

TFFCW UPDATES

Vol. 1 # 1, September-October 1993 Task Force on Filipino Comfort Women (TFFCW)

I. SEPTEMBER

A. FCW Mobilization

Last September 15, the Lolos had their monthly general assembly meeting. The TFFCW conferred with the Lolos about the development of the lawsuit that we have filed there in Japan, about the reactions and responses of the governments of the Philippines and Japan, and also of the news that the U.N. have already appointed a special rapporteur which will conduct an indepth study on the situation of systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during wartime (like what the Japanese Imperial Army did last WW II) and times of internal conflicts (such as that of the current situation in the former Yugoslavia).

The Lolos also had group dynamics where they enjoyed singing and dancing. Coming out and meeting with other women who shared the same fate that they suffered gave the Lolos a renewed sense of belongingness and identity. Thus their coming to the office of the TFFCW and having a meeting with the other Lolos serves as a therapy from the horrible experience that they have undergone during the war and that still haunts them up to now.

On September 16, the TFFCW and the Lolos, wearing black dress to symbolize mourning, held a silent protest in front of the Japanese Embassy in Makati, Metro Manila where they reiterated their demands from the Japanese government, the Philippine government, and the U.N. It was also a solidarity protest with the other women anti-war protesters internation-

ally who signify their solidarity with all victims of wartime violence, particularly in the former Yugoslavia where a civil war continues to rage.

B. Solidarity Activities

Two Japanese visitors (peace singers) from the "Non-violent Direct Action Network" based in Japan met with the Filipino comfort women and the staff of the TFFCW last September 15 after the GA of the Lolos. They gave their solidarity message to the Lolos and to the TFFCW and they entertained the Lolos with their songs. The Lolos had a good time with their two Japanese visitors and they even danced to the songs of their new Japanese friends.

In September 22, 25 Japanese students, through the sponsorship of BAYAN, went to the office of the TFFCW and met with the staff of the TFFCW and with the Lolos. They interviewed the Lolos and they also gave their solidarity messages and pledged their support for the campaign for justice for the Filipino comfort women.

C. Lawsuit Updates

The second batch of the Filipino comfort women plaintiffs (there are 28 of them) filed a lawsuit in the Tokyo District Court last September 20 (the first batch was filed last April 2 in the Tokyo district court with 18 FCW plaintiffs). Sharon Contreras, a staff of the TFFCW, and Lola Amonita Balajadia, a former comfort woman, represented the new group of women plaintiffs. There is now a total of 46 Filipino

comfort women plaintiffs from the Philippines. The TFFCW have documented 100 cases of FCW so far.

D. Fund-raising activities

The TFFCW is trying to raise funds for a sewing machine (about P15,000.00) for a sewing project for some of the Lolas so that they could generate a source of income that would greatly help them in their daily needs. The TFFCW is also raising funds for the medicines of Lola Purita Canedo, 76 years old, who was diagnosed by the doctors of the Jose Reyes Memorial Hospital to be suffering from tuberculosis of the intestines. Lola Purita, who is living in poverty, has no means of purchasing her medicines and the Task Force has again borrowed money to meet this emergency need of Lola Purita.

E. TFFCW School-to-school activities

Last September 17, a Forum regarding the issue of the Filipino comfort women were discussed in the school forum sponsored by the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (Sta. Mesa, Manila) as a part of the school-to-school campaign of the TFFCW to reach a greater number of the population especially the students to learn and understand the existence and the truth about the Filipino comfort women. It is the second school forum initiated by the TFFCW, the first was held at the De la Salle University along Taft Avenue, Manila.

The third school forum was co-sponsored by the Institute of Women's Studies at St. Scholastica also located in Manila last September 27, 1993.

