

# The “History Wars” and the “Comfort Woman” Issue: Revisionism and the Right-wing in Contemporary Japan and the U.S.

**Tomomi Yamaguchi**

*This pair of articles draws on talks by Tomomi Yamaguchi and Satoko Oka Norimatsu at the seminar “The ‘History Wars’ and the ‘Comfort Woman’ Issue: Revisionism and the Right-wing in Contemporary Japan, U.S., and Canada,” at the Institute of Asian Research, the University of British Columbia (Vancouver, BC), hosted jointly by the Centre of Korean Research and the Centre for Japanese Research, on November 21, 2019. Tomomi Yamaguchi discusses the “history wars” over the “comfort woman” issue in Japan and the U.S., followed by Satoko Oka Norimatsu’s “Canada’s ‘History Wars’: The Comfort Women and the Nanjing Massacre.”*



*Event poster by the Centre for Korean Research and the Centre for Japanese Research, University of British Columbia*

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

On August 3rd 2019, the “After Freedom of Expression?” portion of the Aichi Triennale, an international arts festival held in Nagoya and

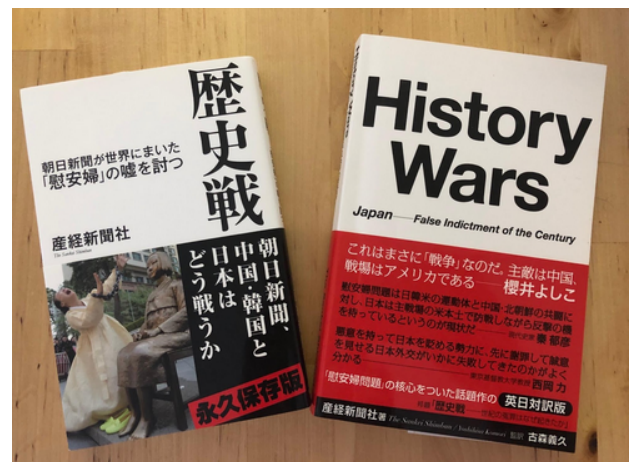
organized by the artistic director, journalist Tsuda Daisuke and an executive committee led by the governor of Aichi, Omura Hideaki, was closed just three days after it opened as a result of intense controversy over the exhibition.<sup>2</sup> “[After Freedom of Expression?](#)” was an exhibition that presented works that had not previously been exhibited in Japan due to censorship (including self-censorship). Thus, many of the works included were already controversial, but the protests centered particularly on the “[Statue of Peace](#),” designed by Korean sculptors Kim Seo-kyung and Kim Eun-sung to honor the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery. The Mayor of Nagoya, Kawamura Takashi, requested that Aichi Governor Omura remove the sculpture and close the exhibit, saying it “tramples on the feeling of the Japanese.”<sup>3</sup> More politicians’ remarks criticizing the exhibit followed, as well as intense protests against the exhibit – especially concerning the statue – which included numerous phone calls and faxes by anonymous citizens. One fax even threatened to firebomb the exhibit. As a result of court mediation and negotiation, “After ‘Freedom of Expression?’” finally reopened on October 8th, only to end a week later at the time of the event’s originally scheduled October 14th closure. Nevertheless, the Cultural Affairs Agency of the Japanese government announced it would withhold from the Aichi Triennale the previously committed 78 million-yen government subsidy.<sup>4</sup>

The situation surrounding the Statue of Peace at the Aichi Triennale demonstrates the widespread nature of historical revisionist discourse and actions concerning “comfort women”, and their sometimes violent nature, in Japan. Matsukawa Rui, a member of the national legislature’s upper house (the House of Councilors) from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, and a former official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, tweeted and commented on this incident on August 3rd: “The Japanese government is fully committed

to the removal of the “comfort women” statues all over the world.”<sup>5</sup> Matsukawa’s remark illustrates the Japanese government’s deep concern, or obsession, concerning “comfort woman” statues and the issue of wartime sexual slavery.

In fact, the Japanese government and neo-nationalist forces have repeatedly challenged global efforts to commemorate the history of “comfort women”. Since the building of the Statue of Peace in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul in December 2011, the Japanese right, as well as the government, have repeatedly criticized, challenged, and sought to eliminate “comfort woman” memorials abroad in places including South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, Germany, Canada and the United States.

The Japanese right considers the removal of the “comfort women” memorials one of the core fights in their “*Rekishisen*” (History Wars). The term, “history wars” was initially coined by Japan’s most conservative national newspaper, *Sankei Shimbun*, in April 2014, in its new series entitled “The History Wars.”<sup>6</sup> While the series is ongoing, earlier portions have already been published as books in Japanese and English.



The Japanese version (left), and the bilingual version in English and Japanese

### on the right. Sankei's *History Wars*.<sup>7</sup>

The series focuses on Japan's disagreements with South Korea and China concerning historical events pertaining to Japan's colonial history, and the "comfort woman" issue is the most prominent, and emotionally charged issue dealt with. The series charges that Japan is a victim of "false indictment" by South Korea and China, and thus has had no choice but to fight against the accusations. The use of the "war" metaphor in the "history wars" is closely connected to revisionist history, according to which the comfort woman issue was fabricated to inflame diplomatic tensions and to put forth a one-sided, unfair evaluation of Japan in the international community, by China, South Korea as well as the Japanese left and the liberal media. These "history wars" reified by the conservatives are currently occurring abroad, especially in the U.S., which the Japanese right-wing considers the "main battlefield," or "*shusenjō*", of the comfort woman issue, as monuments and statues of "comfort women" are being built across the United States.

There are presently sixteen "comfort women" memorials in North America.

#### "Comfort Women" Memorials in North America (as of Mar 2020)

1. Palisades Park, NJ (2010)
2. Nassau County, NY (2012)
3. *Garden Grove, CA* (2012)
4. Bergen County, NJ (2013)
5. Glendale, CA (2013)
6. Fairfax, VA (2014)
7. Union City, NJ (2014)
8. *Southfield, MI* (2014)
9. *Toronto, ON, Canada* (2015)
10. Brookhaven, GA (2017)
11. *Cliffside Park, NJ* (2017)
12. San Francisco, CA (2017)
13. *Manhattan, New York City, NY* (2017)
14. Fort Lee, NJ (2018)
15. *Annandale, VA* (2019)
16. *Hamden, CT* (2020)

(Those in italics are built in private locations.)

After briefly reviewing the history of the backlash against the "comfort woman" issue in post-1990s Japan, this article focuses on developments since 2012, when attacks on the "comfort woman" issue intensified after Japan's ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), regained power and Abe Shinzo became prime minister for the second time in December of that year. Drawing on fieldwork on Japanese right-wing activities in the U.S. and Japan, I demonstrate how the acts of remembering and commemorating the survivors' experiences of wartime violence against women became such a contentious, political issue and mobilized the Japanese right-wing so intensely. I focus on the controversy over the building of the "comfort women" memorials in the US. Following this, Satoko Oka Norimatsu introduces Canada's "history wars".

