

Linda Heredia Chavez
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Systematic Sexual Violence

This paper will make a comparison between the systematic sexual violence from part of the government of Japan and the United States on the mobilization of the comfort women system and brothels for the United States base expansions. The center of focus is to acknowledge the oppression towards Japanese women, since the beginning and after World War II.

The earliest events that reflect the lack of support and respect of human rights for women began with the creation of the comfort women system and shortly after the establishment of brothels for U.S. military personnel. However, what marks a difference in the comfort women stations is that the Japanese government regulated them and a vast majority of other countries benefited from it from 1939 until 1945. Ustinia Dolgopol states (1995) that the Japanese government was the one who condoned the establishment of stations and kept management; it also went as far as regulating every aspect of its function (p. 133-135). Those who contributed in the comfort women system were from the Asian-Pacific: China, Japan, Indonesia, Korea, the Netherlands, the Philippines and Taiwan. Then shortly after that, in 1946, the early beginnings of the United States brothels in Japan are activated. In the time of the United States military occupation in Japanese lands, seeing sexual violence goes almost unnoticeable despite having the brothels assigned for each base, especially in Okinawa (our center of focus). As Suzuyo and Kiyomi (1999), the atrocities of sexual violence increase as the Okinawa land was covered by 20 percent of the bases (p. 66).

It is vital to inform that despite the existence of a variety of women from different countries under the comfort women systems, the most targeted were those of Korean ethnicity and among the sexual assaults reported out of the brothels were in vast majority towards Okinawan women. Laws that lack protection for women and the overuse of military power allows history to repeat itself. Because rights and the voices of comfort women and Okinawa women in the shadows of the United States military bases have been suppressed, it is essential to analyze that Japan's government did participate in the comfort women system and unmask the truth of the cover-ups of inhuman acts committed by the United States military. To understand how similar the actions are, we will have to analyze how both systematic uses of sexual service were handled at each event's independent time.

The topic of comfort women has been well-researched in recent years. Among recent reviews of this topic, articles and books examine the effect in the area of public affairs in Japan, after comfort women. Among the analysis done in this area, many times we see the era of this woman's service titled as the "issue of comfort women". This is because the center of focus of politics and governmental interests is to move on forward with the so-called "issue" to allow the flow of unrestricted or even uncertainty in trustworthiness within all governments of the participants of the issue. For example one of the many reviews done on this topic, Sonya Kuki's article, "[THE BURDEN OF HISTORY: THE ISSUE OF 'COMFORT WOMEN' AND WHAT JAPAN MUST DO TO MOVE FORWARD](#)," which calls for the government of Japan to acknowledge the agreement done in allowing the activation of the comfort stations, despite knowing that things could go wrong. Kuki even gives a bit of insight on how to move forward with the topic in order to remove the burden it has created, because in reality the issue was not

reaching high levels of publication, until the government began to deny taking part of the system. Although Kuki's (2013, p. 245) work does contain information on how if Japan does not comprehend the importance of recognizing the wrong, it can be considered injustice and abusive. The core of her work is to give a solution for better public affairs.

Now the way the topic of brothels created for U.S. military personnel is slightly covered when articles or books are examining the military base expansion in Okinawa. Some of those topics included in articles include percentages of the amount of territory taken away from civilians and the riots that formed because of the invasion of the United States. An adequate example of the topics mentioned covered with the brothels topic, is seen in Jun Shimabukuro's article "[Okinawan Identity and the Struggle for Self-Determination](#)." It introduces the phenomenon of militarization in certain parts of Japan, but little insight is given of the sexual assaults or brothels, which it should be covered in depth as it is highly linked to the expansion of bases in Okinawa. Having had a bit of insight on how each event in Japan's history has left a mark, we will be centering on those women whose rights were overlooked.

There is no better way to get deep into the cruelty and oppression contra women's rights than describing how the systems were created in each event. Therefore, to engage in this research, I will be utilizing recent and old articles, books and other resources. The power of words contains a lot of value when a story is narrated, mainly if it is serving as a lookout for justice, increasing its importance of it being shared. For this reason, I will analyze and make use of testimonies from victims under both systems.

After studying every resource utilized it is safe to say that the main intersecting point in both systems, was the reason for their creation: given to be used under the benefit for man, but

not just any ordinary man, it was those who hold power in any way within the military. After its creation, the justification used for its activation was to prevent civilians from being sexually assaulted. The government of Japan was the one in charge of creating and to start the recruitment for the women; they were the ones who initiated all the stations for the mentioned participants of the regions of Asia during World War II. On the other hand, the formation of the brothels for the United States personal, was also created by the Japanese government, but the United States soldiers ran the sexual assaults made out of distances from bases or the brothels. As we can see here, the idea of having a system controlled by the government made the possibilities of wrong turnouts almost impossible.

