

Heather O'Connell
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Addressing Japan's "Comfort Women" Issue From an Academic Standpoint Response

In 1993 the "Kono Statement" was issued, acknowledging the existence of "comfort stations" run by the Japanese military during the Asian-Pacific War and apologizing for the treatment of "comfort women." This statement was the result of demands for apologies from countries where women were taken from as well as organizations within Japan. However, some politicians claim that the statement dishonored Japan's dignity and partially retracted the Kono Statement.

An important issue brought up in this article is Abe's narrow definition of the comfort women problem as "whether or not the Japanese Army forcibly relocated women by violence or threats." By reducing the scope of the problem, Abe invites questions such as whether or not people outside of the Japanese Army relocating women is okay or if it is acceptable if the relocation was completed without violence or threats. The reality is that the Army should have realized the criminality of their actions either way and returned the women; by not doing so, they not just accomplices, but primary culprits.

A key point related to this is whether or not comfort women should be classified as sex slaves or not. Yoshimi says that due to the four freedoms comfort women were denied—freedom of residence, freedom of movement, freedom to decline sex, freedom to quit—they were slaves. Despite this, the Japanese government claims the comfort women were allowed to move around and quit, thus insisting they were not sex slaves.

Yoshimi also says that Japan's downplaying and refusal to take responsibility for the comfort women issue degrades Japan's reputation and prevents Japan from having stronger relationships with Korea and China. Therefore, even though the current Japanese administration pretends to honor the Kono Statement overseas, ignoring it domestically means that Japan cannot move forward from the past.

I think that refusing to acknowledge and take responsibility for one's wrongdoings is more dishonorable than the original action. Especially if you once already claimed acknowledgement of the wrongdoing and then retracted it! I think that is rather foolish and a sign that you are putting what you don't *want* to do ahead of what you *should* do, which is childish. I can understand retracting a statement if new evidence comes to light, but in this case, the retraction was made before the so-called "re-investigation" which I feel is in the wrong order.