#### Right-wing Revisionists and their Claims

By 1997, information about "comfort women" had been added to all junior high school history textbooks in Japan, but attacks from the right wing on the "comfort woman" issue were growing in intensity with the emergence of a new revisionist history movement. The establishment of *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukurukai* (the Society for History Textbook Reform) in 1996 was especially significant, as it effectively widened the range of participants in the movement. In 1997, *Nippon Kaigi* (Japan

Conference), Japan's largest conservative alliance organization, was founded.<sup>8</sup> For *Nippon Kaigi*, the interpretation of Japan's colonial history cannot be separated from discussions of constitutional revision, which is the organization's prime goal.<sup>9</sup> The current prime minister, Abe Shinzo, was then at an early stage of his political career and he took part in the movement.<sup>10</sup>

The basic line of revisionist arguments emerged in the 1990s. They deny the involvement of the Japanese military and the forcible recruitment of "comfort women," and thus denounce the [Kono statement of 1993](#).<sup>11</sup> They also reject the characterization of the comfort station system as military sexual slavery, and claim that the number of Korean "comfort women" recruited for the Japanese military has been exaggerated. They call out the Japanese leftist and liberal media as "fabricators" of the "comfort woman" issue, calling them "anti-Japan" Japanese.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, they came to target the "comfort woman" issue itself as consisting of false accusations, and characterizing the testimonies of the "comfort women" as untrustworthy.

Abe Shinzo became Prime Minister in 2006, and in March 2007, he made a statement denying the forcible nature of the "comfort woman" system. As a desperate attempt to stop the passage of [US House Resolution 121](#), which asked the Japanese government to make a formal apology for its engagement in the "comfort woman" system, a group of Japanese conservative intellectuals, activists and politicians - supporters of Abe - in June published an opinion ad headlined "[The Facts](#)" in the *Washington Post*, on their revisionist version of the history of comfort women. Current Nagoya mayor, Kawamura Takashi, mentioned earlier regarding his remarks against the Statue of Peace at the Aichi Triennale, was one of the signatories of this advertisement. The ad backfired and angered many in the international community —

especially the United States - resulting in the passage of House Resolution 121 in July 2007.

Around this time, a new ultranationalist, xenophobic movement, called the Action Conservative Movement (ACM), emerged. An anti-Korean group, *Zainichi Tokken o Yurusanai Shimin no Kai* (*Zaitokukai*; The Association of Citizens Refusing to Tolerate Special Privileges for zainichi Koreans in Japan), established in January 2007, becoming the most influential among them. These groups staged repeated counter-actions against events run by the supporters of "comfort women". The movement's core style was one of breaking taboos by using hate speech in its demonstrations, then broadcasting these actions on the internet. Their claims on the "comfort woman" issue, however, were not fundamentally different from existing revisionist arguments by mainstream conservatives. What they did was to make their attacks against former "comfort women" blatantly racist and sexist.<sup>13</sup>

The movement also made a strategic choice to have women as the spokespeople of the movement on the "comfort woman" issue. A woman's group, *Nadeshiko Action* (Japanese Women for Justice and Peace), established and led by Yamamoto Yumiko, a woman who is a former vice president and secretary of *Zaitokukai*, has been especially significant in this regard. The first major action of the group was a counter-demonstration on December 14, 2011 against a feminist demonstration in front of the Diet in Tokyo that was commemorating the 1000th consecutive weekly Wednesday Demonstration in Seoul (begun in 1992) demanding that Japan redress the comfort women problem. That was also the day when the Statue of Peace was unveiled in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul. The government of Japan under the Democratic Party of Japan immediately demanded the statue's removal.



**Statue of Peace in front of the Embassy of Japan, Seoul. Photo by author.**

It was from the date of the completion of the statue that the Japanese right-wing started to engage in activism against “comfort woman” statues, as seen in this march by an ACM group held in 2016, demanding the immediate removal of the “comfort woman” statues, in Seoul and elsewhere.



**An ACM march in Ginza, Tokyo, on June 19, 2016, demanded the removal of the Statue of Peace in Seoul. The march, organized by ‘Nikkan Dankō Kyōtō I’inkai, Teito’ (The Joint Struggle Committee to Break Diplomatic Relations Between Japan and South Korea), was entitled “Demonstration to Demand the Removal of the ‘Prostitute’s Statue’ in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.” Photo by**

author.

### Abe Shinzo and the History Wars

In September 2012, Abe Shinzo won the election for the LDP leadership, on an extremely conservative platform, which included the replacement of the Kono Statement on the comfort women with a new statement. Abe became the Prime Minister for the second time in December 2012, the debate on the “comfort woman” issue intensified, and discussion on the Kono statement came quickly to the fore. The government assigned a group of intellectuals to review the statement and issue [a report \(in June 2014\)](#), though the government was still constrained from outright rejection of the statement.

In August 2014, the second largest newspaper in Japan, the *Asahi Shimbun*, known for its liberalism, released the results of its reexamination of its decades-old coverage on the “comfort women.” The paper announced that its careful reexamination revealed that 16 articles (two more articles were added in 2015) using the testimony of Yoshida Seiji contained errors, which they then retracted, while other articles on “comfort women” withstood reexamination and contained no errors.<sup>14</sup> In the wake of this statement, though, right-wing attacks against *Asahi Shimbun*, former “comfort women”, and activists, scholars and journalists working on this issue, grew in number and intensity. Numerous critiques of the *Asahi* and the “comfort woman” issue appeared in the mass media, and also on the internet, as well as being featured in right-wing organizations’ rallies, statements and actions. Moreover, Japan’s ruling party, the LDP and its politicians, openly criticized the *Asahi* for its errors and said that its failure to truly acknowledge them was ruining Japan’s international reputation.<sup>15</sup>

With the *Asahi* bashing in 2014, conservatives thought that they had “won” the “comfort woman” issue in Japan. The right-wing started to call the United States the “main battleground” of the “history wars,” especially on the “comfort woman” issue, from around 2013 and more extensively from 2014. The main countries involved in these “history wars” were Japan, South Korea, and China.<sup>16</sup> These right-wing efforts to fight the “history wars” in the “major battleground” support the Japanese government’s much larger efforts to disseminate its version of “historical facts” on issues such as “comfort women.”

### The Controversy Over the “Comfort Women” Memorials in the U.S.

In 2010, the first “comfort woman” memorial was built in the United States, next to a public library in Palisades Park, New Jersey. More than half the residents of the city are of Korean ancestry.<sup>17</sup>



**Palisades Park Memorial. Photo by author.**

Being a small memorial plaque in location that was not prominent, it did not gain much attention at first. However, after the unveiling

of the Statue of Peace in Seoul in December 2011, journalist Okamoto Akiko, involved in *Nippon Kaigi* then, published an article on the Palisades Park memorial in the conservative *Seiron* magazine’s May 2012 issue (which came out in April) published by Sankei in Japan. The article claimed that Japanese children in the U.S. are being bullied because of the memorial, though the author provided no concrete evidence that that was occurring.<sup>18</sup> This was likely the first time that anyone problematized a comfort woman memorial in the U.S.

Within a month, in May 2012, the Japanese Consulate in New York contacted the city of Palisades Park, requesting meetings with administrators, and asked for the removal of the monument. Next, a delegation from Japan, with four Diet representatives from the Liberal Democratic Party, Furuya Keiji, Yamatani Eriko, Takemoto Naokazu and Tsukada Ichiro, visited the city, again asking for the monument’s removal.<sup>19</sup> A former city councilman of Palisades Park told me how astonished he was, but he, as well as others in the city, resisted the Japanese government’s pressure. With these developments, this previously ignored small monument was covered in the *New York Times*, and its existence came to be widely known.<sup>20</sup>

In Japan, following Abe Shinzo’s election as LDP leader in September 2012, the Japanese right quickly moved to express its displeasure about the Palisades Park monument. On November 6, weeks before re-assuming the role of Prime Minister in December, Abe signed his name to a revisionist paid advertisement entitled “Yes, we remember the facts” in *The Star-Ledger*, a local New Jersey paper. This ad was supported by the same group of Japanese conservative intellectuals, journalists and politicians that had published “The Facts” ad in 2007 as a reaction against House Resolution 121 that supported a formal apology to “comfort women”.

