

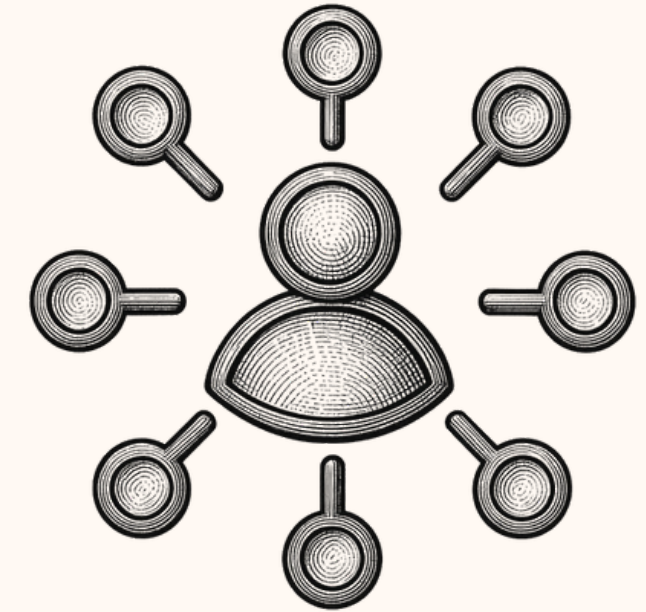
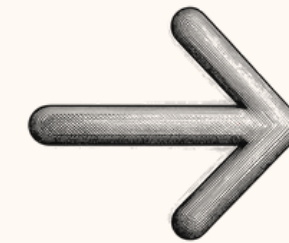
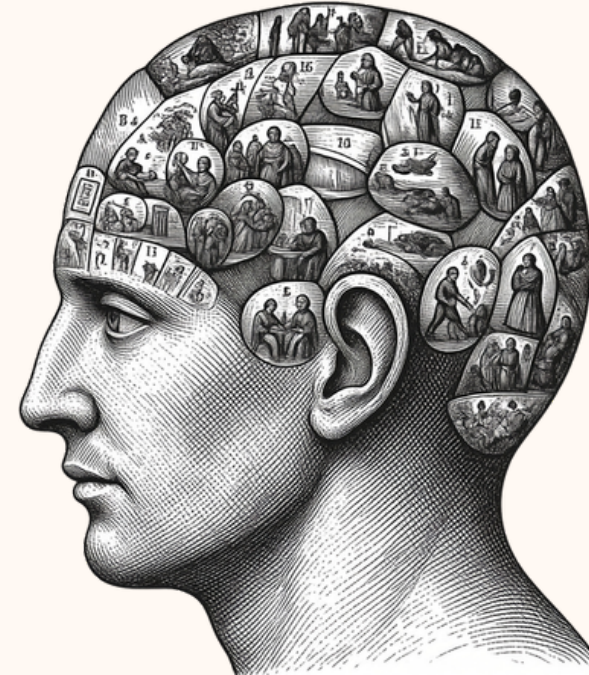
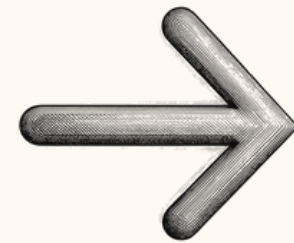
How Do Filipino Feminist Groups Fight for Justice?

By Yu Nga Sze, Ceci

OVERVIEW

1. The Roadmap (The 3 Key Components)
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5. Transnational Awakening and Living Inheritance
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10. Internship Experience & Personal Growth
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ROADMAP



The Starting Point:

Can You Hear Us?, a collection of 14 survivor testimonies, shattered my understanding of history and raised a central question for me:

*What does justice
actually mean for a survivor?*

Why the Philippines:

Filipina survivors' WWII history is globally underrated and rarely mentioned;
Many citizens remain unaware of the state-silenced trauma.

The Core Framework:

This investigation explores how a deeply buried historical injustice directly fuels modern feminist activism, tracking how grassroots groups break both international neglect & domestic erasing to actively fight for the Lolas' justice today.

