

October 1, 2015
**RESPONSE TO THE UPDATED VERSION OF THE *OPEN LETTER IN
SUPPORT OF HISTORIANS IN JAPAN***

An open letter signed by 187 scholars (whose ranks later swelled to 464) appeared on a website used by *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* on May 5, 2015; an updated version was posted on May 7 (<http://www.japanfocus.org/events/view/252>).

Our response, a rebuttal, addresses the updated version, which condemns the Abe administration and makes demands on Prime Minister Abe. Perhaps the letter's authors (and signers) have forgotten that Japan is a democratic nation with a parliamentary cabinet system. Condemnation of and demands on the Abe administration are tantamount to condemnation of and demands on each and every Japanese citizen.

The Alliance for Truth about Comfort Women is a private organization; all of our members are volunteers. We have no connection with the Japanese government. We do, however, possess the right to preserve the honor of the Japanese people in the face of unfounded accusations and unreasonable demands. Beyond that right is a moral, sacred obligation to our ancestors and descendants to refute those accusations and oppose those demands.

We ask all those who signed the *Open Letter* to read our response dispassionately and objectively, as behooves genuine scholars, and hope it will inspire you to reappraise the content of the *Open Letter*.

1. Rebuttal outline

We have read the *Open Letter* with great care. We might simply dismiss it if it were a statement issued by a political organization. But it is purported to have been written by scholars. Therefore, we cannot simply dismiss it. We must draw the world's attention to its dearth of objective logical reasoning, a requisite of scholarly opinion. For that reason (and for other reasons to be outlined in detail below), we have no choice but to conclude that the *Open Letter* is racist hate speech, pure and simple.

The following four aspects of the *Open Letter* demonstrate its lack of objective logical reasoning:

- (1) You have obviously made no investigation whatsoever based on the verified evidence into assertions that you present as historical fact. Therefore, those assertions cannot be considered conclusions resulting from historical research.
- (2) You have not examined any of the resources that refute or discredit the claims in the *Open Letter*.
- (3) You condemn Japan in a vacuum, making no comparisons with actions taken by other nations under similar circumstances.
- (4) You seem to have given no thought to jurisprudence, especially the way in which the rules of law have changed over time. You use current value standards to form judgments against businesses or practices that were once legal.

Furthermore, in the updated version of the *Open Letter* you refer to the Nanjing “massacre” and the Yasukuni Shrine controversy. Here again, the opinions you express are not products of objective logical reasoning. For that reason, our rebuttal will first focus on the problems we detected in the portion of the *Open Letter* dealing with the comfort-woman controversy. Then we will turn to Nanjing and the Yasukuni Shrine.

- Verification of historical fact

The *Open Letter* contains the following passage:

“The scholars ask Prime Minister Abe to acknowledge openly that this system was ‘distinguished by its large scale and systematic management under the military, and by its exploitation of young, poor, and vulnerable women in areas colonized or occupied by Japan.’”

Exactly what do you mean by “large scale?” Have you done quantitative analyses of similar cases in other nations?

Does your criticism of “systematic management by the military” mean that you advocate allowing military personnel to satisfy their sexual needs without intervention from military authorities? Have you looked into the manner in which Soviet troops satisfied their sexual needs in Berlin and Manchuria? Are you not aware that US and Korean military authorities administered to their soldiers’ sexual needs in Vietnam?

By establishing and operating comfort stations, Japanese military authorities ensured the safety of the women working there, protected them from sexually transmitted diseases, and prevented abuse. The results were the best that could be hoped for in such a situation. Would you have wanted the authorities to allow soldiers to run rampant?

You mention the “exploitation of young, poor, and vulnerable women.” Please explain what you mean by exploitation.

You also refer to the apologies offered via the Kono Statement and statements made by other Japanese government officials. Those statements are political in nature, and do not necessarily reflect the truth. They necessarily have political overtones influenced by diplomatic considerations, and are not intended to be (indeed, must not be) used by scholars.

