

## **APHAFIC annual meeting on May 30, 2015**

APHAFIC held its thirteenth annual meeting at China Max restaurant on May 30th , 2015 from 6:30-9:30pm. A total of 55 people attended. Nancy Lo gave a brief report of the activities of APHFIC from June 2014 – May 2015 (see aphafic.org), followed by a speech on "**The significance of the 70th year of the end of the Asia-Pacific War -towards reconciliation and peace in East Asia**" ‘亞洲太平洋戰爭七十週年對東亞協和與和平之重要性’ by Ms. Satoko Oka Norimatsu , the Director of Peace Philosophy Centre, a peace-education organization in Vancouver, Canada, an editor of Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus (japanfocus.org) and Director of Vancouver Save Article 9 .

Ms. Satoko Oka Norimatsu’s presentation started with reading of a poem by Joy Kogawa, poet who presented at an Ottawa convention for the victims.

The whole world knows about the Holocaust in Europe.

The whole world will soon know about a holocaust in Asia.

In Germany it is a crime to deny the Holocaust.

In the Land of the Rising Shame, such light does not yet shine

### Her background

Satoko is a Vancouver resident. Her father was a mechanical engineer, her mother a homemaker. She attended Pearson College High school in 1984 aimed for international understanding. She lived and studied with multinational students. She knew nothing about history, especially Imperial Japan’s war crimes. She learned about this ignorance from her friends who had come from those victimized nations. Indonesian students knew about “lomusha” , a term meaning laborers, but rarely used even in Japan. Many died from severe conditions. Her Singaporean friend told her about Japanese soldiers impaling babies with bayonets. She was shocked to know all that for the first time. She only knew about the atom bombs and how Japanese had suffered as taught in Japanese schools. She wants to help to share the truth of history.

### Asia-Pacific War 70<sup>th</sup> – Significance

This year marks the 70 anniversary of victory over Japan. Looking back at Japanese imperial rule of Taiwan and Korea from 1910, she noticed that much of emphasis in Japan was how they lost war to the United States, not with the neighboring Asian countries. This notion contributed to Japan’s cooperation with USA, rather than finding peace with neighboring countries. Japan founded itself isolated from its neighbors. Everyone thought the start of the war was Pearl Harbor, not many know that the war started an hour earlier at an attack of a UK cargo ship.

True purpose of 1941 invasion was to get to the natural resources in China and continue on to other countries. Japan replaced other imperial powers, but this is not known within Japan. She wanted to promote Japanese friendship with her Asian neighbors.

### A-bomb survivor's apology in Malaysia

Satoko's trip with professor Nobuyaoshi Takashima to SouthEast Asia last year made her realize that there were thousands of victims in Asia by Japan, and these victims perceived that they were saved by the atom bombs. Singaporean and Malaysian victims noted the atomic bombs had shortened the war. Image of atomic bomb and surrender of Japanese commanders was sobering for her.

According to Professor Takashima, a Japanese atomic-bomb victim from Hiroshima joined one of his education tours to Malaysia in March 1989: Suzuko numata (1923-2011). Suzuko was exposed to atomic bomb in Hiroshima and had to have her left leg amputated. She became a teacher, and an international advocator of peace. She learned about the murder of Chinese civilians. The March 1989 tour visited Titi in Negri Sembilan, where 1474 local villagers were burned and killed on March 18, 1942. The local host invited speakers from both sides, and Suzuko immediately volunteered. She apologized and asked for forgiveness. Everyone in the audience congratulated and expressed their longing of hearing an apology from Japanese citizens. She went back to Japan and convinced other atomic bomb victims and included other victims in her subsequent speeches about atomic bomb. She knew more than others what it is like to be a victim.

### Japan's current denial of history and its remilitarization

Satoko reflected that it is key question to ask herself, at this time of this 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, was that we must reflect on this war without presence of victims. Professor Takashima wrote that effort must be continued patiently with the current government that the war was against humanity, incidents such as the Nanking massacre, unit 173, and the abuse of POWs. That ignorance is being further enhanced by Shinzo Abe's government, which is worse in denial of history. He's known for "Departure from the Post-War Regime." In this, he rejects the equations that shaped the post-war Japan, such as the July 1945 Potsdam Declaration, and the new Constitution of Japan of November 1946 that demilitarized and democratized Japan, and the 1946 – 48 International Military Tribunal for the Far East that held Japan's military and political leaders accountable for war crimes, except Emperor Hirohito.

Recently, Abe is especially known by his denial of sexual slavery. He still resists to admit the wrongdoings of Japan during the past World war. He and his cabinet are trying to stipulate under right to exercise to collective self-defense with his ally, the United States. Satoko included in her handout, full text of the Kazuo Shii debate with Shinzo Abe on May 20, 2015. Abe wants to stress Japan's military expansion, revise Kono statement in handout( Chief Cabinet Secretary

Yohei Kono on the result of the study on the issue of “comfort women”), with pressure from US, Korea and China. He still wants to adhere to former ministers’ stands. He wants to strengthen governmental power over educational text books to downplay the Japanese aggression.

