

## **Prologue: How To Kill Democracy**

### **Unprecedented suppression of speech**

How would you feel if, out of the blue, a whole nation, with its media apparatus and its trained civic groups decided to attack you?

Furthermore, how would you feel if your acquaintances chided you for being a “bad person,” that “You have wrong ideas,” and therefore you should “Shut up,” without a chance for reasonable debate about your ideas--what would that be like?

On top of that, suppose these people also spread their message about you via the Internet and collected thousands of signatures in a “petition” drive just so that they can claim, “You should shut up because many, many people disagree with you!”

How would you feel if these people called or emailed you at your workplace and called and emailed your employer with demands that you be fired?

This is exactly what happened to Professor Ramseyer. It all started in the summer of 2020.

Ramseyer sent a manuscript to the *International Review of Law and Economics*, “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War”.

Faculty members at Harvard University included Andrew Gordon, Carter Eckert and Jeannie Suk Gersen.

Gordon specialized in Japanese history, Eckert in East Asian studies and Suk, a Korean-American, was Ramseyer’s colleague at the Harvard School of Law.

These three stated that, “comfort women are victims of forceful taking away and sex enslavement by the Japanese Army,” which is the message endorsed by the government of South Korea and some American academics.

Gordon, in particular, berated the Japanese government when it formally requested that McGraw-Hill ensure a modicum of historical accuracy in their history textbooks concerning the comfort women.

All the while, Ramseyer says that he maintained collegial relations with those who vehemently objected his views.<sup>(13)</sup>

### **“An attempt academic assassination”**

Ramseyer’s manuscript passed the editorial review process and the electronic version was duly posted by the publisher, Elsevier. The peer-reviewed paper was then posted by a *Sankei Shimbun*-affiliated English language medium, the Japan-Forward.com.<sup>(14)</sup> In February, Gordon, Eckert and Suk committed what Ramseyer has characterized as “attempted academic assassination .”

Gordon and Eckert issued a statement, “Statement by Andrew Gordon, Professor, Department of History, Carter Eckert, Professor, Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University,” on February 17, where they told the world that Ramseyer’s article should be retracted because it does not present any evidence of contracts signed by Korean women, despite the paper mentioning contracts, the documents cited failed to support the claims in the paper and this violated academic integrity.<sup>(15)</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, Suk used the Web to spread her criticisms, and slanders, against Ramseyer. How would you feel if one of your work mates did the same?

The trio denounced a paper written by a colleague. Furthermore, Ramseyer is on the same level of the three faculty members that are attacking him—rude indeed. The three did this in full knowledge of how gullible South Koreans would respond.

In turn, Alexis Dudden, a sycophant for the government of South Korea, attacking Japan on any occasion, and Tessa Morris-Suzuki, who claims that the Korean repatriation program was a Japanese government conspiracy, issued a joint statement denouncing and demanding the retraction of the peer-reviewed article.<sup>(16)</sup>

In turn, Suk shrilly denounced Ramseyer in *The New Yorker* introducing a feminist Japanese historian accusation of Ramseyer in addition to Gordon and Eckert.<sup>(17)</sup>

### **Korean media slander**

With the hate campaign sparked by these three, a tsunami of anger ensued by the Korean media; the Japanese are more than familiar with such waves of hate. How was it that a paper written by a law professor at Harvard University, one of the world's most prestigious universities, was carpet-bombed by every major South Korean media outlet? Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), for example, dragged the reporting out, day after day, wailing that Ramseyer's academic article was sophistry, without really reading the paper at all.

Media attempted to personally debase Ramseyer. Because the industrial conglomerate Mitsubishi sponsored his professor chair, this automatically him a lackey of Mitsubshi. They also pointed out that he was on the "list of board members of a Japanese rightist research association." He was also lambasted for his remarks in his earlier paper of the *buraku* (marginalized persons) and permanent residence Koreans in Japan that was allegedly racist.

A "strawman arguments" also appear. Remarks which are not actually made are presented and accused. For example, Ramseyer "insulted" comfort women and that he "defended" child prostitution.

At the same time, reports said that, while quoting criticisms on Ramseyer by Harvard's specialists in Japan or Korea such as Gordon and Eckert, and Suk, a fellow member of Law School, the denunciation was made by those at Harvard University who can be regarded as his colleagues.

At the end of February, Michael Chwe, Chair Ladder Faculty of the Department of Political Science, University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) also issued a statement demanding the retraction of Ramseyer's article, and he claims that he collected over 3,000 as of March 5, in support.<sup>(18)</sup>

The Korean newspaper, *Hankyoreh*, on March 1, 2021, stated that a "Nobel laureate" is "among more than 2,400 academics who have signed [in support]..."<sup>(19)</sup>

*The Harvard Crimson*, the daily student newspaper of Harvard University, covered Ramseyer's article, "Ramseyer's Lies on Comfort Women Signal Deeper Rot."<sup>(20)</sup> Korean students at Harvard called out to Korean residents in neighboring states and held a gathering on campus to demand Ramseyer's dismissal. On March 19, the *Hankyoreh* ran an article, "The Japanese media keep quiet about Ramseyer's 'comfort women' article."<sup>(21)</sup>

The only person to defend Professor Ramseyer during this time was, amazingly, Korean scholar Lee Woo-yeon, who wrote, "Korea silenced by a U.S. study paper denying the sex slave theory." Professor Lee co-authored *Anti-Japan Tribalism*.<sup>(22)</sup>

### **Why I joined the war**

It was some time after March 17, 2021 when I followed Professor Lee Woo-yeon.

