

A bronze statue of two women in traditional attire stands on a pedestal in an urban setting. The woman on the left is taller and has her hair in braids, while the woman on the right is shorter and has a bob haircut. They are holding hands. In the background, there are multi-story buildings under a clear blue sky. A smaller, seated bronze statue is visible in the lower right foreground. The text is overlaid on the image in white, with a small green plus sign between the title and the author's name. Dashed white lines and a solid blue line are decorative elements on the left and right sides of the slide.

Genres of Memory and Asian/American Women's Activism

Dr. Katie Bramlett, PhD
Assistant Professor of English
Director of Writing Across the Curriculum
Cal State East Bay
katie.bramlett@csueastbay.edu

<https://tinyurl.com/kbram>



...s mem...
...an Re...
... memiliki kedudukan...
... tingkat jabatan stru...
...na, yang angkur...
...nya ada dua as...
... yang paling...
... inspektor...
...rubahan ya...
...i menamb...
...rubahan ya...



Cal State University East Bay recognizes that it is located on the ethnohistoric territory of the Jalquin (hal-keen) / Yrgin (eer-gen), the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo Ohlone-speaking People, the successors of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and other familial descendants of the Verona Band.



Positionality



- + White, Native American woman
- + Brown hair
- + Black blazer and red shirt
- + White plain background

Access Check-
In/Content Warning

[https://tinyurl.c
om/kbram](https://tinyurl.com/kbram)





OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION



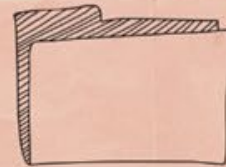
Scholarly
Conversation



Overview of
Research



In-Depth
Example

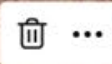


Looking
Ahead

Genres of Memory and Asian/American Women's Activism



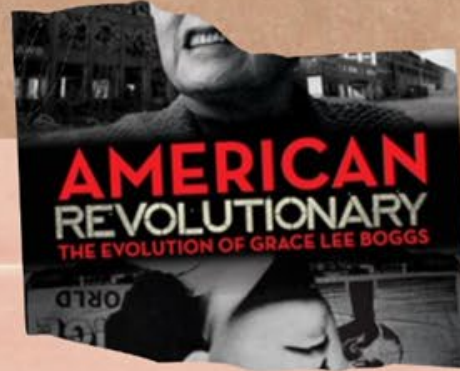
- + Completed in May 2022
at the University of
Maryland
- + Directed by Dr. Jessica
Enoch



GENRES OF STUDY



**TRAVELING
EXHIBIT**



DOCUMENTARY



STATUE



Genres of Memory and Asian/American Women's Activism

+My interdisciplinary research engages feminist memory studies, Asian/American studies, and cultural rhetorics to investigate how public memory activists leverage the affordances of different memorial genres to recover Asian/American women's activism.

Guiding Questions

- + How do Asian/American memorials contest the past and navigate the politics of memorization to influence the present?
- + How do modern memorial activist work to reimagine Asian/American women as activists and members of communities outside narrow conceptions and stereotypes?



Methods, Methodologies, and Scholarly Conversations



Cultural Rhetorics

Andrea
Riley
Mukavet
z

Malea
Powell

Jacequiline
Jones
Royster

Genres of Memory and Asian/American Women's Activism

- + Feminist memory studies expands feminist research to consider the way women are remembered or erased from public memory and how understandings of gender are composed and recast through memorialization.
- + Important influences: Haivan Hoang, Terese Guinsatao Monberg, and Joan Scott





Research Methods

Interviews

Site Visits

Current Social Political Moment

U.S./Asian Histories

Rising Violence Against Asian/American Women

- + 63% of Anti-Asian hate crimes were reported by Asian/American women
- + March 16, 2021 – Six Asian/American women were murdered in the Atlanta spa shootings



GETTY IMAGES

“All the News
That’s Fit to Print”

The New York Times

Late Edition

Today, cloudy, rain, heavy afternoon, high 49. Tonight, rain, snow later, windy, cold, low 32. Tomorrow, snow and rain early, clear, cold, high 40. Weather map appears on Page A28.

VOL. CLXX ... No. 59,001

© 2021 The New York Times Company

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021

\$3.00

A PIVOTAL RESET ON CHINA POLICY BY BIDEN’S TEAM

DIPLOMACY, NOT TARIFFS

Supporting U.S. Tech and
Searching for Allies
to Rein In Beijing

By DAVID E. SANGER
and MICHAEL CROWLEY

WASHINGTON — President Biden is engineering a sharp shift in policy toward China, focused on gathering allies to counter Beijing’s coercive diplomacy around the world and ensuring that China does not gain a permanent advantage in critical technologies.

