

Paving the Road to Peace: Transnational Solidarity for Survivors of Military
Sexual Slavery by Imperial Japan through the Observation of the Wednesday
Demonstration

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Abstract

The Wednesday Demonstration is a weekly protest for former ‘comfort women’ to demand an apology and legal compensation from the Japanese government. This thesis examines the different aspects of the ‘comfort women’ movement through an analysis of the Wednesday Demonstration and its participants, drawing on participant observation and interviews conducted in South Korea. It also draws on secondary sources to offer a contextual analysis of the historical and political background of the ‘comfort women’ movement. In this thesis, I provides a critical framework for understanding what changes have occurred within the Wednesday Demonstration that enables it to persist until today; explores how the survivors and their supporters have become allies beyond a generation gap through the weekly protests; and, through the lens of feminist perspectives, reviews how the Wednesday Demonstration has evolved into a national and transnational movement to foster solidarity.

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“We must record these things that were forced upon us.”(Kim, Hak-Soon)

Chapter One: Introduction and Purpose of Study

At noon every Wednesday, a large crowd, holding a variety of demonstration equipment such as butterfly-shaped fans or colourful banners congregates on the sidewalk across from the Japanese embassy in Seoul, South Korea. The protestors’ strategic disruptions using songs, chants, and expressive gestures attract the attention of passersby and foreign tourists. The primary actors of the protest are a few grandmothers sitting on patio chairs in the shade. Despite their advanced age, these women have participated in this Wednesday Demonstration, rain or shine, since 1992. The purpose of the protest is to seek justice and redress for sexual violence against women and to demand an official apology and legal compensation from the Japanese government. The protesting grandmothers are the victims and survivors of military sexual slavery carried out by Japanese soldiers at “comfort stations” during World War II, a painful legacy that continues to affect political and diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea. Each Wednesday, these women are joined by hundreds of people of all ages, genders and ethnicities, who gather in front of the embassy to attend the weekly protest in a demonstration of deep empathy and solidarity with these survivors.

As an historical truth, the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery is an ongoing controversy, both domestically and internationally, although it first came to light almost three decades ago. The vigorous activism of the surviving grandmothers and their supporters showed that they never gave up on their struggles for justice in a very public and regular fashion. This thesis focuses on the movement of military sexual slavery by Japan during World War II through an analysis of the Wednesday Demonstration and its participants from intersectional and transnational feminist perspectives. Additionally, it explores the persistence of the Wednesday

Demonstration demanding an official apology, the formation of intergenerational solidarity between the survivors and their young supporters after the 2015 agreement between South Korea and Japan over the issue, and the movement's evolution from nationalist to transnational human rights activism.

In the conquest of Manchuria (1931), Japan perpetrated widespread atrocities and carried those into the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Approximately 200,000 young women and girls were forced into wartime sexual slavery for the Japanese military. The Imperial Japanese Army euphemistically called them 'comfort women' ("Japan's Responsibility" Soh). But wartime sex work was harsh and dangerous. The UN estimates only about 25% of these women left the comfort stations alive (McDougal). After the end of the war, many of the victims who survived the horror of this sexual violence found it impossible to go back home due to the shame they felt; others returned but hid their trauma. After the suffering they survived, not even their motherland could soothe them. While the world tried to maintain peace after World War II, peace remained unattainable for South Korea's 'comfort women'.

South Korea concentrated its post-war efforts on national economic growth after the end of Japan's colonization and achieved near-miraculous development, but the nation neglected the victims of traumatic experiences and memories caused by Japan's colonial rule. In a conservative society governed by patriarchal systems, the truth of 'comfort women' was considered a national shame and family disgrace. This patriarchy, paired with the history of Japanese colonization, created a Korean nationalism that forced these women into silence for decades. The oppressive and distorted views of 'comfort women' and the absence of public discourse about the issue aggravated the victims' suffering and reinforced the social stigma around sexual violence against women.

On August 14, 1991, on the eve of Independence Day, the late Kim, Hak-Soon, with the strong support of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (the Korean Council, *Hankuk Chõngsintae Munchetaech'aek Hyõpüihoe*, *Chôngdaehyôp/정대협*), publicized the plight of former ‘comfort women’ for the first time. After testifying about her hardship during the war, Kim became an activist to fight to bring justice for the victims and survivors. Her public testimony inspired other survivors to identify themselves and motivated scholars to begin researching the ‘comfort women’ issue. On December 6th of the same year, 35 South Korean war victims and bereaved family, including three former ‘comfort women,’ filed the first lawsuit in Tokyo District Court against the Japanese government for violating their human rights during WWII. The plaintiffs demanded an official apology, compensatory payment to survivors—¥20 million (US\$154,000) for each survivor-- in lieu of full reparation. This legal action was highly publicised and widely reported around the world. After the initiation of the lawsuit and Japan’s perfunctory denial of the charges, Japanese historian Yoshimi Yoshiaki uncovered irrefutable documentary evidence of military sexual slavery at the National Institute for Defense Studies Library in Tokyo, which was showcased by the national daily *Asahi* newspaper on January 11, 1992 (Yamazaki 58-59, “Japan’s National” Soh 209, Hicks 197).

On Wednesday, January 8th, 1992, the Korean Council held the first demonstration with survivors and their supporters in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, South Korea. They demanded that the Japanese government:

1. Acknowledge the war crime.
2. Reveal the truth in its entirety about the crimes of military sexual slavery.
3. Make an official apology.
4. Make legal reparations.
5. Punish those responsible for the war crime.
6. Accurately record the crime in history textbooks.
- 7.

Erect a memorial for the victims of military sexual slavery and establish a historical museum (*The Korean Council*).

Though no official reason was named for the choice of Wednesdays, on Friday, January 17, 1992, Prime Minister Miyazawa of Japan travelled to South Korea, his first overseas trip after he was inaugurated. The following Wednesday was the closest day for survivors and their supporters to see him and call for an apology (*The New York Times*). On that date, only five of the 234 known survivors participated in that first weekly rally (Glionna). However, from then onwards, the Wednesday Demonstration has been held every week regardless of the weather and has continued to grow, even as the number of living survivors has dwindled.

1.1. The foundations of the Wednesday Demonstration

The roots of the Wednesday demonstration began decades before that first protest. One of the early investigations of military sexual slavery was conducted, not by governments or historians, but by an English professor, Yun Chung-ok of Ewha Womans University, who narrowly escaped becoming one of the ‘comfort women’ in her youth. According to George Hicks, schools were used as sources of recruitment when Yun was school-aged. Since unmarried women were drafted into wartime work, many girls left school and rushed into marriage. Yun’s parents also pushed their daughter to drop out of school to save her from recruiters (53-54). After the war, Yun dedicated herself to exploring the issue and collecting documents and information through fact-finding trips to “comfort stations” (Kwon). In January 1990, Yun published a series of articles on the subject of ‘comfort women’ in the *Hankyoreh* newspaper in South Korea (*asahi.com*). Martha Vickery writes, “Professor Yun, who started her research on comfort women in 1970, little suspected that her efforts to bring justice to that small group of poor elderly women would one day carry the sound of those women’s voices around the world and

inspire others to add theirs to the protest” (35). One pioneer’s work had a profound impact and became a sound starting point to seek an apology and legal compensation for victims and survivors from Japan.

Chin Sung Chung notes that in the 1980s, a Korean Church Women’s Federation (KCWF, *Hankuk Kyohoe Yŏsŏng Yŏnhap Hoe/한국교회여성연합회*) protested against Japanese sex tours to South Korea. She further acknowledges that “[t]he linkage between sex slavery and sex tourism was further developed by the vibrant *minjung* (people’s) movement¹ that critically examined Korean history. Public disclosure was not an accident but was indebted to the development of a social movement in South Korea” (234). Once awareness of the long history of sexual exploitation of Korean women by the Japanese increased, this church women’s group started investigating the remains of several ‘comfort stations’ and reported their findings at a symposium. In May 1990, the Korean Church Women’s Federation issued a statement to demand that South Korea’s President raise the issue of military sexual slavery while he was visiting Japan (Chung 234). One month later, two new nongovernmental organizations were formed by South Korean female leaders to address the ‘comfort women’ issue. One is a small study group that conducted scholarly research and distributed information or knowledge about the issue. The other is the Korean Council, which is an umbrella activist organization formed by thirty-seven women’s groups. Most groups were affiliated with the church women’s alliance including YWCA, and student bodies (Soh 57, Hicks 183). Growing awareness of sex tourism in connection with military sexual slavery by the Japanese army changed social perspectives of the issue.

¹ See Lee, Namhee. The *minjung* movement is the South Korean democratization movement which intellectuals and university students participated in. The notion of *minjung* is “common people”. From the 1970s to the 1980s, the *minjung* movement was prominent in South Korean politics and social life, and by the late 1980s it became the driving force for the country’s transition from an authoritarian military regime to a parliamentary democracy (1).

Despite Japan's defeat in the war, the vestiges of Japanese imperialism remained and continued to exploit Korean women through prostitution and sex tourism, mainly at the hands of Japanese men. Hicks argues that the prevalence of sex tourism was disguised as 'patriotic' work, as it was a source of foreign currency for the Korean state. This issue became a primary concern of feminist groups in the 1970s. Even though the political climate of South Korea was repressive in the 1970s, the Church Women's Alliance started cooperating with Japanese women's organizations and held demonstrations against sex tourism at airports in both countries. Both the 'comfort women' system and sex tourism overlap by "portraying sex tourists as 'industrial warriors'" (174-176). It is not far-fetched to say that sex tourism is an economic invasion caused by capitalistic colonialism and a modern version of the comfort station system based on the concept of sexual exploitation. Because of these similarities, the work that feminist groups were doing around sex tourism also brought attention to the 'comfort women' issue and emphasized an ongoing campaign to raise the public's consciousness on sexual violence.

Bringing the issue of sexual violence against women into the public sphere was a considerable feat for these women in a patriarchal society shaped by Confucian values where women's issues were largely ignored. Until the late 1980s, Korean democratization was suspended by Korea's military dictatorship. After this conservative society was deeply affected by the cases of cruel sexual violence against women during the military regime, the public debate over anti-sexual violence was generated by Korean feminists to raise more awareness of the issue. In the political turmoil of South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s, people began to pay more attention to class liberation and gender-based violence. When the dictatorship ended, there were increased efforts to raise public awareness of sexual violence against women.

According to Kyungja Jung, the first wave of this Korean feminist activism began in the 1910s and was associated with a strong sense of nationalism due to Japanese colonial rule. After the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, the women's movement focused on family law reform. In the process of pursuing a rapid economic development policy in the 1960s and 1970s, the women's labour issue became a serious problem that could not be overlooked because of how women labourers were exploited. However, gender-specific issues were not raised although the majority of the labour movement activists were young female factory workers. In the 1980s, the term sexual violence was identified as a means of oppression by the military regime and patriarchy, and *minjung* ideology was adopted by the progressive women's movement to frame women's issues. However, until the late 1980s when social protest forced sweeping democratic reforms sexual violence against women was considered as a minor issue compared to those of national sovereignty or class mobility. Finally, in the 1990s, the task of addressing issues of equity became significant to many people and, as such, issues of gender equality and awareness of sexual violence against women came to the forefront of public discussions (262-280). This encouraging development positively affected the movement for 'comfort women', as survivors become more visible and vocal.

Unfortunately, many survivors who have waited for justice, like Kim, Hak-Soon, died without receiving an apology or legal redress. Despite the difficulties of litigation for survivors, it made a political impact. The defiance displayed in these lawsuits encouraged survivors and their supporters to push the Japanese government to acknowledge its legal obligation and empowered them to lead the movement for justice. As the issue of 'comfort women' became a widespread concern, the Japanese government changed its attitude on the matter. On July 6th, 1992, when the Japanese government discovered 127 documents on the issue of 'comfort

women,' including 70 documents from the Defense Agency and 52 documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan faced strong waves of criticism. In response, the government conducted a more thorough inquiry at home and abroad about the documents and materials that were studied, and the people related to comfort stations, including 16 former Korean 'comfort women' who were interviewed (*Asian Women's Fund*). On August 4th, 1993, for the second time, the result of the inquiry was released with a statement from the Chief Cabinet Secretary Kōno Yōhei. 117 documents from the Defense Agency, 54 documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and 19 documents from the U.S. National Archive were included (*Asian Women's Fund*).

1.2. Japan's response to the South Korean Women's Movement for 'Comfort Women'

Despite this wealth of evidence and testimony, Japan continues to deny any legal responsibility. Chunghee Sarah Soh argues that the announcement, known as the Kōno Statement, admitted the direct and indirect involvement of Japanese military 'comfort women' in the establishment and management of comfort stations and recruitment of 'comfort women'. It also noted that many women were recruited against their own will and that they lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere (44). Even though the Japanese government finally acknowledged the issue, they did not immediately embark on plans to support the survivors, and its apology might be unfavourably considered a whitewash by some critics and advocates. On August 31st, 1994, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, Japanese Prime Minister Murayama issued a statement expressing once more his "profound and sincere remorse and apologies" with regard to the 'comfort women' issue, and stating his desire to find "an appropriate way which enables a wide participation" of Japanese people in order to share such feelings of apology and remorse (*Asian Women's Fund*).

As a result of the subsequent pressure from local and international advocates, including the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) recommendations, in August 1995, the Japanese government cabinet approved the establishment of the Asian Women's Fund (AWF), which is a hybrid national public organization to fulfill Japan's "moral responsibility" for the survivors. Even though the government was severely criticized by redress advocates for shirking "legal responsibility," the fund as "atonement money" was donated by the Japanese people and their government budgets funding for medical welfare projects for the survivors. The disbursement and the implementation of the fund began in August 1996 (Soh 44).

However, this fund became controversial and was at the heart of the debate. Hee-Kang Kim explains that this project was firmly opposed by the Korean Council, and it strongly urged the feminist coalition of Asian countries not to accept the AWF. Despite the Korean Council's campaign against the AWF, the Asian coalition was dissolved because after some Filipino survivors accepted the AWF money, and some Filipino NGOs endorsed those survivors' actions (7). The recipients' decision was critiqued on the assertion that their demands were temporary, and it was clear that atonement money could not cover everything they endured. Criticism of the AWF included the argument that the perpetrators should take true responsibility for their nation's atrocities during World War II. According to Ami Lynch, Korean activists and supporters of survivors continued to decline receipt of money despite the choice of the Filipino survivors, and in 2007, the fund ceased operating (151, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

1.3. A growing movement that spans generations

In the wake of these responses from the Japanese government, the situation has remained contentious between Japan and the 'comfort women' survivors and their supporters who have persistently led the movement to seek women's human rights and support other women who

have experienced sexual violence in other countries through the Wednesday Demonstrations. As the demonstrations have continued, the weekly rallies have gradually drawn more attention from younger generations who strongly empathize with the grandmothers' memories, and an intergenerational solidarity has developed. After almost twenty years, this weekly rally that only five survivors and a few activists attended in 1992 has grown to approximately 1,500 people gathering at the Japanese embassy and shouting anti-Japanese slogans. These young people's spontaneous and continued involvement in the Wednesday Demonstration leads to not only the expansion of more activities and actions in support of survivors, but also a significant rise in national and global awareness of Japanese military sexual slavery. Thus, the 'comfort women' movement, growing through the political space of the Wednesday Demonstration, continues to seek public responsibility to attain social justice and human rights for the survivors, as well as to prevent sexual violence against women in general.

1.4. Purpose of this study

This thesis examines the different aspects of the 'comfort women' movement through an analysis of the Wednesday Demonstration and its participants, drawing on participant observation and semi-structured interviews conducted in South Korea between June and August 2017. It provides a critical framework for understanding what changes have occurred within the Wednesday Demonstration that enables it to persist until today. This thesis explores how the survivors and their supporters became allies beyond a generation gap through the weekly protests and how the Wednesday Demonstration evolved into a national and transnational movement to foster solidarity. Based on secondary sources, the thesis offers a contextual analysis of the historical and political background of the 'comfort women' movement, and through participant

observation and interviews, it explores the growth of national and transnational solidarity from feminist perspectives.

The significance of this study is in the intention to understand the historical and political contexts and discourses surrounding the ‘comfort women’ issue and to explore how the participants and activists of the weekly rally have strove to remember the survivors’ suffering and continued to promote strong solidarity for justice and women’s human rights, centring around the Wednesday Demonstration. In addition, this thesis attempts to comprehend how and why the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery became a transnational phenomenon representing systemic state violence and gender oppression. However, this project is not without limitations. Firstly, this research is based on only a twelve-week participant observation and data from thirteen interviewees who have taken part in the weekly rally a few times around the recent 26-year milestone of the Wednesday Demonstration. Even though their perspectives of the demonstration are significant and essential in providing an understanding of the value of this movement, those perspectives do not allow for broader perceptions of the various groups that have been involved in the protests. Secondly, the ‘comfort women’ issue is a geopolitical one that spanned from Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia, but only South Korean survivors are mentioned in this study due to its focus on the Wednesday Demonstrations based in Seoul.

This first chapter traces a brief history of the Korean women’s movement and its background as a forerunner of the Wednesday Demonstration and explores how Korean feminist activists have operated the ‘comfort women’ movement during the political and social transformation of Korean society that was not concerned about sexual violence as a serious issue between the late 1980s and in the early 1990s. Through analyzing secondary sources, chapter two introduces the historical process that caused the establishment of the ‘comfort women’

system by Japanese Imperial Army during World War II, criticizes how post-colonialist nationalism and patriarchal system have treated the victims of military sexual slavery by Japan after the war ended, and explores how transnationalism or transnational feminism approaches raise awareness of wartime sexual violence. Chapter three introduces the qualitative research methodology I used to collect main data from feminist perspectives for twelve weeks in South Korea. Chapter four outlines the key findings of the research questions based on qualitative data, analyzing how the Wednesday Demonstration motivated people to get involved in a 'comfort women' movement after 2015 Japan-South Korea agreement on the issue. Further, it explores how human rights and transnational feminism have been promoted as strategies to draw more public attention and garner solidarity but have created layers of complexity for survivors and their quest for reconciliation.

Table 1. Timeline of South Korean Women's Movement and Wednesday Demonstration²

Year	Significant Events
1910	Japanese annexation of Korea
1931	Japanese invasion of Manchuria
1937-1945	the Second Sino-Japanese War
1945	Independence of Korea
1948	Division of Korea
1950-1953	Korean War
1975	Demonstrations against sex tourism
1986	Public testimony about sexual torture against a female student activist under South Korean military dictatorship
1990	Hankyoreh Newspaper published Yun Chung-ok's "Report following the footsteps of Volunteer Labor Corps Victims". Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan was established by 37 women's organizations.
1991	First testimony of the late Kim, Hak-Soon as a former 'comfort woman' The opening of hotline for Volunteer Labour Corps Victims by the Korean Council
1992	The first Wednesday Demonstration The first Asian Solidarity Conference on the Issue of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan in Seoul
1993	100 th Wednesday Demonstration The Kono Statement
1996	The Establishment of Asian Women's Fund
2000	Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery in Japan
2002	500 th Wednesday Demonstration
2003	The Establishment of the Shelter for victims of 'comfort women'
2006	700 th Wednesday Demonstration and International Solidarity Demonstration in 14 cities and 8 countries

² See Jung, Kyungja, the Korean Council and the Asian Women's Fund. Also, this timeline is summarized based on chapter one and four of this thesis.

2007	United States House of Representatives passed the Japanese Military 'Comfort Women' Resolution (House Resolution 121) Closing of the Asian Women's Fund
2011	1000th Wednesday Demonstration The Ceremony of unveiling Statue of Peace
2012	The Foundation of Butterfly Fund (Nabi Fund) The Opening of War and Women's Human Rights Museum The First International Memorial Day for Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery
2013	100 Million Signatures Campaign
2015	The Announcement of Korea-Japan 'Comfort Women' Agreement
2016	The Foundation for Justice and Remembrance against the 2015 agreement
2017	1 Million Citizens' Fundraising Campaign
May 2019	1387th Wednesday Demonstration

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Since the end of World War II, the issue of Korean ‘comfort women (wianbu/위안부)’ has been an ongoing controversy between Korean victims of forced sexual slavery and the government of Japan whose army was responsible for the suffering the victims endured. Before the late Kim, Hak-Soon publicly revealed her brutal experiences in 1991, research on the ‘comfort women’ issue was largely ignored by academia. However, beginning in 1991, painful memories of injustice from survivors began to influence public debate and academic research on the issue of military sexual slavery issue carried out by the Japanese Imperial Army. Since then, a significant amount of work has been done to investigate the impact of violence against women during wartime in relation to multiple intersectional conditions in Korea, as well as global peace and the social justice movement (Hicks 10, Min 949-951, Chung 232-239, Soh, “Human Rights” 124).

2.1. The History of ‘Comfort Women’

In 1910, Korea was annexed by the Japanese Empire, resulting in 35 years of violent colonization during which the Japanese government subjugated Korean territory and forced its citizens to assimilate to Japanese culture. Above all, they exploited human resources by mobilizing Koreans to work in Japanese factories or military bases all around Asia. Early in the twentieth century, the rise of industrial capitalism under colonialization resulted in the gender division of labour in Korean society. Girls moved from the farms to the urban mills to fill in as a portion of the country’s first factory labourers. The number of both Korean men and women employed in factories increased. Female workers alone constituted 20.5 percent of the total workforce by 1922. Throughout the 1930s and during the Pacific War (1931-1945), 33-35 percent of women occupied the industrial workforce, and this number composed over a third of

the total labour force (J. Kim 27). In other words, “war mobilization in late colonial Korea sought to turn young men and women into soldiers and workers” (J. Kim 152). In addition, the economical impoverishment of Koreans became increasingly extreme during the 1930s, and unemployed women were increasingly drawn to prostitution (Song 202). But not all women who engaged in sex work in Korea at this time did so voluntarily.

According to Tanaka, when one racialized group is colonized by a foreign country or a racialized group is subordinated by another, it frequently entails the sexual exploitation of women of the subordinated group by the men of the dominant group. Historically, colonization frequently included forced sexual activities or rape of indigenous women (180). Sexual violence against women during war is used as a tool to suppress the colonized territories quickly and humiliate their national authority (Oh 4, Tanaka 28-32, Alison 75-82). Yamashita mentions that military “comfort stations” were established for the purpose of satisfying the sexual urges of the Japanese military while the Asia Pacific War was beginning in 1931 (209).

However, this military sexual slavery was a part of Japan’s desire to restore the image of Imperial Japan. By confining rape and sexual abuse to military-controlled facilities, the Japanese government hoped to avoid international condemnation, as drawn by the Rape of Nanking, and anti-Japanese sentiment from local people in the occupied areas. Further, the Imperial Army believed that women who could not speak the local language could not communicate with soldiers so this isolation could prevent them from confiding any military secrets (Argibay 376-377). Bonnie Oh writes that hundreds of thousands of women were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army to serve soldiers on the front lines during World War II (3). Soh argues that it is difficult to determine precisely how many women were forced into sex slavery, but estimates range from 70,000 to 200,000 (“The Korean” 1226-1227). Allegedly, 80 percent of these women

were Korean (Soh “The Korean” 1227, Oh 3, Hicks 11, Orreill 129), however, it is important to note that all women of territories they occupied were exploited and treated by soldiers as the spoils of war regardless of their race or age.

While these estimates of the numbers of victims suggest that military sexual slavery was a large-scale enterprise, other scholars disagree. Tsutomi Nishioka claims that the accusation of coercive mobilization for ‘comfort women’ is not true but rather political propaganda. In fact, he argues that all stories of ‘comfort women’ were falsified and unrealistic contrivances, and the Japanese government investigated and found no evidence of these crimes having occurred (1-4, 34, 39). He also refutes Yoshimi’s claim that the ‘comfort women’ were enslaved during the war because the abduction of victims was impossible. Additionally, it came to light that one former comfort woman made a huge amount of money during her time at the ‘comfort stations,’ saving enough to buy five houses in Tokyo (36-37, 57-58). Moreover, Nishioka claims that George Hicks’ book, *The Comfort Women*, and the report by UN Special Rapporteur Radhika Coomaraswamy are worthless because they rely on biased resources (72-73). Regarding the number of ‘comfort women,’ a South Korean professor named Park Yuha argues that the figure of 200,000 is not the number of ‘comfort women’ taken by Imperial Japan, but the number of those conscripted to work at factories (Y.H. Park). However, in wartime, justification for forced labour and the sexual enslavement of women was rampant because people under colonization were not treated as human beings entitled to full citizenships. Despite refutations of the ‘comfort women’ issue by such authors, survivors and other related documents offer convincing evidence of military sexual slavery and a massive violation of human rights during the war (Alison 85-87, Argibay 379, Oh 20-21, Tanaka 181).

2.1.1. 'Comfort women' or Military Sexual Slaves?

