum can be seen as one element of the Korean Council’s advocacy for redress. In Tokyo, the Women’s Active Museum for War and Peace performs a similar function. The Women’s Active Museum for War and Peace is in the buildings of the Waseda Hōsōren, alongside several Christian civil society organizations. The Museum and the Asia-Japan Women’s Resource Centre build on the work of the late feminist journalist and activist, Matsui Yayori (1934–2002), and the Asian Women’s Association which she cofounded.

In Shanghai, two professors at Shanghai Normal University, Su Zhiliang and Chen Lifei, maintain the Chinese “Comfort Women” Research Center. In Shanghai there is an extant building which once housed a so-called comfort station. It is currently a residential building, but many, like Su Zhiliang, would like to see it transformed into a memorial. In December 2015, a memorial was established in Nanjing, called the Nanjing Liji Lane Former Comfort Station Exhibition Hall. A memorial has been dedicated in Taipei, and the museum opening is planned for December 2016, under the auspices of the Taipei Women’s Rescue Foundation. These parallel activities underline that the movement for redress is a transnational one, with ongoing campaigns wherever survivors and their supporters can be found. As we have seen, and will explore further below, diasporic communities have also been prompted to action, including Korean residents in Japan, Korean Australians, Korean Americans, and other Asian Americans.

Glendale, California

Another replica of the peace monument has been erected in Glendale, California. The statue, chair, and platform are identical to the original installation in Seoul, but the words on the plaque are slightly different. There is a caption, "I was a sex slave of the Japanese military," and an explanation of the iconography of the statue (the meanings of the shadow of the old woman, the bird, and the butterfly). The text of the plaque is in English only and differs in significant ways from the plaque attached to the original statue in Seoul.

Peace Monument

In memory of more than 200,000 Asian and Dutch women who were removed from their homes to Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, East Timor and Indonesia to be coerced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Armed Forces of Japan between 1932 and 1945.

And in celebration of “Comfort Women Day” by the City of Glendale on July 30, 2012, and of passing the House Resolution 121 by the United States Congress on July 30, 2007, urging the Japanese government to accept historical responsibility for these crimes. It is our sincere hope that these unconscionable violations of human rights shall never recur.

July 30, 2013

While the plaque by the statue in Seoul has text in Japanese, Korean, and English, the Glendale plaque is only in English. The original Seoul statue commemorates the activism of those who participate in the Wednesday demonstration, while the plaque on the Glendale statue commemorates the “more than 200,000 Asian and Dutch women who were removed from their homes to Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, East Timor and Indonesia to be coerced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Armed Forces of Japan between 1932 and 1945.” The reference to “Asian and Dutch women” is curious. The Dutch women are identified by nationality, while “Asian” seems to refer to an ethnic category which transcends any one national identification. Nevertheless, this wording is an acknowledgment that it was not only Korean women who were abused under this system. Indeed, because of the shifting geopolitics in the region after the end of the Second World War and successive waves of decolonization, pinning down the nationality of any individual can be complex, depending on whether one is referring to colonial regimes before and after 1945, the period of Japanese occupation, or the postcolonial nation-states.

The plaque refers to the local situation in Glendale, where Asian American and Asian diasporic communities had led the campaign for an acknowledgment of the issue, and which led to the announcement of “Comfort Women Day” by the City of Glendale on July 30, 2012. The plaque also acknowledges House Resolution 121 passed by the US Congress on July 30, 2007.

The Glendale statue is in a park, in front of the local community center and public library. In other parts of the park are benches and tables, suitable for family picnics. When I visited there in May 2014, it was a sunny spring day. The bright sunlight cast the features of the statue into relief. As in Seoul, supporters had ordered colorful potted plants. There was no need, however, for the affective touches of scarves and warm clothing seen on the Seoul statue on a cold winter day.

In Glendale, the address of the young woman’s petition is less clear. She is no longer clearly addressing the Japanese government through her accusatory gaze at the Japanese Embassy. Is she addressing the local Glendale community, the wider US public, or an international Anglophone community?

Other Asian American communities have installed commemorative plaques, often outside local community centers, as noted above. Another replica of the Seoul Peace Monument has been installed in Detroit, and a memorial is planned in San Francisco. Internationally, there is a commemorative plaque in Manila and one memorial in Chiba, outside Tokyo.
The geopolitics of protest and response

Another recent iteration of the Peace Memorial in Seoul is in a park some remove from the city center. In this version, the statue of a young woman in Korean ethnic dress is joined by the statue of a young woman in Chinese ethnic dress, sculpted by a Chinese artist, Pan Tiequn, and supported by a Chinese American filmmaker, Leo Shih Young.64 There is another chair seat aside for future visitors and the potential for future statues to be added. This perhaps suggests that the original statue was being read as referring specifically to the Korean women, rather than a more universal figure of a young woman. This instability is apparent in the different descriptions attached to the different statues, as noted above.