Memorials were subsequently planned to be built in multiple locations in North America, leading in turn to mass protest emails being sent from Japan to mayors, city council members, and others in influential positions. There have also been failed attempts at building monuments and statues, such as in the cities of Buena Park, California in 2013, and Fullerton, California in 2015. There were also cases in which attempts to build memorials failed, and they moved to different cities, as in Atlanta, Georgia where the planned statue moved to a neighboring city of Brookhaven in 2017. Likewise, in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, the statue could not be built and eventually moved to Toronto, Ontario in 2015, the case that Satoko Oka Norimatsu discusses in this issue. These cases illustrate the success of the Japanese government and right-wingers' attempts to persuade local politicians and bureaucrats to stop the building of the memorials.

The discussion on building a memorial in Buena Park was happening around the same time as in Glendale, California, the city that erected the "Statue of Peace" for the first time in the U.S. The Japanese consulate in LA and the right-wing forces in Japan and the U.S. worked hard to stop the building of them. Mayor of Buena Park, Elizabeth Swift, showed me the materials that she received from the Japanese government and Japanese people opposing the statue, including manga by *Rompa Project*, a group led by Fujii Mitsuhiro and supported by a political party, The Happiness Realization Party, backed by a religious organization, Happy Science (*Kōfuku no Kagaku*).<sup>21</sup> Thousands of protest emails of mostly the same content were sent to the city of Buena Park from Japan, though the mayor said they were not effective. Mayor Swift also told me that she received information from the Japanese Consulate in Los Angeles and was invited to the residence of the consul general. The other likely more important factor was the opposition voiced by a Buena Park resident Robert M.

Wada, a second-generation of Japanese American who went through mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII, and also a Korean War veteran.<sup>22</sup> In Glendale, prominent Japanese American groups and individuals based in the LA area supported the statue, yet Wada wrote an opposition letter to the Mayor of Buena Park and to the city council members, and sent the same letter to the LA-based Japanese American paper, the *Rafu Shimpo*. It was the first vocal opposition by a Japanese American, and Wada's opposition was used extensively by *Sankei* and Japanese right-wing activists to support their claim against the memorials. Later in 2015, Wada sent similar letters to Fullerton, a neighboring city of Buena Park, as well as Burnaby, BC in Canada. In the end, both cities did not build the statues.



**The J fact and The J Facts manga by Rompa Project, received by the City of Buena Park. The yellow-colored animal character is Tokkuma-kun, a mascot of the Happiness Realization Party. Photo by author.**

Even in cities where a memorial was eventually built, some went through extraordinary

struggles. One such example is Southfield Michigan, a suburb of Detroit, where local Korean-American citizens formed the “Comfort Women Peace Statue Project” in 2012, and began working toward building the first-ever Statue of Peace in the U.S. at the Southfield City Library. The design was based on the Statue of Peace in Seoul. Those involved in the project told me how difficult it was to find a public location to build the statue, due to the consistent interference by the Consulate General of Japan in Detroit, as well as by Japanese corporations, most notably Densō, a major auto parts manufacturer with its North American headquarters in Southfield.<sup>23</sup> After an almost-successful deal with the Southfield library failed in 2013, the group reached out to a number of possible locations - cities in the Metro Detroit area, public universities and museums. All attempts to build in a public location, however, ended in failure. According to Korean Americans involved in the project, the auto industry is extremely important in the region, and people feared undermining the relationship with the Japanese auto industry. After a few years of struggle, they gave up on building the statue in a public location, and in 2014 they placed it in front of their own facility, the Korean American Cultural Center.



**The Statue of Peace in front of the Korean American Cultural Center in Southfield MI. Photo by author.**

The leaders of the project repeatedly told me how important it was for them to build the statue in a public location, as their purpose was to educate the American public on this issue.

### **The Statue of Peace in Glendale**

While Southfield was struggling to find a location for the Statue of Peace, the same statue was built in a public park in front of the city library in Glendale, California in July 2013.





**The Statue of Peace in Glendale Central Park, Glendale, CA. Photo by author.**

This became the first Statue of Peace built in North America. It was placed in the public park at the center of the City of Glendale, near Los Angeles. The Korean American Forum of California (KAFC)<sup>24</sup> played the central role in building the statue. Its leader, Phyllis Kim, emphasized the significance of building memorials in public locations, since the main purpose of such memorials is educational. Although KAFC took the initial leadership role in building the statue, Korean-Americans are not a majority in the city of Glendale, a city notable for its large Armenian-American population (approximately 40% of the city's population).<sup>25</sup> Some members of the city saw a connection between the experiences and ancestral memories of the Armenian genocide with those of "comfort women."<sup>26</sup>



**The Glendale Statue with artwork by local artist, Ara Oshagan, "Landscape of Memory: Witnesses and Remnants of the Armenian Genocide" in Glendale Central Park, May 2018. Photo by author.**

It is also significant that Japanese-American organizations and citizens supported this project. The members of Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress (NCRR) and the local chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) expressed solidarity with KALC by attending the unveiling ceremony.<sup>27</sup> Emi Koyama notes that Japanese Americans connected their memories of the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII and their struggles to secure an official apology and reparations from the US government for the internment to the experiences of former "comfort women" and their demand for an official apology and reparations to the Japanese government.<sup>28</sup> The primary objectors to the Glendale statue were the Japanese government, rightists in Japan, and Japanese residents in the U.S. as well as *shin-issei*, new post-war immigrants, most of whom migrated during the "bubble" economy period in Japan.<sup>29</sup>

When the plan was under discussion in the Glendale City Council, *Nadeshiko Action* and other Japanese right-wing groups mobilized Japanese mass protest emails and faxes. Local Japanese and *shin-issei* residents in the LA area attended the public hearing to express opposition on July 9, 2013. The city council,

however, voted in favor of building the statue, and it was unveiled on the 30th of July of that year.

In Japan, there was outrage over the Glendale statue among right-wing individuals and groups, and conservative media, especially *Sankei*, reported the story extensively. A day before the unveiling of the Glendale statue, on July 29, 2013, non-mainstream right-wing groups in Japan founded *Ianfu no Shinjitsu Kokumin Undō* (the People's Campaign for the Truth about Comfort Women) as a "counter-propaganda" movement to "protect Japan's honor", especially in the U.S. and at the United Nations. The group mobilized protests against statues and monuments in the U.S., while more mainstream movements, such as *Nippon Kaigi*, have been less visible, yet exercised greater influence on the Japanese government and the ruling LDP party.

