

Two Faces of the Hate Korean Campaign in Japan

Ishibashi Gaku and Narusawa Muneo with an introduction by Youngmi Lim translated by Satoko Oka Norimatsu and Joseph Essertier

Introduction by Youngmi Lim

The following two articles document the recent unfolding of hate demonstrations targeting Japan's Korean minority population (hereafter Zainichi Koreans). This introduction provides historical context for the organized expressions of hate against Zainichi Koreans. Earlier analyses of Japan's far right have emphasized how internet communications, explicit expressions of bigotry, and the frustrations of the "lost" generation,¹ contributed to an emergent subculture of grassroots conservatism.²

More recent studies reveal that these post-Internet conservative movements build on a perspective widely shared across the Japanese establishment.³ Whether or not hateful remarks are tolerated in Japanese public space (including cyberspace), the fundamental interpretation of the legacy of Japan's war and colonization is virtually identical among ultra-right grassroots activists and some prominent mainstream public figures. Recent aggressive street campaigns could strengthen these influences on the general public. Japan's establishment, including both elite conservatives, and ultraconservatives, as well as their grassroots counterparts, have recently reached a point in which they had a clear shared perspective. Once the Internet became accessible to millions of people in the past two decades, such people were able to subtly instill their views on mainstream society.⁴

Zainichi Koreans are the migrants and descendants of people who originated in

colonial Korea. Japan's colonization of the Korean peninsula lasted for more than three decades between 1910 and 1945, although one can say that the Japanese Empire's encroachment on Korea began in 1876, when Japan forced the opening of the country and imposed a unequal treaty on Yi Dynasty Korea (1392-1897).⁵ Japan's two major wars against China (1894-1895) and Russia (1904-1905) were triggered by conflicts between Japan and other powers over the control of Korea and Manchuria. As of 2016, conservative estimates of the Korean minority population in Japan put the total at 330,537. That number includes 299,488 South Koreans and 31,049 stateless Koreans.⁶ In addition, between 1952 and 2016, 365,530 Koreans were naturalized.⁷ Zainichi Koreans obtain Japanese nationality through naturalization or by having one legally-Japanese parent (i.e., cases in which nationality is transmitted according to the principle of *jus sanguinis* or "right of blood").

During Japan's colonial rule of Korea, large numbers of Koreans migrated to Japan to fulfill the demand for labor, and many more to Manchuria and other parts of the Empire. Substantial numbers of Korean students also migrated to Japan seeking educational opportunities. Both groups, however, were considered threats to the social order by the Japanese authorities, who moved vigorously to repress labor disputes as well as socialist and communist activities and the Korean Independence Movement. The Korean population in Japan steadily increased and in 1923, when the great Kanto earthquake devastated downtown Tokyo, an estimated

6,000 Koreans were killed by Japanese civilians.⁸ Over 130,000 Koreans were living in Japan at that time.⁹



The Monument for Korean Victims, Yokoami-chō Park, Tokyo.

Photo by the author



The outdoor map of Yokoami-cho Park, Tokyo. The Monument for Korean Victims is located to the right of the main Memorial Hall. Photo by the author

Japan embarked on the Fifteen Year War in China with the 1931 Manchurian Incident. Growing numbers of Korean laborers were then mobilized to alleviate chronic labor shortages in war-industry-related manufacturing, construction, and mining sectors. Conscripted labor migration dramatically increased the number of Koreans in Japan. By the end of World War II there were more than 2 million Koreans in the country. Although most conscripted labor migrants returned to the Korean Peninsula following the 1945 collapse of the Japanese Empire, some 600,000, mainly longer-term sojourners remained, especially those with children who had been born in the country. In 1945, the Korean Peninsula was divided across the 38th parallel, and occupied by the USSR in the North and the US in the South. The increased political tension of the late 1940s also discouraged the return of the remaining Koreans in Japan.¹⁰

In 1952, all Zainichi Koreans were deprived of their Japanese nationality as Japan regained its sovereignty. Zainichi Koreans were then temporarily defined as Law-126 residents who were permitted to stay in Japan “for the time being.”¹¹ After 1965, those who opted for South Korean nationality were granted “treaty-based permanent residency” for two further generations. Only in 1981 at the time of Japan’s ratification of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, did stateless Koreans (those who did not declare allegiance to South Korea) gain a relatively stable permanent residency called “exceptional permanent residency.” In 1991, the residency status of all “former-Japanese” Koreans whose ancestors were in Japan by 1952, was unified into and replaced by a more stable type of “special permanent residency.” This special permanent residency, which took nearly half a century to establish and finally settled the legal limbo of

those stateless people who originated from colonial Korea and their descendants, has been under vehement criticism by various grassroots conservative activist groups since the mid-2000s. These groups manifest their presence through street demonstrations and online video-streaming. The fact that special permanent residency is more stable than other types of permanent residency is attacked as if Zainichi Koreans have unfairly received some kind of privilege. In this way, the fake-news urban myth of “Zainichi Korean privilege” gained currency in ultranationalist networks in the era of the Internet.