At first glance, it seems to adopt much of the Trump administration’s conviction that the world’s two biggest powers are veering dangerously toward confrontation, a clear change in tone from the Obama administration.

For Europeans, Vaccine Doubts Grow Louder

Pause in AstraZeneca
Shots Adds to Worry

By ROGER COHEN

PARIS — It’s said that the European Union grows stronger through crises. The bloc’s attempt at a coordinated vaccination program, less a rollout than a roller coaster, has tested that theory, and now the suspension of the AstraZeneca shots in many countries threatens to turn widespread disarray into an outright debacle.

“I feel like we are being used as guinea pigs,” said Khady Ballo, 21, a law student in the southern French town of Montpellier. “I would not get the AstraZeneca vaccine even if it is approved again.”

Although it seems likely that the European Medicines Agency, the 27-member union’s top drug regulator, will quickly pronounce the AstraZeneca vaccine safe, millions of Europeans have been

RAMPAGE IN GEORGIA DEEPENS FEARS OF RISING ANTI-ASIAN HATRED IN U.S.





MY ETHNICITY
IS NOT
A VIRUS



“Dragon Lady”

+Exotic

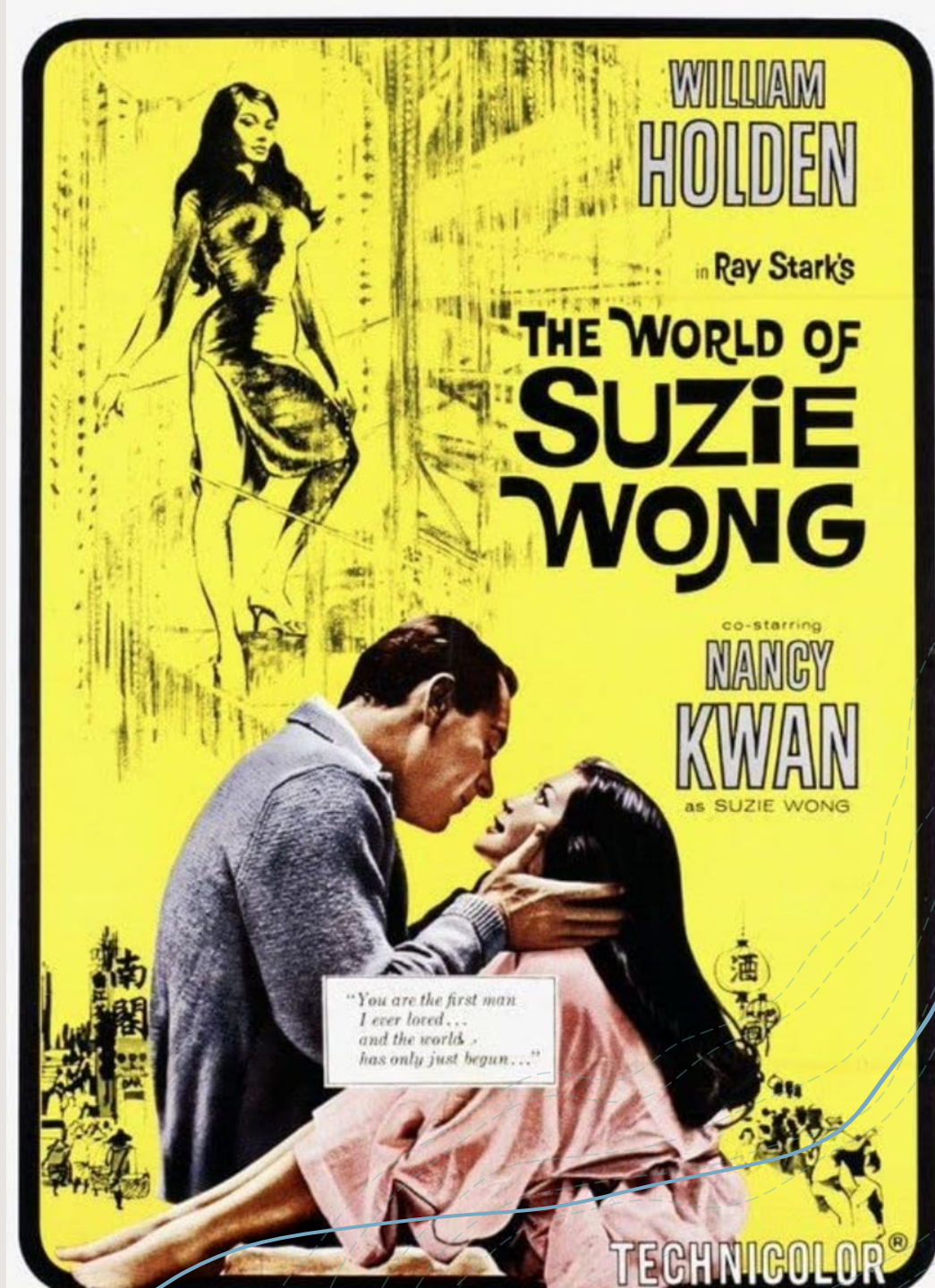
+Evil Seductress

+Untrustworthy

+Source of crime/violence

“Lotus Blossom”

- + Also known as the “China Doll”
- + Submissive/passive
- + Desperate to be saved by white men
- + Sexualized Object
- + Obedient





Mindy in *Emily in Paris*



Family Guy



Full Metal Jacket

+



Miss Saigon, 2018



Research Overview



“Stories of Filipina Suffrage: Remembering Marginal Histories in Colonial Contexts”





Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition

*Rhetorics from 5th century BCE
Coalition since 1989*

[Home](#) [The Coalition](#) [Peitho Journal](#) [FemRhet Conference](#)

Peitho

Journal of the Coalition of Feminist Scholars
in the History of Rhetoric & Composition

