

## Comfort Women Memorial Statue Walking Tour

[Please pay the \\$25 registration fee here.](#)

*All proceeds will go to "Comfort Women" Justice Coalition*

### About the memorial

The San Francisco "Comfort Women" Column of Strength is dedicated to the memory of the hundred thousands of women and girls enslaved by Imperial Japanese Army to serve as their exclusive "Comfort Women," labeled as such for the explicit purpose of sexually "comforting" their soldiers during WWII. Erected in 2017 by the "Comfort Women" Justice Coalition, a grassroots united front, this Memorial portraying Asian women is the first of its kind in any major US city. Built despite great pushback by the Japanese government in particular, its success has helped strengthen the global movement to remember this dark history and the demand for justice and a world free of sexual violence and trafficking.

The women/girls on the pedestal represent China, Korea and the Philippines, from which most were taken. The lone life-size statute gazing up at them with hopeful eyes represents Grandma Haksoon Kim of Korea, who in 1991, broke a silence of more than 40 years and exposed to the world the largest publicly institutionalized sexual slavery system in modern history.

Today, they reach out across the decades and continents, joining all the women of the #MeToo movement who are speaking out about sexual violence and continue to suffer consequences of sexual, racial and colonial oppression everywhere.

Unfortunately, the Japanese government has continued to attack the statue. In 2018, the Mayor of Osaka broke the 60-year-old sister city relationship with San Francisco over its existence. However, the city continues to stand by one of the only public memorials in the country honoring girls and women (and in particular, women of color).

Mayor London Breed has declared "These victims deserve our respect and this memorial reminds us that women and girls must be listened to, and sexual abuse and sex trafficking must be eradicated."

### Program Description

Come and join activists, educators and other NWSA members as we tour the site and understand the movement towards its development, and most importantly, deepen our understanding of the contemporary battleground for rights of women to live in a world free of systematic sexual violence.

We believe that we must depart from the conventional characterization of the "Comfort Women" issue as merely either the "Asian Women's" cause or that of unresolved wartime injustice of the bygone era in a faraway land. Instead, we see this work as part of present-day intersectional women's issue irrevocably linking the issue of sexual violence to that of racist and colonial violence.

Participants will tour the site at St Mary's Square and observe a brief ceremony program. We will walk a short distance to a nearby venue for a 3-course sit-down luncheon program with representatives from CWJC, NWSA and other guests.

This tour is offered by CWJC (with special thanks to Women for Genuine Security and Eclipse Rising) with partial funding support from NWSA, which enables CWJC to distribute its educational materials free of charge to participants.

**Ticket sales of \$25 are priced to cover basic costs. However, if extra funds are generated, they will go to further the work of CWJC.**

### **More background**

The Japanese government has yet to issue an official government apology through the Diet, to the former "Comfort Women" and their families. Instead, it has gone on the counter-offensive 'history war' by censoring the press and threatening academic freedom, punishing those who continue to teach the truth of what happened.

Japan has also systematically demanded that all statues, anywhere in the world be removed. Regrettably, this has happened in the Philippines, Germany and elsewhere. This historical denialism is part and parcel of Japan's growing militarism and its celebration of an imperial past.

Today's records reveal that the United States, which occupied Japan after WWII, often exploited these same women who were liberated from Japanese rule, to subsequently serve in US military camptown brothels. On the other hand, the US placed the very surviving leaders of Imperial Japan into positions of power in the new postwar regime it created. Today's ultra-right-wing prime minister Shinzo Abe descends, quite literally, from these war criminals, in ideology and lineage: he is a grandson of *Nobusuke Kishi*, a war criminal handpicked by the US to serve as the first postwar Japanese prime minister.