Collective memories are always contentious depending on crisscrossing positionalities. The historical debate between the former colonizer and the colonized has far-reaching and long-term consequences. Narusawa Muneo’s report below provides a detailed, behind-the-scenes view of the politics surrounding historically contentious matters about which Koike Yuriko, the outspoken conservative governor of Tokyo, has staked a position. Koike has abandoned the Tokyo governor’s long-established practice of formally issuing a eulogy in memory of the massacre of Koreans that following the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923. This occurs at a time when a conservative women’s group and a Tokyo Assembly Member have launched a concerted effort to remove a contentious monument commemorating the massacre.



The Memorial Hall for Earthquake victims and Air-raid victims, Yokoami-chō Park, Tokyo. Downtown Tokyo was burnt down twice in September 1923 and in March 1945.

Photo by the author

At present, Japanese conservatives and progressives express conflicting interpretations of Japan’s past as a colonizer and aggressor in East Asia.¹² The three most contentious war-related memorial matters are probably the “comfort women,” conscripted labor migration to Japan and the war front, and the overall assessment of Japanese colonial rule. These recurrent conflicts continue to roil diplomatic and civilian relationships between South Korea and Japan. Conservative critics as well as politicians argue that the 1965 treaty establishing diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea stipulated that in exchange for the Japanese economic aid package that benefited major business conglomerates in South Korea, no Korean individual could receive redress for damages inflicted on them during Japan’s colonization and war mobilization. Japanese conservatives and ultra-

conservatives who defend Japan's pre-war regime contest South Korean accusations of "wrong-doing" on the part of Japan. So-called "history disputes" remain landmines which could explode at any time and upset diplomatic and civilian relations between Japan and South Korea. And Zainichi Koreans forever remain foreigners in Japan, left awkwardly in-between, even as fourth-generation Japan-born Zainichi Koreans are coming of age. In addition, the fraught relationship between Japan and the DPRK (with no formal diplomatic relations) adds additional twists in the plight of Zainichi Koreans.¹³

The legal limbo aside, Zainichi Koreans continue to be placed in an historical limbo, being permanently excluded from the orthodox narratives of Japan's "national" history. This historical limbo exacerbates hate demonstrations, as reported by Ishibashi Gaku. The new 2016 Hate Speech Act declares that hate speech against someone who is not originally from Japan shall not be tolerated, but Ishibashi's observations on the ground make clear that the law is toothless. Anti-hate advocacy groups, in which Japanese citizens and Zainichi Koreans work together, continue to urgently require more proactive and comprehensive measures, such as the enactment of anti-discrimination laws that specify penalties for violators. Nevertheless, without any thorough-going solution to the historical plight of Zainichi Koreans who remain in limbo, other means of hate and bigotry may appear, regardless of how law enforcement authorities handle hate demonstrations, on and off-line, as Higuchi Naoto insightfully predicts.¹⁴

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Behind Tokyo Governor Koike's Refusal to Send a Eulogy to the 'Memorial Service for Korean Victims of the Great Kanto Earthquake': a Rightist Women's Group and Nippon Kaigi

By Narusawa Muneo

Translated by Satoko Oka Norimatsu

On August 28, 2016 a number of elderly women and men gathered in front of JR Ryogoku Station in Tokyo with a big banner that read, "Do Not Tolerate the Memorial Stone for Koreans at Tokyo Metropolitan Yokoami-cho Park. It Demeans Japanese People." One woman took the microphone and said, "There is no scientific evidence of the massacre of six thousand [Koreans]... given the political situation at that time when terrorism was occurring frequently... Japanese people stood up (in the wake of the Great Kanto Earthquake) in order to protect themselves. That was how they came to form vigilante groups."

This was a street campaign organized by a right-wing women's group called *Soyokaze* ["Gentle Breeze"], which describes itself as "a group of women that tries to improve Japan even if only slightly!" Since last year, this group has intensified its campaign for removal of the "Memorial Stone for Korean Victims of the Great Kanto Earthquake." Located within Yokoami-cho Park (in Sumida Ward) fairly near Ryogoku Station, the Memorial is under the jurisdiction of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.