Surviving 'comfort women' have come to be respectfully called 'grandmother' (or *halmoni* in Korean). However, for many years, 'comfort women' were wrongly understood as 'voluntary corps,' or *jungshindae* (정신대), who were mobilized to replace the shortage of factory labourers. It was called 'teishintai' in Japanese, which means 'voluntary labour corps' (Watanabe 503). Despite the notable exposure of 'comfort women' as victims of Japanese war crimes, the misinterpretation and conflation of the Women's Labour Volunteer Corps (*jungshindae*) and 'comfort women' ignores the diversity of women's wartime labour. As the institution formed under the Ordinance on Women's Labour Volunteers (*Yōja chōngsin kullo ryōng; Joshi teishin kinrōrei*) issued in August 1944, the Women's Labour Volunteer Corps was only one of many patriotic labour leagues and campaigns during the war, particularly after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor (J. Kim130). In 2014, a national newspaper in Japan, *The Asahi Shimbun Digital*, published a correction regarding the confusion between the terms 'comfort women' forced into prostitution at comfort stations and 'women volunteer labour corps' organized to mobilize women to work at munitions factories during the war due to insufficient research (*The Asahi Shimbun Digital*). While both 'women labour corps' and 'comfort women' could be interpreted in the same context in terms of forced labour, the plight of 'comfort women' differs from that of factory labourers.

The term 'comfort women', also called 'military comfort women' (known as *중군위안부* and *jugun ianfu*), is a euphemism for those women who were forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese military during the war. The term 'comfort women' is translated from the Japanese abbreviation *Ianfu*. As the Chinese characters 慰安 (comfort or solace) and 婦 [fu] (woman or wife) suggest, the women's literal purpose was to offer solace and comfort to Japan's

Imperial Forces (Orreill 129). This language seems to suggest that the ‘comfort women’ system naturally occurred and had cogent reasons for recruiting women. Also, the term ‘military comfort women’ carries a hidden meaning. The nature of the word ‘women participating in war’ (*jugun*) was inappropriately interpreted because it means women who voluntarily followed the troops such as war reporters or nurses (Chung 221-222). Ultimately, the phrases, ‘comfort women’ (*ianfu*) and ‘military comfort women’ (*jugunianfu*) seem to gloss over Japan’s wartime atrocities to avoid the fact that many women were systematically raped and abused by the Japanese military.

When the ‘comfort women’ issue surfaced, it was confused with several different terminologies. In official documentation by the U.N, academic journals, and women’s groups, the terms ‘military sexual slavery’ and ‘slaves’ are frequently used to clarify that women were recruited for the Japanese troops against their will and forced into sexual servitude. Special Rapporteur Coomaraswamy claims that the phrase ‘military sexual slaves’ represents a much more accurate and appropriate term because the term ‘comfort women’ does not reflect the suffering, such as multiple rapes on a daily basis and severe physical abuse that women victims had to endure during their forced prostitution, sexual subjugation, and abuse during wartime (4).

Carmen Argibay, a judge who participated in the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery (the Women’s Tribunal),³ asserts that the terms ‘prostitute’ and ‘prostitution’ profoundly discriminate against women, so ‘sexual slavery’ is more accurate than ‘forced prostitution’ in light of the experiences of former ‘comfort women.’ This change demonstrates the victims’ view by focusing more accurately on the enormity of the

³ This people’s tribunal was organized by the Violence against Women in War (VAWW-NET Japan), South Korea(Yun-Chōng-ok of the Korean Council), and the Philippines (Indai Sajor of ASCENT) on December 4, 2000. The feminist activists collaborated on the tribunal because the International Military Tribunal for the Far East held in Tokyo in 1946 failed to prosecute and punish war criminals responsible for establishing the comfort stations or committing mass rape during the World War II (Soh 42).

enslavement and the rape, rather than ‘forced prostitution,’ a term interpreted from men’s perspectives that suggests these victims were women who took advantage of the ‘comfort system. (Argibay 386-387).

Chung notes that some international women’s organizations had determined to use the term ‘forced war comfort women’, later changing it to ‘military comfort women,’ and then ‘military sexual slavery by Japan.’ In publications of the victims’ testimonies in 1993, the Korean Council and the Research Group used the term ‘military sexual slavery’ (222). In the same year, this terminology was applied to law⁴ to protect and provide financial support for victims who were compulsorily recruited and forced to military sexual slaves under Japanese colonial rule (*Ministry of Government Legislation*).

In addition, based on survivors’ testimonies, Soh claims that the victims were treated like tools of warfare, usually unpaid, and coerced into sexual labour. In other words, their lives as ‘comfort women’ can only be explained as sexual slavery because many survivors suffered from gross violations of human rights. (83). Further, UN Special Rapporteur Gay McDougall reports, “The comfort stations’ that were maintained by the Japanese military during World War II are particularly egregious examples of sexual slavery” (9). Yoshimi, who discovered a great number of official documents to prove Japanese war crimes, claims that victims and survivors can only be described as ‘military sex slaves’ because those women were forced into sex work and restrained for a certain period with no rights (39).

Still, regardless of its common usage, ‘comfort women’ does not embody the crime of the perpetrators but continues to degrade the human rights and dignity of victims. However, for survivors who do not want to call themselves ‘sex slaves,’ Japanese military ‘comfort women’

⁴ Act on Livelihood Stability and Commemorative Projects, etc. For Sexual Slavery Victims Drafted for the Japanese Imperial Army Under The Japanese Colonial Rule (Amended by Act No. 9167, Dec. 19, 2008)

(*Ilbongun wianbu*, 일본군 ‘위안부’) is publicly used in South Korea to prevent survivors from being psychologically harmed (*Ministry of Gender Equality and Family*). Since the term ‘military sexual slavery’ was generally acknowledged, it has now become the most frequently used word in academia, organizations’ official documents, and social justice movements.

2.1.2. From Silenced ‘Comfort Women’ to National Grandmothers Called ‘Halmoni’

The protest that the Koreran Council has held every week for 26 years is officially named ‘the Wednesday Demonstration for the resolution of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery (‘Comfort Women’) issue’. While the organization has refused to use the euphemistic term ‘comfort women,’ the public has begun calling Korean survivors “Japanese ‘comfort women’ grandmothers” (*Ilbongun wianbu halmoni*). At the beginning of the military sexual slavery movement, the survivors, who broke the almost half-century silence and participated in the movement, were in their 70s or older. Conventionally, Koreans call the elderly women ‘grandmothers’ (*halmoni*) in a polite manner to show their respect to older strangers. Soh notes that South Koreans have adopted the term as a show of respect. This usage of the term ‘*halmoni*’ influenced Filipino and Taiwanese activists as well. As a result, they have also made a decision to use the terms *lola* and *ama* in their respective languages, which also mean grandmother (73). Regardless of the arguable usage of the term, both ‘comfort women’ and ‘military sexual slavery/slaves’ will be used in this thesis because the term ‘comfort women’ is a publicly common language to people who know this issue, and scholars and researchers widely use both phrases in their academic or research journals. In the chapter on my research findings, the term ‘grandmothers (*halmoni*)’ will also be used because all participants of the Wednesday Demonstration and interviews call survivors ‘grandmothers.’

2.2. Wartime Sexual Violence from Nationalist Perspectives

2.2.1. Korean Nationalism and 'comfort women' beyond the nation's borders

Since Imperial Japan annexed Korea in 1910, Korea has longed for freedom and independence from Japanese colonization. Nationalism was an important ideology for national liberation and a convincing system for decolonization. Denis Smith defines nationalism as the doctrine or practice that promotes the collective interests of a national community or state above those of individuals, regions, or nations (Smith). This ideology is significant for a people aiming to restore their sovereignty and to build an independent nation. However, Tanaka claims that, generally, the ideology of masculinity is intrinsically interrelated with racism and nationalism. When one race conquers another and colonizes its people, it often gives rise to the de-masculinization and feminization of the colonized race, and sexually-abused women of the conquered nation further symbolize the dominance of the conquerors (5). This explains why most Korean women were mobilized for 'comfort women' during the period of Japanese colonization (Tanaka 5).

The intersection of race and gender allowed Imperial Japan to exploit Korean women as dispensable sexual commodities and to use Koreans as tools to legitimate its violent conquest (Sonnen 286)⁵. This signifies that there was discrimination and oppression based on not only gender but ethnic nationalism—a typical case of imperialism and colonialism where one nation invades another to take advantage of economy and politics under the guise of civilizing inferior countries. As such, South Korea initially adopted a primarily nationalist view of the issue of comfort women, viewing the victimization of Korean women as an issue of national offense.

⁵ Sonnen explains that Japan racialized Korea as an inferior and inhuman people. During Japanese colonial rule, Japan governed the Koreans in cruel ways such as torture, forced labour, random killings, abduction, rape, and imprisonment. This brutal history still permeates modern Korean society (284).

South Korea's national perspective on military sexual slavery has softened since the military sexual slavery movement began, but protestors have continued to include slogans such as 'national pride,' 'national resentment,' 'disloyal agreement on the issue of 'comfort women,' and 'there is no future for the people who have forgotten their history' at the Wednesday Demonstration. This approach to the issue, even by South Korean survivors, has blinded the Korean people to the truth that many other women in Asia were confined to comfort stations as Japanese military sexual slavery as well. Scholars agree that women were recruited from all over Asia and forced into sexual slavery during World War II (Hsu 97). Victims included Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Chinese descendants in Asia, Filipinos, Indonesians, Thais, Malays, Burmese, Indians, Eurasians, Pacific Islanders, and Dutch women. In other words, women in almost all of Japan's colonies and occupied territories were forced to serve the sexual demands of Japanese soldiers (B.J. Kim 29). Even though most victims were Korean women, it is unfair that the existence of other victims of military sexual slavery is overlooked and excluded from historical memory.

Still, much of the focus on the matter of 'comfort women' centres on the idea that Korean girls, specifically, were trafficked and forcibly drafted to comfort stations for Japanese troops. Yeong-ae Yamashita claims that "the 'comfort women' problem is emphasized as a national one. This emphasis is derived from the viewpoint of a colonized nation and thus indicts the national discrimination embedded within the policy of the military comfort women system" (54). Yoshimi estimates that the total number of comfort women range from 80,000 to approximately 170,000 to 200,000 Korean women alone. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find the exact number of military sexual slaves mobilized during the Asian Pacific war as most documents and records were burnt or incomplete (91). Even though it is still true that the largest number of victims were Korean

women, it is reasonable to expect that the number of ‘comfort women’ among Chinese, Southeast Asians, and Pacific islanders was also quite high. In all areas where the Japanese army operated, new ‘comfort women’ were required for soldiers (Yoshimi 94).

After 1942, the Taiwanese military police oversaw mobilizing women for Japanese soldiers. In China, after the fall of Nanking in 1937, ‘comfort stations’ were established for Japanese soldiers, and Chinese and Korean women in China were aggressively recruited for military sexual slavery. In the Philippines, women were often kidnapped by the Japanese army, and many rapes were perpetrated by Japanese troops in the battlefields. Indonesian women were forced into sexual slavery both in Indonesia and other islands nearby. In 1948, a Dutch military court, the Batavia Trial for Classes B and C war criminals in Indonesia, found that twenty-five Dutch women living in Indonesia were forced into military sex slavery, and in Malay, women recruited through newspaper advertisements, former Karayuki-san (Japanese prostitutes overseas), local managers, and abduction worked in comfort stations (Ishikida 65-69). Victims existed in Japan’s occupied areas across Asia, but the issue of military sexual slavery in these areas remains contested because of the nationalist and patriarchal stance.

2.2.2 Nationalism, Patriarchy, and Japanese ‘comfort women’

Another area of interest on the subject of ‘comfort women’ taken from countries other than Korea is the question of whether Japanese women were victims of the practice. Yamashita claims that in Japan, the issue of Japanese military sexual slaves emerged from the darkness as Japanese survivors started to testify about their experiences in the 1980s before the redress movement in Korea got into full swing (208). Yoshimi argues that the Japanese Imperial Military recruited women over twenty-one years old from brothels in Japan which already employed prostitutes. The Japanese police strictly imposed these restrictions (100). Yet, some examples

were found of Japanese women who did not work as prostitutes before the war who were deceived to serve as ‘comfort women (Yoshimi 103). Unfortunately, these women’s stories never resonated with Japanese society. While Korean survivors began to draw more public attention in the 1990s, the plight of ‘comfort women’ of Japanese nationality remained ignored both within the movement and in society at large (Yoshimi 208).

In Japan, the issue of military sexual slavery has become a political and nationalist conundrum. This is arguably because it is difficult for the Japanese government to admit that women of Japanese origin were drafted into sex slavery for the Japanese army, and this fact is likely to be overlooked in the interest of nationalism or patriotism without consideration for these women's human rights and dignity. Yamashita points out that while scholars researched the issue among Koreans, Taiwanese, and Chinese, no research paid attention to the Japanese ‘comfort women’ issue. In records discovered by experts, Japanese comfort women did exist like Korean and Chinese women, but no statistics are available about the number of Japanese ‘comfort women’ and the deployment of them. Still, Yamashita maintains that, though it is hard to say that the Japanese ‘comfort women’ were recruited as frequently as Koreans and Taiwanese, they were not a rarity (210-211).

Yoshimi claims that many Japanese young women were told that their spirits could be enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine⁶ if they died as ‘comfort women’ who offered special services to the Japanese army (101). Because of this belief, women were recruited not only by state authorities, but also by their families. Similarly, according to the U.S. Office of War Interrogation Report No. 49, girls or young women were purchased from their economically destitute families or became indentured servants, and Japanese managers, under military

⁶ The Japanese national shrine where spirits of the war dead are enshrined and worshipped (Yoshimi 101)

authority, purchased Korean women from their families through servitude contracts (Argibay 378). The patriarchal system camouflaged by nationalism and patriotism resulted in sexual violence against women and justified their gender-based oppression.

Most victims of Japan's military sexual slavery were born and raised in Confucian cultures. It is not difficult to imagine how a patriarchal society that emphasizes chastity as a virtue would treat those women who survived the painful wartime experience of sexual slavery. Japanese women were not an exception. Yamashita explains that Japanese 'comfort women' who previously worked as prostitutes used to live in poverty and were sold to brothels by their impoverished parents. Their work made them accumulate debt and subjected them to being traded as merchandise. It was not their own choice, and they were forced into sexual slavery to pay off debts. Even though all debts were paid back, those women did not become free and were stigmatized as 'dishonorable women' with little chance of ever having a 'normal' life (214). These women, drafted by their own country to be military sexual slaves, have remained invisible and ignored for many decades. Japan has taken little action to raise awareness of the exploitation of thousands of women as military sexual slaves by the Japanese Imperial Forces during the war and Japan's government has excluded all mention of *Ianfu* from history textbooks, describing them instead as paid prostitute camp followers (Orreill 129). This nationalism feeds patriarchy, which fully ostracizes and oppresses both 'comfort women' of Japanese descent and other victims.

However, the differences between Japanese comfort women and those from the subordinated nations must be noted. While Japanese women could not avoid discrimination based on their position as 'comfort women,' they could have held power to discriminate against other victims from different nations (Yamashita 212-214). Soh points out that the concubine of

the Japanese Navy hospital director in Taiwan in 1944 was Japanese ‘comfort woman’ who played a leadership role among ‘comfort women’ of Japanese nationality (29-30). Thus, Japanese ‘comfort women’ who were higher in the hierarchy than victims of different ethnicities and nationalities had more opportunity for greater earning power and better living conditions than other women (Soh 206). Michele Sonen argues that hostile or violent behaviour or attitudes toward Koreans were likely because the perception of the “inferior Korean” was rampant in Japanese society. However, Yamashita claims that despite the hierarchy among the women, the treatment of the Japanese women at the comfort stations was no less victimizing than that applied to other women. The Japanese ‘comfort women’ offered sexual service for higher officers, and Korean and other ethnic women were assigned to lower ranks, but it did not change the nature of their work (214). Furthermore, after Japan’s defeat, Japanese ‘comfort women’ could not enjoy any of the privilege of their place in the hierarchy of comfort women. Instead, they have remained victims of military sexual slavery much like the other ‘comfort women’ from countries colonized by Japan.

2.2.3. The Former ‘Comfort Women’ Silenced by Nationalism and Patriarchy after the War

Regardless of nationality, race and class, all women who were forced to provide sex work for the Japanese military troops during the war are victims of wartime sexual violence. The patriarchal norm of conservative cultures has reinforced the violence against ‘comfort women’, and the nationalist perspective of Japanese military sexual slavery prolonged their silence after the war ended (Lee and Crowe 347). While nationalism holds out the alluring promise to women of equal treatment as citizens, inequality manifested in the mistreatment of these survivors (Seiya 5). Yoshimi writes about the abandonment of the vast majority of ‘comfort women.’ There were many victims who were unable to go back to their own homelands or abandoned in a strange

country (192-193). Further, patriarchy, tangled with nationalism, caused survivors to hesitate to come back to their families and to request help to cope with their physical and mental sufferings (B. J. Kim 31). According to Akane Onozawa, women who were discovered to have been forced into being ‘comfort women’ by the Japanese military were often ostracized and scorned by their communities and families because of how women’s chastity was emphasized as a virtue. With few other options, these women involuntarily left home or lived in isolation and poverty (155). Therefore, a combination of national exploitation, sexism, and class discrimination have distressed the victims of military sex slavery and buried the issue for almost fifty years (Chung 233-234).

Moreover, Cynthia Cockburn emphasizes that inequalities and distortions of gender are common when a society is marked by patriarchy, nationalism and militarism. These three ideologies together are used to dictate what women should offer and produce for their nations (7-8). For the survivors then, it would have been very difficult to pose a genuine challenge to patriarchy, nationalism and gender inequality, especially as they lived in conservative countries where any discussion of sexual activity is taboo. Nonetheless, the military sexual slavery issue is both gender-based violence and a war crime, which raises an important question about how nationalism should be dealt with in relation to gender. While both men and women were victims of the war who struggled with colonialism and imperialism at once, men have been appreciated as protectors and heroes, while women have been silenced. Hyunah Yang points out that the silence around the military ‘comfort women’ issue is particularly associated with gender and sexuality. This connection leads to “the intentional amnesia of the victims, as well as those who perpetrated or witnessed the events.” When the fact of the Japanese government’s involvement in

the issue was released, “[it] was quickly framed within the pre-existing nationalist discourse” (128).

In sum, one of the significant problems with military sexual slavery is that survivors have never been accepted as full citizens of their nations. Women’s experiences are treated as an aside rather than a part of the main agenda for addressing the national concerns in these nations after the war. Therefore, when nationalism meets gender and patriarchy, victims of military sexual slavery feel obligated to hide themselves and hold the truth because their experience conflicted with national pride and community values.

2.2.4. Conclusions on the impact of nationalism and patriarchy on the ‘comfort women’ issue

The ‘comfort women’ issue reveals how nationalism intermingled with patriarchy to continuously exclude and oppress women, treating them as inferior to men. Joane Nagel argues, “By definition, nationalism is political and closely linked to the state and its institutions. Like the military, most state institutions have been historically dominated by men. It is therefore no surprise that the culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand-in-hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism” (248-249). Moreover, Sabine Erika emphasizes that both nationalism and militarism rely on violence, intense competition, aggression, and patterns of hierarchy and superiority. Neither can exist without an enemy. While women’s experiences are not reflected in either nationalism or militarism, both systems have negatively influenced their lives to a considerable extent (82).

From a nationalist point of view, the non-Japanese victims of Japanese military sexual slavery during Second World War became subordinates who had no choice but to make sacrifices for their powerless country, and they have been erased from the nation’s history after the war

ended. Nagel claims that women are treated by traditionalists as symbols of family and national honour; “women’s shame is the family’s shame, the nation’s shame, the man’s shame” while men are regarded as protectors of the family and the nation (254). As a result of these views, the comfort women issue in South Korea, ironically, has been represented as an emblem of nationalism (Choi 13) and a reminder to Japan of their obligation to Korea (Orreill 129). Thus, the oppression, injustice, and violation of ‘comfort women’s’ human rights were overshadowed by nationalist discourse, and the nation turns a blind eye to the suffering of victims of military sexual slavery. While it is true that this nationalism has been successful in drawing more attention to the issues Korean people faced as a result of colonization, it should be asked whether this approach will yield positive outcomes for ‘comfort women’ survivors.

According to Chizuko Ueno, in a very short time, the paradigm used for discussing the military comfort women issue was rapidly changed by patriarchal perspectives. Women’s agency is denied by the patriarchal paradigm of ‘national shame’ and, within the patriarchal system, the infringement of women’s sexual human rights is reduced to a dispute over property rights over women between fellow men. She also states, “A truly patriarchal voice of suppression arose in reaction to the testimony of the women’s suffering both in Korea and Japan” (73). In addition, Pyong Gap Min claims that the Japanese patriarchal system led to the establishment of Japanese military prostitutes whereas the Korean patriarchal customs caused the neglect of the Korean victims’ lifelong suffering after their return home (939). In the end, it is the same patriarchy that led Japan to establish military ‘comfort stations’ and caused Korea to neglect the nation’s victims of that military sexual slavery.

In conclusion, military sexual slavery by Japan is obvious gender-based violence. The nationality of the victims does not change this reality. The interplay of patriarchy and

nationalism that caused Asian women and other women of European origin to be forced into sex slavery for the Japanese imperial and later stopped many of them from returning to their homes because they would bring disgrace on their family and communities resulted in fifty years of silence about the plight of military sexual slavery. Regardless of the emergence of the issue in official documents and survivors' testimonies, both Japan and Korea have treated these evidences and experiences as trivial matters and inevitable consequences that could occur in a dominant-subordinate relationship. Whereas nationalism engaging with patriarchy establishes a more powerful masculine society, it pushes survivors to hide themselves.

2.3. The Status of 'Comfort Women' in the Chaotic Korean Society after Colonization

Soh argues that Japanese colonization and the traumatic fratricidal war that unexpectedly divided Korea into two nations left tremendous political upheaval and economic instability in their wake (168). To overcome these challenges, it was necessary that Korea made reconstruction efforts. Bang-Soon Yoon claims that national restoration and defence were the most urgent fundamental policies for political stability and economic survival in the South Korean administration from the 1940s to 1950s. Therefore, the issue of military sexual slavery and other victims of colonialism were denied attention in the political agenda (13-14).

As such, the plight of 'comfort women' was treated as an individual problem caused by Korean brokers who were greedy for personal profit by getting involved in the criminal sex trafficking of their nation's own women and girls. Furthermore, Korea's androcentric culture kept the subject out of public discourse and "reinforced the survivors' self-censorship as they silently suffered from the stigma" (Soh 168). The survivors, fearful of the stigma attached to 'dishonourable women,' kept their experiences a secret, reluctant to betray their country in the midst of its plan to rebuild the nation.

2.4. The Lack of Justice at the Tokyo Trial

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), informally known as the Tokyo Trial or Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, lasted two and half years, from May 3, 1946 to November 12, 1948. There were eleven judges: one each from Australia, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Soviet Union, and the United States. The integrity of the tribunal was compromised by the dominance of the United States. There were twenty-eight defendants comprised of four former prime ministers, eleven former ministers, two former ambassadors, and eight high-ranking military generals. The defendants were charged with fifty-five crimes encompassing crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity (Chang and Barker 37-39).

Trials for war crimes were a conspicuous feature of the immediate postwar world (Minear 20). The Tokyo War Crimes Trial was established to provide an opportunity to seek war crime liability of the Japanese authorities and to deliver a just trial for victims. On 417 days, 818 court sessions were held; testimony from 419 witnesses and from 779 affidavits were presented; and the justices took seven months to compose their judgment. The verdict was guilty. A death sentence by hanging for seven men, including Tojo Hideki, Prime Minister and War Minister at the time of Pearl Harbor, Hirota Koki, Foreign Minister from 1933 to 1936 and Prime Minister from 1936 to 1937; life imprisonment for sixteen; twenty year's imprisonment for one; and seven years' imprisonment for Shigemitsu Mamoru, Foreign Minister from 1943 to 1944. The propagandist and ultranationalist, Okawa Shumei had been deemed for trial, and two defendants died during the long proceedings. The cases against these three were dismissed (Minear 3-17). However, it was ambiguous whether this international criminal justice apparatus brought justice to the court or fairly judged the war crimes.

In the trials, the issues were not considered from the perspective of international human rights. Asian countries that received financial aid and development loans to maintain economic connections with Japan overlooked individual victims of the war and the issue of military sexual slavery. Furthermore, according to Yuma Totani, the court entirely excluded both Korea and Taiwan from Japanese colonialism. The reason may have been that some of the prosecutors and judges were from countries that were colonizing other nations at that time (355–359). In particular, B.S. Yoon notes that the Tokyo Trials did not deal with the issue of military sexual slavery at all (16). Rumi Sakamoto also points out that the trials turned a blind eye to gender discrimination and omitted a rape crime (53).

One case that brought Japanese military sexual slavery explicitly to court was that of Dutch women. Hicks explains that trials were held in 1948 in Batavia (known as Jakarta then). In the trials, thirteen Japanese officers, including an interpreter, who were involved in military sexual slavery were sentenced to prison terms ranging from two to twenty years and to death by law for the crimes committed against the 52 Dutch victims. Though Korea was more seriously affected by the comfort station system, the Tokyo trials never addressed the issue of war rape and forced prostitution against Koreans (168-169). This raises questions of how Japan could have escaped punishment for most of its war crimes and those committed by Japanese soldiers.

