



*Jan Ruff-O'Herne AO
Adelaide, Australia*

Defending the Human Rights of "Comfort Women" and in Support of H.Res.121

22 May, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE NANCY PELOSI, SPEAKER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Madam Speaker:

On February 15, 2007, I had great honor of testifying before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and Global Environment at a Hearing entitled: Protecting the Human Rights of "Comfort Women."

My purpose in testifying alongside Ms. Yong-Soo Lee and Ms. Koon-Ja Kim was to publicly share my very private experience of degradation, humiliation and unbearable suffering as a young woman, forced against my will, to serve as a "Comfort Woman" to the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces during World War II. My other intent was to lend my unconditional and wholehearted support for H.Res.121, introduced by Representative Michael Honda, which demands that the Japanese government "officially and unambiguously" apologize and to "accept historical responsibility" for the "Comfort Women" tragedy.

When I was 19 years old in 1942, Japanese troops invaded Java. Together with thousands of women and children, I was interned in a Japanese prison camp for three and a half years. The horrific memories of "opening night" of the brothel have tortured my mind all my life for I was raped in the most brutal way. But never did any Japanese rape me without a fight. I fought each one of them. Therefore, I was repeatedly beaten. In the so-called "Comfort Station" I was systematically beaten and raped day and night. I have forgiven the Japanese for what they did to me, but I can never forget.

During the time in the "Comfort Station," the Japanese had abused me and humiliated me. I was left with a body that was torn and fragmented everywhere. The Japanese soldiers had ruined my young life and had taken away my youth, my self-esteem, my dignity, my freedom, my possessions, and my family. But there was one thing that they could never take away from me. It was my faith and love for God. This was mine and nobody could take that away from me. It was my deep faith that helped me survive all that the Japanese did to me.

For fifty years, the "Comfort Women" maintained silence; they lived with a terrible shame, of feeling soiled and dirty. It has taken 50 years for these women's ruined lives to become a truly international human rights issue.

Madam Speaker, with all my being, I wish to express my eternal gratitude to the U.S. House of Representatives for consideration of H.Res.121. This resolution will restore a measure of dignity and honor to the few remaining "Comfort Women" survivors still alive today.

Respectfully yours,

Jan Ruff-O'Herne AO

Ad Sponsored By: Greater New York Support 121 Coalition, Greater Washington, DC Support 121 Coalition 121 Coalition in California, National Support 121 Coalition and Korean American Voters' Council of NY/NJ

www.support121.org