F. International Solidarity Activities

Last September 10-12, Nelia Sancho and Lola Rosa Luna Henson were invited to Berlin, Germany to attend the International Conference on "Women, War, and Human Dig-

nity" which was organized by women from Japan and Korea who are living in Germany. Witnesses and support groups from North and South Korea, from the Netherlands and from the Philippines and former Yugoslavia were invited to the said conference. The conference was organized prior to the visit of the Japanese Emperor to Germany on September 15 so the organizers hoped to get media attention to the conference resolutions.

G. FCW Health Care

The TFFCW includes in its program of support for the FCWs a health care system wherein they help the FCWs solicit financial and medical aid for the ageing Filipino comfort women from various organizations and individuals. The TFFCW was able to enlist the support of the Medical Action Group (MAG), health NGO based in Kamias, Q.C. and DOH through the intercession of the government-initiated Task Force on Comfort Women c/o Ms. Daphne Roxas last August. The MAG and the DOH provide free medical check-up for the FCWs. The DOH pledged to give the TFFCW 30 health cards for the use of the FCW. So far, 16 of the 30 medical cards have been given to the TFFCW.

The DOH designated three hospitals in Manila where the FCWs could go for free medical check-ups namely:

1. Dr. Jose Reyes Hospital
2. National Orthopedic Hospital
3. National Mental Hospital

They also designated 11 regional hospitals for such an arrangement namely:

1. Ilocos Regional Hospital
2. Cagayan Valley Regional Hospital
3. J. Lingad Memorial Hospital (in Pampanga)
4. Batangas Regional Hospital
5. Bicol Regional Hospital
6. Western Visayas Regional Hospital
7. Eastern Visayas Regional Hospital
8. Zamboanga Regional Hospital
9. North Mindanao Regional Hospital
10. Davao Regional Hospital
11. Cotabato Regional Hospital

The TFFCW has already accompanied a total of 10 FCWs in Manila in 26 visits to the hospitals for free medical check-ups since the inception of the health program last August. One FCW who was found to have a serious ailment and in need of continuous medical supervision is Lola Furita Canedo who was diagnosed to be suffering from tuberculosis of the lungs and intestine. She also need to undergo immediate surgery as soon as she regains her strength.

II. OCTOBER

A. National Networking

Nelia* Sancho (TFFCW Coordinator) went to Cebu (Oct.1-2) and Davao (Oct.30-4) along with Acay Sancho in connection with the BAYAN Children's Desk Seminar wherein she took the opportunity to meet with the regional chapters of the TFFCW in Cebu and Davao and some of the Filipino comfort women survivors in the said areas.

Last October 5, 1993 a Planning Consultation was held at the U.P. Asian Center on the topic of "Comfort Women and their Place in History" with historians, history professors, and women's rights advocates. The objective of which was to review Philippine history textbooks with regards to wars, how this is depicted and whether women's experiences of violence such as sexual slavery and systematic rape are referred to or not. The consultation also aimed to develop strategies on how to retell history from the point of view of the victims especially those of the women and discuss the proposals and demands of the TFFCW and the Filipino comfort women survivors for historical research of Japan's war crimes in the Philippine context, as well as inclusion in Philippine history textbooks of accounts of wartime sexual slavery of Japan.

The Consultation pushed through despite of the strong typhoon last October 5 (which