A right-wing rally at Yokoami-chō Park, surrounded by the police and bureaucrats. Photo by Narusawa Muneo.

The reason for their protest, they say, is that a certain passage is “demeaning to Japanese people.” This is the part that says, “In the turmoil of the Great Kanto Earthquake, as many as six thousand Korean people were deprived of their precious lives because of scheming and slanderous rumours, which were false.”

In the meantime, Tokyo Metropolitan Governor Koike Yuriko this year indicated that she would break with the tradition of sending a eulogy for the annual memorial service held in front of the Memorial on September 1, the anniversary of the 1923 earthquake that killed over one hundred thousand people. Koike did send a eulogy last year [the first quake anniversary after taking office]. This change in policy is not unrelated to the development of the *Soyokaze* movement.

On June 1, 2016, before the street-campaign speeches, members of *Soyokaze* went to the Park Section of the Park and Greenery Department in the Construction Bureau of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. According to *Soyokaze*’s blog of June 2, they got the Section to commit to the idea that the “Tokyo Metropolitan Government is responsible for the wording of the inscription on the Memorial

Stone since they own it and the land that it stands on.” They then followed that up with this: “The inscription, including the statement that ‘as many as six thousand Korean people were deprived of their precious lives because of false scheming and slanderous rumours, which were wrong,’ might forever be imprinted on the minds of Japanese children.”

Korean Riots?

Back in 2012, *Soyokaze* protested the Memorial Stone To Mourn the Gunma Prefecture Korean Victims of Forced Labour, located in Takasaki City of Gunma Prefecture, attacking the wording “With heartfelt remorse, we inscribe deeply in our memory the historical fact that our country caused tremendous damage and suffering to Korean people,” claiming this to be “a fabricated history that Korea imposed on us.” This ignited subsequent right-wing movements to demand its removal.

In 2014, the Gunma Prefectural Assembly passed a resolution asking the prefecture not to renew the approval of the memorial stone, due to the fact that “the memorial stone, located within a prefectural facility, is being used for political purposes.” The prefecture demanded that the group that installed the memorial stone remove it, and both parties are currently disputing the matter in the Maebashi District Court.

The goal of *Soyokaze*’s attack on the Memorial Stone for Koreans at the Tokyo Metropolitan Park is its removal. Likewise regarding the memorial stone in Gunma. Governor Koike’s refusal to send a eulogy for the annual memorial service may set the stage for achieving that goal. In fact, what directly triggered this move was the meeting of eight members of *Soyokaze* with Koga Toshiaki, a Metropolitan Assembly member, on June 19, 2016.

Assembly Member Koga of the Liberal Democratic Party is the Vice Chair of the Local Assembly Members' League of *Nippon Kaigi*, one of the biggest right-wing organizations in Japan, and an advisor to *Shuken kaifuku wo mezasu kai* ("Group for the Restoration of Sovereignty"), a right-wing group known for its racist remarks. His association with *Soyokaze* is clear enough. At their meeting with Koga, according to [their blog of the same date](#), *Soyokaze* members "reported to him on the issue of the inscription on the Korean memorial—its history and the current situation." They also "reported that the inscription comes 'under the responsibility of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government,' and after exchanging such information, 'came upon a single goal.'"

Koga took up the issue of the Korean memorial at the Metropolitan Assembly's [Education Committee on November 8, 2016](#), and said that "the part about six thousand people does not accord with the facts." He mentioned author Kudo Miyoko's book *Kanto Daishinsai "Chosenjin gyakusatsu" no shinjitsu* ("The Great Kanto Earthquake - The Truth About the 'Massacre of Koreans'"), published by Sankei Shinbun Shuppan, claiming that "it was an undeniable fact that Korean independence activists staged riots," and that attributing the "killings and injuring of Koreans" to "groundless rumours" ... "defames our grandfathers and forefathers through false and malicious slander."

A Book of Random Notes for Attacking the Memorials

Koga went further by saying, "Governor Koike Yuriiko is sending a eulogy to the event held in front of the Memorial Stone," and stated that the "Governor must change her perception of the issue, too." It is therefore possible that the "single goal" that *Soyokaze* and Koga agreed on in their June 19 meeting was Koike's

withdrawal of the governor's annual eulogy to the Korean memorial ceremony.

