

March 17, 2017

Takashi Shinozuka  
Consul General of Japan in Atlanta  
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3438 Peachtree Road  
Atlanta, GA 30326  
VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL  
VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: [info@aa.mofa.go.jp](mailto:info@aa.mofa.go.jp)

Dear Mr. Shinozuka,

I submit this open letter in response to the Japanese government's involvement in opposing a World War II memorial honoring comfort women at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights (the Center) in Atlanta. The Japanese government's actions ultimately led to the Center's cancellation of a previously, agreed upon MOU and groundbreaking date of April 27, 2017 for the memorial with the Atlanta Comfort Women Memorial Task Force (the Task Force). The Japanese government has offered two main reasons for opposing the World War II memorial- first, that the Japanese government has already apologized for the comfort women issue and second, that the Japanese government is concerned that people of Japanese descent living in the United States would be exposed to bullying and discrimination as a result of the memorial.

In regards to the apology issue, the Japanese government fails to understand the fundamental purpose for the World War II memorial. The memorial is not about the Japanese. The purpose of the memorial is to honor the over 200,000 girls and women from throughout the Pacific theater who were trafficked, sexually enslaved, and in many cases killed during World War II. In addition, the history of the comfort women opens a bridge to highlight the present day issues of trafficking, sexual slavery, and violence against women. The memorial is ultimately an apolitical, human rights issue. However, the Japanese government wants to hijack the issue away from the comfort women and make it about the Japanese. If the Consul General had simply contacted the Task Force, we could have corrected the Japanese government's misunderstanding. Our group has never asked for an apology. We want to honor and focus on the lives of the comfort women victims and not the perpetrators of the crime. The human rights of the victims certainly outweigh the concerns of those guilty of the crime.

In the United States, American citizens are guaranteed certain rights under the Constitution. The First Amendment guarantees our citizens the freedom of speech. Expressing our respect and honoring World War II victims in our American homeland is a demonstration of our First Amendment right. The Japanese government's actions to interfere with a fundamental right of American citizens on American soil are offensive to me as an American Citizen. How the Japanese government governs its own citizens is part of its sovereignty and the Task Force does not plan to interfere. However, the Japanese government's actions to prevent a World War

II memorial in a major American city are an affront to the United States Constitution and all Americans.

Since the Japanese government has unilaterally raised the apology issue even though our group has never requested an apology, let me respond with the following questions. Which of the many versions of expressing regret does the Counsel General refer? Does the Counsel General wish to publish a clear apology today to clarify all previous government attempts at apology? The Japanese government responds that they have apologized enough for the comfort women issue. Does that mean that the government has had a certain number of apologies in mind from the beginning? How many apologies does the government feel is sufficient? Despite the lunacy of this line of reasoning, to indulge the Japanese government, I would suggest that over 200,000 apologies, one for each comfort women would be a starting point. However, I would suggest that each act of rape and violence suffered by each comfort women during World War II demands an apology; then an extremely conservative estimate would be two million apologies.

Why does a truly apologetic government allocate \$590,000,000 to fight memorial sites, historians, the United Nations and textbook makers who are speaking on the history of the comfort women tragedy? Why does a truly apologetic government want to rewrite history books to expunge mention of comfort women? Why does a truly apologetic government fight the term “sexual slavery”? Why did Prime Minister Abe say to the Japanese parliament shortly after the announcement of the December 2015 comfort women agreement that he has no desire to apologize ever again for the comfort women issue? Why does a truly apologetic government say it is tired of saying sorry when so many international organizations and governments, including the United Nations (1996, 1998, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2017-pending), International War Crimes Tribunal (2000), United States House of Representatives (2007), European Union (2007), 2015 Joint Statement by Korean, Japanese, and International Scholars for East Asia’s Freedom from the Past, all continue to demand justice for the comfort women?

Your public and private statements of apology are specious and belie the well-documented historical revisionist bent of the current Japanese government. The fact is that the current Japanese government led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has gone back and forth on its position on the comfort women. It’s also a fact that the Japanese government has never gone through the process of formal apology and reparations as it would be defined by the United Nations: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/RemedyAndReparation.aspx>. This is unfortunate given the countries of Germany and my own country, the United States of America, have both made formal apologies and reparations for their part in World War II.

In regards to the Japanese government concerns of potential bullying and discrimination against Japanese living in the United States as a result of a comfort women memorial in Atlanta, the concerns are unfounded in fact. There are almost 100 comfort women memorials built or in the planning stages throughout the world and there is no evidence of a dramatic rise in anti-Japanese sentiment. There are thousands of World War II memorials throughout the world that have not led to a dramatic increase in anti-Japanese acts of discrimination. If there was any memorial or remembrance that would lead to anti-Japanese discrimination or bullying, it would

possibly be with any remembrance of Pearl Harbor. But strangely, you express no concern about that better known part of the Japanese Imperial Army's attack on U.S. soil during World War II.

In conclusion, the Japanese government's two publicly cited reasons for opposing a World War II memorial honoring comfort women in Atlanta- that the government has already apologized and concerns of increased bullying and discrimination against Japanese are unfounded. To take a human rights issue about trafficking, sexual slavery, and violence against women and to politicize the issue turning the focus away from the comfort women to the perpetrators of the crime, Japan, dishonors the comfort women yet again. If all past memorial sites had followed the Japanese government rationale and if all future sites follow the Japanese rationale, no World War II memorials would exist. I am relieved that we live in a country where countless World War II memorials proudly stand and the Atlanta Comfort Women Memorial should be the next American memorial to stand proudly forever.

Sincerely,

Kelly J. Ahn, MD, FACP  
Board Member  
Atlanta Comfort Women Memorial Task Force

#### Appendix

1. UN REPORTS: Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. Commission of human rights resolution 1994/95. Report on the mission to the DPRK, ROK, and Japan on the issue of military sexual slavery in wartime. Jan 4. 1996
2. Contemporary Forms of Slavery. Systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery like practices during armed conflict. Final report. By Ms Gay McDougall Special Rapporteur June 22, 1998. Commission on Human Rights. UN
3. DoudouDien UN REPORT 2006
4. Manfred Nowak UN REPORT 2008
5. RashioaManjoo UN Report 2010
6. Yoshimi Yoshiaki. Comfort Women : Sexual Slavery in the Japanese a military during WW II Translated by Suzanne OBrian 1995
7. US House Resolution 121 Mike Honda 6/30/2007
8. European Union Parliament 11/13/2007 Justice for Comfort Women resolution
9. 2015 Joint Statement by Korean, Japanese and Intl scholars for east Asia's Freedom from the Past 8.15.2015. 37 Western scholars 105 Japan. 382 Korea scholars signed. [Piie.com/blogs/north-korea-witness-transformation/2015-joint-statement-Korean-Japanese-and-international](http://Piie.com/blogs/north-korea-witness-transformation/2015-joint-statement-Korean-Japanese-and-international)