The juxtaposition of the Chinese and Korean statues is in one sense a demonstration of transnational solidarity, staged at a strategic moment just before Prime Minister Abe Shinzō’s official visit with South Korean President Park Geun-hye in October 2015. It could also be argued, however, that the two statues were “re-nationalized” as Korean and Chinese, united in opposition to Japan.

In December 2015, two months after Abe’s meeting with Park, the South Korean and Japanese governments issued a joint communiqué. The Japanese Foreign Minister, Kishida Fumio, stated that the prime minister, Abe Shinzō, “expresses anew his most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women.” Kishida stated that the Japanese government would provide the South Korean government with funds for the establishment of a fund for the care of the survivors and that “this issue is resolved finally and irreversibly.” The statement was met with hostility by the South Korean survivors, who felt they should have been consulted before any government-to-government agreement was reached, a basic principle of restorative justice. The South Korean Foreign Minister, Yun Byongse, confirmed that the issue is “resolved finally and irreversibly” and that the ROK and Japan would “refrain from accusing or criticizing each other regarding this issue in the international community.” The statue was not mentioned in the Japanese statement, but the South Korean statement included an acknowledgment that “the Government of Japan is concerned about the statue built in front of the Embassy of Japan in Seoul” and that the South Korean government would “strive to solve this issue in an agreeable manner through taking measures such as consulting with related organizations about possible ways of addressing this issue.”65 (See Chapter 9 by Kim and Lee in this volume.) The agreement also returned the issue to a bilateral one between Japan and South Korea. In August 2016, the Japanese government transferred the funds to the South Korean government’s Reconciliation and Healing Foundation.66 Twelve South Korean survivors initiated a suit against their government, claiming compensation for the government’s handling of the issue.67 Survivors from other countries have demanded similar recognition. It was clear, however, that the Japan-ROK joint communiqué was a matter of geopolitics, an attempt to forge a closer alliance between the governments of the United States, Japan, and South Korea against China.

Conclusions

The issue of enforced military prostitution/sexual slavery has moved from a matter of private memory and trauma to a matter of international human rights discourse. The movement for redress for survivors of the system has become a transnational campaign involving activists from Europe, Asia, the Pacific, Australia, and North America. The survivors and their supporters have used every conceivable form of activism, from localized support groups and targeted demonstrations at strategic sites to addressing the machinery of global governance.
There have been tensions between nationalist and feminist concerns, and tensions, at times, between those of former perpetrator and victim nations. Nevertheless, transnational solidarity has been achieved in such activities as the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery in 2000 and ongoing campaigns. Politics is carried out in an iterative interweaving of activities at the local, regional, transnational, and global levels.

These campaigns have also stretched the meaning of politics and activism, deploying the cultural politics of art, museums, and memorialization; the embodied politics of demonstrating, testifying, and witnessing; the affective politics of care for the survivors and symbolic care for the bronze statues; the more conventional politics of petitions to local and national governments and the machinery of the United Nations; and litigation in local and national courts. These conventional forms of petition and litigation were supplemented by the people's tribunal.

Research has been vital to these campaigns, carried out by academicians, activists, and lawyers who have reread existing documents, sought hitherto unknown evidence, and interviewed survivors and perpetrators. Questions of culture and knowledge have been particularly important in these campaigns, for nothing less than an epistemological revolution was necessary in order to understand that the system which was unquestioned in wartime (even by many Allied soldiers who came in contact with the survivors) should now be seen as a gross violation of human rights.

In order to shed light on a system which involved hundreds of thousands of soldiers, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, doctors, civilians, and enslaved women across Asia and the Pacific, it has been necessary to forge a redress movement of similar (or even wider) geographical scope, involving activists, researchers, lawyers, and their supporters from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They have come from the former colonizing power and the former colonies and occupied territories, and have crossed the (former Cold War) divides of capitalism and communism.

The recent forms of memorialization discussed in this article do not simply document and memorialize suffering. Rather, they put on record the long decades of activism and affirm the dignity of the survivors.