At the Metropolitan Assembly's Regular Meeting on March 2 this year, Koga, again referring to Kudo's book, went a step further and demanded "measures for improvement, including removal" of the Memorial Stone. In response, Governor Koike said that she would "handle this appropriately," and with regard to the eulogy said, "on future occasions, I will personally go through [the eulogy] and make an appropriate judgment."

But Kudo Miyoko's book *Kanto Daishinsai "Chosenjin gyakusatsu" no shinjitsu* (The Great Kanto Earthquake. The Truth About the "Massacre of Koreans"), the book that Koga used as the basis of his complaint about the Memorial Stone, takes the widely reported "Korean riots" to be "facts," while the newspapers at the time, amid the chaos after the earthquake, reported the riots without providing any actual evidence of them. There are numerous falsifications and distortions of sources in the book, making it unworthy of any serious expert review. This is one of those books of hate, claiming that since we are talking about "Korean terrorists," killing them would not be called a "massacre."

Koike announced in a press conference on August 25 that she would attend the big Buddhist memorial service organized by the Metropolitan Government's Mourning Association and said, "Since I will express my condolences to all the victims (there), I will not commemorate specific groups or individuals." Concerning this, Kato Naoki, a journalist who wrote the book *Kugatsu, Tokyo no rojo de* (In September, On the Streets of Tokyo, published by Korocolor Publishers), which covers in detail the massacre of Koreans at the time of the Great Kanto Earthquake, pointed out that "It is a huge problem to treat people who died as a result of the earthquake, and Koreans massacred by Japanese, on an equal basis

lumping them all together with the word ‘all’.”
He also said:

The Memorial Stone was erected with the determination never to do something like this again, precisely due to the fact that administrative bodies such as the police were complicit in spreading the groundless rumours that caused the massacres. In spite of that determination, Governor Koike’s refusal to send a eulogy there for the annual memorial service is quite possibly the same as the massacre denialism of people like Kudo Miyoko. If nothing is done, this could escalate into a ban on the memorial ceremonies in front of the Memorial Stone, and even its removal. Governor Koike once spoke at an event organized by *Soyokaze* in 2010, when she served as a member of the Lower House. This makes one feel uneasy about what will happen in the years ahead.

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A Japanese Hate Group that Attacked Korean Residents

By Ishibashi Gaku

Translated by Joseph Essertier

“A ring-the-doorbell-and-run demo (*pin pon dasshu demo*).”¹ Mr. Arita Yoshifu, a member of

the House of Councillors (the upper house of the National Diet) from the Democratic Party (Minshintō) watched part of the demonstration from beginning to end with his own eyes. He severely criticized the behavior of these absurd and therefore conspicuously hideous racists.

The participants numbered approximately 20, the distance they walked about 300 meters, and the time they spent a little more than 8 minutes. Riding up in a microbus, they changed their starting point as if to poke fun at the few hundred citizens countering them, waited for the right moment to protest, jumped into the bus for refuge, and ran off. They certainly resembled children full of naughty pranks, dashing off at full speed after ringing the bell at the door entrance.

“I’ve never seen such a clumsy demo.” Diet member Arita is someone who has long been on the front lines of those countering racists and who put all his energy into the Hate Speech Act of 2016 (Heito Supiichi Kaishō Hō).² He is outraged by the reality that “pseudo demos” such as this are permitted. The spectacle of the hate demo that was carried out on 16 July in Nakahara-ku, Kawasaki City brought to the surface the limits of the Hate Speech Act, a law that contains no provisions for banning hate speech.

The ringleaders are Tsuzaki Naomichi, who has conducted 12 hate demos in Kawasaki, and Seto Hiroyuki, the true Nazi believer who is the top adviser to the “Japan First Party” (Nippon Daiichi tō), an extreme right-wing political organization that was a successor to the “Association of Citizens against the Special Privileges of the Zainichi” (Zainichi Tokken o Yurusanai Shimin no Kai, or “Zaitokukai” for short). It is unimaginable that a demo organized by such luminaries of committed discriminationism would have any purpose other than racist agitation.

On the other hand, they were extremely careful to disguise their maneuvering. In their

application for the demo they explained to the Kawasaki Police and the Prefectural Public Safety Commission (Ken kōan iinkai) that their “goal is to denounce the Japan Communist Party” and said that they would “not engage in hate speech.” The unprecedented tactic of chartering a bus was aimed at their opposition. The demo organizers, who had planned it last year, on 5 June, were surrounded by protesting citizens, so they were forced to cancel.³ At that point, they had labeled it the “Demo To Start the Cleansing of Japan in Kawasaki,” evoking images of ethnic cleansing. Certainly, it seems to have become difficult to hold demos that announce hate speech openly and one can see a certain chilling effect brought about by the Hate Speech Act, which says that discriminatory actions will not “be permitted.”

