

Politics of Trauma---Japanese Military Sexual Slavery: Student Website Guide

This short guide is designed to help you navigate the website by providing a glossary of terms and questions to help guide you through the information. If you are new to learning about Japanese Military Sexual Slavery, we do suggest working through the pages of the website in sequence, to familiarize yourself with the context and history of the issue. Also note that there is a list of resources for further reading available on the first page, and throughout the website there are links to documents and other web resources to deepen your learning on this issue. At the bottom of this document is a list of websites for further reading.

Glossary of Terms:

“comfort women”	a euphemism coined by the Japanese military to describe women forced into sexual slavery for their soldiers; translated from “ianfu” in Japanese or “wianbu” in Korean. Generally written in quotation marks to indicate that this term is meant to hide the reality of the trauma and violence of the women, and represents the perspective of the soldiers, rather than the women themselves.
“comfort station”	another euphemistic term used by the Japanese military to describe the brothels where the women were confined
Military Sexual Slavery	a term created by the modern support movement and experts on violence against women at the United Nations to name and describe the truth of what the women experienced.
Intersectionality	a means of analysis that takes into account multiple aspects of a person’s identity, and how those shape their life. For example, gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, etc.
Chosun (also spelled Joseon)	the name of Korea prior to Japanese colonization. Chosun Dynasty: (1392-1910)

Questions to guide your exploration of the website:

To help you get the most out of the website and to understand the complexity of this issue, work through the material and find the answers to the following questions.

1. What is meant by: systemic oppression, insidious trauma; historical trauma; community trauma?
2. What historical circumstances preceded Japan’s colonization of Chosun?
3. What was the colonial period like under Japanese domination?
4. When and why did the Japanese government create the “comfort women” system?
5. How many women were forced into military sexual slavery, and how were they recruited?
6. After reading the survivors’ testimonies, what do you find they had in common?
7. Looking at the survivors’ lives from the perspective of Intersectionality, what were the forces that shaped their lives before, during and after the war? (gender, class, ethnicity, etc.)

8. What strikes you most about the testimonies you read and listened to on the videos? Do you notice any major difference between the Dutch survivor (Jan Ruff O’Hearne) and the other Asian survivors?
9. Has the Japanese government officially apologized for military sexual slavery? What have they done, and what have the survivors’ responses been?
10. What was problematic about the Asian Women’s Fund?
11. How did the women survive after the war? What happened to them?
12. What kinds of intergenerational effects can be seen from the fact that this issue has not been dealt with fully?
13. What are the 7 demands of the Weekly Wednesday protests?
14. Why did the Korean Council have difficulty finding a location for the War and Women’s Human Rights museum?
15. What kind of support was provided to the survivors after the 1990s?
16. What have been the successes of the activist movement to support the survivors?
17. What do you think could have been done to lessen the trauma experienced by the survivors after the war?
18. What do you think needs to be done to resolve this issue?

Web Resources for Further Reading:

Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery: www.womenandwar.net

For text versions of many testimonies, see above and: www.wgsan.org

For information on the 2000 Women’s War Crimes Tribunal: <http://www1.jca.apc.org/vaww-net-japan/english/index.html>

For information on this issue and others on WWII in Asia: www.torontoalpha.org

For interesting historical and government documents, you can visit the website of the Japanese Asian Women’s Fund, a highly contested private ‘atonement fund’ created in place of official government reparations. However, it is important to be aware that this website also consists of propaganda against supporters of surviving “comfort women.” Stick to the interesting translated historical documents about the system, and read everything else with a very critical eye: www.awf.or.jp