Notes
1 This chapter draws on research conducted for Australian Research Council Future Fellowship Project FT0992328 "From HUMAN Rights to Human Security: Changing Paradigms for Dealing with Inequality in the Asia-Pacific Region."
2 There is no one accepted term for this system. I prefer to avoid the euphemism "comfort station," except in quoted material. I refer to "enforced military prostitution" in order to emphasize the institutionalized nature of this system, but respect the choice of others to refer to it as "military sexual slavery." There is no one satisfactory way of describing the women who were subject to this form of sexual violence and exploitation. To refer to the women as "sex slaves" is sensational and dehumanizing. In many cases, I will refer to the women as "survivors," or use other phrases depending on the context. Korean and diasporic Korean activists often refer to the new elderly women as halmóni (grandmother). In Korea, as in many other societies, it is customary in some situations to refer to individuals with kinship terms appropriate to their age, rather than personal names. Thus, individuals may be referred to as brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandmother, father, and so on, depending on their age. When the elderly Korean survivors are referred to as halmóni, this is a term of respect, which places the women in a familial relationship with their supporters. The term halmóni is used to refer to the women in the third person as well as a term of address, thus circumventing the use of terms such as "former comfort woman," or "former sex slave," which are offensive, and which circumscribe the identities of the women, as if their wartime experience were the only relevant part of their personal histories. Similar terminology (equivalent to "grandmother") is used in Taiwan (Ah Mah) and the Philippines (Lola). The term halmóni is sometimes heard in the English language in this context, and the transliteration haramoni in Japanese. Chunghee Sarah Soh, "The Korean 'Comfort Women' Movement for Redress," Asian Survey 36, 12 (1996): 1226-46. Chunghee Sarah Soh, The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Dai-Sil Kim-Gibson, "They Are Our Grandmas," positions: asia cultures critique 5, 1 (1997): 255-74; Sheng-mei Ma, "Grandmothers' Voices," in Silent Scar: History of Sexual Slavery by the Japanese Military, ed. Gracelee Lai, Wu Hui-ling, and Yu Ju-fen; trans. Sheng mei Ma (Taipei: Sheng Zhou Chuban, 2005), 12.
266

Women's Activism and "Second Wave" Feminism


11 See, however, a recent book which mentions 400,000 women, "at least half of whom were Chinese" Peipei Qin with Su Zhihong and Chen Lifen, Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan's Sex Slaves (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 6.


16 As Robert Cribb points out, the attribution of ethnicity and nationality was complex in the Dutch East Indies: "The term 'Dutch' in this context is ambiguous. The Netherlands Indies used a legal system of racial classification which divided the population into 'Europeans,' 'Natives' and 'Foreign Orientals.' The system depended mainly on the paternal line of descent, meaning that some 'Europeans' had a high proportion of indigenous ancestry and some 'Natives' had significant European ancestry. It was also possible for Natives and Foreign Orientals to be legally assimilated to European status. During the occupation, however, the Japanese authorities had generally been influenced in their treatment of people by their physical appearance, rather than their official ethnic status." Robert Cribb, "Avoiding Clemency: The Trial and Transfer of Japanese War Criminals in Indonesia: 1946–1949," Japanese Studies 31, 2 (2011): 156–62; see also Ann Laura Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule (Berkeley: University of California, 2002). In English-language newspaper reports on the discovery of survivors of the enforced military prostitution system in Indonesia and Timor at the end of the Second World War, the term "Eurasian" is used for those of mixed descent. See Mackie, "Gender, Geopolitics and Gaps in the Records."


Transnational Activism from Seoul to Glendale

21 The terms "crime against humanity" and "crime against peace" were used in the judgments in the Nuremberg Trials. These terms were not used in the Tokyo Tribunal.
24 Yang, "Revisiting the Issue of Korean 'Military Comfort Women': The Korean Women's Association and YAWW-NET; Japan has had name changes since then.
26 Yang, "Revisiting the Issue of Korean 'Military Comfort Women:"
27 Ibid., 1236.
36 US Alien Tort Claims Act, Paragraph 1350 of Title 28 of the Code of Laws of the United States of America (United States Code), Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the US House of Representatives, 1983: "The district courts shall have original jurisdiction of any civil action by an alien for a tort only, committed in violation of the law of nations or a treaty of the United States."
This form of People's Tribunal can be traced back to Bertrand Russell and Jean Paul Sartre's People's Tribunal on the Vietnam War in 1967.

Yang, "Finding the Map of Memory," 84. The twenty to thirty volunteers were mainly university students from the Seoul area.


Kim, "Global Civil Society Remakes History," 612. A one-day public hearing was also held at the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice in New York on December 11, where fifteen survivors of militarized sexual violence from around the world testified.

McDonald et al., "The Judgement.

Kim, "Global Civil Society Remakes History," 614.


The butterfly is regularly used as a logo for political campaigns on this issue. See the "Butterfly Fund," established by the War and Women's Human Rights Museum in support of victims of sexual violence. Information available at https://www.womenandwar.net/contents/general/general_setup_str_menu=2405, accessed January 31, 2016.

Hornby, "China's 'Comfort Women': Peipei Qiu et al., Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan, Sex Slaves.