“Of course we say ‘kill them’”

Yes, but for racists who aim at discrimination, it does not matter how the demo is packaged, or how small the scale of the demo is. Their targets and their effectiveness were displayed in videos uploaded to YouTube. One sees an actual situation in which the person with the camera runs up to the protestors and, speaking of citizens who are raising their voices against discrimination, claims that “violent groups from the extreme left and terrorists are on the rampage.” In a period of one month this video was viewed over 80,000 times. The comment area overflows with discriminatory posts.

“Hurry up and go home, you cockroach Koreans.” “Interfering Koreans make me sick. Hang in there, Japanese.”

It was twisted hatred to claim that all the people on the side protesting were Koreans who were “anti-Japanese” and had to be denounced. It was also twisted hatred for Mr. Tsuzaki to pour oil on the flames of discrimination openly at a “Japan purification demo.” The participants, with loudspeakers in

hand, put themselves in good spirits in the following way.

“South Korea and North Korea are enemy countries. They spread groundless rumors and bad mouth Japan all over the world. Of course, we say kill those from the enemy country. So don’t be shy about it, let your voice be heard. Cockroach Koreans, get the hell out. Slaughter the enemy.”

As these right-wing demo organizers and participants see it, the former “comfort women” are liars, Zainichi Korean residents are liars, and so we Japanese have been treated unfairly and have been falsely accused. A perversion in which victimizers justify their discrimination by taking hold of the feelings of victims i.e., self-victimization.⁴ Fabrications of history make this perversion possible and this reflects the way in which such a circuit of discrimination infiltrates this society.

This is why it did not matter that it was a “pseudo demo.” Under the pretext of raising funds for their activities, an account number is displayed on Mr. Tsuzaki and Mr. Seto’s blog. The Hate Speech Act, merely a law of principle, is powerless in the face of professional discriminators who make money from discrimination. What we need next is a law that bans racial discrimination itself and provisions for local government enforcement. It must be something that severs the roots of the historical and structural discrimination against resident Koreans that began with colonial domination, domination that this country’s government has preserved and continued.

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Narusawa Muneo is a journalist and editor and the author of books on the Obama administration and 9.11.

Satoko Oka NORIMATSU is Director of the Peace Philosophy Centre, a peace-education organization in Vancouver, Canada, with a widely-read Japanese-English [blog](#) on topics such as peace and justice, war memory and education in East Asia, US-Japan relations, US military

bases in Okinawa, nuclear issues, and media criticism. (View English-language posts only [here](#).) She is co-author with Gavan McCormack of *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012; an updated paperback version was published in the spring of 2018). The Japanese translation is 『沖縄の〈怒〉—日米への抵抗』 (法律文化社, 2013, the Korean translation is 저항하는 섬, 오끼나와: 미국과 일본에 맞선 70년간의 기록 (창비, 2014) and the Chinese translation is 沖縄之怒 美国同盟下的抗争 (社会科学文献出版社, 2015). She is also co-author with Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick of 『よし、戦争について話そう。戦争の本質について話をしようじゃないか』 (Let's Talk About War. Let's Talk about What War Really Is!) 『金曜日, 2014』. She is editor, author, and translator of 『正義への責任 世界から沖縄へ (Responsibility for Justice - From the World to Okinawa) Vol 1,2,3』 (Ryukyū Shimpo, 2015, 2016, 2017) and 『沖縄は孤立していない 世界から沖縄への声、声、声』 (Okinawa Is Not Alone - Voices for Okinawa from the World) (Kinyobi, 2018). She is an *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* editor.

Joseph Essertier is an associate professor at the Nagoya Institute of Technology. He has written about debates over the use of the colloquial in Japanese writing and the Romanization movement in the Meiji period (1868-1912).

Ishibashi Gaku is a Kanagawa Shimbun journalist.

Youngmi Lim received a Ph.D. in Sociology from the City University of New York Graduate Center, and currently teaches Sociology at Musashi University, Tokyo. Youngmi is writing a book on intermarriage between Zainichi Koreans and Japanese.

Notes

¹ The children of post-WWII baby boomers. “Rosujene” (the lost generation, abridged in *katakana* transliteration) had undergone the most competitive college admission as well as job placement (resulting in higher participation in irregular employment and lower marriage rates) due to Japan’s faltering economy since the collapse of the economic bubble in 1992.

