


AWARD COMPENSATION FOR COMFORT WOMEN'S SUFFERING

 JULIA PORRAS(Filipino Comfort Woman)

Solidarity greetings from Lila-Pilipina, an organization of Filipina survivors of military sexual slavery by Japan.

I am Julia Partosa-Porras, 66 years old. I am a native of Davao, one of the cities in the Southern part of the Philippines. My family resettled in Manila in 1982.

I am glad to attend the Third Asian Conference for Comfort Women and to share with you my story as one of the survivors of World War II, specifically of forcible abduction by the Japanese Army to provide sex service for its soldiers.

I was in the southern province of Davao when the war came. I was 13 years old when the troops of the Japanese Imperial Army (JIA) occupied Davao. As a young girl, I was a witness of the cruelties of war, of how women were raped and children killed by the soldiers. But I also witnessed how the Davaoans defended their people and our native land.

In 1944, when I was 13 years old, a truckload of soldiers came to our house. I was then cooking food for lunch, while my sister was washing clothes by the river beside our house.

I was brought to a tunnel in Ising, about 43 kilometers away from our hometown. Tunnels were used as a hide-out of the soldiers. Two women there when I arrive. I learned later that all women, including myself, were being used as toys by the soldiers to assuage their lust.

I never forget how I trembled in pain and fear as I sat in a corner, thinking about how the soldiers raped me. I would also feel numbed and lifeless sometimes, shouting aloud as I think of ways on how I could end my ordeal. Then I would think of ending my life. But I continued to bear the pain after the war ended. As time wore on, there was only numbness.

An officer whom I knew as Muri Sang was the one who first raped me. He would come regularly, sometimes three or four times a week.

For eight long months, I was imprisoned inside the tunnel, without adequate food, rest and water. There was no toilet, even where I could clean myself. Once I was given only a pail of water to wash my face and private parts.

The war ended in 1945, leaving behind a broken life for me. I lived in silence for more than 50 years, keeping to myself my horrible experience. My dignity was lost, but I lived on and survived.

When the first survivor, Rosa Luna Henson spoke in the open in September 1992 about her experience of sexual slavery during the war in the hands of the soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army (JIA), I trembles and felt nervous as I start to recall my painful past. Then I summoned my strength to talk about my experience.

My husband encouraged me to reveal my past. He suggested that I contact the Task Force on Filipina Victims of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan which is now known as Lila-Pilipina.

For the first time, I have experienced being cared for at Lila-Pilipina. Other people, my relatives and neighbors, ridiculed me upon knowing that I was a comfort women.

Since I joined the movement to restore the human rights and dignity of former comfort women, I learned more about myself and on how I could gain justice. I joined rallies and unashamedly spoke about my past. I attended meetings and became friendly with other comfort women like me. And yes, I cried and cried, casting out the pain until I completely outgrew the past

I want justice. Justice for myself and for other comfort women like me.

We call on the Japanese government to grant direct compensation to us. The plan of collecting charity money form the private sector will never resolve the issue of the comfort women.

We are not asking for dole-outs. What we are demanding is the direct compensation to us for actual and real damages done to our personal integrity and dignity, and the subsequent personal suffering after the war which we continue to endure.

Where is justice if the Japanese government do not face up to their political and legal responsibility to the Asian war victims, particularly the women? Only through granting direct compensation to us, the Victims, can justice be done.