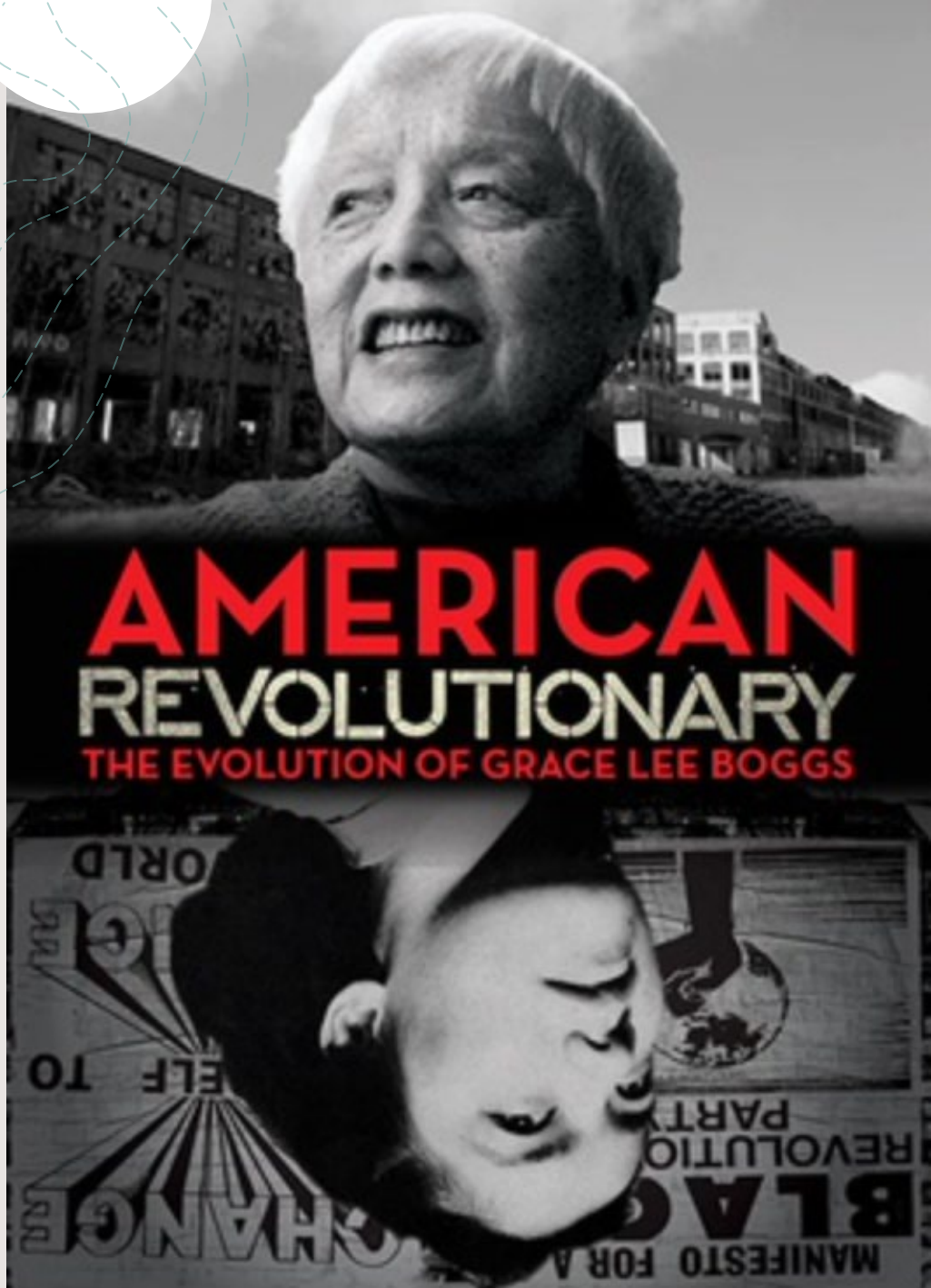


Stories of Filipina Suffrage: Remembering Marginal Histories in Colonial Contexts

[Peitho Volume 22 Issue 2 Winter 2020](#)

Author(s): Katie Bramlett

Katie Bramlett is a PhD candidate at the University of Maryland where she teaches classes in writing, feminist memory studies, and Asian American literature. Her research works at the intersection of Asian American rhetoric, public memory, and



“Documenting Afro-Asian Allyship in Detroit: Remembering Grace Lee Boggs’ Seventy Years of Activism”

Sculpted Advocacy:
Remembering the
“Comfort Women”
through the San
Francisco Pan-Asian
Coalition Statue



The Comfort Women Justice Coalition (CWJC)

