

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 210175-A)

RESOLUTION

Refuting the article, “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War,” which contradicts the historical consensus and evidence of the thousands of women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army before and during WWII, written by J. Mark Ramseyer: Mitsubishi Professor of Japanese Legal Studies at Harvard Law School.

WHEREAS, Harvard Law School Professor J. Mark Ramseyer’s recent academic paper, “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War,” is a grossly inaccurate and is an offensive accounting of the thousands of women and girls who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army before and during World War II. These victims of sexual exploitation came to be known as the “comfort women”; and

WHEREAS, The brutal human trafficking scheme forcibly removed young women from several Japanese-occupied lands across Asia, including Korea, China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Burma, Vietnam, and Thailand. The great majority of these women were from Korea; and

WHEREAS, Estimates vary, but it is said anywhere between 200,000 and 400,000 women were victimized, and 90 percent of them did not survive the war; and

WHEREAS, On August 4, 1993, Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono announced that, “The Government of Japan has been conducting a study on the issue of wartime ‘comfort women’ since December 1991...The Government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing coercion, etc., and that, at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments”; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Kono offered an apology for the terrible suffering caused, and promised that Japan would, “face squarely the historical facts as described above instead of evading them, and take them to heart as lessons of history”; and

WHEREAS, However, under the Abe administration, a government panel was formed to investigate the origins of the 1993 Kono statement, and later its findings were strongly criticized

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 210175-A continued

and denounced by the Chinese and South Korean Government as they believed the investigation was to delegitimize Secretary Kono's apology; and

WHEREAS, Despite the well-documented human rights violations and first-hand accounts from survivors, a small number of academics and historians cast doubt on whether the women were slaves, arguing that many were volunteer and contractual sex workers; and

WHEREAS, Ramseyer's paper is yet another disrespectful rewriting of this history, reducing the grave injustices and suffering inflicted upon these women to consensual prostitution; and

WHEREAS, The Federation of Korean American Associations of North Eastern USA, and the Korean American associations in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, representing 700,000 Korean Americans, have strongly condemned Ramseyer's portrayal of comfort women and have asked for an apology to the victims and withdrawal of the article; and

WHEREAS, The Korean Association of Harvard Law School issued a statement in response to the article that read in part, "We, and the undersigned, strongly condemn the deliberate erasure of human rights violations and war crimes ... We stand with the victims who have yet to receive full reparations and a proper, official apology from the Japanese government. We strongly condemn all actions that inflict pain and insult to the victims, who bear witness to the atrocities committed by the Imperial Japanese Army"; and

WHEREAS, Legislative bodies across the world – including the U.S. House of Representatives, the Canadian House of Commons, the Netherlands Parliament, and the European Parliament – have passed resolutions through the years in support of the comfort women and against the denialism of the Japanese government and others; and

WHEREAS, On January 31, 2007, Congressman Mike Honda introduced House Resolution 121 – "A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces' coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as 'comfort women,' during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II"; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed the above non-binding resolution requesting that Japan apologize for forcing women into sexual slavery during World War II; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. State Department recently announced that Japan's trafficking of women for sexual services during World War II was "an egregious violation of human rights," contrary to Ramseyer's claims; and

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 210175-A continued

WHEREAS, Victims of war-time atrocities deserve their stories to be accurately told, and dangerous rewriting of history should be condemned; and

WHEREAS, On behalf of the survivors, and for women and girls around the world, we must continue to push back on dangerous attempts to minimize historical atrocities and ensure they never happen again; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby refutes the article, “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War,” which contradicts the historical consensus and evidence of the thousands of women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army before and during WWII, written by J. Mark Ramseyer: Mitsubishi Professor of Japanese Legal Studies at Harvard Law School.

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 210175-A continued

CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the fourth day of March, 2021.

Darrell L. Clarke
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Oh
Sponsored by: Councilmember Oh and Henon