According to Yoshimi, although inhumane acts were defined as crimes during wartime and in war zones, no one was tried for crimes against humanity at the trials. This was not because Japan had not committed war crimes, as history shows that Japan carried out extensive crimes against Asian people during World War II, but it was all disregarded by the U.S. and European prosecutors and judges, who did not ever intend to pursue the matter (162). Hence, Chung contends that it is fundamental to examine how Japan has avoided addressing its war crimes in a

broader historical perspective. Additionally, it is necessary to look at American postwar policy toward Japan. The U.S. intended to manipulate Japan as a protection to limit the proliferation of communism across Asia. Thus, the U.S. government supported Japan's recovery and capitalization and sided with Japan in the matter of punishment for war criminals and requests for compensation of its Asian victims. In return, Japan had to give the U.S. all information about the development of live human experimentation at Army Unit 731 in Manchuria and hand over the operation of the comfort stations in Okinawa after the war (232).

Justice for Korean comfort women and other victims of WWII in Asia were subordinate to the needs of the cold war. As B. S. Yoon argues:

The onset of cold war politics shifted U.S. policy toward Japan from political and economic sanctions to re-building Japan for strategic balance of power in East Asia. The U.S. occupation forces in Japan kept Japan's emperor system, although stripped of political power, thus legitimately allowing the Japanese emperor to escape from war crimes responsibilities. Certainly, cold war strategy outweighed the war trials during the U.S. military government polity in South Korea (16).

In 1971, Richard H. Minear coined the term 'victor's justice' based on his account of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. He argues that both lofty and base motives could be determined through an examination of the Tokyo trial. Its foundation in international law was unstable, and its process was fundamentally flawed. In addition, the verdict did not adequately reflect history—the Japanese faced only slight mitigation as a punishment for their crimes—making the trial's results a 'Victor's justice' (180). Based on the trials conducted by the US and Allied forces, the inability of the American injustice to provide redress is a problem inseparable

from their failure to bring deep and broad justice to the victims of Japanese war crimes. In the end, transitional justice in the aftermath of World War II was nothing more than 'victor's justice' (Yoneyama 16).

Along with the issue of military sexual slavery, Yoneyama argues that criticism of the Tokyo War Crimes Trial was an important earlier event that supported the post-1990s renewed redress culture. While scholars differ in their assessment of the degree to which U.S. occupation policy planning for Japan remained consistent over the postwar years, it was generally concluded that the U.S. decision-makers recognized the utility of retaining Japan for the purpose of rebuilding an anti-communist block in East Asia following World War II. The Japanese authority was therefore exempted from postwar prosecution for this reason (30-31). Furthermore, U.S. Cold War policies in the Asia-Pacific region virtually suspended the sovereignty of the people whose lives had been most devastated by Japanese aggression. Thus, the role of the U.S. in pre-empting the possibility of colonial reparation and redress movements did not allow the victimized countries to take justice into their own hands (Yoneyama 139).

In conclusion, the Tokyo Trials allowed Japan to regain sovereignty, granting the nation immunity from its responsibility for war crimes against victims of military sexual slavery. Both the U.S and its Allied countries allowed Japan to take its national privilege and cover up its own war crimes that it committed in other nations under its colonial rules. Consequently, the Tokyo Trials did not accomplish its purposes to hold Japan accountable for war crimes and failed to bring justice for the victims.

2.5. Economic Disempowerment in the Postcolonial Period and San Francisco Peace Treaty

Though the extent of the war damage was immense, all or most of the perpetrators responsible for war crimes were not identified, and only the enormous numbers of victims remained. After World War II, it was important for Korea to find ways of resolving these issues and restoring normal diplomatic relations with Japan. At the time, the world was in a transitional period towards international diplomacy and a peacetime economy although reconciliation for justice remained clearly unresolved.

According to Miki Ishikida, on September 8, 1951, 48 countries of the 55 Allied Powers signed the Peace Treaty in San Francisco, which went into effect on April 28, 1952. Japan signed both separate reparation agreements and joint declarations under the terms of the San Francisco Peace Treaty with all relevant nations except for North Korea and Taiwan. Both Japan and South Korea settled their reparations issues through the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, along with the Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims between Japan and the Republic of Korea. From 1965 to 1975, Japan provided South Korea with compensation through \$800 million in economic aid and loans. In exchange, South Korea gave up all rights to request reparation and compensation. Japan officially made the nullification of the right of requests from South Koreans for unpaid salaries, savings for retirement and pension insurance into Law 144 after the agreement (Ishikida 19-21). Finally, many Japanese people backed their government's position that the settlement of all reparation issues was completed by the 1965 agreement for normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea (Soh 45).

Besides compensation or reparations for war crimes in the years following World War II, it was important to legally judge the atrocities and exploitation enacted by Imperial Japan. Lisa Yoneyama explains:

Reparations for Japanese aggression and war crimes—including civilian forced labour, the maltreatment of Allied POWs, and other war-related damages between 1941 and 1945—have been regarded as officially but arguably, prematurely and insufficiently resolved by the multilateral San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, which was signed by forty-nine nations, who thereby relinquished rights to further reparations. (2)

On the resolution of the war crimes issue, Kazuhiko Togo argues that the judgement given by the Allies in the Tokyo Trials was accepted by the Japanese government through the San Francisco Peace Treaty. However, the legal statement did not satisfy the Japanese from a moral and political perspective, and both the left and the right-wing political parties criticized the Tokyo Trials judgement (338).

Chung claims that, although the Japanese government spent more than 30 trillion yen by 1990 and is presently paying 1.9 trillion yen for Japanese war victims every year, only 1 trillion yen is spent for non-Japanese Asian victims. Though many Asian countries were colonized by Japan causing them economic disempowerment and impoverishment, few pursued Japan to take responsibility for their actions. China gave up their demands, while other former colonies such as Korea, the Philippines, and Indonesia received a small amount of money combined with loans and technological training (233). In addition, these governments “suppressed the voices of their own people lest they disturb Japan and stop the flow of economic assistance from Japan” (Chung 233). Likewise, the hardships of all victims of military sexual slavery were not only silenced, but their nations’ governments refused to treat them as citizens.

B.S. Yoon notes that under the first President of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, who was in office from 1948 to 1960, the South Korean government attempted several negotiations about colonial reparations with Japan, but it was fruitless because of the president's strong anti-Japanese sentiment (15). Hicks points out that during Rhee's presidency, "he refused normal diplomatic contacts, demanding an astronomical compensation sum from Japan without room for negotiation" (170-171). Even if the South Korean government had reached a financial settlement with Japan, it is unlikely that Korean victims of Japanese military sexual slavery would have received compensation because they had not yet been identified as 'comfort women.' During Park Chung-Hee's military dictatorship of 1961 to 1979, the government, which pursued twin goals of economic development and national defence, finally settled on compensation, signing the 1965 South Korea and Japan Basic Treaty after four years of negotiation. The Treaty latently financed Park's ambitious industrialization plans (B.S. Yoon 15-18) but did little to assist victims of military sexual slavery. In terms of an ambiguous apology and legal compensations, Yoneyama points out:

The foremost obstacle to practically all legal battles that have sought new or additional compensation from the Japanese government and/or companies has been the consistent official position of the United States, Korea, China, Japan, and other signatory governments—namely that war reparations issues have been settled by the San Francisco Peace Treaty and other state-to-state normalization treaties (e.g., the 1965 Basic Treaty signed between the Republic of Korea and Japan the 1972 Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China) (154).

Therefore, Special Rapporteur Coomaraswamy concluded:

Neither the San Francisco Peace Treaty nor the bilateral treaties were concerned with human rights violations in general or military sexual slavery in particular. The “intent” of the parties did not cover the specific claims made by “comfort women” and the treaties were not concerned with human rights violations of women during the conduct of the war by Japan. It is, therefore, the conclusion of the Special Rapporteur that the treaties do not cover the claims raised by former military sex slaves and that the Government of Japan remains legally responsible for the consequent violations of international humanitarian law (Coomaraswamy).

In sum, the United States and the Allied forces played a significant role in repressing the execution of justice against Japanese war criminals in the post-war and Cold War period through the San Francisco Treaty. Also, the diplomatic normalization between South Korea and Japan in 1965 under Park Chung-Hee’s regime created another condition that forced the survivors of military sexual slavery to keep silent until the early 1990s. Then, the combination of Western powers and the patriarchal nationalism of South Korea and Japan makes reconciliation over the issue remain unresolved to this day. The San Francisco Treaty did not fully include the former colonized countries, allowing the Japanese government the choice of avoiding full responsibility for their violations of international human rights during World War II. As a result, the political context of the Cold War and the predominance of US power in Asia can be a significant point to grasp the historical and political amnesia of the ‘comfort women’ issue in South Korea and Japan, as well as the international post-colonial justice movement.

2.6. Perspectives on the Issue of Military Sexual Slavery beyond Nationalism and Patriarchy

Since the Peace Treaty with Japan was concluded by the United States and their Allied countries after the war, it has been perceived that Japan had fulfilled its agreements and war reparations for war crimes to all relevant countries. However, the issue of military sexual slavery had not yet been raised in Korean society, and survivors were rendered invisible by the complete silence they held for forty-five years until the first survivor came forward to disclose her brutal experience. The emergence of that story drew close attention from Korean scholars and activists who were motivated to form an organization to conduct research on ‘comfort women’ and provide support to survivors.

When the issue of military sexual slavery is viewed through patriarchal and nationalist perspectives without recognizing race, gender, and class, it fails to properly understand the severity of the problem. Kimberle Crenshaw, who first referred to ‘intersectionality’ in 1989, argues that any analysis without reflection on intersectionality cannot sufficiently account for the particular issue because marginalized groups can encounter complex intersections of race and sex discrimination, gender domination, and oppression related to social backgrounds. The intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism (139-167). Thus, the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery needs to be discussed through an intersectional lens.

Military sexual slavery by Japan involved multiple types of oppression, harming many marginalized women during the war. Scholars emphasize that this ongoing and controversial issue should be reviewed using intersectional perspectives. To deconstruct paradigmatic ways of thinking about victims and perpetrators, the intersections between gender, sexuality, and violence and the social contexts should be used to critically examine a theory of wartime rape (Henry 52).

Soh also suggests that attention to the ‘comfort women’ issue needs a feminist, critical, reflexive approach to understanding this long and complex historical truth rather than being framed through nationalism (237). Sonen argues that many victims experienced oppression caused by the intersection of multiple systems of oppression such as race and gender, so it needs to be recognized to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of victims’ harms (275-276). Min claims that the intersectional perspective on colonization or gender hierarchy can effectively explain the victims’ suffering and overall experiences. Thus, the examination of ‘comfort women’ issues from an intersectional perspective and from various points of view can offer a deeper understanding of gender-based violence. It is necessary to find the mechanisms or systems to draw more attention to the movement of the issue from a variety of perspectives such as feminism, human rights, patriarchy, colonialism, and trans/nationalism (953).

2.7. Transnational Awareness of Wartime Sexual Violence

Given that military sexual slavery by Japan needs to be discussed from various perspectives, solidarity with diverse groups is necessarily significant. It is not possible for a small non-governmental organization working on behalf of survivors to solve a massive issue interlocked with different oppression and ideologies by itself. Thus, transnational attention on military sexual slavery can be an effective strategy to urge both Japan and South Korea to fulfil their obligations to investigate the issue, to apologize to the victims, and to take action to support survivors. Moreover, appeal to the international community about the issue gives a political opportunity to make the survivors’ voices heard and to emphasize the transnational network. The most convincing argument in addressing the issue of ‘comfort women’ is that concerted actions or collaborative campaigns in support of survivors’ struggles for redress are necessary.

Hee Soon Kwon discusses how the Korean Council started to collaborate with women's organizations in the Philippines, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Indonesia to work on the military sexual slavery issue, acknowledging that it was not only Korean women who had suffered (H.S. Kwon). According to Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, in 1992, the Korean Council also organized the First Asian Women's Solidarity Forum. Delegates from the Philippines, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and Hong Kong attended this conference to campaign to pursue their goals for all Asian survivors in solidarity. This forum was successively held in Japan (1993, 1994), Korea (1995), the Philippines (1996), and Korea (April 1998) (180). B.S. Yoon explains, "[e]arly meetings of the Asian women at the Solidarity Conferences helped victim countries' information sharing, feminist solidarity, publicity, and strategizing the comfort women issues against Japanese government" (30). Organizing the alliances and coalitions to draw more attention to social justice and solidarity for survivors allows the redress movement to continue to speak up for survivors' demands.

Furthermore, Soh states that the global women's right movement achieved its ascendancy in representing 'comfort women' as sex slaves in the context of the post-cold war politics of human rights at the 1992 UN debates and at the 1993 Vienna Human Rights Conference with the slogan "Women's rights are human rights." The contemporary paradigm for 'comfort women' as sex slaves has materialized after these two debates. As a case of wartime violations of women's human rights, the Korean comfort women issue was invited to the international rally by the National Organization for Women (NOW) in America. A representative of the Korean Council attended a massive public demonstration to protest the systematic rape of Bosnian women⁷ held in Washington D.C. However, South Korea was the only Asian country which participated in the

⁷ See Skjelsbaek, Inger. "The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995 was marked by the systematic use of rape and sexual violence" (373).

protest (33). Still, Chou stresses that such cooperation among organizations can become an effective way to promote this issue and further foster a transnational activism in Asia and the international community through campaigns and activities. The efforts of ‘comfort women’ support groups have progressed in resolving the issue and have promoted the transnational movement on women’s human rights in East Asia (160). In effect, the movements for women’s human rights rely on popular awareness and consciousness through coalition and alliance with other groups.

Soh argues, “[o]nly honest reflections on the conjuncture can lead to earnest, healing dialogue about a tragic chapter in the inextricably tangled histories of Japan and Korea. Consequently, we may even realize collaborative commitment, at both the national and the international levels, to combat sexual exploitation and violence against women in war and in peace” (240). Furthermore, B.S. Yoon claims that from the outset, South Korean women’s activists collaborated with Japanese women’s NGOs and other organizations in Asian victims’ countries. It became an effective approach to form a global alliance with particularly women’s human rights organizations in the West and to use the U.N. system (29).

Therefore, having individual countries sporadically address the issue of military sexual slavery by the Japanese army for their own interests is not likely to achieve justice for victims. In fact, the transnational solidarity of voices about the ‘comfort women’ issue can contribute to a more powerful, effective and relevant movement to raise awareness of the militarized sexual violence in solidarity with survivors. However, from the beginning of the movement, ‘comfort women’ have been articulated as a national issue in political tension and conflicts between South Korea and Japan (Sonnen 291). Also, the memory of Japanese colonization deeply hurts Koreans, and they take it as national humiliation (Soh 15). A nationalist discourse about the movement

results in internalization of the ‘comfort women’ issue as the suffering of the whole nation (Seo 377-378) and emphasis on the issue as a nationalism (Yamashita “Korean Women’s Studies” 54). Ueno claims that the ‘comfort women’ issue is implicated with nationalism and imperialism; colonialism and racism; patriarchy and discrimination against women, and the oppression that continues every day concerning the division and control among women who struggle with sexual double standards. These women’s struggle concerns contemporary oppression that belongs to the present, not the past (103). Thus, South Korean postcolonial nationalism has been intensified by a deep-rooted anti-Japanese sentiment towards the ‘comfort women’ issue making it challenging to overcome Korean nationalism to promote a transnational growth of this movement (Sonen 300; J. Seo 391; Soh “From Imperial Gift” 74).

Military sexual slavery is a transnational crime⁸ that, though rampant in East Asian nations during World War II, is not a new phenomenon in areas of armed-conflict.⁹ Currently, the strategy of the movement against Japanese military sexual slavery has shifted into transnational feminism and women’s human rights, but transnational mobilization cannot be used to condemn only one nation for war crimes while overlooking those of other countries. “However, movements always undergo rebirth and accompany qualitative change. If the comfort women movement is directed not only at the Japanese government but also at a revolution in awareness of all sorts of discrimination that begins with internalized sexual discrimination or national discrimination, then the movement need not stop with the Japanese government: It will probably pass through many stages as it continues to develop” (Yamashita “Korean Women’s Studies” 73).

Sexual violence against women remains an issue both in wartime and peacetime. Based on historical facts about the ‘comfort women’ system of the Korean Military through *Hoo Bang*

⁸ See Boister, Neil. It is a crime that occurs across borders and has actual or potential trans-boundary effects (955).

⁹ See UNODC. In January 2019, UNODC reported that human trafficking has worsened. Women and children are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, sexual slavery, and various forms of forced labour in conflict zones (11).

Jun Sa written by the South Korean army headquarter in 1956, Korean sociologist, Gwi-Ok, Kim, claims that the ‘Korean Military’ operated a ‘comfort women’ system during the Korean War (1951-1954)¹⁰, a practice that resulted from Japanese colonialism (115). In addition, “[t]he selling and buying of sex by Koreans and Americans have been a staple of U.S.-Korean relations since the Korean War and the permanent stationing of U.S. troops in Korea since 1955” (Moon 1). However, this comfort women system managed by Korean army pays less attention in South Korean society. In terms of the sex trade between South Korea and the American military, the South Korean government has never formally acknowledged involvement in the camp towns and taken responsibility of abuses. An extremely negative view of prostitutes in South Korea made women keep silent for decades (“South Korea Illegally” Choe). Unless the worth of the women in their society is appreciated, the sexual domination and violence of Korean women by foreign men will not vanish (“Prostitute Bodies” Moon 168).

Between 1964 and 1973, roughly 320,000 South Korean soldiers were deployed to Vietnam to fight alongside the United States. It has recently come to light that the South Korean troops were involved in massacres and raped Vietnamese women during the Vietnam War (“The ‘forgotten’ My Lai” Griffiths). South Korea has never acknowledged sexual violence allegedly perpetrated by its troops against thousands of women and girls in Vietnam (Griffin). However, to date, no documentation has been found to determine that the Korean government or military had control over extreme sexual abuse of Vietnamese women (Devine).

Today, South Korea and Vietnam have close economic ties, and neither government has initiated an investigation into the shared war legacy. Also, outside of governmental systems, the Vietnam War is not a priority. In South Korea, there are few scholars and politicians who explore

¹⁰ See Millett, Allan R. and Kim, Gwi-Ok. The Korean War broke out in 1950 and ended in 1953 (A. Millett). Kim estimates that the system was established in 1951 and closed in March 1954 based on the document (91).

this issue to push their government to recognize or apologize to the Vietnamese victims (Cain). Like South Korean ‘comfort women’ have been demanding an apology and legal compensation from Japan, a Vietnamese group, Justice for Lai Dai Han (JLDH)¹¹ is dedicated to giving a voice to the victims and to campaign for South Korea to recognize and apologize for widespread rape and sexual violence against Vietnamese women (*JLDH*). Another group, Voice of Vietnam, is an organization devoted to recording the testimony of the thousands of Vietnamese victims of rape and sexual assault by South Korean soldiers during the Vietnam War (*Voice of Vietnam*). The experience of these Vietnamese survivors and activists is a déjà-vu-like reflection of the plight of South Korea’s ‘comfort women’; the survivors’ trauma, the neglect from their own government, and lack of acknowledgement of the violence from the perpetrator country is remarkably familiar.

In a meeting with journalists, Chung, Hyun-back, Minister of Gender Equality and Family said, “South Korea should be the mecca for the issue of wartime suppression of women’s rights” (*Yonhap News Agency*). However, her statement is contradictory, nationalist, and lacking transnational feminist perspectives because South Korea fails to recognize the crimes committed against Vietnamese victims of sexual violence by its soldiers and does not provide a legal compensation and a formal apology. Griffiths notes, “[s]ensitivity over how and how much to apologize for South Korea's role in Vietnam is particularly poignant given the country's own experience under Japanese occupation and ongoing disputes over so-called "comfort women" forcibly enlisted by Japan for its troops in World War II, accounts of which Japan strongly disputes” (“The ‘forgotten’ My Lai” Griffiths). The sexual violence against Vietnamese women during the Vietnam War is hardly different from military sexual slavery by the Japanese army.

¹¹ See Shipper, Apichai W. and Kerry, Paul. They are children of South Korean fathers and Vietnamese women during the Vietnam War (12) who are stigmatized with the derogatory term ‘Lai Daihan’ (Kerry).

All survivors and victims of wartime rape deserve recognition and an apology from the perpetrators and empowerment to speak up to end sexual violence in armed conflict.

Wartime sexual violence is a serious crime committed by the state power interlocked with patriarchy and nationalism. This is why the 'comfort women' movement continues to demand an official apology and legal compensation from the Japanese government and requires support through the transnational feminist and human rights discourse. It needs to be acknowledged that transnational discourse on the 'comfort women' issue has been used to generate national responsibility using a broad-minded method to support a narrow aim. However, the 'comfort women' movement centring on the Wednesday Demonstration displays postcolonial resistance by actors who revise national memory with survivors and their supporters. Moreover, the transnationalism or transnational feminist discourse of Japanese military sexual slavery could show that it does not aim to disparage the Japanese government, seek revenge on its community, or tarnish its national reputations. To this end, South Korean society could urge its government to recognize the Vietnamese victims of sexual violence by South Korean soldiers and ensure that those victims' children receive appropriate support from South Korea. Therefore, survivors and their supporters from various nationalities and races can hope to draw more attention to the ongoing issue of wartime rape and to organize movements for stronger solidarity against gender-based violence from transnational feminist perspectives.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

Within the empirical and theoretical literature, earlier studies of ‘comfort women’ (military sexual slavery) issues have mainly depended on survivors’ testimonies. As research into this issue has continued, it has been explored in more detail through various perspectives such as nationalism, colonialism, post-colonialism, sexuality, militarization, and patriarchy. However, there have been few studies that have investigated the impact of solidarity between survivors and supporters through the Wednesday Demonstration. In order to gain insights into a peace and human rights movement in solidarity with survivors, a qualitative research methodology was used to design this thesis. The main data collection of this thesis was engaged in via ethnographic research techniques. With this methodology, data was collected through participant observation, individual interviews, and existing archives of the Wednesday Demonstration in South Korea.

The goal of this study is to examine not only why and how participants address the issue when they stand in solidarity with survivors and the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery through the demonstration, but what various causes and reasons have made this movement persist. Additionally, it will provide brief information about participants, the recruitment of the interviewees, and the process of the face-to-face interviews. It will also will discuss how primary data was sourced from participant observations and semi-structured interviews conducted over a twelve-week period from June 14th to August 30th, 2017 in Seoul, South Korea at the Wednesday Demonstration to explore the ongoing movement and engage in activities within that social setting.

3.1. Feminist Ethnographic Approach and Research Questions for Qualitative Research

My research questions were: What are the different aspects of the ‘comfort women’ movement in the observation of the Wednesday Demonstration? What changes have occurred within the weekly protest that has enabled it to persist for 26 years? Moreover, how have the survivors and their supporters become allies beyond generation gaps through the Wednesday Demonstration, and how has it evolved into a national and transnational movement to foster solidarity? Qualitative research methods are an appropriate approach to obtain answers to these questions as they can elicit the in-depth thoughts of participants and collect rich and insightful primary data.

Ethnography is a holistic approach to qualitative research to understand a people’s way of life and behaviours within their social and cultural contexts. According to Anthony Kwame Harrison, “Ethnography is a specific approach to research with a rich history and established yet evolving set of guiding principles. For those of us who take ethnography seriously, it involves training (usually through advanced coursework and mentorship), reflection, and accountability” (4). This methodology seeks to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given ‘field’ or setting. The ethnographic view aims to understand people’s actions and their experiences of the world, recognize how their motivated actions occur, and reflect on these experiences (Brewer 11). Its approach involves close association with the subjects and often participation in the setting. This research was designed to better understand the motives, strategies, evaluations, and values of the Wednesday Demonstration. The study required the researcher to draw in-depth insights and take a better approach to analyze and work to abolish the ongoing oppressive condition of gender-based sexual violence.

As a feminist researcher, it is significant that this research project should draw on feminist perspectives as well. According to Aune Kristin, feminist ethnography is a research methodology used by social scientists to uncover how gender operates within different societies (308). Kristin argues, “Many feminist ethnographers attempt to do ethnography that is reflexive, alert to power differences between researchers and informants, and recognizes diversity among and between men and women” (310). For this research, the feminist ethnographic method for observational research offers a better opportunity to examine social interactions and the practices of solidarity among various groups in the Wednesday Demonstration. Additionally, it provides an alternative approach to see how personal experiences can offer a researcher valuable knowledge on the feminist stance of social expectations about the intersectional approach.

3.2. Data Collection

As part of this thesis, two methods of data collection were employed. The first method explored the weekly demonstration on Wednesdays in Seoul. In order to explore the ongoing movement and engage in activities within a social setting, intense periods of participant observation were involved. The second method consisted of individual interviews with participants who had attended the protest several times and were willing to volunteer for this research. As such, for data collection, both participant observation and one-to-one interviews were used in this thesis.

