

**EMERGENCY SYMPOSIUM ON THE INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL
CONTROVERSY OVER PROFESSOR RAMSEYER'S ARTICLE
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**Video Message from John Mark Ramseyer, Professor of Japanese Legal Studies at
Harvard Law School**

First of all, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the International Research Institute of Controversial Histories and to Japanese Women for Justice and Peace for holding this symposium. I am also immensely grateful to the Sankei Shimbun for its generous support of the symposium, and to all of you for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here today.

In all honesty, I find myself at a loss for words. Never have I dreamed that so many distinguished scholars would assemble to hear me speak. I feel deeply honored.

However, it is quite obvious that I am not at the heart of the problem that must be resolved, nor is my eight-page article. This is not a simple matter of the harassment of an individual educator. It is a far more deeply rooted problem, and is of the utmost seriousness.

As I see it, the challenge we face is twofold: recounting the events of the past accurately, specifically, thoroughly, and in an unbiased manner, to the extent possible; and the protection, at all costs, of academic freedom. I hope I will be able to make a contribution, no matter how small, toward the achievement of these objectives. I am willing to make a concerted effort to fulfill even a small role in protecting academic freedom.

I have learned three lessons from this experience.

The first is the importance of relating facts as accurately as possible.

The first step toward resolving the problem that is today's theme is describing the phenomena of the past as accurately as possible. I realize that this seems obvious, but when we write or present papers or articles, we must do so without bias, to the extent possible. If we are reporting news as it happens, we must do so without bias, to the extent possible. The same care should, again obviously, be taken when we are describing past events, but often this does not happen.

Returning to today's theme, when we are writing about events that took place on the Korean peninsula in the 1930s, we should describe them accurately.

What prompted me to write the short article in question was my realization that much of what had been written in English about those events was untrue. The majority of the material I consulted was marred by Korean anti-Japanese bias. Moreover, I noticed that the overwhelming majority of works produced by members of American humanities circles was suffused with a strong anti-Japanese bias.

The situation we face today is the result of a great many historians writing history into which they insert their political preferences. And many write accounts that are consistent with the current fashion in academia.

The second lesson I learned through this experience is the importance of academic freedom.

We must be able to convey the results of our research even if they are not politically correct.

I had believed that the principles to which I adhere also prevailed in the American academic community. I was mistaken.

I was astonished at the vehemence of the opposition to my article. I suspected that there would be some resistance, but I didn't imagine such violent reactions.

I believe that my critics are determined to prevent any argument that disagrees with their convictions (that the Japanese abducted women and forced them to serve as prostitutes, and that the prostitutes were sex slaves) from being published. At the very least, all of them seem to agree on these two points. I suppose they want all scholars to think alike.

To maintain the illusion that all scholars share the same opinion, my critics have risen up, determined to force the retraction of my eight-page paper.

The attacks on me have been so offensive that they sometimes seem downright Stalinist.

Unless there is source material in English that contradicts the abduction and sex-slave arguments, my critics will feel free to pronounce anyone questioning them bedfellows of Holocaust deniers.

I have been disheartened by the behavior of young assistant professors. With total disregard for the concept of academic freedom, they act like would-be scholar-assassins, and seem to take pride in doing so! The basic principle whereby scholarship progresses when scholars of different opinions publish or present papers seems to have fallen by the wayside. Among young scholars we are now seeing a return of the painful "zero-tolerance" atmosphere that surfaced during the student movement of the 1960s.

The last lesson I have learned through this experience is the importance of friends.

Without friends I don't think I could have weathered this storm of attacks. I couldn't have survived without the encouragement of my American friends, my Japanese friends.

I relied on my friends, friends who believed in me, friends who comforted me, friends who kept telling me that I didn't deserve the names I was called on the internet.

Even if you think your faith in yourself is unshakable, you feel isolated and abandoned when you are the target of a vicious attack. You start to doubt yourself, and that's exactly what your critics want you to do. You start to doubt yourself and ultimately you crumble. That is what happened during the Cultural Revolution in China. I now know beyond a doubt how important friends are.

Soon after the attacks began, one of my friends told me that times like these are learning experiences, and I agree. But it pains me that I also learned things I didn't want to know.

I would like to share an English saying with you today: All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten.

“Don't run with scissors in your hand” is one of those things I learned. I was also taught, “Tell the truth. Tell the truth about what is happening now, and what happened in the past. Listen to what others have to say, even if you don't want to hear what they're saying. And never betray a friend.”

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the International Research Institute of Controversial Histories and of the Japanese Women for Justice and Peace for holding this wonderful symposium, to the Sankei Shimbun for its generous support, and to all the distinguished scholars who interrupted their busy schedules to attend.