### Japan’s renewed war crime

The late Shuichi Kato (加藤周一), 1919-2008, a prominent anti-war public intellectual, author of 日本文學史序說補講 once said the following to young people in Japan:

The young are not responsible for the past wrongdoing of their country, but this does not mean that they do not need to be engaged. The young need to be engaged with history. The purpose of studying history lies in, for example, an active effort to examine whether the kind of discrimination and prejudice, which caused the Nanjing Massacre in the old days, still exists today. The postwar generation is responsible for learning from history and making sure never to wage war again. It is responsible for the present and the future.

Abe is doing exactly the opposite, downplaying importance of history, with his right wing supporters, and denying war crimes. He is renewing the path down the road to war and military aggression. She said Japan should be held responsible. She recognized a lot of the audience were affected by Japan’s war crime, and she apologized for Japan as a Japanese national. She does not represent the country only as a writer/speaker, and she wants to preserve the historical truth. Understanding and resolve can be preserved among the victimized countries and Japanese nationals.

Satoko also mentioned that Professor Nobuyoshi Takashima will speak at their Oct 17<sup>th</sup> event to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of WWII in Asia-Pacific. the same date as APHAFIC’s commemoration at Price theater, UCSD with co-organizer of CSSA ( Chinese scholar and student association).

Q & A session:

Q Jack Meng: The only ally for Japan now is the US. In the future, Japanese people will never be trusted by other countries. Japanese citizens are affected by the denial, not like Germans who retributed for what the Nazis did. Abe and his government are blind . We do not want to spread hatred, and just want to preserve truth of history for future generations.

A: Suicide rate in Japan’s self-defense force is high, because of article 9 of the constitution which allows only self defense military for Japan after WWII. They are traumatized during their support for war, and a lot committed suicide after serving to support UN forces.

Q:War is expensive, how does the Japanese people think about that?

A: Collective self- defense right, slight majority rejected this policy, not keen on military spending, they are the eighth country worldwide in military spending, they don’t like the policy

of the right wing government, but during elections, most people still voted for Abe, due to weakness of other political parties. Japanese common populace also want to feel strong and confident and nationalistic by the Abe government.

Q On Abe's recent comments that Abe posited as if Japan is part of the Western Nations in his congressional speech.

By associating with Western nations, that is what led Japan to be aggressive during WWII. Satoko thought that he sold out the country for a chance to speak to both aisles of the US congress.

Q: Professor Sam Shen asked if Satoko approached the government to establish legislation to stop fascist protest and remove war criminals from the shrine.

A: Satoko reported that xenophobic groups established practically anti Korean towns and reinstating imperialistic flags, against current generations of Korean descendants. There is no law that criminalizes racial discrimination. Liberal Democratic Party members also deemed these protests too extreme.

She had ever heard of legislation against having war criminals from the shrine, it is a private shrine, and politicians uphold the philosophy of the shrine. The Chinese government offered condition that removal of class A war criminals as a compromise. She thinks that it is not enough and the existence of the shrine is itself not right.

Q: on Diao Yu islands, what do the Japanese people think about the sovereignty issue?

A: All across the political spectrum, all Japanese people think that Diao Yu islands belong to Japan.

Q by Nancy Lo: How many people in Japan think like herself? Nancy suggested Satoko to run for officer in Japan.

A: Many political leaders want to appease with China. Three thousand Japanese business leaders visited China and apologized recently and were received by premier Xi Jin Ping. He wants to continue the favorable strategic relationship with Japan. There are historians and serious journalists and scholars who are fighting against the right wingers. Death threats were made to these supporters of comfort women. The minority like them need solidarity with people and organizations like ours for support.

Satoko said the Peace and solidarity center was started at her house. She has the web site, drawing thousands of kids, e.g during the Fukushima nuclear crisis, events were shielded by the Japan government.

Board of APHAFIC presented Satoko with a plaque and 2 books in appreciation. Satoko presented APHAFIC with the Chinese translation of her book: *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

We thank the following organizations for their financial support of the activities of APHAFIC: 1. California Alliance of Acupuncture Medicine, San Diego Chapter, 2. Edward Wang, 3. World for mankind foundation, 4. US China People Friendship Association and 5. San Diego Chinese women association. We thank San Diego Chinese Press for providing photographs of the annual meeting.



Ms. Satoko Oka Norimatsu with APHAFIC current and former board members: from left to right: Yeqing Chen, Alex Chuan, Nancy Lo, Ms. Sotoko, Claudia Ma, Mary Yan-Lee, Jack Men, Lily Xu, and Howard Chang



Nancy Lo explained the book on ‘Midori and the 1000 stitch belt’ by C. Thomas Somma, a novel about a Japanese family during Sino-Japanese war while APHAFIC current and past board members looked on from left to right: Yeqing Chen, Alex Chuan, Nancy Lo, Ms. Sotoko, Claudia Ma, Mary Yan-Lee, Jack Men, Lily Xu, and Howard Chang and Pao chin Chu



Questions and Answers session with the first question from Jack Meng.