In February 2014, the Global Alliance for Historical Truth (GAHT) in Southern California filed a lawsuit in federal court and later in the California state court against the City of Glendale, seeking removal of the Glendale memorial.<sup>30</sup> The Global Alliance is a new organization established by Koichi Mera,<sup>31</sup> former faculty member of USC, along with the Japanese rightists involved in the People's Campaign for the Truth about Comfort Women, two weeks before the lawsuit was filed. Mera became the leader and most prominent member of GAHT, and Japanese right-wing intellectuals and activists served as board members.<sup>32</sup> In the lawsuit, GAHT claimed that the city infringed on the federal government's exclusive authority to conduct foreign affairs by enacting the memorial. GAHT did not address the issue of Japan-bashing and bullying against Japanese children by Koreans and Americans in the lawsuit, but they used such stories to mobilize Japanese and Japanese-Americans in the U.S. and Japan. The tale of bullying, without any concrete evidence, spread further via media coverage of the Glendale statue,

including in right-wing manga such as *Manga Daikenkanryū* (Manga Big Hate Korean Wave) and *Hinomaru Gaisen Otome* (The Girls Trying to Bring About National Pride).<sup>33</sup>

GAHT lost the case in the U.S. district and appeals' courts. GAHT also lost in the California State court as well, and was ordered to pay damages under the anti-SLAPP statute that penalizes those who are found to have filed lawsuits frivolously with the intention to censor, intimidate, and silence opponents. Their petition to the U.S. Supreme Court to review the circuit court ruling was denied on February 27, 2017. In a highly unusual move, the Government of Japan filed [an amicus curie brief to the U.S. Supreme Court](#) in February 2017 in support of GAHT's petition.

In Japan, there were multiple collective lawsuits brought in 2015 by three right-wing organizations against the *Asahi Shimbun*.<sup>34</sup> While each lawsuit differed in its claims, all emphasized the damage to Japan's reputation in the international community and Japanese peoples' great suffering in the United States due to the *Asahi* coverage, or rather, "fabrication", of the "comfort woman" issue. All used the "comfort woman" memorials abroad, especially Glendale statue, as the catalyst for extensive bullying of Japanese people, without providing persuasive evidence, and all lost their cases.

Among the three lawsuits, the *Asahi Shimbun* took most seriously as the one most relevant to the statues in the U.S., was the collective lawsuit called the Asahi Glendale Lawsuit, supported by *Nippon Kaigi*, Japan's largest and one of the most influential conservative organizations. The lawsuit was initially filed on February 18, 2015, with about 2,500 Japanese individuals named as plaintiffs; while most were living in Japan, three Japanese were living in Southern California (later another person living in New Jersey joined the suit). The complaint declared that the *Asahi* fabricated

coverage of the “comfort women” issue, which had a major impact on the international community’s understanding of the issue, and damaged Japan’s reputation and the lives of Japanese people in the U.S. The complaint asked for 1 million yen in damages for the three plaintiffs living near Glendale, and demanded the *Asahi* publish a paid advertisement containing a “written apology by the Asahi Shimbun company” in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Guardian*, as well as in major Japanese papers. The plaintiffs lost the case in Tokyo District Court in December, 2016, and the Tokyo Appeals Court supported the lower court’s decision in February 2018. The plaintiffs did not appeal.

The story of bullying against Japanese people was emphasized in the lawsuit by lawyers and allies who supported the case, though not all the plaintiffs agreed on the existence of such bullying.<sup>35</sup> Despite the losses, plaintiffs of both lawsuits in the U.S. and Japan emphasized positive outcomes from the lawsuits. For GAHT, the submission of the amicus curie brief from the Japanese government was their major triumph in the “history wars”, as it meant they had successfully persuaded the Japanese government to actively participate in their cause. The attorneys and supporters of the cases in Japan, especially the *Asahi*-Glendale Lawsuit backed by *Nippon Kaigi*, also emphasized positive outcomes by claiming that the court recognized the existence of damage to Japanese residents in the U.S., such as bullying, threats and insults. The *Asahi* had not contested this issue in court, yet the plaintiffs and lawyers, in appealing to their supporters, touted this as a formal admission by the court of the existence of bullying.

Both GAHT and the support group for the *Asahi*-Glendale lawsuit held multiple rallies both in Japan and the United States to mobilize support for their cases. Local Japanese residents in the U.S. organized events at which

scholars, lawyers and activists from Japan and the U.S. spoke about the trial and the “history wars”, especially in the Los Angeles and New York areas, including the United Nations.

**第1回「ひまわりJAPAN 講演会」**  
**「このままでいいのか、日本！」**  
 ～日本の誇りを次世代へ～  
 このたびニューヨークとニュージャージーに住む日本人女性が集まって「ひまわりJAPAN」というグループを立ち上げました。これは、アメリカにお住まいの日本人の皆様にも「正しい日本の歴史と現在日本が置かれている様々な状況をお伝えし、日本人として、また、未来を生きる日本の子供たちが誇りをもって生きられるようサポートする会」です。  
**併ってご参加を**  
 2016年  
**8月23日(火)**  
**開演** 午後6時30分 (開場 午後6時)  
**会場** Social Hall  
 4 West 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036  
 (5th Aveから2軒目)  
**入場料** \$25 ※出来るだけおつりが要らないようご協力をお願いします。  
**主催** 『ひまわりJAPAN』  
 協賛: ニューヨーク正論の会  
 Japanese Women's Center  
**お問い合わせ/予約**  
**info@himawarijapan.org**  
 ☎ (201) 747-2284  
 ご予約は、お名前・電話番号・参加される方の人数を記入し、上記のEメールアドレスへお送り下さい。  
**交通** ● 乗換 5th Ave駅から約2分  
 ●●●●●●●● 乗換 Grand Central - 42St駅から約8分 (地下鉄)  
 ●●●●●●●● 乗換 42St Bryant Pk駅から約8分  
 ●●●●●●●●●● 乗換 Times Sq - 42St駅から徒歩約15分

Flyer for *Himawari Japan* event, featuring Takahashi Shiro, Sugita Mio, Takasaki Yasuhiro and Tokunaga Shin’ichi, August 23, 2016. [Source](#)

60th UN Commission on the Status of Women

# Misunderstood Comfort Women

[Presentations]

- Comfort Women Were Not "Sex-Slaves"
- Japan-S. Korea Agreement & Its Implications
- War Time Military Violence: the Case of S. Korea in Vietnam

DATE:  
Mar 16 2016  
Wednesday @4:30 PM

PLACE:  
Church Center for the United Nations  
Room Hardin -777 UN Plaza-  
777 First Avenue 44th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10017  
(at the corner of 44th St and 1st Ave)

[Sponsors]

- GAHT-US Corporation
- GAHT-Japan
- Japanese Women for Justice and Peace

[Supporters]

- Japan Mahoroba Support
- Seiron-no-Kai NY

[Contact]

GAHT-US CORPORATION  
URL: [www.gahtjp.org](http://www.gahtjp.org)  
E-mail: [info@gahtusa.org](mailto:info@gahtusa.org)



Flyer for the “Misunderstood Comfort Women” session co-sponsored by GAHT and Nadeshiko Action (Japanese Women for Justice and Peace) held during the 60th UN Commission on the Status of Women, New York City, March 16, 2016. [Source](#)

In order to engage in activism and host the events, new organizations, such as *Himawari Japan* in New Jersey, were formed. While the leader of *Himawari Japan* participated in *Nippon Kaigi's* Asahi Glendale lawsuit as a plaintiff, religious group Happy Science played a significant role in helping to organize these events. In addition, free papers often distributed at Japanese restaurants and grocery stores in the U.S. covered the stories from a right-wing, revisionist perspective, in some cases functioning as an important connection point for Japanese residents in the U.S., and also in Canada as Satoko Oka Norimatsu explains in the case of *Vancouver Shinpō*.<sup>36</sup>