3.2.1. Participant Observation

Ethnographic research requires the researcher to develop a long-term presence within the community to observe social interactions among groups and participants in the demonstration. According to Philip Balsiger and Alexandre Lambelet, in social movement studies, neither ethnography nor participant observation is the most common method. However, it was through

early scholars' observation and participation in social movements that this research field has seen its major paradigm changes (145). Greg Guest et al. claim that participant observation connects researchers to the most basic of human experience, discovering knowledge through involvement and participation in the ways and reasons of individual behaviour in a particular context (75). Thus, the observation method is appropriate to gain an insightful understanding of the ongoing solidarity activism for survivors. In addition, it helps thoroughly illuminate a wide range of participants' experiences and the complexities of the voluntary participation milieu.

In spring of 2017, the Korean Council, which hosts the weekly demonstration, permitted me to conduct the participant observation for this study during the summer of the same year. It was important that the project schedule was systematized and well-organized for a fluid process. As a student researcher, the timeline of participation needed to be prioritized because of a limited time to observe the movement in-person. The protest was held at noon every Wednesday in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, located approximately three hours by public transit from the city where I was staying. Great challenges such as time, finances, and personal issues posed concerns for the execution of this research project, so a time schedule needed to be effectively structured. Initially, I spent four weeks in May participating in the Wednesday Demonstration to collect demographic information and to survey the current state of the protest while the ethics review was processed. This period also provided an initial understanding of the demonstration culture and information on the diversity of its participants. The fieldwork itself began in earnest in June 2017 after the research ethics were approved.

Qualitative research for primary data was conducted for a total of twelve weeks from June 14th to August 30th, 2017. I observed the Wednesday Demonstration from 12 pm to 1 pm in Seoul for eleven weeks and a local monthly demonstration near the capital city for a week. Every

participant observation of the demonstration was documented in the field and edited at the end of each day. In order to write field notes, Evernote, a free note-taking app for computers and mobile devices, was used. It made for easier and more effective chronological recording of the field atmosphere, participants' behaviours, speeches, and social interactions on the spot. As Evernote is a cross-platform app available for laptops, smartphones, desktops, as well as being available online, there was no concern about losing raw data.

The Wednesday Demonstration is open to everyone supports survivors and understands why this demonstration is necessary. Therefore, the range of participants varied greatly. For this research, regardless of sex, age, gender, or race, most community member participants were observed, including emcees of the weekly protests, activists, organization members, college or university students, religious organizations, etc. People younger than 18-years-old were excluded from one-on-one interviews, but the researcher transcribed their speech at open mics for this participant observation. Most participants were teenagers so their proactive attendance could not be overlooked during this research.

Additionally, I had initially planned to take photos to describe the demonstration. However, there were too many teenagers who needed consent from their parents or guardians to participate in this research and have their images captured. It was impossible to inform them of their rights and the purpose of the photos and ask their parents to sign the written consent form because participants were not accompanied by their parents or primary caregivers at the scene. Instead, participant observations of the cultural parameters, politics, social interactions, and taboos were recorded by observing social groups and individual participants, and no images of participants are attached to this thesis.

All applicable participant observations were conducted in the field setting and were recorded on Evernote in Korean. It was challenging and technically demanding to describe the scene specifically and transcribe participants' comments at open mics. According to Guest et al, when researchers are participant observers in a more formal sense, the challenge is that an inherently fluid process must be systematized and organized. This means being a player in a specific social milieu as well as fulfilling the role of researchers such as taking notes and recording voices, sounds, and images. Also, they must ask questions that are designed to uncover the meaning behind the behaviours (75). The researcher as an active participant needs constant evaluation of her role and establishment of reliable rapports with participants. Hence, the meticulous research and records are required for the participant observation to develop an understanding and interpretation of the Wednesday Demonstration.

3.2.2. Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were used as a primary qualitative research strategy along with participant observation. This method collects verbal data through one-on-one interviews. According to Uwe Flick, semi-structured interviews are widely used. It is expected that interviewees' viewpoints are more likely to be expressed in an openly designed interview situation than in a straightforward interview or a questionnaire (150). I created twelve questions but did not strictly ask all interviewees all questions.

Susan Tilley notes, "The semi-structured interview often reflects a post-positivist stance that keeps the interviewer, theoretically at least, in control at the centre" (48). True to this assertion, I had the discretion to control the order of questions, although they were guided. While each participant had the same set of questions in order to ensure comparability, this approach allowed me some flexibility to facilitate the natural flow of the conversation. Therefore, the

semi-structured interview provided a great way to learn how participants think about the value of the Wednesday Demonstration and obtain comprehensive information about participant's strategies and resolution of the issue.

3.3 Recruitment Strategies in Qualitative Research

A specific recruitment strategy was necessary to identify and list volunteers to participate in this research study. Phyllis J. Eide states, “[i]n qualitative inquiry, recruitment refers to the process whereby the researcher identifies and invites (recruits) participants to join the study. Qualitative researchers strive to include participants who meet the study criteria and who represent the richest and most complex source of information (data) relevant to the phenomena being studied” (744). In keeping with this, I developed reliable criteria to single out potential interviewees, and determine the number of participants to be recruited, the location for the interview, and the ways to approach people. To recruit participants, I used both the snowball technique and random sampling. While participating in the demonstration, I also sporadically volunteered at the Korean Council to establish reliable rapport with them, as well as the organization staff and other volunteers. This connection became a great advantage for the study and reassured participants about confidentiality.

However, while Eide praises the use of existing organizations as a recruitment source, she cautions that, “[r]esearchers must again examine the issue of who would not be reached if the recruitment strategy is overly reliant on this approach. Use of more than one recruitment strategy can assist in widening the potential audience and participant pool” (745). As such, it was not enough for me to rely on referrals from the Korean Council to reach the target number of the interviewees. It was necessary to develop another strategy to enroll more participants. Thus, a purposive random sampling was also used as a qualitative research technique. However, as

Harter notes, random sampling does not imply that sampling is aimless or that the researchers merely take respondents who are easiest to obtain (683). Instead, after finishing each participant observation of the protest, I independently approached participants from women's organizations, social justice groups, NGOs, religious groups, and college or university student bodies to ask if they were interested in participating in the interview. Furthermore, it was very challenging to approach random participants and to overcome the climate of mistrust and fear of a stranger. Therefore, I developed careful recruitment guidelines to avoid misinterpretation about the study and inform the voluntary nature of participation for being interviewed.

3.4. Researcher Positionality as Insider and Outsider

In the research process, researcher positionality and its influence should be deemed significant, especially as the researcher is officially titled a data collector. Positionality in qualitative research requires the understanding of the researcher's social and cultural background and examines how it can affect the research process. Kim England points out that fieldwork is an intense personal method in that the positionalities such as class, gender, and race, and the biography of the researcher play a central role in the research process both in the field and in the final text (251-252). Therefore, it was crucial that I practiced reflexivity. Wanda Pillow says that "Reflexivity is often understood as involving an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research" (178). As such, I needed to be continually aware of my positionality and the influence of the data outcomes through the process of reflexivity.

However, my positioning as a researcher was challenging in this study. It is important for researchers and participants to build up a reliable and trusting rapport with staff and participants,

as well as create an appropriate space and relationship to collect sufficient and qualitative data. Tilley argues that student researchers can be a “partial insider,” who might struggle with the complexities of their multiple identities (31). I was considered both an insider and an outsider in the community. Even though I am a native Korean woman who grew up and was educated among this group of people in South Korea, I currently live in Toronto, Canada and study at a Canadian academic institution.

Contrary to my expectations, it was not easy to recruit participants for interviews at the scene. Participants seemed very shy to share their own experiences and thoughts of the demonstration with a stranger. They also worried they might not offer meaningful and informative answers to my questions. However, partway through participant observations, some participants saw me as staff or a volunteer of the Korean Council. In addition, I attended a few workshops and conferences that the Korean Council held. Those events were a good place to establish a network and recruit potential participants. Moreover, through professional channels such as colleagues and other organizations, more participants were recruited for the interviews.

To address the complication of a researcher with multiple positions, I discussed with participants ways to support one another within the confines of this research project before letting them take part in interviews.

3.5. Individual Participants and Interviewing

As primary data collection, thirteen conversational individual interviews were conducted at the same time while the Wednesday Demonstration was being observed. For gender/sex balance, I tried to recruit the same number of each gender. All participants were enrolled from the protest scene and network through other events. The interviewees were seven men and six women. Although the majority of the weekly protests’ participants were women and teenage

girls, when I approached attendees to ask their availability and willingness to participate, men showed more positive reactions than women. As participation in this study was strictly voluntary, I could not push women or girls to get involved in the interviews to balance gender.

Each of the participants I interviewed took part in the demonstration several times and were working for victims and survivors of the Japanese military sexual slavery as NGO staff, volunteers of the Korean Council, or student activists who worked on their own projects to raise awareness on the 'comfort women' issue. To ensure easy contact with participants, I exchanged individual phone numbers and social media accounts. Invitations were sent out by messaging apps and text messages. One participant did not use an email or social network services, but he participated in the demonstration every week, so I invited him to this study in person after the protest and he accepted. All potential participants who were contacted via text or messaging app responded that they would be interested in participating in the interviews.

Each interview was scheduled in advance, held at cafes, a private study room, or offices in Seoul, Bucheon, Suwon and Jeonju, South Korea, and ran approximately 20 minutes to 45 minutes in duration. All locations and times were selected at the convenience of the participants. When informed about the protection of voluntary participants in this research project and before the interview began, they understood consent forms and confidentiality. The participants agreed that all interviews would be recorded for analysis of this study. For recording participants' voices, a digital voice recorder¹² was used. Even though the device was an old version, it was compact and affordable. Moreover, it enabled me to easily store the audio files on a laptop and made transcribing interviews easier. While the interviews were recorded, it was not easy to obtain perfectly clear voice recordings because they were mostly conducted in public places.

¹² SONY® IC RECORDER ICD-UX70 (April 2008)

However, the background noise did not cause a major disturbance in discussion and transcription.

The interviews were semi-structured. I asked questions, and the participants freely answered them rather than providing pre-determined responses. However, rather than participants simply responding to questions as the interviewer wished, they were allowed to lead the interview so long as they were not sidetracked from the topic. In interviews, they were asked twelve questions about things like their motives for participating in the weekly protest, the driving force of the ongoing movement, the strategy for solidarity, the necessity of the demonstration, nationalist aspects of the movement, and future plans to resolve the issue (see Appendix). All participants seemed to clearly understand questions and felt comfortable being interviewed. Therefore, all interviews went smoothly.

3.6. Data Coding and Analysis

The participant observation resulted in twelve “notes” in Korean on the Evernote app and 74 pages of English translation journals, which were more like descriptive observations in which I tried to delineate what was happening at the scene and how participants expressed their thoughts about the issue at open mics at the Wednesday Demonstration. Similarly, I transcribed the thirteen interview recordings. There were 112 pages of Korean transcription containing all participants’ words and a 55-page English translation version in which their answers were condensed as part of the analytic process. I thoroughly read all notes and transcripts before translating them. After translating all data into English, I read them multiple times for coding and thematic analysis.

To find themes and develop thematic analyses from data collection, I referred to Braun and Clarkes' six phases of analysis (86-87). A free online word cloud generator¹³ was also used to search for the initial themes. In addition, keywords and important sentences were highlighted to make a list of candidate themes. These methods were useful for developing main themes. Ultimately, I selected the more emphasized words and sentences to finalize themes and checked the selections from all coded extracts to clarify relations of research questions and theoretical references.

¹³ I used the website, <https://www.wordclouds.com>.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter outlines the key outcomes of the research questions based on qualitative data. As previously mentioned, the findings were primarily derived from a twelve-week participant observation of the Wednesday Demonstration and one-on-one interview data from thirteen participants. This chapter is composed of three sections based on the research. The first section will look into how social and political circumstances surrounding the issue and public phenomenon of the Wednesday demonstration has changed after a 2015 agreement between South Korea and Japan over the ‘comfort women’ issue. The next section will discover how the Wednesday Demonstration recently motivates people to get involved in this movement regardless of their age, gender and class. The third section will explore how the survivors and their supporters have made efforts to raise transnational awareness on the issue to bring justice and build strong solidarity through the Statue of Peace Butterfly Fund (*Nabi Fund*) across world.

4.1. Paving the Road to Peace: the Wednesday Demonstration

On December 28th, 2015, South Korea and Japan announced that they had reached a ‘final and irreversible’ agreement that aimed to resolve their long-standing dispute. However, the agreement did not bring survivors justice nor fulfilled their obligations. As such, both the South Korean and Japanese governments have been facing significant backlash¹⁴ from survivors and their supporters in South Korea and around the world since. These survivors and their supporters have staged the Wednesday Demonstration to appeal for strong solidarity beyond the border to invalidate and renegotiate the agreement. The agreement provoked a national and international public outcry for justice and women’s human rights for the grandmothers who have demanded an apology for over two decades. Even as the ‘comfort women’ movement has been criticized by

¹⁴ See Kim, Kevin. “Japan and South Korea agree WW2 'comfort women' deal.” *BBC News Asia*, and See Choe, Sang-Hun. “Japan and South Korea Settle Dispute Over Wartime ‘Comfort Women.’” *The New York Times*.

some as an expression of a nationalist sympathy and anti-Japan anger, the survivors' activism is not deterred.

4.1.1. Time Waits for No Survivor

On Sunday, July 23rd, 2017, Kim Kunja halmoni passed away at the age of ninety-one at House of Sharing, a shelter for victims of Japanese military sexual slavery in South Korea. She was lured to China at seventeen in March 1942 and remained in a comfort station as a sexual slave of the Japanese military until the end of the war. During the three years of her enslavement, she suffered sexually transmitted disease, had an abortion, and attempted suicide seven times. When she returned home after Korea's liberation, she suffered various hardships in her homeland. In 2007, Kim Kunja halmoni testified about her painful experiences and injuries for the first time. Her testimony played an important role in getting the U.S. House of Representatives to pass the 'comfort women' resolution. Since then, she has worked as a human rights activist, participating in the Wednesday Demonstration and donating more than 200 million won for scholarship programs and children's' charities she had saved from the South Korean government-provided compensations. Her generosity earned her the epithet the "Doctor of Charity" (*House of Sharing, warandwomen*).

Though Kim Kunja halmoni wished that she could receive an official apology from the Japanese government, she unfortunately left the world without closure. On July 26th, 2017, the 1293rd Wednesday Demonstration was held as a public memorial service for Kim Kunja halmoni and other victims who had already died. In front of the stage, there was a small table holding her portrait along with a white chrysanthemum. The memorial service took place under the sweltering heat at noon during a country-wide heat wave with temperatures soaring to 31°C and feeling like 39°C. Despite the scorching weather, the sidewalk for the protest was already packed

with participants of all ages, religions, social statuses, genders, and ideologies. As usual, police officers were positioned at the demonstration and a number of their buses surrounded the Japanese Embassy. Of the living survivors, Gil Wonok halmoni was the only participant present. Another survivor, Kim Bokdong usually participated in the demonstration with Gil, but the Korean Council staff said that she was in the hospital.

The atmosphere of the rally seemed calmer and more emotional, but still colourful and energetic. Participants waved yellow butterfly-shaped fans marked with the phrases ‘an official apology’ and ‘legal compensation’ in Korean. As always, the rally began with a group performance to a famous protest song, ‘Like a Rock.’¹⁵ Many participants sang along and danced together to this bright and cheerful song. At the protest, emcees typically introduce performers and speakers and lead participants in chants. At this memorial service, the emcee offered a short greeting and then asked all protesters to engage in one minute of silence in tribute to Kim Kunja halmoni. The president of the Korean Government Employees’ Union (KGEU) made a speech to express his condolences to the former ‘comfort women’ who had died, including grandmother Kim Kunja, and highlighted the importance of the solidarity with survivors to achieve their goals while they are still alive. He also voiced strong disapproval of the 2015 agreement and called on both the Japanese and the new government of South Korea to embark on meeting survivors’ demands.

Yoon Mi-hyang, co-president of the Korean Council, testified about Gil Won-ok halmoni’s painful memories on her behalf. Gil halmoni strongly criticized the colonialism, imperialism, and patriarchy that had oppressed victims and survivors. In addition, she

¹⁵ See Pilzer. ““Like a Rock” is an upbeat, poppy protest piece written by Yu, Inhyeok in the 1990s in the heat of the “people’s movement” (*minjung undong*) that helped bring about the end of decades of authoritarian rule in South Korea” (17).

condemned Japan and South Korea's deliberate disregard for victims and survivors in the 2015 agreement and the intentional concealment of the truth by the U.S. and its allied forces for half a century. Yoon stressed how the movement has transformed silenced survivors into human rights activists and living history teachers like Gil halmoni. In the end, Yoon cried out that the humiliating agreement of 'comfort women' must be immediately dismissed, the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation for 'comfort women' launched by the deal should be disbanded, and the billion yen from the Japanese government must be returned.

As the afternoon progressed, and the temperature continued to rise, participants did not leave the scene even though there was no shade to avoid the heat wave. The Wednesday Demonstration also offers a space for artists or musicians to show their performances. At the 1293rd rally, one indie band performed songs that they created with lyrics about the liberation of women and the necessity of a sincere apology from Japan. After the performance, 11 volunteer speakers signed up for an open mic to give short speeches. Surprisingly, ten of them were uniformed and elementary students. They mentioned that they learned about the 'comfort women' issue and the Wednesday Demonstration in a history class, but current books and curriculums only partially cover the truth. The students criticized both the Japanese and South Korean governments for making the agreement a "final and irreversible resolution" without including survivors and their supporters' demands. One of the speakers, a college student, travelled all over the country to meet other survivors. Another participant planned an online protest to raise awareness about the issue and promote the weekly demonstration. All of the speakers asserted that the Japanese government must admit its war crimes and offer an official apology before the grandmothers die, and people should encourage each other to attend the rally to stand up with survivors in solidarity.

According to the interview participants of this research study, the demonstration has a considerably increased number of the participants, but survivor attendance has dwindled away as many of them died of old age or poor health conditions caused by military sexual slavery. In her recent book, *Embodied Reckonings*, Elizabeth Son mentions that, during the first decades of the twentieth century, an average of ten survivors in bright yellow vests constituted the focal point of the weekly demonstration with up to seventy-five protesters (28). However, the number of survivors is dwindling, and the opportunities for participants to listen to survivors' testimonies have now been substantially diminished. Time is running out for the survivors' demands to be met.

As of August 18th, 2018, the total number of registered survivors is 240 (*MOGEF*). According to the record of Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and the Korean Council, the 391st demonstration in 1999 was the last rally in the 20th century. In the seven years between the first demonstration and the turn of the century, thirteen survivors passed away without receiving an apology. From September to December in the first year of the new millennium, the Wednesday Demonstration was run in five different cities in South Korea in support of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal for the Trial of Japan's Military Sexual Slavery in Tokyo, Japan. However, ten survivors died without positive responses from the trial. In 2005, on the 60th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan, eighteen survivors passed away still not having genuine emancipation from Japanese imperialism and colonialism. In 2007, the Korean Council hosted the 774th weekly rally for the biannual Global Action Day for Survivors of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery. As a gesture of international solidarity, the demonstrations or events happened in thirteen cities across ten countries including Japan, Germany, Australia, Taiwan, Canada, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and the United States. That year, fourteen grandmothers

died. In 2008, the Wednesday Demonstration was awarded the Women's Movement of the Year by Korean Women's Associations United; that year, fifteen more survivors who helped to make the movement possible left the world (*MOGEF, the Korean Council*).

2011 marked the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration. That year, the Statue of Peace, which represents 'comfort women,' was erected in front of the Embassy of Japan in Seoul, South Korea, but another fifteen survivors were no longer alive to see it. In 2012, on the 20th anniversary of the Wednesday Demonstration, six more grandmothers died without justice. In December 2015, 70 years after the end of World War II, the governments of South Korea and Japan reached the "final and irreversible" agreement over the issue of 'comfort women.' The unfair and incomplete deal meant that nine more survivors passed away without having received their demands. In 2017, eight of the remaining thirty-two survivors died (*MOGEF, the Korean Council*). Despite the many efforts and milestones achieved on the issue of 'comfort women,' the long delay in meeting their demands have caused a total of 89 grandmothers to die without justice.

4.1.2. The Flawed Agreement on the 'Comfort Women' Issue Without Survivors' Voices

It was said that the agreement reached between the South Korean and Japanese governments in December of 2015 was intended to resolve their long-standing altercation over the 'comfort women' issue more than seventy years after the end of World War II. However, the agreement included the conditions that the statue in honour of survivors be removed and that the issue no longer be criticized by the international community (K. Kim). The efforts survivors poured into their 26-year-long social justice and anti-war movement seemed to have been futile. According to the Korean Council, the agreement specified that the Japanese government should take responsibility for the issue of military sexual slavery, the Japanese Prime Minister should offer an official apology, and the Korean and Japanese governments should co-manage

initiatives funded by the Japanese government. However, the Korean Council found that these terms were not met, refuting the assertion by noting:

Although the Japanese government announced that it “feels [its] responsibilities,” the statement lacks the acknowledgment of the fact that the colonial government and its military had committed a systematic crime. The government had not just been simply involved but actively initiated the activities which were criminal and illegal. Also, the apology was not directly made by the Prime Minister himself as the official representative of the government but was read by a diplomatic representative, while it was unclear to whom he was actually apologizing. Hence it is hard to believe if it was a sincere apology (*The Korean Council*).

Additionally, The Korean Council reports that the Japanese government did not accept the recommendation of the United Nations for a stable and solid solution to the issue of its military sexual slavery. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, major UN Human Rights experts, and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) all expressed their deep regrets about the agreement (“Committee on the Elimination” 2-3).

Furthermore, Patrick Hein argues that the agreement moved the subject of ‘comfort women’ as sexual slaves from the centre of official discourses, instead placing greater emphasis on diplomatic relations. The pragmatic approach chosen by Japanese Prime Minister Abe is problematic for several reasons: first, Abe reopened old wounds by quoting the controversial Kono statement of 1993; second, the wrong impression is given that reconciliation with survivors is a top-down approach to the issue that only involves diplomats and only concerns Korea; third,

he diluted and rationalized the issue by reframing it as an unrealistic gender issue in the present and by failing to acknowledge at least moral responsibilities without tracing the perpetrators; fourth, the intentional deletion of the ‘comfort women’ issue from Japanese textbooks was not acknowledged, and criticism of the Japanese government was depicted as anti-Japanese; fifth, Japan’s international credibility in the fight against global sexual violence crimes suffers; and finally, Abe missed the final opportunity to meet with survivors (458).

While the agreement reached between the Japanese and South Korean governments has not brought justice to ‘comfort women’ survivors, it cannot be said that the Wednesday Demonstration is a failure. Since this agreement was globally reported, it has been critically analyzed and has been the driving force to attract more public attention to the Wednesday Demonstration. The withdrawal of the 2015 agreement is now the most important agenda at the rally every week.

It may not be possible for the ‘comfort women’ issue to be completely resolved and all demands perfectly achieved. Political and diplomatic tensions between two nations will likely remain, and all grandmother survivors will inevitably die. Still, the resolution remains significant because it will restore the dignity and human rights of the survivors who were abused by state power. Regardless, any effective resolution requires that the survivors’ voices are heard. Through the Wednesday Demonstration and all the other forms of mobilization that the survivors have participated in over the years, those women have had opportunities to share their plight and voiced their desires regardless of Japan’s responses. The weekly rallies have provided an important space for them to exercise their agency and a true solution will require that the thoughts, ideas, and demands they have shared there be considered. Furthermore, mitigating the survivors’ pain and grief would require having the Japanese government admit its past war

crimes, which will also help to enhance the nation's moral responsibility and preserve its reputation in the international community.

4.1.3. Intergenerational Awareness of the Issue and the Weekly Protest

During the twelve-week participant observation of the Wednesday protests, many students in different school uniforms sat on the sidewalk facing the stage. Some were taking photos with the Statue of Peace or browsing tables of bookmarks or bracelets on sale to raise funds for the cause. Others were holding colourful handcrafted placards with powerful messages to the Korean and Japanese governments written in Korean, Japanese, and English. During the twelve-week observation for this research, it was common for young people ranging in age from elementary school children to university/college students to comprise the majority of participants attending the weekly protests. Children as young as kindergarteners attended with their parents or teachers. Older students accompanied their teachers on field trips. Some students took part in the rally to complete school assignments. Students often approached the Korean Council staff and asked questions. At the open mics, some proactive students shared that they had taken the initiative in organizing school clubs to raise awareness of the 'comfort women' issue or coordinated fundraising events to support *halmonis*. Others said that they simply wished to show their respects to grandmothers. This influx of teenagers and university students to the demonstrations represents a growing intergenerational awareness about the 'comfort women' issue and a developing solidarity between grandmothers and young people that did not exist at the beginning of the movement.

According to news sources, young people have become involved in the 'comfort women' issue in various ways, such as attending the Wednesday Demonstration every week, guarding the Statue of Peace outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, and attending the funerals of

grandmothers who have passed away. Experts attribute their participation in the movement to “a combination of learning in school about the comfort women’s painful history and their generation’s shared experience with societal controversies” (Hwang and Park). The statues in many other cities have also triggered public attention as true symbols of the ‘comfort women’s’ suffering; this attention was amplified when Japan demanded that the statues be removed after the 2015 agreement (Hwang and Park). These statues and their significance will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.

