

WE SHALL ALWAYS REMEMBER

TRIBUTE TO KANG DEUK-KYUNG HALMONI

16 MINUETS, AUGUST 1999

"We Shall Always Remember: Tribute to KANG Deuk-kyung Halmoni" is a 16-minute video, made as a sign of tribute to late Ms KANG Deuk-kyung, a much-to-remember Korean woman, who died on 02 February 1997.

KANG Deuk-kyung was born in 1929 in the province of Kyongsang-Namdo, Korea. She was sent from the colonised Korea across to the prefecture of Toyama, Japan, in June 1944, only a year prior to the end of WW2, in the first group mobilised in Korea under Japan's Joshi Teishin-Tai ("girls' volunteer labour corps") project. She was put in a munitions factory there. But the work was so hard and provision so little there she ran away. She was caught and raped by a military policeman, and put in a brothel for Japanese military. There she was kept and used by force as a "comfort woman", or sex slave, until the end of the war. Fifty years later, in 1992, KANG Deuk-kyung registered herself as a survivor of sexual slavery at the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan. She moved into the House of Sharing, Seoul, Korea, where some of the women survivors live together and help one another to this day. She became very active in the movement to demand the Japanese government for its full acknowledgement of its role in the

system of sexual slavery during the war, its due full and sincere apology, and full State compensation. She was a leading figure in the movement and her enthusiasm and character kept giving courage to many women survivors and their supporters. She also took painting lessons at the House of Sharing. Through painting her talent blossomed into the extraordinary works which we are now able to see.

KANG Deuk-kyung was an incredible survivor of sexual violence. She influenced many women and men in different parts of the world, who had a chance to listen to her, see her paintings, and especially those who got to know her personally. The ways she tried to cope with what life had brought her, and to relate to other people, were what moved people most. Now that she is gone for good, her supporters are still full of sorrow and regret that she died too young, at the age of 67, and that she never received from the Japanese government either its truthful apology or any forms of compensation or remedy, which no one should be able to deny that she was entitled to.

This video was originally put together for "women's urgent conference: truth of the past shall never

be wiped out; women shall never be silenced” held in Tokyo on 20 March 1997. At the time, an increasing number of historians, other academics and leading businessmen were beginning to advocate in Japan that “comfort women” were “only prostitutes” and that the women were no victims but “merely exercising commercial acts”. Many of us felt it was even more crucial in those circumstances to inform the Japanese public of truth. We thought it was important to provide as many people as possible with a chance to see and hear KANG Deuk-kyung with their own eyes and ears. We felt it was important for supporters ourselves also to have an effective means to remember her thoughts, feelings and experiences. Out of such thoughts and feelings the committee was formed to produce the video. The core of the committee included about ten Japanese women in their 20’s and 30’s (This group was the seed for the present Video Juku), along with four Korean students studying in Japan. The committee collected from various sources 8mmfilm records of, and other materials about, KANG Deuk-kyung. Translation from Korean into Japanese and editing were done in much of a hurry, with many others helping the committee in a variety of ways. The video was just in time for the conference, less than two months after KANG Deuk-kyung’s death. In the following two years many people who saw the Japanese version have pressed the core members to produce translated versions in various languages. This English version is the first of those which we are hoping to produce.

The production was made possible only with very generous

permissions from the House of Sharing, Buddhist Television Network and a video journalist Mr. DOI Toshikuni for the committee to use their film materials. Please note not to make or sell copies of this video without the prior written consent of the copyright holders.

The committee is keen on finding more facts about the life of KANG Deuk-kyung’s, in particular prior to and during WW2, as historical evidence. We would appreciate it most greatly if any of you with any information on the subject would kindly contact us.

Any information is welcome, but those on the munitions factory in Toyama, the Japanese military forces in and around the region and the military brothels on mainland Japan in particular would be most relevant for our next project. We commit ourselves to the efforts for the true solution of the so-called “comfort women” issue. We truly hope that you will understand the issue and become a part of the solution.

Last but not least, we wish you a great success, and the chance for you to come together with others will bring a lot of fruit to both you and the rest of the world.

English version: Video Juku, 1999.

Original Japanese version: Video Juku, the House of Sharing, Buddhist Television Network and Mr DOI Toshikuni, 1997.

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