



Asian American Youth Council

"For the Youth, By the Youth"

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The Asian American Youth Council was founded 2017 with the central objective of representing the Asian American voice. We have amassed more than 70 youth activists, from 30 different schools across the United States and abroad, each of whom brings their own experience in civic engagement to represent the Asian Community. As young individuals, we strive to address current social issues regarding race, gender, and politics, primarily by raising social awareness on the political rights of minorities, including Asian Americans. Through the development of our organization, we aim to cultivate influential leaders for our community and to encourage the youth to partake in the society they live in. By combining the passion of our youth activists, the Asian American Youth Council aspires to create a more responsible Asian American community in which we can continue to develop new practices that will enrich not only our society but also the broader American society as well.

As our organization was founded in response to a hateful incident against our Asian American community, we believe that as young representatives of our society, it is vital to address such incidents as they occur. The recent denouncement of Korean comfort women by Professor J. Mark Ramseyer at Harvard University in his publication, "Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War," is no exception. Thus, it has come to our attention to publish a statement against such publications.

Comfort women ranged from ages as young as six to nineteen years old. The girls, who were abruptly taken from Korea, China, and other countries during Japanese occupation of those countries, were forced to become sex slaves by and for the Japanese Imperial Army from 1932 to 1945. These young girls were kidnapped after being lured in by a false promise of employment and coerced into sexual servitude, a claim which Ramseyer denies in his paper. As many of them were minors, they had no way of consenting to the persistent sexual violence committed against them, resulting in many becoming permanently infertile and left them to live the rest of their lives with deep psychological scars and internal injuries. Ramseyer's baseless claim that these young girls were contracted for sex is absurd since most comfort women were minors who could not even be bound to any legal contract, especially to sexual slavery. Due to the traumatic experience and aggression done to them, many of these girls committed or attempted suicide, believing death would be a better solution than living under the inhumane conditions presented to them as comfort women. Examples of this are the movies called *I Can Speak* and *Spirits' Homecoming*.

Mark Ramseyer, a Harvard University professor who grew up in Japan, has taught at numerous Japanese

universities and garnered the title “Mitsubishi Professor of Japanese Legal Studies” because of his connection to the prominent Japanese company Mitsubishi. Mitsubishi has donated \$1.5 million to Harvard in 1970 to supposedly solidify Ramseyer’s position which he has maintained since. Despite his claims that the professorship had “no strings” attached to the donations, he was the recipient of the Order of the Rising Sun award in 2018, serving as strong evidence that he is a Japanese sympathizer. His support implies his support of Japan’s continued effort to eradicate the fading voices of the comfort women.

Ramseyer’s publication is just one of Japan’s many failed efforts to erase the memory of these comfort women from their dark history. Since the rise to power of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the Japanese government has continuously fought against the recognition and justice for comfort women. In one attempt, a group of Japanese scholars attacked the American publishing company McGraw-Hill for acknowledging the existence of these comfort women. Ramseyer’s publication is yet another repulsive attempt by the Japanese government to ignore and deny justice for the comfort women.

Given Ramseyer’s position at one of the most prestigious universities, Ramseyer is unjustly promoting efforts to erase the memory of these survivors of abuse. It is insulting to those who have endured sexual violence, psychological trauma, and social stigma resulting from these crimes. Today, only about twenty Korean comfort women, a number that will continue to dwindle as the years go by, are still alive to tell their stories and injustice done against them.

Despite the publication regarding the sensitive topics of sexual violence and violation of basic human rights, it must also be recognized that Ramseyer’s statement is unapologetically detached from all emotion. It is imperative that a reputable professor of Japanese history must be impartial in his research; yet, Ramseyer has cited no Korean sources in his publication, further proving his support as a of the Japanese government and its persistent approach to the erasure of the war crimes that they committed. When asked why he did not cite Korean sources in his publication, Ramseyer replied by stating that he could not read Korean, which further implies his bias and willingness to spread very opinionated and misleading information.

The clear bias that emerges from his background and his lack of historical, political, and emotional aptitude is truly unprofessional and uncharacteristic of the prestige that Harvard is universally known for. It is vital for Ramseyer to apologize for the historical inaccuracies within his paper for the sake of the comfort women and all people who have been so falsely misled by his shameless publication. We, the Asian American Youth Council, demand immediate retraction of the publication and an apology from Professor Ramseyer.

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