

INTRODUCTION TO SAY IT

The Japanese Government kidnapped as many as 50,000 to 200,000 young girls from surrounding countries and forced them into sexual slavery during World War II. Today, the surviving "comfort women" are between 70-90 years of age. As they are slowly dying off, their wish is for an official apology from the Japanese government, acknowledging what was done to them.

Given the 21st century's escalating armed conflicts, the precedent of impunity for wartime sexual violence cannot be tolerated. The experience of the comfort women essentially set the stage for the patterns of systematic rape and sexual violence that continue today in places of armed conflict such as Sudan, Congo, and Iraq, and thus recognizing the human rights atrocity committed against women during WWII is paramount.

In July 2007, V-Day witnessed a huge victory when, our efforts in conjunction with many others, resulted in the US House of Representatives passing a formal resolution calling for this apology from Japan, which has not yet been granted.

SAY IT

For The "Comfort Women"

Our stories only exist inside our heads
Inside our ravaged bodies
Inside a time and space of war
And emptiness
There is no paper trail
Nothing official on the books
Only conscience
Only this.

What we were promised:
That I would save my father if I went with them
That I would find a job
That I would serve the country
That they would kill me if I didn't go
That it was better there

What we found:
No mountains
No trees
No water
Yellow sand
A desert
A warehouse full of tears
Thousands of worried girls
My braid cut against my will
No time to wear panties

What we were forced to do:
Change our names

Wear one piece dresses with
A button that opened easily
50 Japanese soldiers a day
Sometimes there would be a ship of them
Strange barbaric things
Do it even when we bleed
Do it young before we started bleeding
There were so many
Some wouldn't take off their clothes
Just took out their penis
So many men I couldn't walk
I couldn't stretch my legs
I couldn't bend
I couldn't .

What they did to us over and over:

Cursed
Spanked
Twisted
Tore bloody inside out
Sterilized
Drugged
Slapped
Punched

What we saw:

A girl drinking chemicals in the bathroom
A girl killed by a bomb
A girl beaten with a rifle over and over
A girl running head first into a wall
A girl's malnourished body dumped in the river
To drown.

What we weren't allowed to do:

Wash ourselves
Move around
Go to the doctor
Use a condom
Run away
Keep my baby
Ask him to stop.

What we caught:

Malaria
Syphilis
Gonorrhoea
Stillbirths
Tuberculosis
Heart disease
Nervous breakdowns
Hypochondria

What we were fed:

Rice
Miso soup
Turnip pickle
Rice
Miso Soup
Turnip Pickle
Rice Rice Rice

What we became:

Ruined
Tools
Infertile
Holes
Bloody
Meat
Exiled
Silenced
Alone

What we were left with:

Nothing
A shocked father who never recovered
And died.
No wages
Scars
Hatred of Men
No children
No house
A space where a uterus once was
Booze
Smoking
Guilt
Shame

What we got called:

Ianfu-Comfort Women
Shugyofu-Women Of Indecent Occupation

What we felt:

My chest still trembles

What got taken:

The springtime
My life

What we are:

74
79
84
93

Blind
Slow
Ready
Outside the Japanese Embassy every Wednesday
No longer afraid

What we want:
Now soon
Before we're gone
And our stories leave this world,
Leave our heads

Japanese government
Say it
Please.
We are sorry, Comfort Women
Say it to me
We are sorry to me
We are sorry to me
To me
To me
To me
Say it.
Say sorry
Say we are sorry
Say Me
See Me
Say it
Sorry.

[Based on The Testimonies of The Comfort Women]