Japanese military authorities had no direct involvement in the recruitment process. Private brokers did the recruiting; in some cases women were recruited against their will (poor families sometimes sold their daughters to brokers). Many women became (civilian) prostitutes for the same reason. We know from contemporaneous newspaper advertisements placed by brokers that women who worked at Japanese comfort stations were paid approximately 300 yen per month (30 times the salary paid to a private first class). The high salary prompted many women to respond to the advertisements, and many parents to do so on their daughters’ behalf. The military authorities did not recruit women, and they certainly did not force anyone to serve as

a comfort woman. There was no need for them to do either. If you possess verified evidence to the contrary, please produce it.

Some former comfort women have testified that they were rounded up by the police, or by military police. At the time there were about 400 military policemen stationed in Korea. Most police officers were Korean. There was no need for military policemen to serve as pimps, and regulations that governed them prohibited them from doing so. Nor did they have time for such activities. Accordingly, such testimony must be considered unreliable.

Is it true that the comfort women “lived in misery”? And what are we to make of “excluding those from Japan”? Suppose all the comfort women had been Japanese. Would it have been permissible to coerce *them* or allow *them* to live in misery?

In any case, we urge you to present proof that corroborates your assumptions about the comfort women. Accusations unsupported by evidence constitute libel.

- Evidence that refutes your claims

Next we shall provide evidence that refutes your claims beyond any doubt.

1. We presume that you are aware of Japanese Prisoner of War Interrogation Report No. 49 issued by the US Office of War Information in 1944. Since this is an official report prepared during World War II, the Americans who wrote it would not have made any efforts to show the Japanese in a good light. That is precisely why it is a reliable resource. The report states that “a ‘comfort girl’ is nothing more than a prostitute or ‘professional camp follower’ attached to the Japanese Army for the benefit of the soldiers.” It also tells us that the women lived well, and “amused themselves by participating in sports events with both officers and men, and attended picnics, entertainments, and social dinners.
2. Next we have the testimony of a former comfort woman named Mun Ok-ju. Morikawa Machiko, a former left-wing activist, compiled Ms. Mun’s recorded testimony into a book entitled *I Was a Comfort Woman with the Shield Division on the Burma Front*. Ms. Morikawa is not the sort of person to glamorize Ms. Mun’s recollections. In the book Mun Ok-ju says that she sent large amounts of money to her family in Korea, and bought diamonds and expensive clothing. She also mentions that she had enough money in her bank account to purchase several houses in Japan. Ms. Mun remembers proudly parading around Rangoon wearing the clothing she had purchased, and speaks of her lover, a Japanese soldier. Since she reveals that her colleagues also purchased expensive jewelry, Ms. Mun was obviously not an exception to the rule.

How can you call women who earned so much money “sex slaves”? Perhaps some of their testimonies and recollections are inaccurate, but it is impossible to believe that they were enslaved.

3. Now we will discuss a report issued by the Asian Women’s Fund under the title *Military Prostitutes: Government Research Resource*. It contains many accounts demonstrating that the Japanese military police oversaw the recruiting process, meaning that they took pains to prevent brokers from resorting to illegal or unscrupulous tactics. It also contains statistics about the comfort women, such as

place of origin.

4. Wouldn't you expect Koreans to have been furious if the Japanese had resorted to coercive recruitment, as you claim they did? Remember that the overwhelming majority of police officers in Korea were Koreans. Would they have stood idly by while Korean women (possibly their sisters or girlfriends) were abducted through illegal, exploitative means? There is no record of riots triggered by recruiting methods of that sort — not even one. Nor were Japanese troops ever mobilized to subdue such a riot.
5. A great many Korean women were recruited (forcibly, according to your *Open Letter*) as comfort women in 1944 and 1945. Yoshida Seiji began making speeches about abductions of comfort women in 1982, and in the same year *Asahi Shimbun* started carrying articles about Yoshida's testimony. But at that point there wasn't much of a reaction in Korea. In 1991 an article written by *Asahi Shimbun* reporter Uemura Takashi was published in the newspaper's Osaka edition. It contained testimony by former comfort woman Kim Hak-sun. Korean media representatives were given advance copies of the article, and the repercussions were swift and acute. But until then, during a 45-year period, neither the Korean government nor Korean NGOs broached the subject of comfort women. Has it never occurred to you that political forces might have been involved in the genesis of this controversy?