The inclusion of the ‘comfort women’ issue in school curricula have varied over the years in Japan and South Korea. The term ‘comfort women’ has been gradually reduced in all junior high schools in Japan since 1996. In 2001, it was mentioned three times, and just once in 2006. On the other hand, in South Korea in the mid-1990s, the term “comfort women for Japanese Army” appeared in textbooks. Since then, attention to this subject has increased, and textbooks have been edited to elaborate on ‘comfort women’ (Guex 9-10). I found out in my participant observation of the Wednesday Demonstration that many teenage students had learned about military sexual slavery and the weekly demonstration in their history classes. However, many college students said that they did not know about the issue until they accessed other sources such as online media, community groups, or conversations with friends. Two female student activists explained that their friends recommended that they participate in the demonstration. Two other interviewees responded that they were influenced by their family members. One girl learned about the issue and the weekly demonstration from her younger sister who was actively involved in the movement. Another college student first visited the House of Sharing, the shelter for former ‘comfort women,’ with his mom who volunteered there; he later attended the demonstration as well. Only two college-aged students learned about ‘comfort women’ and the

Wednesday Demonstration at high school. All adult participants found out about this issue and movement through media.

The involvement of the younger generation in the ‘comfort women’ issue has become an important and encouraging cultural and social phenomenon. The remarkable outpouring of support for survivors from teenagers and university students makes the issue more visible and draws more transnational attention. While the question of how this growing attention will be maintained, many young people have demonstrated an intention to keep the movement going. Most young interviewees of this research study did not end their interest in the issue of military sexual slavery with participation in the Wednesday Demonstration. One university student activist said that the Wednesday Demonstration, which she participated in for the first time in 2012, opened her eyes to the ‘comfort women’ issue. When she saw the protesters standing on the street and grandmothers sitting on chairs despite the heavy rain on the day of her first protest, it left a lasting impression. She said:

Actually, I think that it must be so difficult for grandmothers to testify about their experiences at the Wednesday Demonstration. In a sense, a lot of teenage girls participate in the rally every week. Then, those girls might trigger the grandmothers’ sad memories of their teens when they were taken. When I watched it at my first participation, I just felt so sorry for *halmonis* and a sense of guilt toward the elderly victims. However, while I was listening to their stories and attending many protests, I have learned that this issue is not only grandmothers’ struggle but also ours. For example, Kim, Bokdong halmoni not only tells about her stories but also brings up other issues about world peace such as

THADD¹⁶ or women's rights at the protests. Also, she founded a scholarship committee with her own name. Recently, grandmothers are called human rights or peace movement activists because they have not given up on this movement for 26 years. Their courageous actions and activities have impressed many people and given them the opportunity to think about the issues. I believe that grandmothers have become a good driving force for us to continue gathering at the demonstration. Unfortunately, grandmothers can't attend the rally every week due to their health conditions. It doesn't matter. Their long efforts are the most important force to have sustained the Wednesday Demonstration" - *from an interview with a student activist, July 31st, 2017*

In 2014, this student activist launched 'Peace Butterfly Network (*Pyeongwha Nabi Network*)' an organization of college students in support of the survivors and helped other students to form branches in their cities. Since then, she has continued working through this national organization as a student activist in solidarity with survivors.

Another college student also said that she took part in the weekly demonstration for the first time because of a friend. Before that, she did not know about the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery because she had never learned about it in detail at school. In 2015, when South Korea and Japan announced the 'final and irreversible' agreement over the issue, this student organized the 'Joint University Student Action to Protect the Statue of Peace (*Pyeonghwaui Sonyeosangeul-jikineun Daeha-saeng Gongdonghaengdong*)' and led a sit-in protest next to the

¹⁶ See Ryall. The US Army's Terminal High-Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system. Ryall reports that the deployment of THADD that the US and South Korean defence ministries agreed in July 2016 triggered concern and protests at home and abroad because the unit's radar is harmful to their health (Ryall). It triggered an anti-US activism among peace activist movements in alliances with residents of the place where THAAD system was scheduled to be stationed.

monument in front of Japanese Embassy for almost 600 days. She empathized with grandmothers:

For me personally, people are so important. When I learned about military sexual slavery by the Japanese army, I was very upset about the fact that survivors were treated mindlessly... like toys. I believe that the 'comfort women' issue is mine. I don't think that I am volunteering for this movement or that is unrelated to me. It has something to do with me. The former 'comfort women' could have been my grandmother, mother, or me. This is why I continue to attend the protest every week. - *from an interview with a student activist, July 12th, 2017*

Regardless of the season or weather, she and other students have spent many nights on the pavement to protect the Statue of Peace outside the Japanese Embassy. On Wednesdays, they remove mats, tents, signs, and banners for the demonstration. After they participate in the rally, their street housing is set up again and the sit-in goes on.

Beyond the border, five university students set out on a transnational bike ride to raise awareness about military sexual slavery by Japan during World War II. They participated in the 1287th Wednesday Demonstration before they embarked on their campaign. Three members who completed this mission in the United States for the past two years were recruited for this research study, and two others promised to participate in the voluntary interview when they finished their journey. Among the interview participants, three were college students who rode bikes across the U.S, from Los Angeles to New York, and two others pedalled their bicycles in several Japanese cities during their summer vacation. One participant, who initiated the campaign of biking for

‘comfort women’ in the States, was motivated by a short animation film, *Herstory*,¹⁷ based on a true story of one survivor. The more he learned about the ‘comfort women’ issue through books, involvement in the protest, and visits to the War and Women’s Human Rights Museum,¹⁸ the more he could empathize with grandmothers, and he felt compelled to start initiatives to promote this historical truth.

This student and his friend embarked on the first U.S. ride in support of the ‘comfort women’ in the summer of 2015. Baek reports that in late June, these two young men began a 6,000-kilometer (3,728-mile) cross-country bike ride from Los Angeles to New York City to raise global awareness about the ‘comfort women’ issue (Baek). In September, they achieved their goal with a safe arrival in New York and held a protest in front of the Japanese Embassy in Washington DC to demand an apology for ‘comfort women’ (*The Korea Times*)

Another interviewee, who joined the same bicycle campaign, learned about ‘comfort women’ and attended the rally for the first time with his high school. However, he was still not fully aware of the issue. When he became involved in the project, he started studying about military sexual slavery and reading related news articles. He understood that the ‘comfort women’ issue is a human rights matter. He said, “I thought that I should know this issue and take part in the protest at least once as a Korean citizen to avoid repeating the same history.” In addition, he said that the growing number of participants spur both the South Korean and Japanese governments to accept survivors’ demands and resolve the issues quickly.

¹⁷ See Yoo. This animated short film directed by Kim, Jung-gi was created based on a true story of the survivor Jeong, Seo-wun, who was taken away to Indonesia at age 13 and forced into Japanese military sexual slaves for eight years (Yoo).

¹⁸ See The War Memoryscapes in Asia Project (WARMAP). The museum was established in Seoul, South Korea in 2011 to inform visitors about the traumatic experiences of ‘comfort women’ during World War II through the use of exhibitions and archival material (WARMAP).

The other interviewee who joined the cross-country bike campaign learned about ‘comfort women’ through volunteering at the shelter with his family in his youth. Later, he taught himself about the issue by reading articles and joining school activities. When he decided to get involved in a ride project, he visited the shelter again to see the grandmothers. In 2016, as he and his team completed their ride, they had biked 3,000 miles across the U.S. from the east to the west over the span of three months and attended the monthly Wednesday Demonstration outside the Consulate General of Japan in New York to stand in solidarity with the survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery (*Zoom in Korea*). This annual cross-country bike ride campaign in the U.S. to raise awareness about ‘comfort women’ issue still continues today. Two South Korean college students plan to pedal along a 6,600-kilometer route across America from Los Angeles on June 18th, 2018 to New York on September 4th. Three duos have already completed the same mission since 2015. Their bike trips have been covered by several U.S. media outlets such as the LA Times, NBC, Fox, ABC etc. (*Yonhpap*).

The bike ride campaign is not exclusive to the U.S. Some young men planned to ride bikes in Japan to promote the ‘comfort women’ issue as historical truth. These two college students participated in the 1287th and 1289th demonstration before leaving Korea for Japan. One student who led the bike ride project said he watched the national news on the 2015 agreement and, while travelling in America, he became aware of the existence of the Wednesday Demonstration. He discovered that the ‘comfort women’ issue faces many struggles because of the disputed agreement. This experience led him to learn more about the issue and participate in the weekly protest for the first time. The other participant in the Japan bike campaign also realized that the ‘comfort women’ issue is a long-time dispute between South Korea and Japan through articles and news on TV. He, too, understood that the 2015 agreement had fueled this

controversy. When his friend proposed he join the bike ride project to raise awareness about Japanese military sexual slavery, he did not hesitate to get on board. Since then, he has read books and academic journals about the issue. Later, he participated in the demonstrations and visited the House of Sharing and the museum. He believed that the ‘comfort women’ issue is an ongoing history, which is why he took up courage to get involved in the movement.

After a 44-day bike ride from South Korea to Japan to increase public awareness of ‘comfort women’ and demand a sincere apology from the Japanese government, these two young men participated in the 1296th rally before heading to the endpoint to complete their mission. It was two days after International Memorial Day for Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery and the day after Korea’s Independence Day. Slimmer from the intense exercise, and more tanned because of hours spent riding in the sun, the young men stood up to speak at the open mic. “Even though it was not easy for us to bike for most days under the scorching heat,” they said, “we received many free hugs and support from local people when we held a ‘Free Hugs Campaign’ in each destination. We believe that there can be other ways for Japanese people to apologize to grandmothers. Therefore, we would like to return all those warm hugs to halmonis.” The young men then came down from the stage and gave hugs to two grandmothers, Kim Bok-dong and Gil Won-ok who smiled and thanked them.

As shown in the interviews and participant observation of this research study, the younger generation demonstrates a solid organizational power and ability to act on the issue in various ways. Moreover, the youth determine that they should be more dedicated to draw transnational attention as much as domestic one to resolve this contentious issue. Amongst the weekly rally’s participants was the leader of a group called Hope Butterfly (*Huimang Nabi*) that embarked on a Europe trip three years ago to promote the issue of military sexual slavery by the

Japanese Imperial Army during World War II. This group also attended the 1289th rally. At the open mic, Hope Butterfly's leader said that the group is nationwide, and many members have been working hard to solve this issue in solidarity with survivors and their supporters. This student activist was personally involved in a sit-in protest to protect the Statue of Peace in front of the Japanese Embassy for 550 days. He mentioned that in the summer of 2017, the group would take their activism beyond the border again by trekking several cities in the United States and conducting activities such as flash mobs and a campaign to raise awareness about 'comfort women.'

According to a national daily newspaper, *Hankyoreh*, which accompanied Hope Butterfly to cover its European trip for peace in 2016, there were fifty-four participants, fifty of whom were in their teens and twenties. Under the slogan 'The Butterfly's Dream (*Nabiui Kkum*)', they planned to visit sixteen cities in five countries and stay in tents in campsites for the twenty-three days of the trip. The main goal of the group was telling the world that the 'comfort women' system was a crime against humanity and calling on global support for resolving this issue and eliminating war and human rights violations. Their activities went beyond drawing attention to the issue and requesting people's support. They also planned to launch a petition for the survivors of military sexual slavery to be awarded a Nobel Prize. In some cities they visited, they held Wednesday Demonstrations. While they were undertaking campaign tours for the unresolved 'comfort women' issue, two survivors passed away. The group drew attention to this reality while demanding the Japanese government officially apologize, acknowledge its legal responsibility, and revoke the 2015 agreement (Kwak).

There is no guarantee that these young people's vigorous and energetic passion and dedication can make a huge impact on bringing the survivors justice. However, the younger

generation's powerful and brave actions definitely convey strong solidarity with grandmothers and are becoming a driving force behind the growth of the movement. The more people who are aware of the 'comfort women' issue and attend the weekly rally, the more survivors and their supporters will be encouraged.

The activism of the younger generation reveals how the survivors' ongoing efforts and passionate activism resonates with them, and their shared cause creates a familial bond between them. When the survivors who hid themselves for almost fifty years came forward about the plight of 'comfort women,' they were already in their early sixties and seventies. Many of them were infertile because of the sexual trauma they had experienced as military sexual slaves. They testified about how deeply they were saddened by the fact that they could not have children (Orreill 144). Son argues that in identifying as grandmothers, the survivors reclaim the "dignity, respect, and social bonds they were denied during their wartime and postwar experiences. Further, the intimate appellation of 'grandmother' establishes a "familial order that transcends a one-dimensional notion of victimhood" (51-52), and the ongoing participation of young people in the activism to bring justice to these grandmothers reinforces this familial order.

Through participant observation and interviews, it was found out that most young participants had shown their respect for survivors and their supporters. Son notes that many young participants attend the demonstration simply to show their support and respect. By calling survivors grandmothers, the young people set up a familial structure placing survivors in the position of teachers. One high school student who attended the protest with her school teacher and ten friends said that she would like to listen to the survivors' history and tell others about it. She planned to write about this issue in her school newspaper. Another student who was a regular participant said that she initially pitied the grandmothers, but after meeting them in

person and seeing their activism, her perception changed, and she now deeply respects them (54-55). One interview participant who teaches Korean and leads a writing club in support of the activism against military sexual slavery at a high school suggested that the issue should not be regarded as a simple unfortunate moment in history. He said:

As a teacher, I feel more responsible for better awareness of the issue because the ‘comfort women’ issue is still going on and would happen to the next generation if it is not resolved. All my students are teenage girls. When the survivors were victimized, most of them were also teenagers like my students. My students deeply empathize with grandmothers who were victims of ‘comfort women’ in their teens. Due to geographical distance, we can only participate in the Wednesday Demonstration as a group once a year before summer vacation begins. Therefore, my students actively attend the writing group every week to support the survivors. *-from an interview with a male high school teacher, July 25th, 2017*

Son finds, “The Wednesday Demonstrations provide survivors with a public space for sharing their thoughts and experiences with their supporters. A vital exchange of knowledge, respect, and care happens among students and the *halmeonidul* (grandmothers)” (54). Through the Wednesday Demonstration, the intergenerational differences between the survivors and empathetic participants have collapsed, and a good rapport and strong bond has been forged between them.

4.2. From Otherness of ‘Comfort Women’ to Empathy for ‘Survivors-Grandmothers’

The victims of military sexual slavery have been treated as ‘the other’ in a patriarchal society that stresses women’s chastity. Even though military sexual slavery is a result of

colonization, imperialism, and patriarchy, former ‘comfort women’ have been seen as a solely personal issue and ‘national’ shame. This view overlooks how the military sexual slavery issue is a violation of human rights. The silence of nearly half a century also shows that male-centred and ethno-nationalist society has blocked women’s voices and caused them to remain hidden. However, through solidarity between survivors and women’s groups, Ko argues, there has been greater “criticism of the tendency to reduce the issue of ‘comfort women’ simply to one of (Korean) ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’ suffering.” Korean men, both in Japan and Korea, have been criticized for taking advantage of the issue as “an ace for condemning the Japanese and as a synonym for ‘Korean suffering’” (130). That is, because ‘comfort women’ are regarded as a symbol in the nationalist discourse, their experiences are not just politicized “but rather mobilized for the narrative of the nation” (E.S. Kim 55).

Most participants at the Wednesday Demonstration and the interviews showed a comprehensive understanding of military sexual slavery and the significance of transnational solidarity to resolve the issue. They have actively participated in the protests and incorporated thoughtful ideas from their experiences into their projects and activities. However, one of the findings from this research reveals that there was an internal conflict supporters faced—struggling with considering ‘comfort women’ as *others* while attempting to empathize with them. One interviewee responded that she attended the first Wednesday Demonstration twenty-six years ago. Ironically, she said that she recognized the victims and survivors as *others* at that time. Even though she knew that this was a women’s issue, she found it difficult to relate to it personally and deeply empathize with the survivors. When she was involved in events such as organizing the 1000th demonstration with women’s groups in her local community and leading the group of teenagers to participate in the rally, she was passive about them. In addition, she and

other interviewees all said that they had identified the survivors as pathetic victims who experienced hardships during the war but did not feel that they should be responsible for the cause. In a conservative and patriarchal society, it was difficult to fully empathize with survivors who had miserable and unimaginable memories about rape under Japanese colonial rule. Moreover, in nationalist perspectives, the victims of military sexual slavery have been described as virtuous women raped by Japanese soldiers, further *othering* them as innocent and vulnerable young girls. In the end, the human rights of ‘comfort women’ continued to be disregarded.

This dangerous and belittling othering of women, especially those who have been sexually abused or assaulted, is easy and common in a patriarchal and nationalist society. This *otherness* is defined and positioned by male-centric standards and reflected in the language used to describe them. The women who were sexually enslaved by the Japanese army during World War II have been called various terms such as ‘comfort women,’ ‘military sexual slaves,’ and more recently, ‘Japanese military ‘comfort women’ grandmothers’ (*Ibongun wianbu halmoni*). Many scholars and activists have contested these terms because the survivors should be considered the ‘subjects’ of the issue. As such, in compliance with international debates, historical research, and legal discourses, use of ‘military sexual slavery’ or ‘Japanese military ‘comfort women’ with the single quotation mark in Korean is encouraged as the most appropriate terms to refer to survivors. Yet, none of this terminology has been determined by the survivors, and their voices have not been heard or considered. These titles make it difficult for survivors to belong to their community.

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir describes this societal othering of women in her book, *The Second Sex*, where she argues, “She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the

Absolute. She is the Other” (26). Further, she insists, “One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society” (330). Thus, De Beauvoir emphasizes the importance of discussing women from various points of view—biological, psychoanalytical, and historical materialist perspectives— and working to understand how “feminine reality” has been constructed, why women have been established as the Other, and the impact of these realities. This will help to “describe the world from the woman’s point of view” (38). Up until recently, survivors of military sexual slavery have not been considered independent subjects. E.S. Kim argues that the survivors are not regarded as persons in the social discourse because they no longer signify family or nation because they were denounced as a reproach to their community. It is easy to see how this contributed to the fifty years of silence about the issue of military sexual slavery despite Korea’s independence from Japan in 1945 (56). The survivors have faced an invisibility and *otherness* assigned to victimized women.

Soh provides further insight into how ‘comfort women’ survivors have been treated as ‘others’ in their communities. She explains, “I take seriously the theoretical criticisms and methodological issues concerning the representation of the ‘other’ that postmodernism and feminism have raised against conventional ethnography.” She goes on to say that survivors of military sexual slavery were multiply othered at the hands of the colonial conquerors and their own postcolonial patriarchal society. After they returned to their homelands, they were stigmatized as impure women with sexually shameful and promiscuous bodies (244). The victims and survivors of military sexual slavery by Japan have been thoroughly left out from their communities. The *otherness* of those women means that the issue is regarded as an ethnonational matter between Korea and Japan rather than a transnational one; it shows how the

miserable experiences of ‘comfort women’ who are *othered* in an androcentric society have not always been appropriately connected to the causes of sexual violence against women and universal human rights.

When the survivors began testifying about their experiences, it was with the hope that they could recover and restore their dignity in solidarity with their country and community. Instead, victims and survivors found they could not belong anywhere or to anybody. Ueno argues that the victims’ testimonies recovered a forgotten past as a “distinct and different reality” for the first time. This act made history anew and made it possible to attempt a “retrial” of that history. Though positivist historians claim that certain historical facts can be assessed “just as they are” from a third-party perspective, and the reality of the victims who had painful experiences can be separated, it is naive to perceive history as simply telling past facts “as they are” in a new way because this is no longer tenable (137). The victims’ recollections of their experiences are painful and difficult. However, it is important to listen to these women’s narratives in various ways and figure out how to engage with them.

At the Wednesday Demonstration, the survivors, who have constantly been marginalized by both the colonizing and colonized countries, convey their painful memories and war trauma in their own language, speaking in a tough and unsophisticated way. When these women are sharing their experiences with the next generation, they have the opportunity to rediscover their individual identities. At the same time, the participants who have not suffered through the colonial period and wartime struggle not only learn about the historical truth through the survivors’ testimonies but also empathize with their suffering. Through this experience, the participants can raise awareness about the ‘comfort women’ issue and its entanglement with colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, nationalism, capitalism and sexism, and have a chance to

start standing up for grandmothers. Therefore, the Wednesday Demonstration offers a valuable space to the public to share memories and develop empathy between the survivors and their supporters.

4.2.1. From Nationalistic Concern to a Human Rights Issue

There have been instances, under the guise of justice and patriotism, where the ‘comfort women’ issue is used as a tool to generate deep-rooted hostility toward Japan and its people, exclude victims from other nations, and mobilize a sense of a united South Korea. One of the key concerns in the fight for survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery is that the issue has often been framed as a nationalist issue instead of a human rights one, leaving victims without the justice they seek and deserve. For example, the War and Women’s Humans Rights Museum, established in 2012, was supposed to be built on the site in *Seodaemun* (West Gate) Independence Park to remember the victims of military sexual slavery. When the final project approval was granted by the city of Seoul in 2008, the construction project unexpectedly encountered tough opposition from the Association for Surviving Family Members of Martyrs for the Country and Korea Liberation Association in November of that year who argued that this museum for military sexual slavery would defame patriotic martyrs and instill a distorted historical perception of Korea as a nation that merely experienced suffering under the Japanese empire. This resistance caused the museum’s approval to be delayed. Rather than wait for permission, the Korean Council decided to find a new location and embarked on this project with civic funding and donations from survivors who saved their subsidies from the government (T.W. Park). This incident illustrates how a collision between “nationalism” and “feminism” creates tensions and conflicts for the movement.

4.2.2. Nationalist Views in the 'Comfort Women' Movement

While it is important to acknowledge the positive impact the Korean Council and the Wednesday Demonstration have been able to make in the fight for justice for survivors of military sexual slavery despite nationalist sentiments, criticisms of the organization's own nationalist stance have been raised. Anti-Japanese or patriotic comments were featured on some pickets or banners: "Never be defeated by Japan," "The Japanese government should apologize for abandoning the biased historical consciousness," "The Japanese government should reflect on the shameful history of itself and apologize to all victims and survivors," "The Japanese government must bow your head first and truly apologize to virginal young women who were 17 years old," and "Dismiss ignominious agreement of 'comfort women immediately.'"

Yamashita highlights how the Korean Council emphasized the differences between "the coercive nature of the Korean 'comfort women' experience" and the case of Japanese 'comfort women' who were mobilized as licensed prostitutes. She also argues that the image of "young virgins brutally mobilized by the authorities" reinforces the "virgin or prostitute" and "forced or voluntary" dichotomies that are used as a male-centric yardstick to measure the validity of victims of the 'comfort women' system ("Nationalism" 62). Whether the confinement of 'comfort women' to the image of "young girls" was intentional or not, it made it difficult for the public to embrace elderly victims and former prostitutes as 'comfort women' who deserved justice and offer them empathy and protection. This image of 'comfort women' calls to mind the Statue of Peace which symbolizes the victims of military sexual slavery and sparks renewed controversy about the issue between Japan and South Korea. It is necessary to deliberately and critically reflect on whether the statues that have been diffused in different cities around the world reinforce the depiction of young and innocent girls (see fig. 1).

Further, though there was a former Japanese ‘comfort woman’ who spoke out before Kim Hak-Soon, no government or organization made efforts to support her testimony or aid other Japanese survivors. The separation of the experiences of Korean and Japanese ‘comfort women’ resulted in the dangerous logic that Japanese survivors were less entitled to be considered victims of military sex slavery than survivors from Korea. Moreover, Yamashita claims that the Korean nationalist element of the issue is so strong that, especially in the early days of the movement, there was a marked lack of concern for victims from other countries (64).

Moreover, the rhetoric of political slogans that harshly and directly criticized the Japanese government for failing to fulfill its responsibility of a formal apology to all victims is, arguably, nationalist and patriotic. J. H. Yoon says that even though it seems that Korean politicians and civic activists claim to advocate human rights improvements for the victims, they are more focused on the geopolitically-contested issues between South Korea and Japan, and the attention their advocacy generates “helps provoke public indignation against Japan and grow the strong sense of nationalism and patriotism in Korea” (172). Additionally, the patriarchal paradigm that sees women as objects views rape as the infringement of male property rights. This is not different from the nationalist discourse which understands rape as the violation of the nation by turning women into national subjects. By that token, the norm for the nation is based on the male subject and identifies female interests with male interests (Ueno 94). In a ‘comfort women’ discourse of the 21st century, androcentric nationalist perspectives on the issue are publicly adopted and easily permeate most levels of society, even woman-led movements for justice.

The Korean Council’s opposition to the establishment of the Asian Women’s Fund (AWF) also exemplifies the way nationalism trickles into their movement. During the Korean Council’s

campaign against the AWF, their public statements included nationalist language and sentiments like “national pride,” “victims’ honor,” and “real ‘comfort women’” and implied that accepting the money from the Japanese would be a breach of those ideals. A 1997 domestic fundraising campaign hosted by the Korean Council similarly featured an appeal to nationalist ideals, using phrases such as “to rebuild national spirit” and “to take care of the victims with national love” to encourage the refusal of the AWF (H.K. Kim 5-7). Soh notes, “The Korean responses to the AWF controversy underline the predominance of ethnic nationalism over feminism and/or human rights advocacy” (128). In other words, the needs of the nation were placed above the human rights of women.

