



**SPEECH ON THE OPENING
OF THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL
DECEMBER 7, 2000
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INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**

WHY THIS TRIBUNAL?

ARE WE SIMPLY RE-OPENING WOUNDS BEST LEFT SILENCED? ARE WE RESURRECTING A PAST THAT CAN ONLY DISTURB OUR CIVILIZED COMMUNITY OF NATIONS? ARE WE SEEKING VENGEANCE?

NO.

LET JUSTICE COME THOUGH THE HEAVENS FALL. FOR TODAY JUSTICE IS OUR SUIT. AND WE SUE FOR IT IN THE NAME OF HISTORY.

FOR IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT HISTORY IS WHAT THE NEXT GENERATION WILL KNOW FROM THIS GENERATION.

WE BELIEVE THAT EVERY TIME A BRILLIANT MOMENT, AS MUCH AS A CRUEL ONE, IS NOT RECOGNIZED BY THIS GENERATION, IT SHALL NOT EXIST FOR THE NEXT.

THIS TRIBUNAL WILL NOT MAKE THAT MISTAKE. THIS TRIBUNAL WILL NOT DEFACE TRUTH.

IT WILL, UNLIKE THE POST-WAR INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL FOR THE FAR EAST, CONFRONT THE SHAME OF WAR.

THAT TRIAL INDEED HEARD TESTIMONIES OF RAPE. FOR 19 DAYS THE COURT LISTENED TO EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATING THE BESTIALITY AND ENORMITY OF JAPANESE WAR CRIMES.

IT HEARD HOW, IN EVERY ASIAN COUNTRY OCCUPIED BY THE JAPANESE FORCES, ALL MANNER OF HUMAN DEGRADATION WAS INFLICTED ON CIVILIANS. IN THAT WAR, WOMEN IN ASIA WERE PARTICULARLY SINGLED OUT. AND THEY WERE VIOLATED IN A MANNER AND SCALE THAT, IN ANY ERA, WOULD SHAKE CIVILIZATION.

YET JUSTICE WAS NOT SERVED.

MOREOVER, THIS TRIBUNAL ASKS NOW: WHY DO THE TESTIMONIES FROM ONE COUNTRY TO THE NEXT RING WITH THE SAME DETAIL OF TRUTH?

WHY IS IT THAT, PUT TOGETHER, A PATTERN EMERGES? OF A SYSTEM IN PLACE? OF AN OFFICIAL IMPRIMATUR? OF SEXUAL SLAVERY CAMPS NOT BEING THE RANDOM CALL OF LOWLY, INDIVIDUAL JAPANESE SOLDIERS?

NOTHING SHOULD SO DISTURB OUR CIVILIZED COMMUNITY OF NATIONS MORE.

KNOW THAT WE GO INTO TRIAL RECOGNIZING THE LAWS FIRMLY IN PLACE IN 1945—THE VERY LAWS RECOGNIZED BY THE JAPANESE LEGAL SYSTEM AT THE TIME AND THE VERY SAME INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAWS THAT BOUND CIVILIZED SOCIETY THEN.

THOSE LAWS RECOGNIZED SLAVERY AND RAPE AS CRIMES. AND EVEN THEN, THOSE LAWS DEMANDED PUNISHMENT.

WE GO INTO TRIAL BEFORE JURORS OF INTERNATIONAL RENOWN.

WE BRING OUR CASE THROUGH LAWYERS OF BOTH INTEGRITY AND PROBITY.

BUT MOST OF ALL, WE GATHER, IN THIS HALL, THE SURVIVORS OF THOSE CRIMES: THE WOMEN WHO STAND AS LIVING WITNESSES TO THE HISTORY WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR WRITING TODAY.

IT IS NOT MERE COINCIDENCE THAT WE STAND TODAY IN A HALL WITHIN SIGHT OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE—THE CENTER OF POWER, THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF POLICY, THE FINAL RESTING PLACE OF BLAME FOR SEXUAL SLAVERY CAMPS AS A CONDITION OF WAR.

WE HAVE COME TO BREAK THE SILENCE.

TODAY, WE WOMEN RISE TO WRITE OUR VOICES INTO THE HISTORY OF A WAR YET TO BE TOLD IN FULL.

TODAY, OUR GENERATION DRAFTS THE HISTORY BY WHICH THE NEXT ONE WILL BEST KNOW THE TRUTH.

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