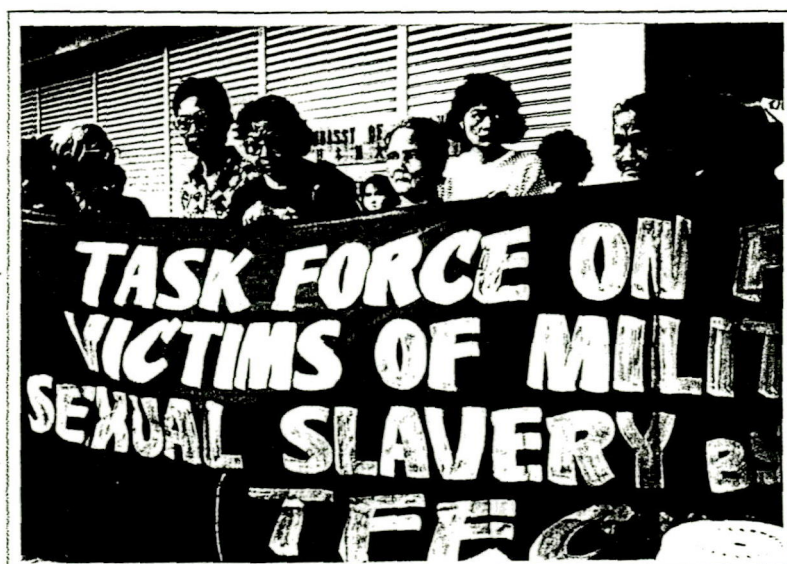
was held for half a day). The few attendees decided to form a Planning Committee among themselves in preparation for the re-scheduling of the Consultation to some future date and also in preparation for the National Conference on the Inclusion of the Comfort Women in the History Textbooks and the Legal Basis and the International Law regarding the Comfort Women.

B. International Solidarity Activities

Lola Tomasa Salinog, Lola Rosa Henson, Susan Macabuag (TFFCW Coordinator in Antique), Jeannie Layador (AWHRC staff and TFFCW volunteer), went to Japan last October 12-31 primarily to attend the First Court Trial Hearing of the Filipino comfort women case on October 15, 1993 at the Tokyo District Court which was held from 10-12 P.M. and to attend some solidarity activities. The TFFCW staff and the FCWs attended numerous solidarity speaking engagements in fora sponsored by various organizations based in Japan such as the Forum in Jichiro Hall in Tokyo (October 15, 6:30-9:00 P.M.), "Bellflower Society" sponsored Forum (Oct. 16), Forum in Kanagawa Human Rights Center, Workpia, Yokohama (Oct. 18), the 2nd Asian Solidarity Forum on Military Sexual Slavery: Testimonies of War Victims and Responses, in National Women's Education hall, Saitama (Oct. 21-22), Solidarity Forum: Testimonies, Asagaya Church (Oct. 23), Forum, Women's Department, Tochigi-Ken Association, National Committee for Buraku Liberation (Oct. 24), Forum, Missionary of Helpers (Oct. 26), Forum in Ueda (Oct.26), Joint Forum in Osaka with Korean survivors (Oct. 29), Forum, Catholic Groups in Tsu (Oct. 30).

C. Community Forums

The Community Forums are envisioned by the TFFCW to help and enable the immediate neighbors and community of the Filipino comfort women to understand their plight and gain their sympathy and support.



There will be a joint Birthday celebration of the Lolos born on the months of Oct.-Nov.-Dec. on November 21, 1993 at the office of the TFFCW from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M.

On November 22, a Protest Rally of the TFFCW will be held at Mendiola from 2:00 to 4:00 P.M.

The first community forum was held last October 16 in Navotas (Area I) from 4:00 -6:00 P.M.. It was attended by 7 FCW living in the said area and three TFFCW staff. It was also attended by some 30 audience living in the said neighborhood. The Lolos narrated their bitter experiences at the hands of the Japanese soldiers during WW II and why they chose to divulge their long-kept secrets. The TFFCW staff also gave an update on the activities of the TFFCW and the status of the lawsuit filed by the FCWs. The forum ended in a positive note with most of the audience pledging their support especially in the signature campaign.

The second community forum was held in Navotas (area II) last October 24. 7 FCW from

the same area were the speakers accompanied by the staff of the TFFCW. It was a well attended forum with 100 participants. As with the first community forum, the audience also signified their support for the Lolos.

D. Continuing Interviews with the FCW

The month of October was another hectic month for the Lolos as they were continuously being interviewed by foreign visitors and journalists, local T.V. and radio programs (such as the Probe Team and Woman Watch), and by students conducting research works about the Filipino comfort women.

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