More recently, this concern resurfaces after the controversial 2015 agreement. During the Wednesday Demonstrations of 2017, the ‘A Million Civic Fundraising Campaign for the Invalidation of the Japan-South Korea’s Agreement (*2015 Hanil hapŭi muhyo 100-man simimokŭm*, A Million Civic Fundraising Campaign)’ was created in resistance of one of the terms of the 2015 agreement—a fund of one billion yen to be provided by the Japanese government. Much like the Korean Council refused the AWF, they claimed that this funding from the Japanese government was not beneficial to the survivors of military sexual slavery and argued that it should not be accepted. Choe reports that unlike the previous fund, the apology and payment outlined in the 2015 agreement would be directly provided by the Japanese government and represent a compromise for Japan’s prime minister who has often denied Japan’s wartime wrongdoings (*The New York Times*). The Korean Council’s rebuttal of the agreement included criticism of the lack of transnational acknowledgement of colonialism and state violence, as well as exclusion of the demands that the survivors and their supporters have sought for 26 years (*The Korean Council*). However, interspersed with the broader human rights, post-colonial, and

feminist criticisms, there were still some nationalist expressions such as: “This is a diplomatic humiliation” and it is only “a diplomatic collusion which “betrays” the demands from all” (*The Korean Council*), language that seems to be in conflict with the transnational feminist perspectives that they have pursued for a long time.

The Korean Council was not alone in its resistance to the Japanese fund. This controversial payment from the Japanese government was not welcomed by many South Korean activists and scholars. According to the *Yonhap News Agency*, a South Korean civic group launched an independent non-profit organization, the Foundation for Justice and Remembrance¹⁹ for the issue of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan to support the victims and continue research on the issue (*Yonhap News Agency*). At the 1287th Wednesday Demonstration which was my first participant observation, the Korean Council and the Foundation for Justice and Remembrance have aggressively promoted their new campaign to return one billion yen to the Japanese government to nullify the agreement. They claimed if a million citizens donate ten thousand won, Japan’s payment can be refunded by ‘us’. Yoon, Mi-hyang (Yoon) and Han, Kookyeom (Han), two co-presidents of the Korean Council, appealed to the participants to make donations to pay back the money that the previous South Korean government received from Abe’s cabinet. They stated that this “humiliating” compensation from Japan is not acceptable.

It is evident that the Korean Council and their Wednesday Demonstration over the last 26 years have contributed to an international debate on wartime sexual slavery and set a legal precedent for women’s human rights. But though it appears on the surface that the Korean Council's primary goal is transnational solidarity with grandmothers to achieve their demands

¹⁹ The Korean Council and the Foundation for Justice and Remembrance have consolidated and are named “The Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan” (*The Korean Council*).

and world peace, its response to compensation from the Japanese government under the 2015 agreement and Asian Women's Fund still appeals to nationalist sensibility by portraying this monetary compensation as a national humiliation.

Both the compensation based on the 2015 agreement and AWF as a coalition of citizen's private fund have been established due to controversy surrounding Japan's avoidance of state responsibility for its war crimes and legal obligation, and nationalism penetrates these actions. Also, the Korean Council's negative responses as a painful loss of national pride to these projects show the persistence of anti-Japanese nationalism, and that South Korea is reluctant to proactively get involved in the resolution of the issue. In the end, these nationalist actions and responses, such as Japan's flawed attempt to reconcile with the victims of 'comfort women,' the Korean Council's contradictory reactions against its stated purposes of transnational feminism, and the South Korean government's nationalist approach to the issue hinder the reconciliation with grandmothers and the transnational growth of the movement against gender-based violence.

Furthermore, nationalism is apparent on both sides of the issue when you examine the strategies that the Korean Council and Japanese government have adopted to resolve the issue. The Korean Council continues to engage in direct confrontation with Japan as offenders who avoid their responsibility in the 'comfort women' issue. On the other hand, Japan is aimed at providing a lump sum of money to deflect global criticism and attention rather than acknowledging the historical wrongdoing and offering individual victims a formal apology. Yang argues that dichotomous categories between Koreans and Japanese such as us and them, victim and offender, good and bad appear exclusive and independent, but this is mutually defined by one other. The existence of an enemy is made more visible through blaming, and this helps to confirm the collective identity of 'Koreans' (129).

Ueno claims that in nationalism, the equation of the self and the ethnic group creates an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ (146). With the issue of military sexual slavery tied up with national pride, it becomes a powerful tool to mobilize “the feeling of unity” as Korean people (Yang 128). At this point in time, it is hard to say that South Korean nationalism is not used for sentimental tendency to mobilize people at the demonstration. As a result, the movement is impacted by conflicts between nationalism and transnational feminism. However, it is arguable that the nationalistic tones of the Korean Council interrupt the various dimensions to the issue of military sexual slavery and generate tensions with those who consider ‘comfort women’ in feminist discourses or perspectives.

4.2.3. In defence of the Wednesday Demonstration as a human rights movement

While scholars and other critics offer the aforementioned observations about nationalism within the Korean Council and Wednesday Demonstrations, interview participants who attended the weekly protests, argued that nationalistic sentiments or anti-Japanese attitudes amongst attendees were weak or non-existent. All interviewees responded that the Wednesday Demonstration should not be a ‘nationalist movement’ because they are aware of the fact that other countries in Asia and Europe were impacted by the issue of military sexual slavery. Several participants shared similar thoughts on the idea of nationalism in the movement:

I always emphasize that the importance of this movement is not ethnic nationalism like only ‘Koreans’ or ‘Joseon²⁰’ women. When I collaborate with other groups, we discuss the issues about many women who suffered from the war. I don’t think that nationalism is bad, but some men see this issue from a distorted viewpoint of nationalism. If this was a

²⁰ See Murray, Lorraine. Joseon dynasty, also called Chosŏn dynasty or Yi dynasty is a kingdom founded by Yi Sŏng-gye, and it is the last and longest-lived imperial dynasty (1392-1910) of Korea (Murray).

nationalist movement, grandmothers would not support other victims in Vietnam, Congo, or US military comfort women. *—from an interview with a participant, July 31st, 2017*

When my team was biking for a cross-country campaign in the U.S. to promote the ‘comfort women’ issue, we did not contact any Korean community groups or support groups for ‘comfort women’ to avoid unforeseen conflicts. This issue is against human rights. If we don’t acknowledge others’ rights, I am not sure if we are entitled to ask for our own rights. *—from an interview with a student activist, July 30th, 2017*

I was born to Korean parents and raised in Japan. In the 90s, I learned about military sexual slavery through Grandma Kim, Hak-Soon’s public testimony. Being of the same ethnicity as this woman, this shocking news made me pay attention to ‘comfort women.’ I approached the concern from a nationalist perspective, not a feminist viewpoint. In 2004, I came to Korea for the first time in my life and attended the Wednesday Demonstration. Since I started volunteering and working at the Korean Council, I have learned that this protest is not a nationalist movement. Also, survivors do not attend the rally against Japan. Every week, Japanese people participate in the demonstration. Koreans work with Japanese people in strong solidarity to promote amity between two nations and make a peaceful world. *—from an interview with NGO staff and activist, recorded, August 4th, 2017*

Overall, interviewees of this research responded that nationalism or nationalistic perspectives on the issue are not an effective approach to military sexual slavery and cannot bring reconciliation between survivors and perpetrators. One participant said that a “nationalist” approach to the issue would be a “retaliatory” action. Another interviewee who participated in

the bike ride campaigns expressed his discomfort with being called “patriots” by Korean elderly people while they were conducting their bike ride in Japan. Others mentioned that sexual violence against women during war or armed conflict is an ongoing issue in society, so the purpose of the Wednesday Demonstration is much broader than simply seeking an apology for the ‘comfort women’ issue; it also aims to end war and the associated abuses of human rights against women. The participants believe that the Wednesday Demonstration is the vanguard of the global human rights movement to support the survivors of military sexual slavery, to seek justice, and to act as a ‘live history classroom.’ Ultimately, they view the idea of the Wednesday Demonstration as a nationalist movement as a misrepresentation of the cause.

Their understanding that the Wednesday Demonstration as a human rights movement is rooted in the background that the Korean Council continues to emphasize: that this weekly protest pursues human rights for those who were forced into military sex slaves and currently suffer sexual violence, along with a formal apology and world peace. Son mentions that the language of human rights has been increasingly spoken at the movement since 2000 (41). At every demonstration, the Korean Council staff and two co-presidents ask the crowd to sequentially shout “the Wednesday Demonstration is peace, an official apology (*Kongsiksajwoe*), legal compensation (*Beopjeokbaesang*)” three times to draw public attention. In addition, all audience members are asked to roar “shouts of peace (*Pyeonghwa Hamseong*)” towards the Japanese Embassy for ten seconds. This pattern is repeated and stressed throughout the demonstration. Co-presidents convey the survivors’ testimony on behalf of the grandmothers, share the growth of the demonstration, and recount the goals of the movement at intervals throughout the protests. The primary aim of their speeches is highlighting the importance of reaching the demands for survivors and the significance of the Wednesday Demonstration that

strives for “human rights,” “peace,” and “righteous resolution for justice.” In their own resistant parlance, the actual bodies of these grandmothers have become the representation of their trauma and suffering, empowered by their supporters’ solidarity at the weekly protests.

Whereas the Wednesday Demonstration was initially the place for survivors to testify about their ordeal and various hardships as ‘comfort women,’ this protest is now the public platform for supporters to initiate or show various actions and performance to raise global awareness about military sexual slavery and seek justice and human rights for all those who have suffered sexual violence. In the beginning of this weekly event, the ‘comfort women’ issue was suspected of demonstrating the relevancy of human rights and the value of the effort to obtain justice. Survivors and supporters were and have been publicly neglected and politically disempowered. Wui Ling Cheah says that the ‘comfort women’ movement has developed from an isolated group formed by lone survivors and concerned historians into a transnational movement equipped with skill in both grassroots organizing and institutional-maneuvering” (72). This movement is a meaningful challenge to uncover the historical truth about ‘comfort women’ to address the international dispute over Japanese colonization and imperialism, and to resist patriarchal society.

4.2.4. Towards the path of human rights and women’s rights

Women have often been obstructed when it comes to human rights struggles because women have long been viewed as property in society. The system of comfort stations established for Japanese soldiers’ sexual urges shows that women were treated as property under inhumane conditions. In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has worked to develop a coherent strategy to monitor the situation of women and to promote women’s rights.

Its efforts for the advancement of women included an international bill of rights and detailed an agenda for action by countries desiring equal rights (*OHCHR*). The Korean Council, in tandem with the Association for Surviving Families of the Korean Victims of the Pacific War, and their work to raise awareness about the issue alongside feminist groups in Japan, Taiwan, Burma, the Philippines, and North Korea, domestically and internationally, have resulted in two publications of survivors' testimony and more attention from international organizations such as the United Nations and the International Commission of Jurists (Yang "Revisiting the issue" 54).

As a result, nearly half a century after the end of World War II, the international community has begun paying attention to the issue of 'comfort women.' In 1992, the United Nations Commission of Human Rights' (UNCHR) series of formal hearings on the issue began. In August of the same year, after the testimony of a former Korean 'comfort woman,' Hwang Kum-ju, to the UNCHR Sub-Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities in Geneva, the United Nations took the Japanese military 'comfort women' issue into deliberation. Later, the UNCHR embarked on its own investigation into the issue with the assigned Special Rapporteurs (Soh 69-70).

Through the investigation of UN Special Rapporteurs on the causes and consequences of violence against women²¹ and systematic rape, sexual slavery, and slavery-like practices during armed conflict²², it was reported that the case of 'comfort women' is a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. UN human rights experts have recommended the renegotiation of the agreement to both South Korea and Japan.²³ At the demonstrations, the Korean Council claimed

²¹ Coomaraswamy, Radhika. "Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences", 1996.

²² McDougall, Gay J. "Systematic rape, sexual slavery and slaverylike-practices during armed conflict", 1998.

²³ On March 11th, 2016, a group of United Nations human rights experts announced that their concerns were raised at the 2015 agreement on 'comfort women' signed between Japan and South Korea, and urged the Japanese

the UN should officially declare August 14th as the International Memorial Day for Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery, and they have consistently put pressure on both governments and other global organizations to address the issue of ‘comfort women’ as a serious violation of human rights. In that sense, the Korean Council that has held the Wednesday Demonstration as a human rights movement has made significant strides in drawing attention to the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery.

The United Nations asserts, “[h]uman rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Everyone is entitled to the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, and freedom of opinion and expression without discrimination” (UN). However, Theodor Meron argues that the struggles against sex discrimination do not receive adequate attention from the mainstream of the UN human rights program and only “benefited from some salutary innovations in UN human rights procedures, such as the appointment of special rapporteurs” (215).

After two UN Special Rapporteurs investigated and reported on the ‘comfort women’ issue of World War II, the ‘comfort women’ system has been properly recognized as military sexual slavery. This has contributed to the recognition of women’s rights as human rights and brought more attention to international solidarity with survivors to end sexual violence against women. However, though the UN urges the Japanese government to accept its recommendations and implement them immediately, these recommendations are not legally binding. This shows that the Korean Council strategically succeeded in attracting global attention to the issue with the

government to implement the recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (OHCHR).

support of the UN, but they cannot rely solely on its recommendations and endorsement to attain the survivors' demands.

Moreover, even though UN actions have outlined nations' legal obligations to assure women's equality, "the development of women's human rights has continued to challenge the boundaries between the public, the private, and the international" (Geurrina and Zalewski 5). After the Beijing women's conference in 1995, women's groups and non-governmental organizations expected the growth of women's human rights from feminist perspectives in practice. Unfortunately, there still, to this day, remains a huge gap "between the rhetoric and realities of women's human rights" whereby women's rights continue to be a highly controversial topic in countries in the world and governments often avoid fulfilling their international obligations (Guerrina and Zalewski 5). It is obvious that human rights in South Korean society have significantly evolved through the democratic movement against military dictatorship. Yet, it is not a given that women's rights²⁴ have equally advanced as women currently do not enjoy the same basic rights as men have.

Despite the Korean Council's tireless advocacy for former 'comfort women's' human rights and justice, the issue is still a diplomatic and political controversy between South Korea and Japan. It demonstrates how both governments have not approached the issue of military sexual slavery from victim-centred perspectives and have considered it an inevitable consequence of war rather than a war crime against women's human rights. According to Keck and Sikkink, since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the mainstream human rights organizations

²⁴ According to World Report 2018 of Human Rights Watch, "South Korea is a democracy that generally respects basic civil and political liberties. However, it maintains unreasonable restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and assembly. Discrimination against LGBT persons, women, racial and ethnic minorities, foreigners- especially refugees and migrants- and people with HIV remain a major problem" (495). It concludes, "Discrimination against women is widespread in South Korea" (497).

have begun to take on the issue of women's rights, but "most restricted themselves to instances where states, professional staff, and contributors pressured the mainstream groups to work on women's rights," and within these mainstream organizations, women's rights projects are often marginalized, underfunded, and understaffed (184). Karen Engle argues that even though women's human rights advocates deal with the difficult task of affirming women's place in the international human rights framework and challenging traditional notions of human rights of women, they are forced to rely primarily on international human rights law and related organizations as vehicles for achieving women's equality. Thus, a tension emerges in the space between the possibility and the means of including women's rights into human rights (521).

Soh explains that at the beginning of the 'comfort women' movement, Korean people had to learn ways to practice human rights as it related to 'comfort women' survivors, such as respecting personal autonomy and allowing the survivors to have self-determination regarding the AWF offer, even though they have embraced the notion of human rights after their experience with military authoritarian regimes. The South Korean 'comfort women' redress movement shows remarkable success in moving away from nationalist views of the issue and towards recognizing military sexual slavery as a gross violation of human rights. Nonetheless, it is ironic that the movement has emphasized correction to the wrongs of the past (128), as the strategic approach to human rights and nationalist purpose to meet the survivors' demand creates conflicts in the movement.

The interview participants agreed that military sexual slavery is obviously a violation of human rights, and that the movement does not pursue to achieve nationalist agendas. Unlike their negative responses that the Wednesday Demonstration is a nationalist movement, some of the participants preferred to say that it is a humanist movement, but they seemed reluctant to

associate with the term ‘feminism.’ Despite the important signification of human rights as women’s rights that has applied to the ‘comfort women’ issue, the movement needs to overhaul whether a rights-based discourse as strategy is simply consumed as performance to amplify anti-Japanese sentiment or it is properly accommodated to meet survivors’ demands within the transnational framework of human rights.

Based on interviews, participant observation, and scholarly sources for this research, it would seem that public consciousness on the issue of ‘comfort women’ is more focused on human rights beyond nationalist concerns. However, it should be noted that the Korean Council adopts a strategy that relies on both nationalist and human rights discourse to support the survivors because it deals with the issue with the countries involved. This creates an interesting connection between the approaches. For example, despite repeated use of the phrase “human rights” at the protests, “many survivors still refer to Korea as a ‘weak country’ that was unable to protect them and equate personal redress with national redress. For survivors, invoking the nation in gendered terms becomes a way to express a deeply personal sense of injury as a collective grievance” (Son 41). Further, Soh argues that the definition of human rights may shift in different cultural contexts so it cannot be a static concept (129). Similarly, Ulf Johansson Dahre notes that despite the global democratisation initiatives and the political and legal adoption of human rights principles, discrimination and oppression of socially marginalized peoples is still widespread (641). Unless true gender equality bridges a gap between normative theory of human rights and social practice, it is not easy to find the relevance to the ‘comfort women’ issue within human rights framework.

Why have the survivors of military sexual slavery by Japan still participated in the weekly demonstration rain or shine at noon every Wednesday despite the challenges of a human

rights approach? In short, this international human rights approach proves to be the most viable option to achieve the survivors' demands and promote a reconciliation of colonial Korean rights at this time. Chou mentions that a non-profit human rights organization is reliant on the popular awareness and consciousness toward human rights issues in a civil society. Six strategies of "education, enforcement, empowerment, documentation, democratization, and development" are used to achieve this goal and allow the organization to cross an indistinct boundary into international activism (155). In practice, the Korean Council has made strides towards international activism having provided various forms of support and welfare programs for the survivors, continued to put pressure on both the Japanese and South Korean governments to fulfill their responsibility with the support of international organizations and solidarity, and made the Wednesday Demonstration a place for remembrance, national and global solidarity between the survivors and supporters, a source of education and history, and a platform for peace and women's rights beyond gender, age, nationality, and ideologies (*The Korean Council*).

Cheah agrees that it was the smartest strategy for the 'comfort women' movement to adopt a human rights discourse, arguing that it played an important role for "member engagement" and "public influence" (78). Additionally, the human rights discourse has been used to build solidarity among its supporters and activists have worked to establish cross-movement relationships by focusing on the different collective rights. Through an anti-sexual exploitation, anti-war, and pro-peace frame, activists combating contemporary sex trafficking have joined the movement, and supporters have discovered how the 'comfort women issue' connects to present-day war victims including children (Cheah 80).

However, recognizing that the 'comfort women' issue is a human rights concern does not negate ongoing concerns and specific cultural circumstances. Due to political conflicts with

other countries, all interview participants expressed the fear of possible war not only on the Korean peninsula but other fronts as well. The Korean peninsula is the only country divided into two different political ideologies, and the two nations are in a state of armistice. This is a serious situation that gives rise to unusual cultural circumstances. It also means that military sexual slavery in Korea is an ongoing concern that can recur anytime because war could erupt at any time, not only in Korea, but in other high-tension areas around the world. Therefore, interviewees said that military sexual slavery is a serious global problem that needs to be immediately resolved, and the particular concerns and rights of sexual violence against women should be paid significant international attention within a human rights framework.

In sum, to succeed in addressing the ‘comfort women’ movement with human rights strategies, women’s rights should continue to challenge and enhance human rights from feminist perspectives. When the movement acknowledges human rights advocacy as an effective and global strategy for women’s rights, the Wednesday Demonstration can remain the embodiment of the peace movement that educates participants on human rights and democratic diversity regardless of gender, ethnicity, class, religion, nationality, age, and ability. Also, it consistently needs to offer a safe space for survivors of sexual violence and their supporters to speak out and be empowered until the goals are achieved. This weekly rally is not only demanding an official apology and legal compensation, but also seeking justice and strong solidarity promote the awareness of sexual violence against women and protect others from these experiences.

While it is true that a human rights discourse on the military sexual slavery issue is already significant, it should be improved to give the survivors greater autonomy in their own lives by empowering the survivors not only to impose themselves in the international community to put pressure on perpetrators, but also to retain relationships of trust with their supporters

across the world. A feminist approach may help move the conflict of human rights values within the issue from the periphery and help fill the gap in women's rights. However, legalistic human rights approaches may be a small arena to resolve the issue of military sexual slavery by Japan. Ultimately, the issue might benefit from moving beyond human rights frameworks and nationalist concerns by acknowledging oppression of the patriarchal system against women and prioritizing gender equality and women's rights. Furthermore, through recognition of the significance of transnational feminism to raise awareness of military sexual slavery, the Wednesday Demonstration could become a form of transnational activism to navigate more local, national, and transnational spaces to pursue its primary aims and to build up global advocacy.

4.3. International Stage for Transnational Awareness of 'Comfort Women'

4.3.1. Can Transnational Solidarity be an Effective Strategy?

With the goals of international solidarity and world peace at the forefront of their movement, the Wednesday Demonstration places great emphasis on the proliferation of transnational awareness of Japanese military sexual slavery and survivors' human rights. Since the survivors broke their silence in the early 1990s, these women and their supporters have initiated various actions and performances to raise global awareness about military sexual slavery and seek justice and human rights for others who suffered from sexual violence, even today. In the early 1990s, with the support of the United Nations, the 'comfort women' issue was acknowledged as the forced sexual exploitation of women during wartime and included among wartime crimes against human rights. Reports of U.N. Special Rapporteurs played crucial roles in the tribunal and activists' lobbying for legislatures (Cheah 92-93).

To further increase international society's attention to sexual slavery, civic groups and international organizations formed by ordinary people provided a space for survivors to testify

about their experiences and raise public awareness of the Japanese military sexual slavery. As previously discussed in this thesis, the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery (The Women's International Tribunal) took place in Tokyo, Japan in December 2000 in direct response to the result of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials which largely disregarded sexual violence against women as a war crime and was mainly a media event (Lévy 126). The Women's International Tribunal was a people's tribunal established by NGOs and social justice movements. The idea for the Tribunal was first conceived in 1998 during the Asian Solidarity Conference, and it took two years to prepare for the mock trial (Cheah 95, Chou 174, Park 40). Instead of governmental authority, activists and supporters confronted the states' failure to resolve the issue and urged the Japanese government to be responsible for war crimes. During the Women's International Tribunal, 64 survivors from nine countries²⁵ spoke about their experiences, testifying about the Japanese army's involvement in the 'comfort women' system (Cheah 74, Chou 174), and approximately 40 women activists from 20 different countries discussed the terrible atrocities of the war (Lévy 125). Roughly three hundred journalists from Japan and abroad, thousands of international audience members, and prosecution teams from each of the nine countries also participated in this trial (Chou 175). Unsurprisingly, the Japanese government did not respond to the invitation to participate in the Tribunal (Cheah 95).

The Tribunal's existence and subsequent verdict emphasized the insufficiency of the official apologies offered by the Japanese Prime Ministers (Lévy 142). Son argues that the Tribunal, like the Wednesday Demonstration, was a site that produced knowledge and formed community. As redressive actions, both the tribunal and the weekly protest provided survivors

²⁵ The survivors came from South Korea, North Korea, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, the Philippines, the Netherlands, Indonesia, East Timor, and Japan (Chou 174).

with public acknowledgement of their wartime experiences, and the Women's Tribunal "reflect and extend the growing transnational scope of the movement" (101).

However, even though the Tribunal succeeded in making public the historical truth through the survivors' testimonies and significantly widening the issue into women's human rights, its verdict has not yielded Japan's acknowledgement of war crimes or a formal apology and legal compensation as the organizers had hoped. No satisfactory resolutions of the 'comfort women' issue have been achieved and, unfortunately, most survivors have passed away, and the remainder continue to hope and wait for an official apology from the Japanese government before their time is also up.

The 26-year weekly Wednesday Demonstration continues to be held to draw local and global attention to urge the Japanese government to fulfill its responsibility. Occasionally, similar rallies with the same name happen in other cities and countries in support of the survivors. As it has been since the beginning, an official apology and legal compensation are the primary agenda of the Wednesday Demonstration. Every week, in a fight for the demands of the survivors, transnational awareness about the issue and strong solidarity with the global community are emphasized through various announcements such as cooperation with Japanese and Korean youth activists, the installation of monuments in various cities, the 100 million signature campaign, and the International Memorial Day for Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery. Still, despite these initiatives staged by this peaceful protest to end sexual violence against women, no one can guarantee when this weekly protest will end with final satisfaction of the survivors' demands.