THE CORE QUESTION

How Do Filipino Feminist Groups Fight for Justice?

1. THE POLITICAL PARADOX

The state sacrifices legal claims to maintain trade deals, foreign aid (ODA), regional security pacts, and diplomatic harmony, bounded by geopolitics and legal treaties

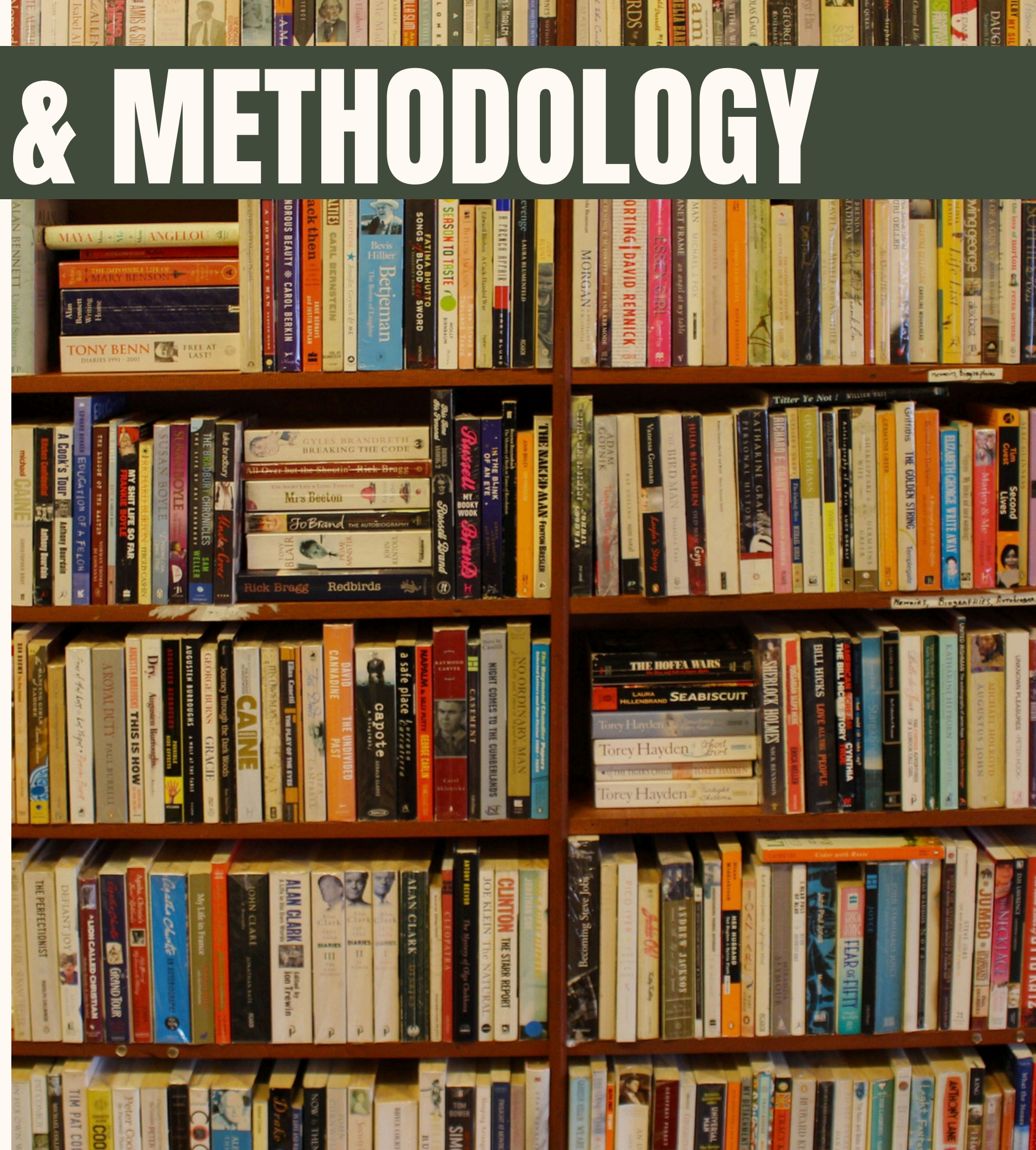
2. THE FRAMEWORK OF KAPWA

Uses the unique value of Kapwa (shared identity) to do the cultural interconnectedness between contemporary youth and adopt the grandmothers' historical struggle as their own personal fight today