An article on the gathering of *NY Rekishi Mondai Kenkyukai* (New York Historical Issues Study Group), inviting Nishioka Tsutomu, Takahashi Shiro and Yamaoka Tetsuhide from Japan in a free paper, *Weekly NY Biz*, September 9, 2017

Hence, despite losing in court, they spread their message that the widely accepted version of the history of “comfort women” in the international community is “fake,” via multiple gatherings, media and online reports, by having the Japanese government come out on their side. The language that the right-wing now uses regarding this issue ranges from “propaganda” and “fake news” to “plot” and “anti-Japan hate”. Conservatives try to portray South Korea, China and leftist Japanese as enemies filled with a hidden political, anti-Japan agenda, and magnify the scale of their

(imagined) impact. Yet the governments of South Korea and China have nothing to do with building “comfort women” memorials in the US, and the *Asahi Shimbun*, viewed by the Japanese right as the voice of the Japanese left, is not read widely outside of Japan, and has little impact on public opinion in the U.S.

With the *Asahi*'s retraction of the articles on Yoshida Seiji and the bashing of the *Asahi* in 2014, conservatives in Japan consider that they have “won” on the “comfort woman” issue in Japan. [The diplomatic agreement between South Korea and Japan on the “comfort women” in December 2015](#) furthered the feeling that the issue has been concluded, with the statement that “this issue is resolved finally and irreversibly with this announcement” in the agreement. Yet the agreement did not reflect any of the survivors’ voices, and the “comfort women” issue concerns women of many Asian nations other than South Korea. Yet in Japan, the idea that the comfort women issue is only a diplomatic matter between South Korea and Japan, and that the issue should be closed by the agreement, has prevailed. Furthermore, the Japanese government claims that the removal of the Statue of Peace in Seoul was one of the conditions for the “agreement,” and continues to insist upon its removal, and more recently, it insists on the removal of all other statues and memorials throughout the world, despite the fact that the national government of South Korea has not been involved in the construction of any of them.



**A flyer for a rally reporting on the Asahi-Glendale Lawsuit, “The Front Line in the History Wars: The ‘Fake’ News of the Asahi and the Anti-Japan Movement Spreading to the World”, held in Tokyo in Feb 8, 2018.**

So the conflict continues. In 2017, there were movements to build “comfort women” statues in two major cities in the U.S. in Atlanta and San Francisco. The Atlanta effort eventually failed and the statue built for it was donated to the Atlanta suburb of Brookhaven, Georgia. The statue in San Francisco was successfully built despite major protests from the Japanese government, San Francisco’s now-former sister city of Osaka, and Japanese right-wingers in Japan and the U.S.

**Statues in Major Cities:  
Atlanta/Brookhaven and San Francisco**

In June 2017, the Atlanta suburb of Brookhaven became the first city in the southern U.S. to install a comfort woman memorial, the Statue of Peace.



**The Statue of Peace in Blackburn Park of Brookhaven, GA. Photo by Kelly Ahn.**

The original plan by the local activist group, Atlanta Comfort Women Memorial Task Force, however, was to have the statue at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, a major tourist destination. Yet three weeks after the agreement to place the statue there, the Center withdrew from it, and local media reported that the Japanese consul general of Atlanta had met with local business leaders, officials of the Center, and other influential people, “to express concerns and threaten Japanese business fall-out from erecting this memorial,” the same tactic that the Japanese government used in Southfield, Michigan and elsewhere. The Center withdrew from the agreement, and instead, the Task Force succeeded in persuading the City of Brookhaven to accept the donation of the statue. Attempts by the Japanese consulate to block the acceptance and installation of the statue in Brookhaven failed.



**National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, the originally proposed location for the Statue of Peace. Photo by author.**

Though this represents a familiar story of intervention by the Japanese government to prevent the installation of the statue, what is noticeable about the Brookhaven case is the overtly visible role that the local Consul General of Japan based in Atlanta played. In June 2017, when Brookhaven decided to install the statue, Consul General Shinozuka Takashi said in an interview with the local media, *Reporter Newspapers*, “Maybe you know that in Asian culture, in some countries, we have girls who decide to go to take this job to help their family,” and the statue is a “symbol of hatred and resentment against Japanese”. This remark was reported by *Reporter Newspapers*, which also wrote that the consul general described “comfort women” as “paid prostitutes”, which prompted international outrage. Later, another consul, Oyama Tomoko, attended a Brookhaven City Council meeting and delivered a public comment of the Japanese government’s opposition to the statue. Also there were right-wing Japanese citizens and their supporters, such as “Texas Daddy” Tony Marano, and the leader of a local branch of Happy Science who expressed opposition to the statue and denied the history of the “comfort woman”.

In September 2017, San Francisco became the

first major city in the U.S. to build a “comfort woman” statue, and the unveiling ceremony was held at St. Mary’s Park in Chinatown.



**“Women’s Column of Strength” by Steven Whyte, San Francisco, CA. Photo by author.**

The statue was initially proposed by Chinese-Americans from the Global Alliance for Preserving the History of World War II in Asia. Yet it soon became a pan-Asian-American effort as the project also faced extensive opposition from the Japanese right, the Japanese Consulate of San Francisco, and the City of Osaka, at that time San Francisco’s sister city in Japan. Citizens who supported the memorial project founded a new organization, the Comfort Woman Justice Coalition (CWJC), consisting of Chinese-, Korean-, Filipino-, and Japanese-Americans, as well as Jewish-Americans, peace activists, and many others. The design of the San Francisco statue represents the pan-Asian nature of the coalition, with girls from China, Korea, and the Philippines depicted, while the first comfort woman who came forward publicly, in 1991, Kim Hak-Sun, looks at them.<sup>37</sup> Japanese Americans, including former congressman Mike Honda, public defender Jeff Adachi, director of the Fred T. Korematsu Institute, Karen

Korematsu, activists of NCCR, as well as those who are of zainichi Korean, Okinawan, and Japanese heritage were among the supporters of the memorial project.

It is interesting that in San Francisco some – though not all – Japanese-American community members, reportedly under threat of possible withdrawal of grant and aid money from the Japanese consulate, and the termination of the sister city relation with the City of Osaka, opposed the statue.<sup>38</sup> In other words, interference by the Japanese government and the City of Osaka was extremely divisive for the local Asian American community.

As a result of the city’s acceptance of the statue in November 2017, the city of Osaka terminated its sister city relationship with San Francisco in October 2018. The ironic outcome for the Japanese right-wing was that news about the statue, which was initially only local news, became a significant international story that was widely reported, with the so-called “Streisand Effect,” the phenomenon when attempts to censor or hide information results in the politicization of that information.<sup>39</sup>

### **Ongoing Pressure by the Japanese Government: Annandale, VA**

Subsequently, more “comfort women” memorials were built on private property. In some cases, the private location was chosen to avoid interference from the Japanese government and the right-wing, and in other cases, as discussed in the example of Southfield, Michigan, pressure from the Japanese government and sister cities in Japan prevented securing a public location.

