

APHAFIC autumn meeting on September 24, 2016

The autumn meeting was held in University Community Library, 4155 Governor Dr. San Diego, 92122, CA (858-552-1655) from 1:30-3:30pm, Saturday, September 24, 2016. Around 40 people attended. The meeting featured the documentary video of 蘆葦之歌(Song of the Reed) about comfort women in Taiwan.

"Song of the Reed" is a video documentary about Taiwanese comfort women with English subtitles , filmed during 2011-2012, and completed in 2013. In the film, six Taiwanese comfort women were interviewed. The name of the film was from the [Bible: Isaiah:42:3](#) :”A bruised [reed](#) He will not break, a smoldering wick He will not snuff out, He will faithfully bring forth justice." Ms. Kang Shu Hua ([康淑華](#)) , the executive director of TWGF, indicated that [the Japanese government](#) failed to compensate their claims, and Taiwanese comfort women still insist on denouncing Japan. Many people do not know about the tough lives of those women, so the foundation decided to produce this documentary. This film is not only a history record showing the results of [the Japanese](#) brutality, but also serves as a healing to Taiwanese comfort women’s tough experience. The young generation will know the history and are willing to fight for justice with future generation. (partially from Wikipedia).

This documentary received two awards: 1. 2014 年 [台灣國際女性影展](#) (Women Make Waves Film Festival, Taiwan) 入圍「光榮時刻：台灣競賽獎」¹⁵¹ and 2. 2014 年 [四川電視節金熊貓國際紀錄片「最具人文關懷獎」](#); the Best Anthropology Concern Award at the International Gold Panda Awards for Documentary, held Nov. 25, 2014.

The meeting started with the short introduction of the documentary by Nancy Lo and after the film, Jack Meng led discussion by giving a short history of comfort women.

Introduction by Nancy Lo

Comfort women in Taiwan: There were a total of 2000 Taiwanese comfort women out of 200,000 comfort women who worked in Japan’s brothels before and during the WWII. As of March, 2016, only three Taiwanese comfort women are alive: two are 92 and one is 87. In this documentary, six Taiwanese comfort women were interviewed in 2011-2012.

Korean is much proactive to deal with comfort women issue while Taiwan was not quite so proactive until 1992, when the Taipei women’s rescue foundation (TWRF) ([台北婦女救援社會福利事業基金會](#)) realized that just a few comfort women were left and started working on the comfort women issue. The TWRF established in 1988, with an anti-human trafficking mission, fight on the behalf of girls forced into prostitution. TWRF has provided legal counsel and psychological support for these aging victims and has championed their cause by petitioning governments and courts in both Taiwan and Japan.

The situation in Taiwan is different from that in Korea regarding dealing with atrocities by Japanese imperial army during WWII, due to the following reasons:

1. “Taiwanese people take this as a political issue or a hatred for Japan, so the issue is easily ignored or misunderstood” according to Kan shu-hua (康淑華), executive director of TWRF. Taiwan was occupied by Japan from Sino-Japanese war till the end of WWII in 1895-1945. During WWII, many Taiwanese served alongside Japanese troops. Currently there are 4 million Taiwanese who are Japanese descendants. They activate to have Taiwan be part of Japan and not for independence of Taiwan.

2. Both China and Korea push Japan for apology and compensation for wartime wrong doing. Taiwan’s more friendly relationship with Japan sets it apart from China and Korea. To some Taiwanese, dealing with WWII issues implies a political likeness toward mainland China.

3. In Taiwan, text book includes history of WWII but few lines mentioned comfort women. In general Taiwanese do not pay much attention to the WWII issues.

As a results, the issues of Taiwanese comfort women do not get as much attention as those in other countries. TWRF decided to make a documentary about Taiwanese comfort women. Two documentaries were made: A secret buried for 50 years (1998) and Song of the Reed (2013). In March, 2016, a comfort women museum, Ama museum in Taipei, was dedicated by then president Ma and it will be open in September.

The current defense chief of Japan, Ms. Tomomi Inada, denies the history of slave laborers (comfort women). Her attitude toward WWII is likely to jeopardize the relationship between Japan and many Asian countries. She should visit the Ama museum in Taipei. On the positive side, In July, state of board of education voted to include the history of comfort women in the 10th grad curriculum beginning in September 2017. High school students in the US will learn the history.

After the show, Jack Meng gave a brief history of comfort women who were forced to served Japanese soldiers’ sexual needs by coercing methods at comfort stations (慰安所). Comfort women were all Japanese at the early stage of the war. As the Japanese army got larger, Korean, Chinese, Filipino, and other countries, like Malaysian, East Timorean. Some 35 Dutch women from Indonesia including one Dutch woman born in Java, Indonesia, were forced to serve as comfort women. A photo of comfort women was taken by allied soldiers in Burma. The memory of being a sex slave has constantly crushed them in misery. Japanese Government should apologize sincerely to these women which is their only humble wish. Yet, on the contrary, Japanese Governments still deny any atrocities and wrong doings ever happened.

Q: What is the latest news about comfort women?

A: Japanese prime minister Abe apologized (made by the US for political reasons related to North Korea) to the Korean comfort women with a foundation to pay for medical expense for current comfort women, and asked to remove the statue across from the Japanese embassy in Korea.

Nancy Lo indicated that we need to speak up for WWII victims, including comfort women. Two WWII veterans were at the event: Frank Mason and Frederick Gerlach.

Future activities

Winter meeting, 2017

On Feb 25, 2017, Jana McBurney-Lin, the author of 'Blossoms and Bayonets' will give a talk on 'Stories That Need to Be Told'. Jana will talk about how this story found her, how the telling of it healed some of Dr. Hi Dong Chai's (the co-author) wounds by the suffering of his family during WWII, and the numerous stories she has uncovered since. Meeting location to be decided.



Nancy Lo gave introduction of the documentary of Song of the Reed.



Jack Meng gave a short history of comfort women during WWII

References:

(<http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-taiwan-museum-20160330-story.html> by Ralph Jennings)

(<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2016/09/03/commentary/complicating-taiwans-love-affair-japan/#.V-RKkDMVD3g>).

(<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201603090062.html>)