PRIMARY SOURCES & METHODOLOGY

- **The Activist Archives:** Evaluated *public manifestos, legal petitions, & News Webpage* issued directly by modern society, & grassroots feminist organizations like Lila Pilipina & GABRIELA.
- **Historical & Legal Cross-Examination:** Analyzed official post-war military records, diplomatic treaties, & declassified state documents to trace the systemic cover-up and institutional abandonment by global superpowers.

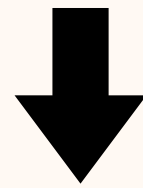


VIDEO SHOWCASE

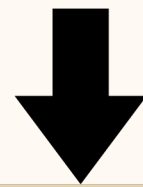
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TRANSNATIONAL AWAKENING AND LIVING INHERITANCE

For 50 long years, the brutal truth of victims under the wartime sexual slavery system was buried under a heavy silence, kept in place by a culture of shame that blamed the victims, and governments that cared more about Cold War politics than domestic human justice.



In August 1991, South Korean survivor Kim Hak-sun shattered that silence by publicly telling her story and demanding accountability. Her bravery sparked a massive feminist wave across Asia, and inspired Maria Rosa Henson (Lola Rosa) the courage to speak her truth up in the public in 1992.



Even though most of the elderly Lolas (victims under JMSS) are passing away, their fight isn't dying with them. A new generation of young feminist activists is inheriting their struggle, reframing the Lolas not as helpless victims, but as "political ancestors" & warriors.

FEMINISM GROUP

1. *Organizations like GABRIELA and Lila Pilipina* rejected the Asian Women's Fund as "cheated money." They demanded formal state responsibility and a legal apology from Japan. Some Lolas accepted the fund to support themselves and their families, reflecting different needs and perspectives within the movement.
2. **An Unbreakable Legacy of Resistance:** Young feminists continue the Lolas' struggle across generations, even after the government demolished their monument on Roxas Boulevard. Bronze statues can be destroyed; collective memory and the fight for human dignity cannot.



Facebook Account: @Lila Pilipina

IG Account: @gabrielaphils

SURPRISING INSIGHTS & DISCOVERIES



Wikipedia. n.d. "Agreement against the Communist International Japanese ambassador to Germany Kintomo Mushanokōji and the German ambassador-at-large Joachim von Ribbentrop sign the Anti-Comintern Pact." Photograph. Accessed July 13, 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Comintern_Pact.

The Silence Was Engineered:

Right after WWII, the U.S. fast-tracked an alliance with Japan to fight communism, and the Philippino government buried wartime atrocities for regional security.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA). n.d. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan Official Website. Accessed July 13, 2026. <https://www.mofa.go.jp>.

The Post-War Reconstruction Trap:

The devastation of WWII left the Philippines physically and financially ruined. Desperate for capital to rebuild the country, the state grew heavily dependent on Japanese loans and development aid (ODA), creating a trap for the Lolas that effectively priced out human rights justice.



