



VOICES OF THE 'CW' MOVEMENT

Linking history
with humanity

Interviewer: Edward Li



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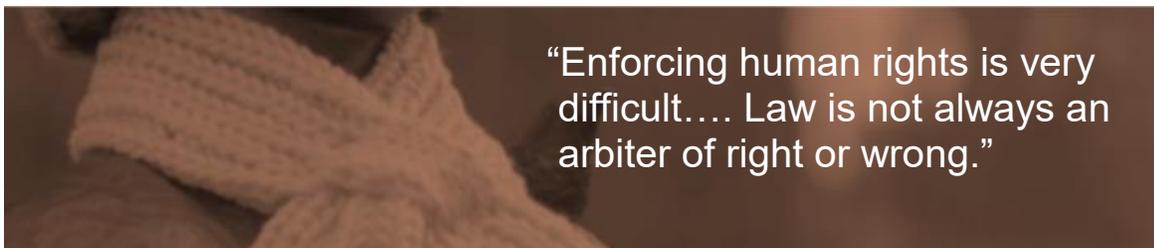
This educational document features interviews with artists, academics, and advocates in the community, taking place between 2017 and 2019. Each interview traces the experiences of the young women and girls who were forced into military sexual slavery leading up to and during the Asia-Pacific War (euphemistically named, 'comfort women') as well as the implications of this historical atrocity for issues of peace, justice, & reconciliation today.

4—A story about basic human rights

Interviewee:

Daniel Ki-Won Moon

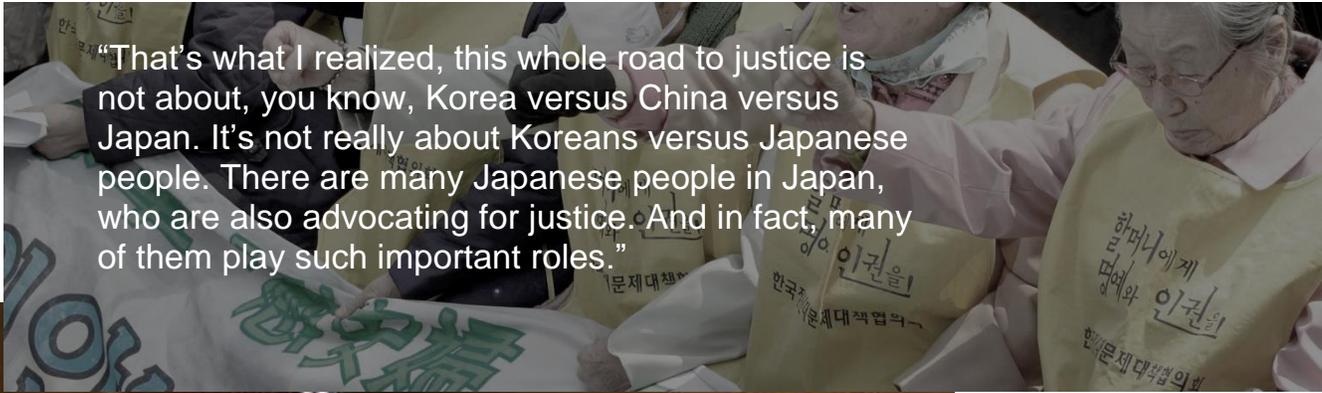
As an International Human Rights Program fellow, Daniel has engaged with the ‘comfort women’ issue in China, Korea, and Japan. During his fellowship, Daniel conducted research to create educational material about the legal issues at stake in the ‘comfort women’ issue and the different reconciliation efforts in the three countries. Moreover, he had the opportunity to intern at the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan in Korea, where he obtained deeper insight into Korea’s approach to reconciliation.



“Enforcing human rights is very difficult.... Law is not always an arbiter of right or wrong.”

Citing that the law in Nazi Germany openly discriminated against and, in fact, condoned the murder of Jewish people during WWII, Daniel illustrates the stark difference that can exist between what is legal and what is moral. Incidentally, military sexual slavery was not always explicitly recognized in law as a war crime. For example, the Hague Convention of 1907 only seemed to hint at protecting “family honour” and the “rights [and] lives of persons”. Accordingly, war crime prosecution efforts by the Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials of 1945 and 1946 operated on vague legal precedents. It was not until the Geneva Conventions in 1949 that sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence were explicitly denounced as “an intolerable violation of human rights” and “a crime against humanity”. Even then, the concept of state sovereignty, which allows every country to have exclusive control to regulate its internal affairs, can render human rights provisions in international law difficult to apply in practice.

In light of the limitations of law, one might argue for the increased importance of citizen participation in holding governments accountable and preventing future human rights violations. In fact, “time is running out.” With increasingly fewer survivors of Japan’s ‘comfort women’ system and most survivors being in their 90s, Daniel explains, “it becomes incumbent on this generation to lead the movement and to continue justice.” How precisely we might approach the question of advocacy might vary widely. Drawing from his own learning experience, Daniel suggests that it is possible to see the ‘comfort women’ issue through the lens of women’s rights, contemporary geopolitics, historical scholarship, and beyond, and that these disciplinary lenses are far from mutually exclusive. Rather, what unifies and sustains the global ‘comfort women’ movement might be as simple as a shared belief in humanity, and a powerful show of solidarity, for those who have been treated so inhumanely in our collective past.



“That’s what I realized, this whole road to justice is not about, you know, Korea versus China versus Japan. It’s not really about Koreans versus Japanese people. There are many Japanese people in Japan, who are also advocating for justice. And in fact, many of them play such important roles.”

“One thing is very clear.... people’s human rights were violated in a very, very grievous and heinous way. And it wouldn’t be right for us to just ignore that, without making sure that proper justice is served. Because what are we essentially leaving behind?”