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Museum of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery

“PEACE ROAD: WORKSHOP FOR PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS“

The Museum of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery is not only an exhibit of visual materials, historical documents etc about Japanese Military Sexual Slavery during the Asia-Pacific War but is a workshop. ‘Peace Road’, for college students living in Korea and Japan, has been held twice a year from February 2003, in order to give them opportunities to study " the history of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery " and "the importance of human rights and peace" too.

It cannot be overemphasized that this sexual slavery issue should be solved by the Japanese government through a formal apology and reparations for every victim. However, in order to realize those two things, it should also be recognised by younger generations (our future politicians) that this historical tragedy must be seen as the human rights issue too.

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What's Japanese Military Sexual Slavery ('Comfort Women') ?

'Sexual slaves' are the women who were abducted by the Japanese military and raped during Japan's colonization of Korea. In Korean, we call them "Jung Sin Dae." "Jung Sin Dae" was a noun that described organizations that specifically provided manpower in order to strengthen Japan's military under imperialism during the war. However, by the end of the pacific war in 1943, people tended to limit its use to indicate sexual slaves, and finally in August 1944, government issued "Female Jung Sin Dae Labor Statement." Ever since, "Jung Sin Dae" was only used to indicate females who were mobilized during the war.

Sexual slaves who were organized under "Female Sexual slaves Labor Statement" were organized to supplement labor due to the loss in labor during the war. Therefore, female labor Jung Sin Dae and Japanese military's sexual slaves were fundamentally different.

Japanese government institutionalized 'comfort stations' during the China and Japan war and the Asia Pacific War. 'Comfort stations' were a place where sexual slaves were confined and military troops came in groups in order to gratify their lust. The Japanese Military abducted countless women and sent them to the front line, and systematically forced them into sex slavery. The abducted women were stationed at different 'comfort stations', and repeatedly

raped. They used to be called "Jong-goon we ahn boo" ('comfort women'). However, that word assumes a voluntary action rather than a forced action; therefore it is not an appropriate expression.

Internationally, expressions such as "sex-slaves" and "rape victims" are used, and those are the words that most appropriately convey the essence of the nature. We currently address them as "Japanese Military's We Ahn Boo(sexual slaves)." The word 'Jung Sin Dae' which is presently familiar to the general crowd via mass media means a military unit that sacrificed their bodies for the country. The word, "Jung Shin Dae", used to be used with the same meaning as "Japanese Military's We Ahn Boo", and started to appear on newspapers in 1940s. During this period of time, "Jung Shin Dae" meant women who were working at factories that made products that were military-related. A lot of women who used to work at factories were abducted by Japanese military and used as sexual slaves, and that is why the word "Jung Shin Dae" was used to mean sexual slaves. However, "Jung Shin Dae" is necessarily not the same word as sexual slaves. We estimate that about 200,000 Korean women were abducted by the Japanese military as sexual slaves. Most of them died, and there are only 210 sexual slaves who have identified themselves as sexual slaves to the Korean government since 1992. Of these, about 90 women died, and the sexual slaves who are still alive, including ones that are not included in the government's statistics, total about one hundred twenty one. 10 of them currently live in the House of Sharing, which is a registered social welfare organization.

The House of Sharing

The "House of Sharing" is the home for the survivors who were forced into becoming sex-slaves by Japanese military during World War II. The House of Sharing Establishment Committee was founded in June 1992 with the purpose of building a home for them through raising funds from Buddhist organizations and various circles of society.

As a result, the House of Sharing was first built in Mapo-Gu, Seoul in October, 1992. The House of Sharing was moved to several different districts within Seoul, and in December 1995, it was moved to the present location, Kyung-ki-do Kyung-ju-si Tae-chon-myun.

Women who were sexual slaves during World War II live in the House of Sharing and learn Korean language and practice painting every week. They hold exhibitions of their paintings across Korea and the world to educate people about the truth of the Japanese military's past barbarity.

Every Wednesday, they participate in the weekly protest in front of Japanese embassy in Seoul, sponsored by "The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan" in order to educate the public of the Japanese military's brutal abuse of Korean women, and to put pressure on the Japanese government to apologize for their past atrocities. The House of Sharing will lead in spreading the truth about the sexual slaves through the " the Museum of Japanese Military Sexual slavery" so that our descendants know the accurate history about what happened to the women in Asia during World War II.

As of April, 2005, there are ten survivors living in the house, and there are six full-time staff members.

The Museum of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery

The Museum of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery is the world’s first museum that has the main subject of sex slaves. It was established on August 14th, 1998 with the purpose of showing people what the Japanese military did during the war, and vindication of victims and educating the next generation for peace and human rights.

The museum, which has two floors and a basement, was built with the money donated by private organizations and civilians. The museum shows testimonials by victims from Korea and abroad and also has related documents that prove what happened during the war, much of which Japan denies publicly.