Why did I, a non-specialist on the comfort women issue, rush to rebut? Mainly because of the behavior of the Korean media. Obviously, the Korean media were engaged in disseminating propaganda rather than reporting. The Korean media went as far as dipping its poisonous pen into Yahoo! Japan.

I have written in the past about the "war guilt information program" legacy of the US occupation, in *Nihonjin wa Naze Jigyakuteki ni Nattanoka (Why the Japanese Have Become Masochistic)* and *Genpatsu, Shoriki, CIA (Nuclear Power Plants, Shoriki and CIA)*. I have long been engaged in the psychological warfare by the U. S. and searched how propaganda influenced Japanese people's mind and how public opinion was manipulated. Therefore I pretty much figured out what the Korean media was up to.

The Koreans wanted to make sport of Professor Ramseyer and as a result, no one would find his article of value. Thus, the Korean propaganda machine went overtime to dredged up from the darkest depths "authorities" who would denounce Ramseyer.

It should not be surprising that Harvard University professors, allegedly prominent in their field of Japanese studies, including Mr. Ramseyer's colleagues, would be the first to swallow. If this mob was not able to kick him out of Harvard, then maybe they would be able to shut him up on social media.

## **Censorship does not transmute history**

What was the political goal of this Korean psychological chicanery? It was to avoid the collapse of the official and obscene narrative that the “comfort women were abducted” and that they were “sex slaves”. It was pure propaganda lacking in data from the beginning and Ramseyer’s article hit at a crucial juncture. That is, Korean women became comfort women by contract and not because of coercion or a gun pointed to their heads.

Yes, despite what individual Korean females thought at the time of the transaction , when they went to the police station, together with their legal guardians, to fill out the necessary government forms, to affix a seal on the letter of consent, and prepare a personal information form, these transactions were above the board. This fundamentally denies “coercion.”

This crucial point was brought up by Harvard Law School, a highly-selective graduate school of one of the most prestigious universities. History researchers of Japan could not influence the Japanese public opinion, not to mention the global public opinion, no matter how hard they tried to deny the “comfort women forceful mobilization theory” by using primary sources as the basis but the Ramseyer article has an impact to turn the situation around. That is why the Korean media and Western scholars who adopt this theory rose up unanimously.

All things considered, it was abnormal that they did not criticize or attack the article but demanded its retraction from the beginning. Why retraction? In a country with freedom of speech, the principle is to let an article published first and criticize or denounce if there is any problem, or complain to the court according to circumstances. That is, respect freedom of speech and let articles published as a general rule.

Throttling of free speech is pure fascism. The suppression of the discussion of uncomfortable truths or facts that do not fit with the national narrative is not democratic. Should we be surprised that Korean media, a product of decades of military dictatorship, is suppressing speech by that of non-Koreans? If Americans did the same to Koreans, how would they feel?

At any rate, it was action taken by a country or an organization to throttle the freedom of thought and belief and freedom of expression of one individual. In addition, it was violation of human rights and a crime as well in terms of libeling.

It was an issue affecting the basis of democracy more than an issue of academic freedom. If this is permitted in a democratic society, democracy should be regarded as no longer existent.

## Notes

- (13) Based on the email dated April 5, 2021 sent by Ramseyer to me.
- (14) “[JAPAN Forward *Nihon o Hasshin* (Telling about Japan)] *Gizen to waikyoku o kiru* (No to hypocrisy and distortion)” Sankei Shimbun <https://sankei.com/column/news/210125/clm2101250004-n1.html>
- (15) “Statement by Andrew Gordon, Professor, Department of History Carter Eckert, Professor, Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations,” Harvard University, February 17, 2021, <https://apjff.org/2021/5/Gordon-Eckert.html>
- (16) Tessa Morris-Suzuki, The ‘Comfort Women’ Issue, Freedom of Speech, and Academic Integrity: A Study Aid (The Asia-Pacific Journal) March 1, 2021, <https://apjff.org/2021/5/MorrisSuzuki.html>, Alexis Dudden, The Abuse of History: A Brief Response to J. Mark Ramseyer’s ‘Contracting for Sex’ <https://apjff.org/2021/5/Dudden.html>
- (17) “Seeking the True Story of the Comfort Women: How a Harvard professor’s dubious scholarship reignited a history of mistrust between South Korea and Japan,” <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/annals-of-inquiry/seeking-the-true-story-of-the-comfort-women-j-mark-ramseyer>
- (18) Michael Chwe Letter by Concerned Economists Regarding “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War” in the International Review of Law and Economics <http://chwe.net/irle/letter/>
- (19) “Nobel laureate among more than 2,400 academics who have signed letter,” <https://news.yahoo.co.jp/articles/740cb4d90155283451868ab2f2a9efeab0964476>
- (20) Korea JoongAng Daily “‘Lies on Comfort Women Signal Deeper Rot’: Harvard University Newspaper Shouts at Ramseyer” (in Japanese) March 9, 2021 <https://s.japanese.joins.com/JArticle/276308?sectcode=A10&servcode=A00>
- (21) “The Japanese media keep quiet about Ramseyer’s ‘comfort women’ article” (in Japanese) March 19, 2021, <https://news.yahoo.co.jp/articles/1b544fac48e027935262c90b7d8056ec418802ad>
- (22) Lee Woo-yeon “Korea silenced by a U.S. study paper denying the sex slave theory,” (in Japanese) JP Press, February 14, 2021, <https://jbpres.ismedia.jp/articles/-/64066>