As a matter of fact, it was anti-Japanese Japanese activists who set the stage. They traveled around Korea, issuing provocative statements about coercive recruitment and sex slavery, manufacturing what developed into an international problem out of whole cloth.

6. Conclusions reached by the IWG (Interagency Working Group)

Between 1999 and 2007, an eight-year period that spanned the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, the US government launched a massive reinvestigation into war crimes in connection with comfort women servicing Japanese military personnel and the systematic enslavement of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Not one American government or military document was discovered that corroborates either accusation. The conclusion reached was that the comfort-women system was in keeping with prostitution as it existed in Japan at the time. What is your opinion of the IWG conclusion?

In the face of an abundance of evidence refuting the claims made in the *Open Letter*, do you still stand behind it?

We welcome your opinions on the evidence we have presented.

- Satisfying the sexual needs of military personnel

Now we will address the global perception of soldiers' sexual needs and how to satisfy them, citing several examples. We shall also point out how myopic you are in citing Japan's comfort-women problem without suggesting viable alternatives. Or perhaps you prefer myopia.

1. The Soviet method (used in Germany and Manchuria): We are fairly certain that Soviet military authorities made no attempt to deal with soldiers' sexual needs. Their troops did exactly what they pleased. You condemn Japanese military authorities for their involvement in this matter. Does that mean that you recommend the Soviet solution to the problem?
2. The American method used in Vietnam (identical to the Korean method used there): Is it possible that you are unaware of this? If that is the case, ask any Vietnamese. Surely you know how many Korean-Vietnamese children Korean troops left behind when they returned home? If you don't, perhaps you shouldn't call yourselves scholars.
3. Do you know one of the first requests US occupying forces made of the Japanese? They asked for recreation centers, but they were not talking about athletic facilities. They wanted brothels! Didn't you know about this? We would expect scholars worth their salt to be equipped with this information.

As we have indicated above, most of the world's nations have been faced with the necessity of providing for soldiers' sexual needs. The fact that you, knowing that, have chosen to direct your venom at Japan, and only Japan, leaves us no choice but to conclude that your invective is racist hate speech. You may insist that you are not guilty of racism, but we are not convinced.

- Is prostitution unlawful?

When confronted with the fact that the comfort women were prostitutes, nothing more, some people may maintain that prostitution is evil. And they will condemn the Japanese military authorities for their oversight of comfort stations. We would like to remind them that, in those days, prostitution was legal. Moreover, it remains legal in most of Europe, the only restriction being that prostitutes must be 21 years of age.

- Accusations of revisionism

Because we voice opinions about the comfort-women controversy that differ from yours, most of brand us as revisionists. We would like to demonstrate how ridiculous that makes you look.

New discoveries about historical events are made with great frequency. They are followed, in many cases, by new interpretations or explanations, which supplant previously established theories or opinions. In other words, history is constantly being revised or modified. For instance, when historical ruins or relics are newly discovered, the starting or ending points of eras, clearly defined spans of time in history, often change. Do you insist on calling these changes historical revisionism (in a pejorative sense, of course)?

- The Nanjing "massacre"

Recent scholarly research has proven that no massacre took place in Nanjing in the aftermath of the Japanese victory in December 1937. We now know that the massacre ploy was the product of Chinese Nationalist and Communist propaganda. The Nanjing "massacre" lives only in the realm of politics. Are you scholars or politicians?

- Yasukuni Shrine

Your position in the controversy over Yasukuni Shrine causes us to wonder whether you have any knowledge of modern criminal law. Since scholars are presumed to possess a great deal of intellectual curiosity, we would expect you to know about two fundamental principles of modern law: the prohibition against retroactive law and *nulla poena sine lege*. At the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (commonly known as the Tokyo Trials) Japanese accused of Class-A and Class-C war crimes were prosecuted and sentenced in violation of those principles. Defense attorneys asked if the tribunal had jurisdiction, i.e., the right to try persons accused of war crimes; the presiding judge never supplied an answer. At the basis of the prosecution of Class-A war crimes was the perception that Japan had waged a “war of aggression” beginning with the Manchurian Incident in 1931. It was precisely this perception that defined all Japanese actions as evil. Allow us to explain its shortcomings.