The Wednesday Demonstration becomes evidence of survivors and their supporters' efforts to raise transnational awareness of the issue. Interview participants were asked whether the Wednesday Demonstration should be continued to maintain the international promotion of the fight for justice against Japanese military sexual slavery and reach the demands that grandmothers and their supporters have requested for 26 years. Each participant said yes, stressing that the acceptable resolution of the issue for survivors is crucial and that it is the significant reason that the demonstration has lasted for a long time.

The aims of the Wednesday demonstration are that survivors and victims need to receive a sincere apology and proper compensation and the Japanese government should admit its wrongdoing. This is the first priority. As the Japanese government built up the Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall to remember all atomic bomb victims during World War II, the 'comfort women' issue should be equally acknowledged and Japanese people should commemorate all victims and survivors. The worst victims were always women at war. The survivors have acted with a courage born out of desperation to solve this. *-from an interview with a male student activist, August 23rd, 2017*

Frankly speaking, who wants to participate in the demonstration every week? Every time I wish that this Wednesday would be the last day. Since grandmas were in their 90s, many people have been considering whether the Wednesday Demonstration should keep going on or not. It is getting harder for survivors in their 80s and 90s to attend the protest every week. However, the Wednesday Demonstration remains because grandmothers have longed for world peace. If the issue were resolved properly, the demonstration would be over. *-from an interview with NGO staff and activist, August 4th, 2017*

In my opinion, even though the Wednesday demonstration would not continue, we would keep strengthening history education or setting up a historical monument in more places. It can be good to promote the correct awareness of Korean history in the face of neighbouring countries' distortion of history. Through the experience of the Wednesday demonstration, I hope that other countries also work hard not to repeat this kind of tragic history again. *-from an interview with a male student activist, recorded, July 30th, 2017*

Thus, the Wednesday Demonstration as a symbol of the 'comfort women' movement offers a space to persist in pressuring the Japanese government and making survivors more visible. It has developed in the midst of widespread public apathy towards sexual violence against women and grown into a well-known global solidarity movement. This weekly protest has raised national and transnational awareness about the injustices and violation of the victims-survivors' rights during the war. It also alerts the world to the truth that the 'comfort women' issue is not irrelevant to sexual violence against women and children in the present. The Wednesday Demonstration remains the only place that supporters meet and talk to survivors once a week, and they urge every week that both South Korea and Japan fulfil their responsibility to achieve all demands and restore the human rights of the survivors.

4.3.2. Making a New Herstory: The 1000th Wednesday Demonstration and The Statue of Peace

The Wednesday Demonstration was never meant to last 20 years. However, more than two decades after the first tear-filled demonstration, this weekly protest has grown to resonate with the significance of solidarity and deep gratitude between survivors and their supporters. Since January 1991, the Wednesday Demonstration organized by the Korean Council and survivors has been held in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. This place has enormous symbolic significance for survivors and their supporters because the embassy is a representative

of the country. On December 14th, 2011, the Wednesday Demonstration marked the 1,000th protest.



(Figure 1. The Statue of Peace, Pyeonghwabi or Sonyeosang outside of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, South Korea. Photograph taken by author, June 28th, 2017)

The Statue of Peace known as Pyeonghwabi or Sonyeosang was erected in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, South Korea to commemorate the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration and remember all the victims and survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery. This monument was designed by the artist couple Kim Seo-kyung and Kim Eun-sung. Initially, these artists had intended to create a memorial stone, but this plan was replaced by the “Statue of Peace” to depict the ‘comfort women’ in detail when they heard that the Japanese government was against the memorial stone being built (Griffiths). These artists attempted to transform tragic memories of the survivors into common history shared by Koreans through the installation of this monument (J.H. Yoon 14).

The statue depicts a girl in a modified Korean traditional garment sitting on a chair and staring at the Japanese embassy in Seoul. The girl’s hands are balled into fists which demonstrates her anger against the denial of Japan’s responsibilities, and her bare feet symbolize the suffering, social stigma, and ignorance from the government that victims of military sexual slavery endured. Its shadow on the bottom represents the hardship of the survivors’ long wait for justice. The butterfly in the centre of the shadow represents the souls of the victims who already passed away. Lastly, the empty chair next to the girl symbolizes the solidarity of people who remember the victims and a space for empathetic supporters who participate in the Wednesday Demonstration (*The Korean Council*).

There are a number of possible interpretations of this statue. The gendered monument could reinforce a message about wartime sexual violence against women. In this case, the diffusion of the statues might be welcomed as a testament to the tragic history of military sexual slavery during World War II and a way to raise awareness of sexual violence in general. However, the representation of the statue as a pure, virginal, young girl can be controversial

issue as it may be interpreted as emphasizing Korean victimhood, excluding other victims and focusing solely on the conflict between Japan and South Korea. Therefore, monuments from various artists to commemorate the victims of ‘comfort women’ could be helpful²⁶ in focusing on the goal to gain a deeper understanding of the complex history of military sexual slavery and encourage introspection on the violation of human rights against victims of sexual violence. If the statues are meant to be erected as a symbol of remembrance and awareness in other countries, it requires a movement away from the controversy over nationalism and greater focus on transnational feminism.

²⁶ See Figure 2 and Hauser, Christine. “It depicts young women from Korea, China and the Philippines standing on a pedestal holding hands, while a statue of Kim Hak-sun, a Korean activist, gazes up at them” (The New York Times).



(Figure 2. The Statue of Grandma Kim, Bokdong and Gil, Wonock at War and Women's Human Rights Museum, Photograph taken by author, August 4th, 2017)

Pyeonghwabi (*Sonyeosang*) is not aimed at irritating the Japanese government. Son argues along with activists and survivors that artists have grappled with how to sublimate the experiences of women who endured military sexual slavery into art on behalf of those survivors (101). Through the installation of the Statue of Peace, the artists were able to contribute to the dismantling of the social and cultural stigma that transformed the survivors' protest into transnational solidarity. It also intensifies the political justification of the Wednesday Demonstration which has been held in front of a diplomatically thorny place.

The appropriation of the space around the Japanese embassy gained momentum as the statue representing the 'comfort women' became known to local, national, and foreign press. This reconstruction of the landscape by the monument provided the survivors a chance to re-tell their painful memories to the public (J.H. Yoon 15). Thus, the Statue of Peace, facing the Japanese embassy, commemorates not the suffering inflicted by the military sexual slavery during World War II, but rather the spirit and the deep history of the Wednesday Demonstration, as its inscription states. The monument is by no means reconciliatory or merely aesthetic. It is more purposefully performative (Mikyung, Kim 88). When global awareness of 'comfort women' is raised as a women's human rights issue, the invitation to join the movement will be extended to those who hesitate to empathize with the survivors and their supporters. Beyond the symbolism and nationalist image of the victims of military sexual slavery by Japan, this statue will be able to provide a more meaningful space for an effective reconciliation process when it shows the power and value of transnational feminist solidarity through the Wednesday Demonstration.

Yet, this statue is not universally well-received. The question remains: why is the statue such a source of controversy and conflict between the protesters and the Japanese government?

This monument is a meaningful symbol to mark a milestone in the Wednesday Demonstration which the survivors and their supporters have persistently held for 20 years. It has nothing to do with the diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan. However, under the 2015 agreement over the ‘comfort women’ issue between South Korea and Japan, one of the conditions was the removal of the Statue of Peace in front of the Japanese Embassy (Choe). This term makes it evident that this monument is a nuisance to the Japanese government. During a joint news conference, Foreign Minister of South Korea mentioned that the government will strive to address Japan’s concern about the statue in an appropriate manner through consulting with related organizations (Yun, “Japan-Republic of Korea Relations”). Chandler argues that this single statue and the negative response to it “silently highlight the short-sightedness of this new deal by pointing out the fact that both the Japanese and Korean government officials apparently do not understand the depth of the pain experienced by those who were forced to be comfort women” (Chandler). Even if the statue were relocated or removed, the historical fact of the issue would not change.

When the Japanese government remonstrated with the Korean government about the Statue of Peace, the threat of the removal of the monuments sparked a storm of protest around the country. Additionally, as the 2015 agreement over the dispute of military sexual slavery was severely criticized and received widespread media coverage drawing global attention to the issue, since the statue was erected and became the subject of controversy because of the agreement, it has also garnered public attention and brought more people to the demonstration. Some interviewees share their thoughts on how the Statue of Peace and the 2015 agreement have impacted their interest and involvement in the movement:

The first time I knew of the Wednesday Demonstration was through the news on TV. It was about the agreement about the ‘comfort women’ issue between South Korea and Japan on December 28th, 2015. So, I knew that the Wednesday demonstration has existed for a long time. Since then, I have been aware of the protest that happens every Wednesday. One day, I decided to participate in the Wednesday demonstration and have started taking part in it. *-from an interview with a male student activist, August 23rd, 2017*

The first occasion to draw more attention was the 1000th Wednesday demonstration. At that time, so many people came out to attend the protest in front of the Japanese Embassy and packed the road. It became more sensational and brought more people. In addition, after the 2015 agreement between South Korea and Japan was announced, the number of participants has been growing up from several hundred to a thousand. *-from an interview with NGO staff and activist, August 4th, 2017*

While the Wednesday Demonstration is being held, it is common for the participants and journalists to take photos of the statue or themselves sitting on the empty chair next to the statue. Others lay flowers and shoes at its feet and wind scarves around its neck. These acts aid in “keeping the issue and memory of the victims alive” while allowing people to show public support and to express their anger against detractors. These performances of care give people a chance to participate in the movement, to empathize with the survivors’ history, and to remind others that everyday acts of redress matter (Son 175). It is important to remember that these interactions with the Statue of Peace are about commemoration, not idolatry. By visiting the statue, the participants have opportunities to ponder the issue and to ruminate on the great value and the powerful symbol of the Wednesday Demonstration.

Moreover, the interview participants were galvanized by this statue which represents the victims of military sexual slavery and call for apology and remembrance. They shared:

Both a pastor and the other group asked me to join the committee to raise awareness of the ‘comfort women’ issue and to set up the Statue of Peace at the same time. I thought that this would be a timely important action and felt a call to get involved in this work. The Statue of Peace in the city was the first one which had been erected by civic fundraising. *-from an interview with a female civic activist and co-president of NGO, recorded, August 2nd, 2017*

I paid more attention to the ‘comfort women’ issue when the peace statue became an issue between South Korea and Japan. Since I heard that college students pitched tents next to the Statue of Peace and started holding a sit-down protest against the removal of the monument, I have participated in the demonstration. *-from an interview with a female participant, August 16th, 2017*

At my friend’s suggestion, I attended the demonstration for the first time. Since I learned the issue and witnessed the threat against the statue, I have been involved in an all-night sit-in demonstration to protect the monument since 2015. For almost 600 days, I have led this sit-in protest and participated in the weekly rally on Wednesdays. *-from an interview with a female student activist, July 12th, 2017*

The Statue of Peace in commemoration of ‘comfort women’ creates voluntary participants in the ‘comfort women’ movement, turning passive bystanders into active participants. Son says that through interactions with the survivors and other protesters, people become part of communities of remembrance to commemorate both the wartime experiences of

survivors and their brave activism. Moreover, two demands of this movement are reached by ordinary citizens who have erected the statues: “providing education about the history and memorializing the experiences” (175). Thus, there is no reason why the statue should be a politically and diplomatically a thorny problem if it aims at offering room to reflect on historical wrongdoings by overcoming an impediment to reconciliation with survivors without anti-Japanese sentiment or propaganda.

However, the more the statue becomes controversial, the more attention it draws. Hein argued that the removal of this commemorative statue as requested by Japan could create conflict between South Korean and Japanese governments (456). That conjecture became fact, and there were many political and diplomatic tensions between South Korea and Japan. In December 2017, an identical statue was erected by a civil group in front of the Japanese consulate in Busan, South Korea which is a port city and geographically closer to Japan than Seoul, the site of the first statue. In response, the Japanese government recalled two diplomats from South Korea and halted talks on economic ties between both nations to show its displeasure with the breach of the 2015 joint agreement (Han and Griffiths). Japan’s reaction had a different effect than they hoped; it drew more attention to the issue domestically and internationally and inspired protest participants to organize groups and grassroots movements to install statues in their own communities. While local governments and legislatures have been involved in the installation projects of some of the ‘comfort women’ statues, the majority of them have been funded by public donations and from the local community (Je. H. Lee).

For instance, high school students of an after-school history club launched a campaign to distribute 100 miniature statues to 100 schools in South Korea since the spring of 2015. Through organized fundraising, they raised money to start the project. This campaign successfully

achieved their target of 100 orders. The club members extended the plan to continue to hand out the statues, filling 239 orders, the number of government-registered victims in Korea (M. K. Jung). An interview participant explained the implications:

This successful campaign that the high school students have organized shows that more Korean people have started understanding the history of the ‘comfort women’ issue. I believe that we have taken a big step to resolve the issue. As you know, it has taken 25 years to gain the public’s empathy. Japanese military sexual slavery should not be solved with haste. *-from an interview with a male civic activist, August 27th, 2017*

This suggests that the installation of the monuments is not an expression of resentment for some who engaged with the issue, but an opportunity for the public to establish their subjecthood and act out their passionate support for grandmothers. All interview participants said that greater teenage students’ involvement in the Wednesday Demonstration and other related events would be able to carry the significant and hopeful implication of the ‘comfort women’ movement in the future. On the other hand, as previously noted, most university students among interviewees mentioned that they had not learned about military sexual slavery by Japan in detail when they were at secondary schools, suggesting they had been taught these historical events through the prism of nationalism.

According to Choi et al., on August 14, 2017, eleven more statues were erected in South Korea for two days in commemoration of the fifth International Memorial Day for Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery. Five more statues were installed that same day in five districts in one city. In total, there are 58 of the Peace Monuments²⁷, 51 statues through the country, and

²⁷ In the interview with Korea Broadcasting System, the Korean Council says that there are 110 statues in South Korea, 17 statues only in Seoul in August 2018 (Hong).

seven more outside Korea. In the 2015 agreement, Japan requested the South Korean government refrain from provocative actions, such actions as erecting more statues, that may have a negative effect on bilateral relations, but President Moon Jae-in's administration questioned the transparency of the agreement (Choi et al.) Again, this shows that the statues become a thorn for Japan and Japanese revisionists because it represents too boldly the dark history and shameful facts they would rather deny.

Despite the political tension and diplomatic conflict surrounding the Statues of Peace, the replicas of this monument have begun to appear internationally in the past few years. In July 2013, the first exact replica of the 'comfort women' statue was unveiled in Glendale, California. Kim Bok-dong, a survivor of Japanese military sexual slavery, attended the dedication ceremony (Kwaak). Statues were also installed in front of the Korean American Cultural Centre in Southfield, Michigan in 2014 (*The Korea Times*), outside of the Fairfax County Government Centre in Fairfax County, Virginia—Kang Il-Chul, another survivor attended an unveiling ceremony (Olivo)—and in 2017, two more statues were unveiled in Georgia, Atlanta (Constante) and San Francisco (Fortin). The third replica in North America was installed at Korean Canadian Cultural Association in Toronto, Canada in 2015²⁸ (*The Korea Times*).

Outside of the United States, peace monuments have been built at the Uniting Church, in Ashfield, New South Wales, Australia despite legal threats from the Japanese Community Network (Visentin). In Europe, the first statue was installed in the German municipality of Wiesen on International Women's Day in 2017. Even though the first plan was dropped due to obstruction from Japan, approval from the municipality of Wiesent invited survivor, Ahn Jeom-

²⁸ See Fuller-Evans, Janaya. The statue was proposed to be erected at Central Park in Burnaby, but the project foundered by opposition of Japanese Canadian Community (Fuller-Evans).

soon, to attend the unveiling ceremony (B.E. Kim). These statues embody how the history of wartime sexual slavery and the hope for a peaceful world have continued to spread beyond regional and national borders. Knop and Riles argue, “Replicas of the Seoul statue proliferate, change, and even remanifest as people replicating replicas” (869).

Just as the Japanese government and communities resisted the statues erected around Korea, they also fought back against the installation of the international statues and lobbied to remove them. In 2015, the proposal to erect the ‘comfort women’ statue in Burnaby, British Columbia could not be reached because the Japanese Canadian community claimed that it was against “the Canadian tradition of multiculturalism” (Fuller-Evans). In addition, the memorial statue dedicated to the military sexual slavery by the Japanese army was installed in San Francisco in 2017. It has three figures holding hands on a pedestal and represents girls from Korea, China and the Philippines. Next to them, stands an older woman who resembles a Korean activist and survivor, Kim Hak-sun. This symbolic statue has caused the mayor of the Japanese city of Osaka to cut its 60-year sister city relationship with San Francisco (Fortin). A different interpretation of the statue representing Filipina ‘comfort women’ was unveiled in Manila, the Philippines in December 2017 to honour the victims. However, it was quietly removed by the Philippine government, and activists suspect that the Japanese government pushed them to take the statue down (*The Associated Press*).

The Japanese communities in the cities that proposed erecting a monument have often filed petitions or pursued legal action to limit the installation of statues. A three-year legal battle around a lawsuit by a Japanese non-profit group in 2014 concluded in U.S. Supreme Court on March 27th, 2017. The court declined to review a case calling for the removal of the controversial monument in Glendale, California that commemorates the victims of Japanese military sexual

slavery during World War II (Nguyen). Yoneyama argues that this legal dispute is an unfortunate development because it shifts civic disagreement over popular justice into the juridical arena and re-establishes and reauthorizes the United States as the ultimate power (171). However, “The complex stories behind memorials in the United States show how the ‘comfort women’ cause can mobilize and foster political alliances and become re-scripted into nationalistic agendas” (Son 175). It further shows that the process building transnational campaign has consistent and broad ramifications.

Though it is evident that intentional state violence cannot be resolved by one state power, it is ironic that the public should depend on authoritative intervention to find legal justification of political actions. To avoid political and diplomatic tension and conflict, Knop and Riles argue that the current transnational positivity of the statues can quell controversies through a feminist and solidarity viewpoint:

Support for the statue tends to emanate from a transitional justice framework, developed more recently in domestic societies dealing with regime change and now also invoked to address specific historical wrongs in stable regimes, and from victim-oriented perspectives in contemporary international human rights law and international humanitarian law. From this vantage point, rather than closing an issue, the resolution should keep it open to continual exploration by state and non-state actors through such techniques as memorializing and collective justice partnerships between individuals, groups, and states (866).

The interviewees of this research and participants of the weekly protest emphasize that the historical tragedy of ‘comfort women’ should never be repeated, and they acknowledge the

significance of the Statue of Peace. Chandler notes that the monument becomes a constant reminder of the atrocities of war and the destruction of the social norm that silences marginalized people (Chandler). Within South Korea and across international borders, the Statues of Peace that started spreading with the Wednesday Demonstration are not about humiliating Japan as a war criminal in an international society, but to ensure that the historical truth and the victims' sufferings are never be forgotten.

The 'comfort women' movement shows that the exploitation of women's bodies and sexuality in war is associated with complex problems such as gender, politics, geopolitics, diplomatic relations, and recognition of historical issues. Hence, the transnational monuments are important to continue producing discourses on issues of gender injustice and serving as a strong reminder to the world of the atrocity of sexual violence against women. The more the Japanese government is sensitive to the installation of the statues or the implementation of other justice actions for 'comfort women,' the more people pay attention to the issue and organize groups to support survivors. Japan's negative response is a strategic error on their part because it is sensitizing people to war crimes and the comfort station system during World War II and highlighting the nation's resistance to justice. If Japanese military sexual slavery is recognized as a universal/women's human rights issue, there is no reason for Japan to obstruct organized rallies such as the Wednesday Demonstration or the installation of replicas of the monument in Seoul to commemorate the victims.

4.3.3. The Butterfly Effect: Reaching Beyond the Border?

The 'butterfly' becomes a significant symbol of the Wednesday Demonstration's goal of acquiring resolution of the 'comfort women' issue in a righteous and just way. It is an expression of transnational solidarity to strive to solve the issue of Japanese military sexual slavery.

Additionally, the butterfly represents the hopes of the survivors and all the women who desire to be liberated from discrimination, oppression, and violence, like ‘butterflies’ flying free (The Butterfly Fund). Much of the promotional material for awareness of Japanese military sexual slavery and many of the fans for the protest participants are designed in the shape of a butterfly. Many civic groups or organizations were also named after a ‘Butterfly (Nabi).’ The term has been widespread since a ‘Butterfly Fund’ was established in 2012. The Butterfly Fund (Nabi Fund) was a campaign created by two well-known survivors, Kim Bok-dong and Gil Won-ok halmonis who suggested this fund and founded it with the strong support of the Korean Council and the public on International Women’s Day on March 8th, 2012. The two grandmothers promised to donate their full compensation from the Japanese government to support women who still suffer from sexual violence in other countries (*The Korean Council*).

In an interview, Grandma Kim Bok-dong said that she wanted to use the Nabi Fund to help women who had the same experience as her and continue advocating for survivors until she dies. The Nabi Fund was initially established with seed money from Grandma Kim Bok-dong and a donation from a popular singer, Lee Hyo-ri (37, Lee Kim). Since then, the Fund has been run by voluntary donations from the public, including high school students, teachers, university students and different ethics groups (H.B. Jung). Korean Council co-president Yoon Mee-hyang states that she hopes that the courage cultivated by these grandmothers will spread wings thanks to the Butterfly Fund, reaching female victims of war around the world and offering a stern warning to those who start wars.

As of April 20th, 2012, 1,090 people participated in a relay in support of the Butterfly Fund, raising 15.42 million won. Rebecca Masika Katsuva of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was selected as the first recipient of the Fund. She and her two daughters were sexually

abused by soldiers during her country's civil war in 1998. The next year, Katsuya founded Listening House, an organization aimed at supporting thousands of victims who have gone through similar painful experiences, including orphans and children born of forced pregnancies (H.B. Jung, Kerry). Furthermore, the Butterfly Fund donates to Vietnamese victims of sexual violence by the Korean soldiers in the Vietnam War and their second generation who have suffered through economic difficulties (Kerry).

At the press interview for the second anniversary of the Butterfly Fund, the Korean Council demanded the Korean government investigate the truth of the sexual violence by the Korean military and apologize to the Vietnamese victims. Founders, Kim Bok-dong and Gil Won-ok said that they deeply empathized with and stand in solidarity with all victims (M.H. Yoon). Through the two empowered grandmothers' persistent involvement in the ongoing demonstration, they have taken the opportunity to help others who have suffered similar experiences and to raise their voices to demand human rights for themselves and other victims around the world in a show of solidarity. However, the Korean Council fiercely criticized the establishment of the Asian Women's Fund in 1995. They specifically found Japan's admission to be an incomplete and devious statement that allowed them to cleverly skirt the charge of war crime and avoid a commitment to legal responsibility (Soh "Japan's National" 219). The Reconciliation and Healing Foundation established as a result of the 2015 agreement about the issue between Japan and South Korea was also disbanded because grandmothers and advocates had continued refusing to accept the agreement without a formal apology (Kang).

In 2015, as part of the Butterfly Fund project, the Korean Council visited Vietnam to meet Vietnamese victims of sexual violence by South Korean troops during Vietnam War. Its co-president, Meehyang Yoon met ten survivors and heard their experience. This marked the first

time that survivors had shared their personal information and disclosed specifics about their situations. Yoon commented that when she heard Vietnamese women victimized by ‘us Koreans’, she felt mortified and sorry for them as ‘Koreans.’ This highlights the importance and value of Koreans increasing the Nabi Fund to provide these victims support (K. Koh). However, Yoon’s nationalist comments would contradict the intent of the Butterfly Fund to raise better awareness of wartime sexual violence offer transnational solidarity with survivors.

In fact, it is paradoxical that the Korean Council being from South Korea, a nation that perpetrated sexual violence against Vietnamese women and children, provides selected women with financial support from a fund donated by Korean citizens. Moreover, the South Korean government does not acknowledge its war crimes and has never apologized to the victims. What is a critical distinction between Butterfly Fund and AWF in the context of Vietnamese survivors? When this private fund by Koreans continues to be provided to Vietnamese victims, it becomes an illogical argument that the Nabi Fund supports other victims who survived rape and sexual violence and suffered from oppression and discrimination. This wartime gendered violence encounters many intractable questions regarding various views of the issue such as gender, nationalism, colonialism, racism, patriarchy, human rights, and feminism.

In April 2019, 103 Vietnamese survivors presented a petition to the South Korean government demanding a formal apology and urged them to investigate several attacks (Ryall). The South Korean government’s response to this alleged war crime is being watched with keen interest because the international community knows how long South Korea has demanded an apology for military sexual slavery by Japan. The South Korean government’s decision on this matter would reflect their willingness to accept strong criticism of hypocrisy or acknowledge the war crimes. To avoid furthering nationalistic agendas of wartime sexual violence requires

sparkling a public debate over transnationalism, transnational feminism, and strong solidarity with survivors and a commitment to finding appropriate actions against the disagreement for reconciliation with victims. Obviously, private funds established and developed by feminists and women's rights organizations in South Korea will be still beneficial to Vietnamese women who suffered from military sexual violence. It will also become an effective tool to lay the groundwork for transnational solidarity between women in these two countries. Yet, it would be more meaningful if the Korean Council could pressure the South Korean government to offer Vietnamese victims a formal apology and legal compensation. Then, these women would benefit from public recognition and awareness of the issue and a sustainable movement of support to make them heard in an international community.