The Japanese government and right-wing organizations complain and intervene in the building of “comfort women” memorials even when they are to be installed on private property. For example, when the Statue of

Peace was erected at the Museum of Korean American Heritage in Manhattan, New York, the *Sankei Newspaper* of Japan reported that the Japanese consulate pressured local politicians not to attend the unveiling event.<sup>40</sup>



**The Statue of Peace at the Museum of Korean American Heritage in Manhattan. Photo by author.**

On October 27, 2019, a new Statue of Peace was unveiled in Annandale, Virginia, near Washington DC, which has one of the largest concentrations of Korean Americans in the U.S. The statue was erected on private property in front of a commercial building, with direct access to a major street.



**The unveiling ceremony of the Statue of Peace in Annandale, VA on October 27, 2019, with survivor Gil Won-Ok. Photo by author.**

The Executive Committee for the Statue of Peace, the citizens' organization that erected the statue, announced that "the long-awaited and long-postponed Statue of Peace is now visible in Annandale, Virginia," referencing a three-year struggle to find a location for the statue.<sup>41</sup> The statue was donated by the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery (now the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery) and Yeesol Cosmetics of Korea in 2016, to the Korean American community with the aim of locating it in the Washington, DC area. However, they faced "the real existence of pressure and force" - likely by the Japanese government - against the installation. After three years, they were able to install it on



private property outside of DC. Jungsil Lee, one of the co-chairs of the Executive Committee, acknowledge to me that it was not the best location, and the group would like to continue looking for a location in Washington. Nevertheless, many people attended the unveiling, including elected officials such as Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax of Virginia and other state and county officials; a former victim and survivor, 92-year old Gil Won-Ok; and Yoon Mee-Hyang, the chair of the Korean Council. The presence of politicians, as well as many foreign correspondents from the media in Korea and Japan at the ceremony, indicates the powerful impact of locating the statue near Washington DC, even in a private location. The opposition and pressure that the Japanese government places on attempts to erect memorials anywhere, including private property, may have enhanced the news value of the installation of the statue.

In her speech at the unveiling ceremony, Jungsil Lee emphasized the significance of the statue for commemorating the survivors, criticized the failure of the Japanese government to meet the demands of the victims, and called for an official apology and legal reparations, suggested by House Resolution 121 in 2007.<sup>42</sup> Lee also said that the statue is a “teachable memorial to the public and to the next generation,” and it is also for the activists involved in the comfort women redress movement, and for all victims of sexual

assault everywhere. Despite these aims, most of the Japanese media reported that this statue could impact diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan for the worse, even though the building of this statue was a Korean-American citizens’ project, and had nothing to do with the South Korean government. I, as a Japanese citizen living in the U.S., was there at the ceremony, so that I could express my sincere support and gratitude for this project, and share this important moment with other activists, including survivor and activist Gil Won-ok and many Korean American activists.

The “history wars” by the Japanese government and the right-wing continue, and efforts by the Japanese government to intervene in citizens’ projects to build “comfort women” memorials are intensifying. These right-wing efforts help the Japanese government’s efforts to disseminate its version of “historical facts” on its colonial past. Despite opposition by the Japanese government and the right-wing, and their effort to disseminate “historical facts”, that is to deny the Japanese government’s and military’s responsibility for wartime sexual slavery, “comfort women” memorials continue to be built, and the redress movement continues in the U.S. and elsewhere.

This is the first of a two-part article. Part two, entitled “Canada’s ‘History Wars: The ‘Comfort Women’ and the Nanjing Massacre” by Satoko Oka Norimatsu, is available [here](#).

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[The “Comfort Woman” Issue Goes Overseas: Questioning the Right-wing “History Wars”], *Iwanami Shoten*, 2016. She is also an author of “The ‘History Wars’ and the ‘Comfort Woman’ Issue: The Significance of Nippon Kaigi in the Revisionist Movement in Contemporary Japan” in Pyong Gap Min, Thomas Chung and Sejung Sage Yim eds. *Japanese Military Sexual Slavery: The transnational redress movement for the victims*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the exhibit, its cancellation and its reopening, see David McNeill, “Freedom Fighting: Nagoya’s Censored Art Exhibition and the ‘Comfort Women’ Controversy.” <https://apjff.org/2019/20/McNeill.html>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Agency of Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan. “Aichi Toriennāre ni Kansuru hojokin no toriatsukai ni tsuite.” (On the handling of aid money to the Aichi Triennale.) September 26, 2019. [https://www.bunka.go.jp/koho\\_hodo\\_oshirase/hodohappyo/1421672.html](https://www.bunka.go.jp/koho_hodo_oshirase/hodohappyo/1421672.html), Accessed January 19, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Matsukawa Rui, Twitter, August 3, 2019.

[https://twitter.com/matsukawa\\_rui/status/1157636225785683969](https://twitter.com/matsukawa_rui/status/1157636225785683969), Accessed January 22, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Nogawa Motokazu, a scholar who specializes in historical revisionism in Japan, points out that the term, “*rekishi sensō*”, started to appear in right-wing opinion magazine, *Seiron*, in February 2013, and *Seiron* often published special issues on the “history wars” from that year. Nogawa Motokazu, “‘*Rekishisen*’ no Tanjō to Tenkai”, *Umi o Wataru Ianfu Mondai: Uha no Rekishisen o Tou* (The “Comfort Women” Issue Goes Overseas: Questioning the “History Wars” of the Right-Wing), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1-39.

<sup>7</sup> On the right: The Sankei Shimbun, *Rekishisen: Asahi Shimbun ga Sekai ni Maita “Ianfu” no Uso o Utsu*. (History Wars: Defeating the Lie of “Comfort Women” that Asahi Shimbun Spread in the World.) The Sankei Shimbun, 2014, and on the left, The Sankei Shimbun, translation directed by Komori Yoshihisa, *History Wars: Japan – False Indictment of the Century*. Tokyo: The Sankei Shimbun, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> For more background of *Nippon Kaigi*, see Tawara Yoshifumi, What is the Aim of Nippon Kaigi, the Ultra-Right Organization that Supports Japan’s Abe Administration? *The Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus*, November 1, 2017, Volume 15 | Issue 21 | Number 1.

<https://apjff.org/2017/21/Tawara.html> Accessed January 23, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Sakamoto Takao. 1998. ‘Kenpō Kaisei Rongi to Rekishi Kaishaku.’ (The Discussion on the

Revision of the Constitution and the Interpretation of History.) *Nihon no Ibuki*. January: 4-5

<sup>10</sup> Abe played a leadership role in the revisionist history textbook movement, as the secretary-general of the Young Diet Members' Group for Japan's Future and History Education. The group published a book entitled *Rekishi Kyōkasho eno Gimon* (Doubts about History Textbooks) in December 1997, summarizing their activities led by Nakagawa Shoichi and Abe Shinzo since February 1997. *Nihon no Zento to Rekishi Kyōiku o Kangaeru Wakate Giin no Kai, Rekishi Kyōkasho eno Gimon*, Tokyo: Tentensha, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> For discussion on the right-wing claims and criticisms against them, see Nishino Rumiko, Kim Puja and Onozawa Akane, eds. *Denying the Comfort Women: The Japanese State's Assault on Historical Truth*. Routledge 2018.