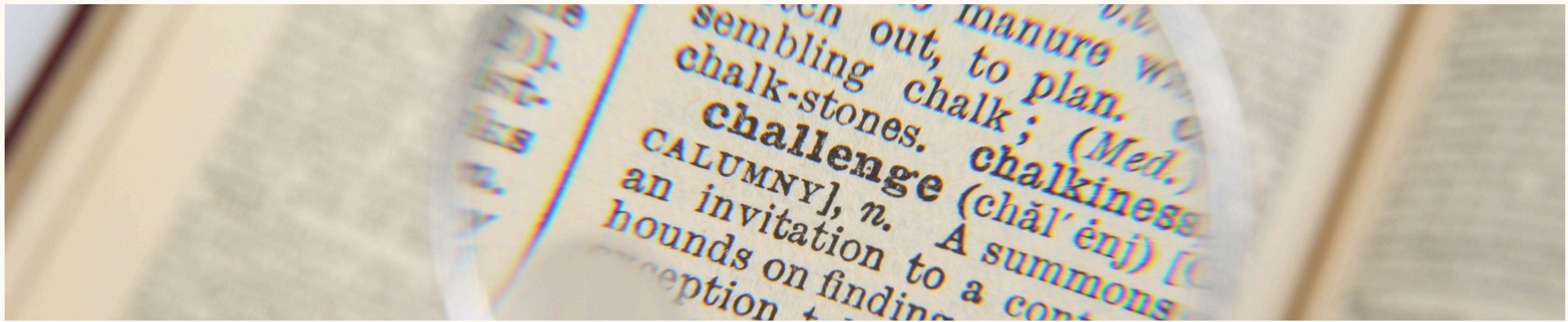
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A Battle of the History is

Still Actively Policed:

In the 2018, the government's midnight removal of the Lolas' statue in Manila proved that the state still treats women's historical trauma as a direct threat to modern foreign investment.

CHALLENGES



Digging Through Intentionally Erased History

- Finding official documentation was incredibly difficult.
- Retreating Japanese forces destroyed military records, while postwar geopolitics, colonial legacies, and local political contexts contributed to gaps and silences in the historical record.
- This meant piecing together history through fragmented archives, testimonies, and other surviving sources.

The Emotional Weight and Ethical Burden

- Reading raw, graphic testimonies of wartime sexual violence carries a significant emotional weight.
- The challenge is balancing academic rigor with human empathy—honouring the Lolas' trauma and survival without reducing their experiences to mere "data points."

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY



The Online Citizen. 2023. "UN Committee Finds Philippines Failed to Address Ongoing Discrimination and Suffering of WWII Sexual Slavery Victims." March 8, 2023. <https://www.theonlinecitizen.com/2023/03/08/un-committee-finds-philippines-failed-to-address-ongoing-discrimination-and-suffering-of-wwii-sexual-slavery-victims>.

A Landmark of Legal Rule :

In 2023, the UN (CEDAW) ruled that the Philippine government is actively violating international law today (Tugade, 2025). By taking care of male war veterans while completely ignoring the Lolos, the state is guilty of ongoing gender discrimination. This sets a landmark legal precedent → governments cannot simply wait out the clock for elderly survivors to die to avoid legal accountability → Is a good start

The Modern Exploitation:

Lured by fake jobs and trafficked into brutal online scam hubs in northern Myanmar, where they face captivity & torture → Deep Poverty, State Neglect, & Treating vulnerable people as economic commodities—are the exact same root causes driving human trafficking today.

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE & PERSONAL GROWTH



Finding Truth in the Silence

Working on this project made me realize that research isn't just about grades or lines on a resume; it's about *giving a voice* back to women who were intentionally silenced by history, which completely changed my perspective on why I want to do human rights work.



The Shift from Sympathy to True Empathy

Stopped just *"feeling sorry"* for the Lolos and started truly *feeling the weight of their resilience* → turned my daily tasks into a deeply personal mission to ensure their survival is *respected*, not just studied.



Fueling My Passion for Advocacy

This experience made me stop looking at myself as just a student looking for credits → Started seeing myself as a staff member of Asia Pacific Peace Museum and elevated *my spirit of respecting the people* who suffered in WWII and *deepened the empathy* I brought to my work every single day.

CONCLUSION

- Digging into the Lolas' testimonies completely changed me; it stopped feeling like a school project and became something I felt deeply in my gut, where their pain and their strength started driving everything I did.
- This entire experience completely rewired how I see my future; seeing how the Lolas' past is identical to seeing how they still fought for their justice today. This showed me that history is alive and lit a permanent passion in me to fight for human rights.



THANK YOU

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