Though survivors and their supporters have initiated various actions or performances to promote global awareness about military sexual slavery, their desperate battle to seek justice and human rights for those who have suffered from sexual violence carries on. In the years before the first victim spoke out, drawing on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, we can see that the subalterns were not able to speak because their imperialistic and patriarchal society made them invisible or ambiguous (90-104). The survivors who represented the subaltern of Korean society were silenced. After the end of the war, the survivors of the 'comfort women' system were abandoned by their families and communities and were forced to remain silent about their brutal experience at war. Despite the total neglect of the survivors' public testimonies decades ago, their patience and determination to demand a formal apology have drawn national/transnational attention to the issue. Therefore, the establishment of the Butterfly Fund would be better directed towards pursuing transnational feminist goal of improving how survivors as the subalterns address others in similar positions and how they engage with subaltern voices.

Survivors' constant testimonies and their ongoing involvement in activism like the Wednesday Demonstration develop and expand a way for survivors and their supporters to express empathy for each other and other victims. All interview participants stated that the Wednesday Demonstration is essential to the grandmothers' ability to transform from silenced victims into women's human rights activists, and take up the activism that makes it possible for them to support other victims of sexual violence beyond race, nationality, gender, and language, like a butterfly effect of positive change.

The younger generation, inspired by the meaning and value of the *Nabi Fund*, have organized groups such as 'Peace Butterfly (*Pyeonghwa Nabi*) Network'²⁹ which is a nationwide network of university students to raise awareness of the "comfort women" issue with activities such as seminars, concerts, and marathons, both nationally and internationally, with the aim of achieving justice for the survivors (Kim and Song). Furthermore, Gil Won-ok Women's Peace Prize³⁰ and Kim Bok-dong Peace Prize, named after the founders of the Butterfly Fund, have been created to award women who dedicate themselves to working for world peace and awareness of wartime sexual violence (D.H. Kim, Baek).

On Wednesdays, the importance of the Nabi Fund as a transnational project continues to be emphasized and conveyed to participants at the protest. These two grandmothers' meaningful actions demonstrate how the survivors who fight against sexual violence around the world are supported beyond victimhood. It is also stressed that they exemplify the significance of transnational feminist solidarity for moving away from nationalism as a solution to the issue of military sexual slavery. On a more positive note, the survivors who never had the opportunity to

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/peacetoher/>

³⁰ The Korean Council. <http://womenandwar.net/kr/gil-won-ok-halmonis-90th-birthday/>.

engage in leadership before they broke their silence have finally had the chance to empower other victims and have a profound impact on leading the younger generation to action.

4.4. Are Nationalist Discourses Incompatible with Transnational Feminism?

It took almost half a century for the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery to break their silence because of how women's sufferings were ignored within the nationalist framework of their conservative, patriarchal and Confucian societies. Ultimately, nationalist and patriarchal viewpoints on military sexual slavery, which emphasized victims' fidelity or virginity, overlooked human rights violations by the imperial state, gendered exploitation, patriarchal oppression, and discrimination against women. Without public awareness to break the interlocking system of nationalism, patriarchy, and patriotism, the conflict around the 'comfort women issue' cannot be resolved.

As a complex issue that involves a great number of victims of wartime rape in other nations occupied by Imperial Japan, military sexual slavery during World War II has been considered a serious matter across borders. Thus, transnationalism as an analytic lens finds a set of sustained long-distance and border-crossing connections within social movements, global issues, and migrant phenomena focusing on gender, ethnicity, and political participation (Vertovec 3-4). Furthermore, from feminist perspectives, women's movements built on the ties between women in different countries consider feminist actions as transnational collaboration. Yet, considering the possibilities of a transnational feminism, the implications of the word 'transnational' generates tension. Not only have the decisions of transnational corporations affected political actions across national boundaries, but people of particular nations have also had similar opportunities for negative impact, and their nation becomes the guarantor or the violator of individual political rights (Mackie 184-185).

Furthermore, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan argue that transnational feminism seeks to destabilize the boundaries of nation, race, and gender because the term ‘transnational’ indicates attention to uneven and dissimilar circuits of culture and capital. Through such a critical viewpoint, the connections between patriarchy, colonialism, racism, and other forms of domination become more obvious and available for critique or appropriation (Grewal and Kaplan). Mackie claims that cultural production and critique are not only important for advocacy of ‘transnational feminist practices, but they are also useful for women’s movements to be focused on actions such as supporting for former ‘comfort women’ and women in factories of transnational corporations in their claims for compensation, offering community support for migrant workers and refugees, and developing activities in NGOs and international organizations such as the UN and its various committees across national borders (189). Furthermore, Spivak reflects on the links between cultural production and political economy, writing: “Transnational feminism is neither revolutionary tourism, nor mere celebration of testimony. It is rather through the route of feminism that economic theories of social choice and philosophical theories of ethical preference can be complicated by cultural material” (284). The misconceptions of transnationalism that Spivak cites can reinforce nationalistic goals. Instead, it is important for transnational feminism “to negotiate between the national, the global, and the historical as well as the contemporary diasporic” (278). Hence, for the ‘comfort women’ movement, it is vital to recognize the complexity and tension that arise in using the term ‘transnational’ to politicize gender-related issue beyond national borders.

The ‘comfort women’ movement which addresses wartime rape and gender discrimination committed by the state power has shifted its political intervention into the pursuit of global social justice and women’s human rights. Despite the strategic aim for transnational

feminist awareness of the issue, the activism of military sexual slavery by Japan has been at the centre of criticisms about a nationalist discourse on 'comfort women.' Whereas many nationalist discourses were employed by male-dominated governments, the nationalist discourse on the 'comfort women' issue is led by the Korean Council which was formed by feminist groups. Considering the gendered nature of nationalism, it is particularly interesting. In fact, feminist solidarity among other support groups on the issue in Asia has eventually been fractured by the patriarchal nature of nationalism (H.K. Kim 10). As previously noted, nationalism was demonstrated in instances like the negative responses to the AWF. However, although there is tension and complexity between feminism and nationalism, it has not stopped transnational feminist groups from endorsing the survivors of 'comfort women' and their supporters.

Centring on the Wednesday Demonstration, the 'comfort women' movement, pursuing social justice and women's human rights, is pushed ahead with various strategies to demand an apology and legal compensation. Yuki Terazawa claims that regardless of whether any survivors live long enough to receive an apology and obtain redress, activists and scholars should continue to find new strategies for a remarkable transnational networking and alliance to support them through connecting diverse activists working with survivors of sexual violence (142). On the subject of strong solidarity for the unresolved military sexual slavery, transnational feminist and human rights discourses have been adopted as a strategy to play an important role in resolving the issue.

However, the question remains: how can they establish grassroots solidarity to avoid the traps set by the nation-state and distorted nationalist views? Abstract and universal principles suggest that everyone can be members of the world to "overcome the exclusivity of national collective identities." Yet, individuals cannot delude themselves into believing they can be

entirely freed from all connections without denying that the burden of history exists (Ueno 148). Transnational feminist solidarity offers an alternative that acknowledges that the issue of military sexual slavery is recognized as a universal problem of human rights that can happen to everybody rather than citizens of a particular nation.

Based on the 12-week participation observation, any groups or organizations can facilitate the Wednesday Demonstration each week if they sign up for the Korean Council's list. A variety of groups led the weekly rally such as women's organizations, high school history clubs, non-profit agencies, religious groups, different labour unions, and international groups visiting Korea for human rights related work. The openness to all groups or individuals who are willing to show their solidarity for grandmothers becomes a crucial approach to sustain the weekly rally over the past 26 years. The nature or ideologies of the organizations do not matter unless they deprecate the 'comfort women' movement or hesitate to participate in the Wednesday Demonstration. As argued previously in this thesis, even though nationalism is too narrow a view to understand and resolve the issue, it has been used for more attention to the movement and political decisions relying on the nation-states. Not only Japan but also Korea cannot be absolved from the responsibility they had to address and take care of all victims of the 'comfort women' system. Therefore, Japanese military sexual slavery requires transnational feminist perspectives and efforts to examine the aspects that nationalism overlooks such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class in Japan's colonialism.

Interestingly, international feminist activism has contributed as much to the remarkable success of the movement to support the survivors of 'comfort women' as nationalist fervour has. Soh says that the Korean Council took strategic actions such as the appeal for investigation of the issue to the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), the presentation on Japanese military

sexual slavery to UNCHR meetings in Geneva, and driven networking with women's organizations in Asian nations affected by Imperial Japan to build up transnational feminist solidarity. They have been effective for publicizing the 'comfort women' issue internationally and encouraging more victim-survivors from other countries to speak up and file lawsuits against Japan. Thus, the Korean Council's endeavours elicited strong support from international organizations such as the United Nations and the International Commission of Jurists (215).

In addition, the predominant view of the international campaign organized by the Korean Council is the transnational feminist discourse which makes the issue a universal women's matter of contemporary and international importance. The feminism that the Korean Council pursues is similar to "universal feminism proposed by the First World feminists in the 70s and 80s on the grounds of universal sisterhood. Feminism of universal womanhood united to fight violence against women helps to emphasize the seriousness of the 'comfort women' issue and facilitate global cooperation among women in international society" (H.K. Kim 13). Ulrike Wöhr also notes, "The issue of the 'comfort women' symbolizes the continuing importance of solidarity across the borders between first world and third world, and between majority and minority" (84).

With that said, considering the nature of nationalism and feminism, the possibility of compatibility between them remains ambiguous. While the former is exclusive and homogenous, the latter is embraceable and heterogeneous. Truong claims that transnational feminism rejects a dichotomy such as male and female or North and South. The focus is on gender identity shaped by specific intersections between national identity, race, and sexuality (295). "Transnational feminism aims to outline the complexity of identity formation and the meanings of agency as produced by the interrelationships and interactions among actors. In this framework the

differences in women's lives are shaped by the positions they occupy within a given set of local–global relations and determine how they seek to build solidarity” (Truong 296).

Anne McClintock argues that all nationalisms are gendered, invented, and dangerous. There is no nation in the world that both women and men are granted to have “the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state” (409). Additionally, women's experiences are rarely taken by nationalist movements and do not serve as the starting point for an understanding of the experience of being colonized or unshackling that material and psychological domination. Rather, nationalism “typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope” (Enloe 44). Moreover, “The unifying impulse of nationalism demands moral purity, which is often articulated in gendered rhetoric. Nationalism represses ambivalence about and contradictions in women's subjectivity and therefore leaves no room to negotiate” (C.M. Choi 28). Thus, transnational feminism that fights against patriarchal nationalism to make itself visible does not compromise with nationalism, especially in a postcolonial nation.

According to the responses from the interview participants, transnational solidarity to resolve the issue is essential. They argue that close collaboration with Japanese people will help to promote stronger solidarity and to expedite resolution of the ‘comfort women’ dispute. University student interviewees show keen enthusiasm for cooperating with Korean-Japanese and Japanese native students for reconciliation between South Korea and Japan. Regardless of gender, all student participants have the same understanding of transnational solidarity and respond that the in-depth historical and political knowledge about the issue encourages Korean people to pay more attention to the Wednesday Demonstration, and also helps Japanese people to put pressure on their own government to acknowledge the issue and take responsibility for their war crimes. These young people believe that through better education, when more Japanese

youth can attend the demonstration and try to cooperate with South Korean youth, their collaborative endeavour will have great effect on transnational solidarity with the survivors.

While participants also mention the significance of proper education about the ‘comfort women’ issue by teachers or educators, they also place great emphasis on the diffusion of the Statue of Peace in more places around the world. These interviewees believe that this monument can not only be the most important tool to educate the international community on the historical issue of ‘comfort women’ but also encourage communities to take initiative to organize local campaigns to build transnational solidarity. Moreover, interviewees mentioned that the spread of the identical statues in other Asian countries will help raise awareness of sexual violence in those nations as well, such as the issue of the rape of Vietnamese women by Korean soldiers during the Vietnam War, and commemorate those victims and survivors in solidarity.

The Wednesday Demonstration and campaigns organized by a Korean feminist coalition to support former ‘comfort women’ have been domestically and internationally endorsed by scholars, politicians, individuals, and groups. The ‘comfort women’ movement in East Asia has resulted in creating transnational links to gain more support of international groups and media to promote the transnational movement on women’s human rights. More importantly, along with the growing social environment of the human rights movement in Asia, activists continue working hard to push the Japanese government to fulfill its responsibility of war crimes on the UN’s recommendations. Therefore, it has become a successful model for the transnational advocacy networks in human rights movement (Chou 175-176).

In conclusion, the complexity and tension between nationalism and feminism makes compatibility challenging in the movement for victims of Japanese military sexual slavery. At

the Wednesday Demonstration, survivors and supporters have expressed their resistance as a meaningful challenge to the patriarchal system interlinked with nationalism. Most importantly, the activism of the 'comfort women' grandmothers and their significant contributions to the history of the anti-colonial movement from a transnational feminist perspective should be respected. Their participation in the movement is not only a symbol of powerful inspiration for women's human rights but an essential part of paving the road to peace. Thus, transnational feminism would be most effective if it contributes to growing awareness of war crimes and sexual violence against women both in wartime and peacetime but cannot overlook how Imperial Japan victimized Korea and other countries in Asia. Ultimately, transnational feminism requires more global thought and more effective actions beyond the complexity of the relationship between feminism and nationalism for stronger solidarity with the victims and survivors of military sexual slavery or sexual violence.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

It has been 75 years since World War II ended, and military sexual slavery by Imperial Japan is no longer a secretive issue. With the support of the Korean Council, organized by diverse Korean feminist groups, late Kim, Hak-soon publicly testified about her experiences as the victim of military sexual slavery by the Japanese military in 1991 and became the first survivor who broke over 50 years of painful silence. In a conservative and patriarchal society where women's chastity is as important as their lives, the long silence of women who experienced rape is not a rare phenomenon. Thus, Kim halmoni's public testimony about the 'comfort women' system constituted a revolutionary turning point in a long-standing historical and political issue that had previously excluded women.

In addition, the emergence and expansion of the women's movements in a period of South Korea's political upheaval triggered the remarkable growth of collective consciousness about sexual violence against women and the devastating costs of patriarchy. Hence, the social development of women's movements in the nation has encouraged a push for gender equality and women's human rights. These encouraging changes positively affect the movement for former 'comfort women' forced into sex slavery for Japanese soldiers during World War II.

Every week, for 26 years, these survivors and their supporters have protested outside the Japanese embassy in Seoul every Wednesday afternoon at what has now come to be known as the Wednesday demonstration. Beyond their own cause, they have actively campaigned against military sexual slavery and wartime rapes as women's human rights activists. Moreover, several survivors travelled around the world to raise awareness of the 'comfort women' issue and to call for global solidarity to push both the Japanese and South Korean governments to take

responsibility for the resolution of this issue. Their actions resulted in a lawsuit against the Japanese government, an investigation of the issue by the United Nations, international attention on the issue from human rights perspectives at the World Conference, and the establishment of transnational solidarity with other survivors from different countries.

Kim, Hak-soon's courageous voice also opened the door for other survivors from South Korea and all over Asia to come forward to the public and reveal their own experiences as sex slaves for the Imperial Japanese army in the war. Since then, many of them have become involved in the Wednesday Demonstration to obtain justice and demand an official apology from the Japanese government and have held the protest every week in solidarity with their supporters. However, the controversy surrounding 'comfort women' remains unresolved, many of the survivors who courageously broke the long silence and made their voices heard in global society have already passed away without receiving a formal apology, and the number of the survivors is quickly dwindling. The rest will eventually die sooner or later. Still, the movement valiantly persists and has positive impacts both nationally and internationally.

The Wednesday Demonstration has performed a key role in educating participants, especially students, as a living history class and providing opportunities to galvanize them into political action and solidarity for the survivors. As a result, the number of participants in these weekly protests is surprisingly on the rise, and the age range of the protesters grows younger and younger each year. Rather than solely participating in the demonstrations, these students who regularly attend the protest also study the issue by themselves and create various activities to capture more attention to the 'comfort women'. More than half of the research participants of this study are university students who took the initiative to form support groups and organize the grassroots campaigns to raise awareness of 'comfort women' across the border. Therefore, the

strength of the current Wednesday Demonstration breaks intergenerational gaps between grandmothers traumatized by colonization and young people who have never experienced war. Their deep empathy for one another, which has developed through the rallies, allows them to build strong solidarity despite the differences in their life experiences. If the persistent activism of the survivors and activists was the fuel that sustained the Wednesday Demonstration for the past 26 years, this young generation's proactive involvement in the movement and their versatility will become the new driving force to continue the movement on behalf of all victims and survivors and to seek the justice they have pursued for more than two decades.

Even though the 'comfort women' issue has not attracted social and governmental attention as an important political agenda because sexual violence was considered merely an unfortunate personal matter, these women have written a new history of the women's movement in a currently patriarchal political world. Their actions and activities revolving around the Wednesday Demonstration have played crucial roles in promoting awareness of military sexual slavery as a women-specific and survivor-centred issue. Despite the unresolved issue and their unmet demands, these activists have remained committed to the cause, and the Wednesday Demonstration held in front of the Japanese embassy marked the 1,000th weekly protest in 2011. To commemorate the plight of 'comfort women' and celebrate the survivors' persistent activism for justice and women's human rights, a memorial to these remarkable women named the Statue of Peace was erected by artists and activists. The statue has become a symbol that represents the victims of military sexual slavery by Japan and echoes the call for an official apology and legal compensation.

According to the participants of this research, the statue symbolizing 'comfort women' caught their attention and caused them to take action to stand up for grandmothers. Contrary to

the geopolitical power struggle over the monuments, participants do not agree that the statue is a tool to disgrace Japan. Instead, they acknowledge that it should be considered a historical symbol to immortalize the legacy of these survivors and remind us that we should never forget the human costs of war and colonialism. As such, in spite of Japan's nationalist and hostile reaction towards the erection of the statue, identical statues and similar memorials have been erected across South Korea and in various cities across the world to reflect empathy, remembrance, and solidarity.

While military sexual slavery by the Japanese army during World War II was not fully acknowledged by either South Korean or Japanese governments, the issue was placed on both nations' political and diplomatic agenda in December 2015. Their Foreign Ministers announced a private agreement on the 'comfort women' dispute reached through a secretive negotiation. This matter was considered to be "finally and irreversibly" resolved because all conditions were met, and they agreed to refrain from bringing up this issue to criticize each other in the international arena and to look into removing the statue outside the embassy. As Kate Millett claims, patriarchy equipped with universality and longevity as its greatest psychological weapon has a still tenacious or powerful hold (58), and the survivors' voices were not reflected in the agreement at the negotiation table constituted by the predominantly male officials; instead the matter was approached for political expediency rather than justice or human rights. In the agreement, Japan's acknowledgement of responsibility for military sexual slavery by Imperial Japan during World War II remained ambiguous, and both Seoul and Tokyo have faced public backlash against the deal without a sincere apology. Both countries have been criticized by scholars and activists for treating the issue of military sexual slavery as a nationalist concern

with little regard for its real victims—the halomis who survived the harrowing experience of Japanese comfort stations.

During the 12-week period of this study's participant observation of the Wednesday Demonstration, the request for the invalidation of the agreement was the primary agenda for the Korean Council and protest participants. Every week, the Korean Council refuted the agreement and declared that it should be withdrawn immediately because an apology and compensation were not directly made for the victims and survivors by Japan's Prime Minister. The Korean Council's argument is consistent with its demand that it has requested for the survivors over the last 26 years. Further, the protesters of the rallies and the interviewees of the research endorsed the Korean Council's response because they believe that their own government failed to support the survivors and fight for their human rights by giving up discussing the issue as an international agenda.

However, the Wednesday demonstration has not gone without its own share of criticism. The same nationalist views that have contributed to the challenge of resolving these issues have appeared within the Korean Council and Wednesday Demonstrations. The Korean Council's negative response to the agreement and strategy to nullify Japan's compensation was a clear demonstration of the undercurrent of nationalist sentiment in the movement, as was its reaction to the Asian Women's Fund (AWF). In both cases, they described the Japanese government's offering as an offense to national pride. Additionally, while Korean feminists succeeded in bringing the issue of 'comfort women' to the societal and political agenda through their solidarity efforts and awareness-raising in the international arena, it has still created a strong antipathy towards Japan among the public. Though this is helpful for drawing attention to the

issue, it reinforces the critique that the movement legitimizes a nationalist discourse which lacks feminist concerns.

Furthermore, the recent emergence of Vietnamese survivors speaking of sexual violence they experienced at the hands of South Korean soldiers has raised questions about the nation's hypocrisy. South Korea, considered as the Asian country most significantly affected by sexual abuse during the wars is also a perpetrator that exploited women sexually for Korean soldiers during the Korean War and for the American army after the war, and Korean soldiers deployed to Vietnam to fight alongside the U.S, raped many Vietnamese women, But as the South Korean government does not admit its own wartime crimes, Vietnamese survivors have launched campaigns for investigation of this issue, demanded an apology from the South Korean government, and brought South Korea's hypocrisy and nationalist views increasingly under scrutiny. As the country that holds the 'comfort women' movement to demand an apology and legal compensation from the Japanese government, this reflects a contradictory, hypocritical, and ambiguous attitude toward sexual violence against women. The world carefully watches the response of the Korean Council and Korea's women's movements as well. This is especially relevant when considering how the Nabi Fund—a fund created to support women of wartime sexual violence around the world—has been offered to Vietnamese survivors by the Korean Council as a part of the nationalist agenda to attempt to reconcile with survivors without the South Korean government's acknowledgement of its war crimes during the Vietnam War.

This criticism is why transnational feminist solidarity is significantly important at the weekly protest. Since the early 2000s, human rights rhetoric on the issue of survivors of military sexual slavery has grown and taken centre stage, and women's human rights and transnational feminism have become key strategies employed at the weekly protest to resolve the issue. Many

participants assert that the ‘comfort women’ issue should be considered as a human rights matter and a peace movement. Moreover, the Wednesday Demonstration provides a political and feminist space for the survivors to start communicating with other survivors and supporting other victims beyond the border who suffered sexual violence, with initiatives like the aforementioned Nabi Fund. The Wednesday Demonstration is the place to put revolutionary ideas into action and reinforce solidarity.

The feminist discourse on the issue of military sexual slavery has made a significant contribution to the success of the persistent activism that helped the women who were brutally oppressed in a patriarchal and nationalist system. Even though feminism cannot ignore nationalist discourse as the ‘comfort women’ issue is a matter of state violence committed by nations, nationalism is, by its nature, incompatible with feminism. As such, it is difficult to reconcile the complexity and the tension between feminism and nationalism. To encourage more feminist allies and solidify transnational feminist solidarity to address all factors—from gender and patriarchy to colonialism and national pride—a viable solution to the issue needs to be created by both nations and supporters.

In sum, these grandmothers who revealed the plight of military sexual slavery 26 years ago still fight for justice and women’s human rights in the age of the #MeToo movement when issues of sexual violence are at the forefront of Western society. The survivors’ tireless participation in the justice and peace movement and their supporters’ persistent advocacy for ‘comfort women’ are the driving force raising awareness of the ‘comfort women’ issue and maintaining the Wednesday Demonstration to demand an official apology and legal compensation. Their tenacious persistence helps break intergenerational gaps and build strong solidarity between the grandmothers and younger generations. Moreover, the positive

reinforcement of their powerful advocacy delivers the message that the issue of military sexual slavery by Japan can be resolved when the international community thoroughly reflects on itself about its history. At the Wednesday Demonstration, a 90-year-old survivor, Yong-soo Lee shouted loudly, “Age is only a number! My age is absolutely good enough to actively work for justice!” Much like this grandmother’s long-lived commitment, the Wednesday Demonstration should continue to actively seek justice for as long as it takes for the fight to be won, and its physical symbol, the Statue of Peace, should continue to be spread across the world as transnational feminist solidarity paves the path to peace and resolution for ‘comfort women.’

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. Would you introduce yourself and what organization you represent? What is your position within the group?
2. When did you attend the 'Wednesday Demonstration' first? So far, how many times have you participated in?
3. How do you receive information about this event? Email, Social network (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), Newsletter, Media, etc.
4. What made you pay attention to this protest? (Why do you attend this movement?)
5. Why do you think that survivors and supporters have been still fighting for recognition for 25 years? What has made them continue this protest for a long time?
6. Do you find any changes of the demonstration in comparison with the initial stage? If yes, how?
7. What should we do to develop strategies to extend such solidarity with survivors to organization-to-organization, region-to-region and nation-to nation?
8. Have you ever joined in any other social movements or demonstrations? Did you find any differences between the Wednesday Demonstration and others? If yes, what and how?
9. Do you think that this movement is relevant to us in the present? Why? How?
10. Why is this movement necessary?
11. Do you think that the Wednesday Demonstration is a nationalist movement?