<sup>12</sup> This line of criticism to label someone as "fabricator" is typically seen in the right-wing attacks against Uemura Takashi, a former reporter of the *Asahi* and the current president of *Shūkan Kinyōbi*. Uemura Takashi, "Labeled the reporter who 'fabricated' the comfort woman issue: A rebuttal." *The Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus*, Volume 13, Issue 2, Number 1, January 12, 2015. <https://apjff.org/2015/13/1/Tomomi-Yamaguchi/4249.html>

<sup>13</sup> On the ACM's involvement in the "comfort woman" issue, see Tomomi Yamaguchi, "Revisionism, Ultrnationalism, Sexism: Relations Between the Far Right and the Establishment

Over the 'Comfort Women' Issue". *Social Science Japan Journal*. Vol. 21, Issue 2, 2018: 219-238.

<sup>14</sup> Yoshida Seiji (1913-2000) was a WWII veteran and a writer who claimed that he forcibly took women away to serve as "comfort women." *Asahi* announced in 2015 that three other articles were based on Yoshida's testimony and retracted them as well. As a result of intense criticism against the *Asahi*, the company had a third-party panel examine its coverage of the "comfort woman" issue, and in December 2014, the panel stated that "the lack of an apology when the *Asahi* retracted those past articles in August was a mistaken judgment by the *Asahi* management. The *Asahi Shimbun*, "Third-party panel criticizes delay in retracting 'comfort women' articles over Yoshida testimony." December 23, 2014.

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201412230056.html>. Accessed February 2, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> For example, the LDP's Special Mission Committee for the Restoration of the Honor and Credibility of Japan submitted a proposal to Prime Minister Abe on July 28, 2015. The proposal includes the statement blaming the *Asahi* for damaging Japan's honor as a result of its reports of Yoshida Seiji's claim. See the Prime Minister of Japan and its Cabinet, "Proposal from the LDP Special Mission Committee for the Restoration of the Honor and Credibility of Japan." July 28, 2015, [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97\\_abe/actions/201507/28article2.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/actions/201507/28article2.html). Also see the *Asahi Shimbun*, "Ianfu Mondai Meguri Jimin-i ga Teigen, 'Jijitsu ni Motozuku Hanron o.'" (The LDP Committee Submitted a Proposal, 'We should offer counterarguments based on facts.')

July 28, 2015, [https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASH7X4V8KH7XUTFK00L.html?iref=pc\\_ss\\_date](https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASH7X4V8KH7XUTFK00L.html?iref=pc_ss_date)

<sup>16</sup> The term, "*shusenjō*" (main battleground), started to appear in conservative media in Japan from around 2013, as seen in scholar Shimada Yōichi's article in *Seiron* magazine, "Amerika ni okeru Nicchū Jōhōsen no Saizensen (The Forefront of the Information War Between Japan and China in the U.S.)," *Seiron*, May 5, 2013: 26-83). The term became more widely used from 2014, especially in relation to the "comfort woman" issue in the U.S., and appeared as a title of Part 6 of *Sankei's* serial, "History Wars," as "*Shusenjō, Beikoku*" (Main Battleground, the

United States) that ran from August 30 to September 3, 2014. On the concept of “main battleground,” see Emi Koyama, “The U.S. as the Main ‘Battleground’ for ‘Comfort Woman’ Revisionism: The Screening of Scottsboro Girls at Central Washington University.” *The Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus*, June 3, 2015, Volume 13 | Issue 22 | Number 2.

<https://apjif.org/Emi-Koyama/4324.html> A documentary film directed by Miki Dezaki, *Shusenjō: the Main Battleground of Comfort Women Issue*, released in 2018, uses the term *shusenjō* in its title, but its meaning in the film mainly concerns the debate, constructed by director Dezaki in the film, on the “comfort woman” issue, and differs significantly from its original meaning referring mainly to the United States, and occasionally Canada, Australia and the United Nations.

<sup>17</sup> On the Korean American movement to build the monument in Palisades Park, see Alexis Dudden, “Korean Americans enter the Historical Memory Wars on behalf of the Comfort Women.” *The Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus*, Volume 10 | Issue 54 | Number 122, December 31, 2012. <https://apjif.org/-Alexis-Dudden/4731/article.html>

<sup>18</sup> Okamoto Akiko, “Beikoku no Hōjin Shitei ga Ijime Higai, Kankoku no Ianfu Hannichi Senden ga Man’en suru Kōzu.” (Japanese children in the U.S. are victims of bullying: the system of permeation of the anti-Japan PR by South Korea.) *Seiron*, May 2012: 126-133.

<sup>19</sup> Tamura Shigenobu, “Bei Nyū Jājī shū Pariseizu Pāku shi no Ianfu Kinenhi Mondai.” (The Problem of the Comfort Woman Memorial in the City of Palisades Park, New Jersey, US.) *Blogos*, May 28, 2012. <https://blogos.com/article/39937/> Furuya Keiji, “Ianfu Hi Mondai, Howaito Hausu eno Shomei no Onegai.” (The Issue of Comfort Woman Monument, Please sign the petition to the White House.) May 22, 2012. <http://www.furuya-keiji.jp/blog/archives/1798.html>. Accessed February 14, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Kirk Semple, “In New Jersey, Memorial for ‘Comfort Women’ Deepens Old Animosity.” *The New York Times*, May 18, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/19/nyregion/monument-in-palisades-park-nj-irritates-japanese-officials.html>

<sup>21</sup> *Rompa Project* was established in August 2013 by Fujii Mitsuhiko to exhibit manga on the “comfort woman” issue from a revisionist perspective to the Angoulême International Comics Festival in France held in January 2014. The booth by the *Rompa Project* was removed by the festival organizer. *Rompa Project* has been actively involved in the “history wars,” as a member organization of *Ianfu no Shinjitsu Kokumin Undō* (The People’s Campaign for the Truth about Comfort Women).

<sup>22</sup> Robert M. Wada, “Vox Populi: Korean War Vet Sounds Off on Proposed Comfort Women Monument.” *The Rafu Shimpo*, August 7, 2013. <https://www.rafu.com/2013/08/vox-populi-korean-war-vet-sounds-off-on-proposed-comfort-women-monument/> Accessed February 14, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> “Michigan Latest to Install Comfort Woman Statue.” *The Korea Times*, August 18 2014. <http://www.koreatimesus.com/michigan-gets-a-comfort-woman-statue-also/>. Accessed February 14, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> KAFC changed its name to “Comfort Women Action for Redress & Education” (CARE) in 2019. CARE’s website is <https://comfortwomenaction.org>

<sup>25</sup> The largest Asian population in Glendale is Filipino. The 2020 census data shows that the City of Glendale, population 191,719, has 13,289 people who identify as Filipino, 10,315 as Korean, 2,439 as Chinese, and 1,222 as Japanese.

[https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC\\_10\\_SF1\\_SF1DP1&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_SF1_SF1DP1&prodType=table). The census does not ask about Armenian ancestry, and it is hard to determine the number of Armenians in the city. Yet it is said that Armenians are the demographic majority, with about 40% of the population. Daniel Fittante, "But Why Glendale? A History of Armenian Immigration to Southern California." *California History*, Vol. 94, No.3, Fall 2017: 2-19.

<sup>26</sup> At the unveiling ceremony of the Glendale statue, *Rafu Shimpo* reports that councilman Zareh Sinanyan spoke as a grandson of an Armenian genocide survivor, "My people, my grandfather, were subjected to a horrible, horrible crime ... To this day, because no apology has come, no proper acknowledgement has come ... the wound is deep, it's festering, and there can be no moving forward without it." J.K. Yamamoto and Mikey Hirano Culross, "Comfort Women Monument Unveiled in Glendale." *Rafu Shimpo*, August 2, 2013. <http://www.rafu.com/2013/08/comfort-women-monument-unveiled-in-glendale/> Accessed February 14, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Emi Koyama, "Amerika 'Tanfuhi eno Kōgeki" (Attacks against 'comfort woman' statues in the US) in Yamaguchi et al. *Umi o Wataru Ianfu Mondai*: 44-45.