These shifting regimes before and after 1945 are another reason why it has been so difficult to document the enforced military prostitution system. Some Dutch war trial records, for example, are still closed. In what are present-day Indonesia and Timor-Leste, administration has shifted between the Dutch East Indies, Portuguese Timor, the Japanese Occupation, the Australian-administered period of surrender, reversion to Dutch and Portuguese control, the independent nation-state of Indonesia (including West Timor), Indonesian-Occupied East Timor, and the independent nation-state of Timor-Leste. For the difficulties of tracing the fates of individual women through these different administrative regimes, see Mackie, "Gender, Geopolitics and Gaps in the Records."


in a number of academic and NGO studies on the history of feminism and women's movements in Central and Eastern Europe, including the National Science Center-funded research: "Bits of Freedom: Gender Equality through Women's Agency in State-Socialist Poland and Georgia" (2011–14). Her publications include "Exploring the Chronology and Intertextuality of Feminist Scholarship on Central and Eastern Europe," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Signs@40 (http://signs40.signsjournal.org/commentaries/grabowska), and "Bringing the Second World In: Conservative Revolution(s), Socialist Legacies, and Transnational Silences in the Trajectories of Polish Feminism," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 37, 2 (Summer 2012). Grabowska is a co-founder of the Foundation for Equality and Emancipation STER, where she conducted an EEA Grants-funded study on the prevalence of sexual violence, in particular rape, in Poland.


Priya Jha is associate professor of English at the University of Redlands. Her work is interdisciplinary, aligned with postcolonial cultural studies, transnational feminisms, and design and film studies. She is currently working on a memoir, "Not That Kind of Indian," and a monograph on postcolonial design.

Seung-Kyung Kim is Korea Foundation professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and Director of the Institute for Korean Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her scholarship addresses the participation of women in social movements as workers and in relation to the state; the processes of transnational migration in the context of globalization and the experiences of families in that process, especially with regard to education; and feminist theories of social change. Besides numerous journal articles and book chapters, she is the author of Class Struggle or Family Struggle?: Lives of Women Factory Workers in South Korea (2009/1997) and The Korean Women's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change (2014), and coeditor of Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives (2016/2013/2009/2003).

Na-Young Lee, professor of sociology at Chung-Ang University (Seoul, Korea), specializes in research on (re)construction of gender and sexuality in postcolonial nation-states, including topics of women’s movements, prostitution, Japanese military “comfort women,” and US military prostitution. She has published numerous articles and chapters on these topics, such as "The Korean Women’s Movement of Japanese Military ‘Comfort Women’: Navigating between Nationalism and Feminism" (2014) and "Gendered Violence and Gender Regime in the Neo-Liberal State of South Korea" (2015). She also has coauthored and coedited Feminist Oral History: Deconstructing Institutional Knowledge (2012) and Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Society (2014).

Vera Mackie is associate dean of research in the Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts at the University of Wollongong (Australia). Publications include The Social Sciences in the Asian Century (2015, coedited with Carol Johnson and Tessa Morris-Suzuki); Ways of Knowing about Human Rights in Asia (2015); The Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia (2015, coedited with Mark McLelland); Gender, Nation and State in Modern Japan (2014, coedited with Andrea Germer and Ulrike Wöhr); Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality (2003); Gurōbaruka to Jenkó Hiyoshō [Globalization and Representations of Gender] (2003); Human Rights and Gender Politics: Asia-Pacific Perspectives (2000, coedited with Anne-Marie Hilsdon, Martha Macintyre, and Maia Stieves); and Creating Socialist Women in Japan: Gender, Labour and Activism, 1900–1937 (1997). She has been National Convenor of the Australian Women’s History Network and is a board member of the International Federation for Research in Women’s History.

Purv Mehta, assistant professor of history at Colorado College, researches caste, gender, and human rights issues in India. Her work focuses on transnational anti-caste activism and the conceptualization of social justice in this global movement.

Barbara Moloney, professor of Japanese history at Santa Clara University, California, and copresident of the Coordinating Council for Women in History, specializes in research on women’s rights, transnational feminisms, and the construction and representation of gender in Japan and East Asia. She has published more than two dozen articles and chapters on these topics. She has also coauthored or coedited Gender in Modern East Asia (2016), Modern East Asia: An Integrated History (2010), Asia’s New Mothers: Crafting Gender Roles and Childcare Networks in East and Southeast Asian Societies (2008), and Gendering Modern Japanese History (2005). She is currently coauthoring Ichikawa Fusae: A Political Biography (in progress).

Jennifer Nelson, professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at University of Redlands, California, specializes in US women’s history, the history of feminism in the United States, and medical histories associated with social justice movements. She has published widely in these fields, including two books, Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement (2003) and More Than Medicine: A History of the Feminist Women’s Health Movement (2015). Her current research is a comparative study of the history of the movements for and against legal abortion in the United States and Mexico.

Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney, chair, Department of Gender and Women’s Studies (GWS) and associate professor, Department of History, University of Arizona, Tucson, specializes in Latin American history, gender, and comparative/global history. She has written about the politics of motherhood, reproductive rights, transnational women’s activism, and the forging of global feminisms in the post–Second World War era.