

FRIENDS of "COMFORT WOMEN" in AUSTRALIA

Newsletter No. 7 August/September 2007

* Due to the lateness, the update from World Conference in October is also featured here.

15 Aug Parliamentary Briefing

Marking the anniversary of end of WWII, 15 August is Global Day of Action for "Comfort Women". In Australia, FCWA in collaboration with Green's Senator Kerry Nettle organised a Parliamentary Briefing.

At the briefing, Australian survivor Jan Ruff O'Herne, ANU Professor Hank Nelson and FCWA campaign co-ordinator Anna Song each presented to a small but committed number of MPs, academics and activists in Canberra.

Senator Nettle showed her commitment to moving a cross-party motion on "Comfort Women" following the successful example from the US House of Representatives.

Statement from Jan Ruff O'Herne, report from Anna Song and pictures from the day are available on our website – www.fcwa.org.au

Thank you to Judit Kovacs, our volunteer, for photos and transport on this day.

FCWA Activists meeting 25 August

FCWA members gathered in Sydney to help organise fundraising concert as well as discuss strategic plans for the motion in senate. Members based in Sydney took on the task of arranging another meeting with Senator Nettle to follow up on parliamentary briefing.

Another member took on the task of getting FCWA the tax deductible status with ATO.

Korean Film Crew visits Jan

Documentary makers from Korea paid a visit to Adelaide to interview Jan Ruff O'Herne at her home for a new documentary initiated by UN Human Rights Policy Centre in Korea.

The documentary will include interviews with survivors from Korea, China, Philippines and Australia and overall updates on the issue. The purpose of this project is to raise public awareness outside Asia, via screening on channels such as PBS in USA and others. We look forward to its release!

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"Comfort Women" Motion in Our Senate

On September 11, Labor Senator Penny Wong moved motion 882 on "Comfort Women". In hearing the news, FCWA mobilised our networks to increase the chances of its successful passage. Our actions included vigorous letter writing action to Prime Minister Howard's Bennelong office by Korean Society of Sydney and visit to Senator Lyn Allison in Melbourne by FCWA with supporting group Japanese for Peace, and an opinion editorial piece in the Canberra Times by ANU Professor Tessa Morris-Suzuki on 18 September.

Unfortunately, however, motion 882 on 19 September failed to pass by just one vote. Moreover, Liberal Senator Marise Payne moved a surprise motion "commending" the Japanese government! On 20 September, this motion containing such errors passed. But not without resistance – before the vote Democrats Senator Lyn Allison moved an amendment and statements from Senator Wong and Nettle made clear of their opposition and commitment for a motion in support of the survivors' demand for justice.

Although this is a disappointing result, FCWA has consolidated official support from the Green, Democrats and Labor parties and will take more strategic steps in the future.

"The Jammed" & Butterflies of Hope

In the movie "The Jammed", a powerful portrayal of trafficking and sexual slavery of women in Melbourne, there is a butterfly necklace.

The butterfly is a symbol of "Comfort Women" signifying the silence and suffering they endured, and for some enduring still 60 years after WWII, which they now hope to transform into hope, beauty and freedom.

To connect the past and present forms of sex slavery of women which illustrates its the persistent cycle that we must break, writer and director of "The Jammed" Dee McLachlan has generously offer to donate the butterfly necklace to the museum for "Comfort Women" in Korea. FCWA will gratefully receive this in the near future.

World Conference in LA, Oct 07

From 4 to 7 October, World Conference on Japanese Military Sexual Slavery was held in LA, USA bringing together survivors, NGOs, academics and legal experts – including Patricia Sellers, a Special Advisor to the Gender and Women's Rights Division on the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On Wednesday 3 October, the conference participants also held a Wednesday Demonstration in downtown Los Angeles.

Summary of some suggested actions from the conference are:

- University student bodies passing a resolution on the issue, establishing a policy on campus for any visitors representing the Japanese government to be answerable on outstanding apology to "Comfort Women".
- Promoting education of "Comfort Women" through study tours of teachers, like the one organised by ALPHA in Canada.
- Prepare documents for circulation and lobby governments in the UN Human Rights Council to question Japan on its human rights crimes.

Thank you to the World Conference Organising Committee and volunteers. Also, a thank you to the Women's Department, University of Melbourne Student Union for its grant, which facilitated FCWA's participation to the conference.



Thank you, Friends

Last but not least, in August/September, FCWA received amazing grassroots support in our awareness raising and fundraising efforts.

We'd like thank you, friends to the following people and organisations for their time, support and efforts.

FCWA Film Fundraiser - Melbourne

Louisa Shellingford - Brown
Mohita Roman
Monash Korean Student Club
Women's Action Collective, Melbourne University Student Union (WAC)
Japanese for Peace

Fundraising Concert - Sydney

Kim Seung Il
Moon Yeon Cho
Vivian Pak
Duet of Love
Korean Society of Sydney
Various Korean community newspapers in Sydney

Exhibition for "Comfort Women" - Sydney

Sherry Lee
Kim Seung Il

People into APEC! Exhibition

Adrian Pen
Shin Joon Shik
Vivian Pak