<sup>28</sup> For example, a board member of NCRR, Kathy Masaoka, writes in her letter to the *Los Angeles Times* that the apology by the US helped the victims heal. She then continues, "when Japan apologizes and pays reparations to 'comfort women,' it will give some healing to those women who are still alive and provide a lesson to the world that abuse of women will not be tolerated." Kathy Masaoka, "Readers React: Japan should apologize to 'comfort women.'" *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 2015. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/readersreact/la-le-1216-tuesday-japan-comfort-women-2014-1216-story.html>

<sup>29</sup> Katsuya Hirano also points out that shin-issei "have been organizing meetings and study groups to promote a revisionist history in the greater L.A. area." Katsuya Hirano, "A Reflection on Uemura Takashi's Talk at UCLA." *The Asia-Pacific Journal, Japan Focus*, August 17, 2015, Volume 13, Issue 33, Number 4. <https://apjif.org/2015/13/33/Katsuya-Hirano/4363.html>

<sup>30</sup> The plaintiffs were Michiko Shirota Gingery (1924-2015) and Koichi Mera (1933-2019), along with GAHT-US. Gingery passed away in March 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Koichi Mera, the chairman of *Nihon Saisei Kenyūkai* (the Study Group of Japan's Rebirth), and the founder and president of Global Alliance of Historical Truth (GAHT), <http://gahtjp.org/> was one of the leading figures of the movement to oppose "comfort woman" statues by the Japanese and *shin-issei* based in Southern California. After moving to Princeton, NJ, he opened a website discussing controversial history-related issues, such as "comfort women," Nanking Massacre and Tokyo Trials, from a right-wing perspective, calling his site "Princeton Institute for Asian Studies." The site was later renamed as "Pacific Institute for Asian Studies." <https://pacificifas.org/> He passed away in December 2019.

<sup>32</sup> The Japanese American Bar Association (JABA) also supported the City of Glendale when GAHT brought a lawsuit against the city to remove the statue. See the joint statement by the Korean American Bar Association of Southern California (KABA) and JABA's joint statement in support of the city. [http://www.jabaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/KABA\\_JABA\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_4-23-14.pdf](http://www.jabaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/KABA_JABA_Joint_Statement_4-23-14.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> The right-wing manga that depict the Glendale statue and the bullying incidents of the Japanese in the U.S. include Yamano Sharin's *Manga Daikenkanryū* (Manga Big Hate Korean Wave), Tokyo: Shinyūsha, 2015, and Tomita Akiko's *Hinomaru Gaisen Otome* (The Girls Trying to Bring About National Pride), Vol2. Tokyo: Seirindō, 2016. Volume 2 of Tomita's *Hinomaru Gaisen Otome*, the volume that covers the Glendale case, has an English version, while volumes 1 and 3 do not.

<sup>34</sup> In 2015, three right-wing organizations filed collective lawsuits against the *Asahi Shimbun*. Besides the Asahi-Glendale Lawsuit supported by *Nippon Kaigi*, Asahi Shimbun o Tadasu Kokumin Kaigi (The National Conference to Correct the *Asahi Shimbun*) led by Mizushima Satoru, the president of the right-wing television and online production company, *Channel Sakura*, and its activist organization, *Ganbare Nippon*, filed a collective suit against the Asahi at Tokyo District Court, with 25,000 plaintiffs, in January 26, 2015. Each plaintiff asked 10,000 yen for the defamation of their character as Japanese, resulting from the *Asahi's* report. Another organization that sued the *Asahi* was by a group called Asahi o Tadasu Kai (Group to Correct the Asahi) filed suit in February 9, 2015, with about 480 plaintiffs. The group also filed a suit at Kofu District Court in Yamanashi Prefecture with about 150 plaintiffs in August 2016. Both lawsuits argued that the plaintiffs' right to knowledge was denied. The *Asahi Shimbun* won all the cases. For more information on the court battles, see Kitano Ryuichi. "Neraware Tsuzukeru 'Ianfu Hōdō.'" Tsukada Hotaka ed., *Tettei Kenshō, Nihon no Ukeika*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2017: 276-287.

<sup>35</sup> In addition to the lack of concrete evidence that they could provide to the court, there are disagreements over the existence of bullying in local communities among the initial plaintiffs of the Asahi Glendale Lawsuit. Regardless, the legal team emphasized bullying as the major damage to Japanese living in the U.S.

<sup>36</sup> In the greater New York area, free papers such as *New York Biz* and *NY Seikatsu* cover events, and have space for opinion advertisements for the Japanese right-wing based in the US and Japan, such as *Himawari Japan*, *New York Rekishi Mondai Kenkyūkai* and *Nadeshiko Action*. In the LA area, *Nikkan Sun* runs a serial by a Japanese columnist who sometimes covers the Glendale statue controversy from a right-wing perspective.

<sup>37</sup> *The Rafu Shimpo*, "'Comfort Women' Memorial Unveiled in San Francisco." October 6, 2017. <http://www.rafu.com/2017/10/comfort-women-memorial-unveiled-in-san-francisco/>. Accessed January 26, 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Emi Koyama. "Amerika 'Ianfu' Hi Secchi eno Kōgeki." (The attacks against the building of 'comfort women' monuments in the U.S.) In Tomomi Yamaguchi, Nogawa Motokazu, Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Emi Koyama. *Umi o Wataru "Ianfu" Mondai: Uha no Rekishisen wo Tou* (The "Comfort Women" Issue Goes Overseas: Questioning the Right-Wing "History Wars"), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. 2016: 41-68.

<sup>39</sup> The Streisand effect is named after the incident in which Barbra Streisand attempted to suppress photographs of her residence from a database only to receive extensive attention and publicity.

<sup>40</sup> *kubutukan no Jomakushiki, Nihon Seifu wa Hisshino Hatarakikake.*" (History wars, Comfort woman statue, is it going to be built in Washington DC after Manhattan? The unveiling ceremony at a Korean American museum, the Japanese government worked hard to persuade), *Sankei Shimbun*, October 14, 2017. <https://www.sankei.com/world/news/171014/wor1710140054-n1.html>. Accessed February 29,

2020.

<sup>41</sup> The Executive Committee for Statue of Peace, “Unveiling Ceremony for Washington Statue of Peace” program distributed at the unveiling ceremony, October 27, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> H. Res. 121 states that “the government of Japan should: (1) formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of young women into sexual slavery (comfort women) during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II; (2) have this official and public apology presented by the Prime Minister of Japan; (3) refute any claims that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the comfort women never occurred; and (4) educate current and future generations about this crime while following the international community's recommendations with respect to the comfort women.”

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-resolution/121> The “agreement” on “comfort women” issue between the Republic of Korea and Japan in 2015 does not involve any official apology presented by the Prime Minister of Japan, nor does it include a statement on the part of the Japanese government to refute revisionist claims or to educate current and future generations on this issue. The Japanese government also has not followed the UN recommendations on the “comfort woman” issue. In other words, the 2015 “agreement” was far from what the H. Res. 121 demands Japan on this issue.