² Yasuda, 2012; Sakamoto, 2011.

³ Higuchi, 2014; Yamaguchi, 2013.

⁴ See Klein, 2012 for “information laundering.”

⁵ Reestablished as the Great Korean Empire (*Daehan Jeguk* 1897-1910).

⁶ Hōmushō, 2017. Those who have “special permanent residency” are “former Japanese nationality holders” and their descendants; their migration took place during Japan’s colonization of the Korean Peninsula (1910-1945). When Japan first introduced Alien Registration in 1947, these legally-Japanese Koreans were registered simply as “Koreans” (*Chōsen*) just to indicate their regional origin, prior to the 1948 foundation of two Korean states, the Republic of Korea (ROK) or “South Korea,” and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), or “North Korea,” in 1948. Those who formally pledged allegiance to the ROK gradually switched their registration to the ROK (*Kankoku* in Japanese). The ROK government was formally recognized by Japan following the establishment of diplomatic

relations between Japan and South Korea in 1965. Those who continue to be registered as just Koreans (*Chōsenjin*) are stateless Koreans. Not all such Koreans support the DPRK regime.

⁷ Calculated from Hōmushō 2017b. Once naturalized, Zainichi Koreans or any other former foreigners, are counted simply as Japanese and are statistically lost.

⁸ Ryang, 2007.

⁹ Nishinarita, 1997, p.42, Table II-1.

¹⁰ Mun, 2007, p. 87-88. The fighting in the years 1950 to 1953 that is conventionally referred to as the “Korean War” in the pro-US narrative was only one stage in this civil war. The division of the Korean Peninsula into two territories, one Communist-controlled and the other US-controlled, at the 38th parallel in August 1945, as well as the undemocratic elections that were lent legitimacy by the newly-established-yet-still-weak United Nations in 1948 exacerbated Korean-versus-Korean strife. With the dark clouds of a civil war on the horizon and intense guerrilla fighting in the late 1940s, e.g. the left wing and grassroots independence struggles in southwestern Korea and on Cheju Island, it is not surprising that many Koreans chose to remain in Japan rather than return immediately to their ancestral homeland. I thank Joseph Essertier for pointing out this deeper context.

¹¹ Law-125 (Alien Registration Law) and 126 (Residency of Former Japanese Subjects), and Law-127 (Compensation for Death and Injury associated with Military Duties), possess tremendous symbolic meaning in Japan’s re-establishment as a sovereign state. Law-125 and 126 disconnected Zainichi Koreans from the new Japanese state, and Zainichi Korean war veterans receive no compensation. See Jung 2003. Only in 2001 did they receive temporary remuneration, by which time, the vast majority of war veterans were already deceased and the law itself expired in 2004 (Sōmushō n.d.).

¹² Hashimoto, 2015.

¹³ See Ryang, 2016 for a range of issues surrounding Zainichi Koreans who are sympathetic to the DPRK.

¹⁴ Higuchi, 2016.

¹⁵ A “[ring-the-doorbell-and-run demo](#)” (*pin pon dasshu demo*) is the way that Mr. Arita has described this hate demo that was held in the city of Kawasaki on 16 July 2017.

¹⁶ The Hate Speech Act of 2016 is a toothless law against hate speech that was enacted on 25 May 2016 by Japan’s National Diet. It does not “legally ban hate speech and sets no penalty.” Tomohiro Osaki, “[Diet passes Japan’s first law to curb hate speech](#),” *Japan Times* (24 May 2016)

¹⁷ In other words, it appears that a decision to carry out the hate demo in Kawasaki was made on 5 June 2016, almost two weeks after the Hate Speech Act was enacted and about 13 months before the day of the demo, 16 July 2017. This supports the suggestion of Ishibashi Gaku, the author of the article, that this demo would be banned, *if* Japan had real laws against hate speech.

¹⁸ A term from psychology, “self-victimization” refers to a kind of deception in which the abuser plays the victim, deceiving others by portraying himself or herself as the victim in order to elicit sympathy from others, divert attention away from his or her abusive acts, to place responsibility for wrongdoing on his or her chosen scapegoat. This is what Ishibashi seems to intend to express with the word “perversion”—that this hate group twists the history

to such an extent that they make it look as if the people who are obvious victims and have little power, i.e., “comfort women” who have given testimony about how they were tortured and Zainichi Koreans who face discrimination in Japan, are, in fact, the ones in power and doing the bullying. This contradicts the historical evidence and is a complete reversal of roles.