The museum has a replica of a comfort station where the sexual slaves lived, and also the remains. It also has paintings that are drawn by the survivors, so that the visitors can better understand how they lived and felt during and after the war.

The museum publishes and distributes information booklets, using the documents, pictures and other data stored in the archive. We also maintain a website in order to disclose the truth about the harm they had during the World War II by Japan.

Peace Road

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The contents of Peace Road performed from February 14th to 19th 2005 are as follows,

February 14 "encounters"	16:00 Encounters with survivors of the House of Sharing 19:00 Group formation and participants self introduction
February 15 "memories"	09:00 Video veiwing, exploring the museum and the testimony of a survivor 13:00 Making rice cake with survivors and placards for Wednesday demonstration 20:00 Discussion #1 (what is "response" to survivors' cries ?)
February 16 "pain"	10:00 Visiting the memorial park ‘Seodaemun prison’ and joining the Wednesday demonstration (1) 14:00 Visiting Karak-dong fish market 20:30 Discussion #2 “national responsibility and individual responsibility for this issue”
February 17 "struggle"	08: 00 MISSION(2) 19:00 A short lecture by a Korean atomic bomb victim 20:30 MISSION reports
February 18 "reconciliation"	08:30 Making ‘peace t-shirts’ 14:00 Musical performance by Padak-sori and making memorial gifts for survivors
February 19 "peace"	09:00 Sharing impressions of the workshop 14:00 Departure
note	(1) Wednesday demonstration Weekly demonstration which demands a formal apology and compensations of the Japanese government in front of the Japanese Embassy. (2) MISSION Three groups of Koreans and Japanese visit human rights organizations in Seoul. Staff of the each organization give lectures to the participants. This program is also a form of training carried out by the participants only without any help of staffs of Peace Road.

This workshop was opened in August 2003 first time and has been carried out 3 times with almost the same contents. In addition, students form Germany and the United States have also participated in until now. At the latest one, fifteen Korean students, twelve Japanese and one Korean born in Japan gathered together.

Programs of this workshop which approach the issue of Japanese military Sexual Slavery from a viewpoint of politics, history and human rights, were carried out by studying at the museum, listening to the testimony by a survivor, joining Wednesday demonstration and etc in daytime.

In particular the survivor's testimony was helpful for them to recognize the importance of having a positive interest in survivors' traumatic experiences and to try to share in their physical and mental wounds which still remain unhealed.

Furthermore, MISSION was also useful to extend the fields of participants' concern not only on this issue but also on human trafficking, domestic violence and the issue of the historical textbook used in Japanese schools in modern society.

And debates were carried out based on those experiences.

The first discussion was based on the theme "what is the best response to survivors' cries?" Probably because most of the participants were talking from a basic human viewpoint, a lot of time was spent on the generalities and common recognitions of peace and human rights.

The 2nd discussion was "the national responsibility and individual responsibility about this issue". This time the discussion progressed from the position which sees a person as a political sovereign of a state that each participant belongs to.

In the 1st discussion, about the infringement of the human rights, the importance of handing down the history and experience of victims, and women in a patriarchal society were focused on. On the other hand, they discussed the effective measures of a political resolution and concrete actions people can do in the second discussion. As a result, through those discussions two main points were debated:

- 1: The necessity of an immediate political solution to recover the lost human dignity of every victimized woman.
- 2: The universality of Japanese military Sexual Slavery that can be shared with all human beings.

After the program ended, they are tackling positively various activities to protect human rights and realize peace, like exchanging their opinions through the Internet, keeping visiting the House of Sharing as weekend volunteers, participating in anti-war demonstrations and so on.

This should be mentioned especially – the participants from Japan joined Peace Road in February 2004 held testimony rallies in 10 places of Japan in December 2004. The students and citizens of Tokyo, Kawasaki, Niigata, Shizuoka, Osaka, Kyoto, Kochi, Hiroshima, Fukuoka and Okinawa worked together to hold the events while inviting survivors from Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines. 2000 or more people joined the rallies in total and another rallies are due to be held again in Japan in October 2005.

And this summer Korean participants are also planning to hold exhibition tours in Korea which display the paintings by survivors of their experiences and pain and photographs of them.

Thus, Peace Road is can be seen to be playing a role of an inspiration which leads participants to join the political activities positively to resolve this issue in and other peace and human rights movements.

Some subjects can be left as follows

1. The expansion of Peace Road participants' network should be made.
2. The development of activities in which both of Korean and Japanese students can work together with more effectively.
3. To enable more students to join from all over the globe to make this issue shared as one of the most important lessons for human beings.
4. The encounters with the survivors were especially precious experiences for the participants. By feeling victims much closer, they seemed to have recognized this issue as one which should be tackled by them directly and positively. So, when the all survivors leave this world, the subject of how of Peace Road should be prepared is raised.