Still, when the promotion of both systems began with lies, the results are bad. According to Kim Hyunduk (2012), "The Japanese military engaged in the systematic abduction of women from China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, and other nations and confined them to military installations in Japanese-occupied territories to serve as sexual slaves" (p.1). The promotions for the system of comfort zones had been using headlines like "recruitment" or "volunteer," and from the standpoint of the military, women had not been forced, but we can see how in this article the headline used to "recruit" is abduction and it is proven as so in more pieces. Pyong Gap Min describes the same type of technique used to obtain the women for the stations (2003), "The other popular technique through which Korean comfort women were obtained was coercive means, including abduct" (p. 951). Noting the way the military approached women is essential due to the Japanese government violating the rights of the women in the stations. This is because their work was supposed to be paid and be part of it voluntary, however, many did not make it out until allowed to or in most cases were not even paid. Ustinia

Dolgopol (1995) argues the point of having had women forced to be part of stations without pay and were vulnerable to be part of because the economic situation, especially in Korea, at that period was not at its best (p. 131-133). According to Thomas J. Ward and William D. Lay's (2019), analysis in Yuki Tanaka book *Japan's comfort women*, points out the reasons why women decided to continue their participation in the comfort stations was because "they [...] found themselves trapped and enslaved by loan arrangements [...] that they accepted for themselves or their families" (p.2). Having held women forcibly because of loans or poverty extremities in the system is not justifiable to not have been allowed out of the system. Another strategy used to keep women serving the soldiers was promising things such as, sustainable salary and freewill of departing the system; instead they received exploitation. Kazuko Watanambe (1999) describes how women were used merely as "female ammunition" and that their dehumanized bodies were used as "public toilets" (p. 20). Shortly after, the whole purpose of having the system run voluntarily was no longer enough to keep the man's desires fulfilling, despite the intention to have a considerable amount of women working. The ranging numbers of women who formed part of the stations were according to Qiu Peipei (2013) between 200,000 to 400,000. Still, Sonya Kuki (2013) projects another range from 50,000 to agreeing with Peipei on 200,000 comfort women. The uncertainty of the exact right amount of women hasn't been fully defined because another role player in this topic is anonymity. The fact of people having the idea that the victims of the system as were volunteers and not victims, many opted out of recording themselves as a survivor. However, because organizations and outsiders from the government itself, have been achieving the goal of helping all those survivors come out from isolation and

report their stories, we can examine word for word their testimonies. Qui Peipei (2013) book provides one of many testimonies from survivors of the stations, Zhu Qiaomei reported:

“When I was first abducted by Japanese troops I was already pregnant, but the Japanese officers raped me despite the baby in my belly. And merely two months after I birthed the child I was again subjected to frequent rapes” (p.94).

As we observe in the narration of Zhu Qiaomei, there was no special treatment to anyone, even in situations like hers.

On the other hand, the results of the lies of the brothel systems are shown after the first sexual assaults are reported. The idea of keeping civilians safe from troops committing rape is used once again, but not implemented by the United States troops. The focus here is narrowed only towards the use and abuse of military power by the United States military soldiers against Okinawan women. According to Robert Kramm (2019), "Many occupation servicemen took advantage of their sexual opportunities in post-surrender Japan. They did not engage only with the women "provided" for them; some perceived all Japanese women as sexually available" (p. 64). Once again, the promising idea of only having women to the disposal of men for their desires and needs is not reflecting here because, in the vision of the soldiers, anyone could be assaulted. In Akemi Johnson's book (2019), many reports were made in the year of 1955 and even though it was highly unlikely to happen, two in specific were reported to the Japanese police and became public. One report was of a six-year-old girl raped and murdered by the United States soldiers and another from a twelve-year-old girl raped while on her way out of school. The adequate thing to do as far as the purpose for bases in Okinawa and the United States military image, was for soldiers to follow the rules and use only the brothels. Yet, because there

was not much regulation towards their acts, the reports just kept rising. An active United States airman soldier stationed in Okinawa bases gave his testimony in Johnson's book:

“He described the "intensive jungle with the marine's warfare training" that marines do in northern Okinawa—" set loose in the woods by themselves for three months at a time," deprived of sleep and food. Once, on a drive through the north, this veteran and his family came across a group of marines: "They were filthy. They looked like a bunch of wild men. Well, you take a bunch of guys that have lived like that for three months, and you get them back to camp, and you give them the weekend off and send them out into town, to the bars in Chatan and Naha, and expect them to act normal.” (p. 61)

After the crimes become more noticeable, Johnson describes that civilians began to take matters into their own hands. For example, many lived hidden and even created a system to warn of the United States military personnel approaching the villages. Women's rights regarding the oppression suffered under the United States government is where both events in Japanese history connect to its maximum capacity. There is no doubt that the women who were forced into undesirable happenings were possible because, among the two governments, they were seen as one more item for men's performance and status of inferiority.

After thoroughly examining the victim's testimonies under the military violence committed by the United States personnel and the military personnel during the comfort women era, I have determined that little acknowledge given to the rights women uphold. The rights women hold were diminished as the justification used in all victims from both events, titled sex as a necessity for men's better functioning and well being. Women's bodies were mobilized for war.

Having too many similarities in what happened to comfort women and the Okinawan women abused under the United States personnel allows us to see the lack of implementation of respecting all civilian's rights. It is unconstitutional to believe that only specific individuals are protected under human rights. Having had actual testimonials of survivors and victims of all these crimes committed by the government of Japan and the United States allows the doubts of the historical events to be considered truthful. Analyzing both events also shows the much more significant impact on human rights other than just for public affairs interests or military bases expansion.

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