It is very likely that the Kellogg-Briand Pact contains the basis in international law for this perception. The agreement seems to prohibit aggressive war. However, it fails to define “aggression.” Furthermore, when ratifying the agreement, both the US and the UK reserved the right to exercise military force to protect their interests, even outside their national boundaries. They also declared that each nation party to the treaty would decide in which regions it had special interests, and whether there had been “aggression.” Similarly, US recognition of Japanese interests in China are reflected in the Ishii-Lansing Agreement.

If those of you who signed the *Open Letter* are indeed scholars, you must be conversant with historical fact concerning the principles of modern criminal law and international law. In the context of the fundamental principles of modern criminal law and of international law currently in force, there is no such thing as a Class-A war crime. Accordingly, the Yasukuni Shrine controversy exists only in the minds of propagandists in certain nations. Do you support those propagandists?

- To those who signed the *Open Letter* for reasons other than those stated

When the *Open Letter* was published, the Messrs. OGATA Yoshiaki, SEKINO Michio, TANIMOTO Sunao, MOTEKI Hironichi, YAMAMOTO Shigeru and Ms. YAMAGUCHI Mari issued a statement addressed to those who signed it, drawing attention to errors and other infelicities. Some of the responses from signers and comments posted elsewhere made no sense at all.

1. Some signers maintained that they had never agreed to sign the *Open Letter*. Nevertheless, their names remained on the list even after the updated version was posted.
2. Other signers said that they did not agree with the position vis à vis the comfort women stated in the *Open Letter*, but signed it because they disapprove of recent actions taken by the Abe administration.
3. Still others said that they signed in support of Japanese scholars and commentators who are being unfairly persecuted.

To those who fall into categories 2. and 3, we suggest issuing statements that express

your views accurately. Failure to do so is a clear sign of negligence.

As far as critics or commentators who are being unfairly persecuted, the only person we know of who complains of such abuse is former *Asahi Shimbun* reporter Uemura Takashi (now an educator). The reason he is under fire in Japan is not inaccurate reporting or his beliefs. It is because for a long time after his mistakes came to light, he remained silent, feigning ignorance. Such behavior goes against the ethics expected of educators.

We urge those of you who have realized, from the weight of the evidence we have presented, that you should not have signed the *Open Letter*, to request that your names be removed from the “global list of signers.”

Now we would like to address those signers who are Americans. We hold Americans in the highest esteem, mainly because of their great respect for fairness. The last line of the American national anthem describes the US as the “home of the brave.” Those who are truly brave should have the courage to correct errors when they are discovered.

We ask the American signers to take another unbiased look at the *Open Letter*. Do you think the authors’ viewpoint is impartial? If your answer is no, please have the courage to point out any errors you discover.

If you are truly scholars, we expect you to respond in a rational manner, basing your arguments on facts. If you have no arguments to present, that means the *Open Letter* was fallacious, and that you should not have signed it. It is our intention to broadcast our conclusion — the fact that the document is indeed fallacious — throughout the world.

KASE Hideaki
Chairman, Alliance for Truth about Comfort Women

Affiliated Members

- Asian Solidarity Council for Freedom and Democracy
- Gentle Breeze
- Japan Current Affairs Review
- Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform
- Japanese Women for Justice and Peace
- Rom-pa Project
- Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact
- Society for Passing –down the Real History to the Next Generation
- Society for Reading and Studying FUMI Journal in Chofu
- Society for Protecting and Throwing Light on Honor and Spirit of War Dead
- Texas Daddy Japan Secretariat
- Veteran’s Voices Memorial Project
- Volunteers’ Society for Correcting the Forged Story about Comfort Women