- + The 'Comfort Women' Justice Coalition is “a grassroots, multi-ethnic and multi-national group of individuals and organizations that are part of the global ‘Comfort Women’ Justice Movement.”
- + The memorial symbolizes “the coalition’s international efforts to stop atrocities being repeated, as well as a reverent statement to the victims of sexual violence and human trafficking” (Khrebtan-Hörhager and Kim 445).

The Column of Strength

+The statue remembers the “comfort women,” the thousands of Asian women who were forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese army during WWII.

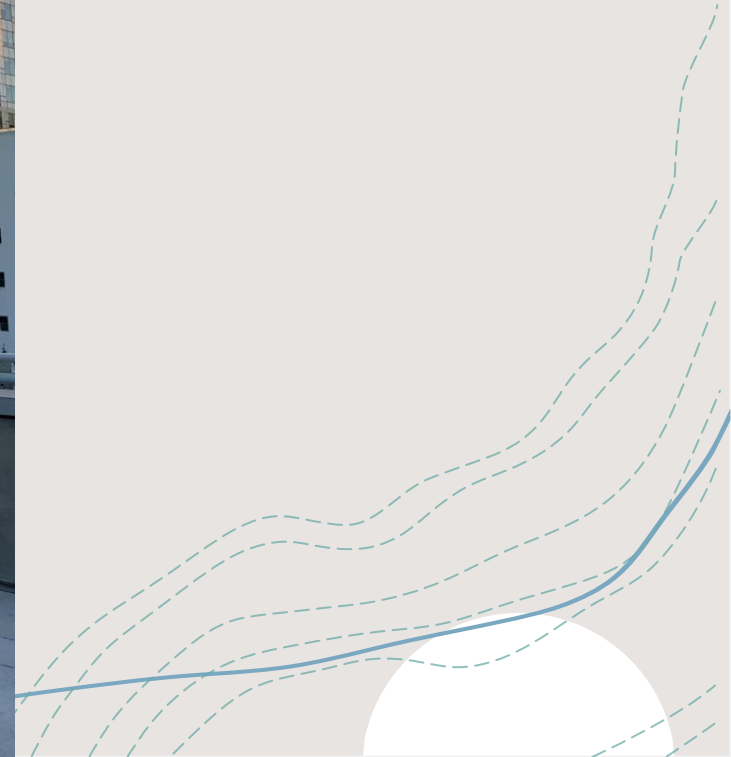


The Column of Strength

- + Few memorials that remember rape domestic violence, or other crimes against women.
- + Many see rape or other sex crimes as a private ordeal not meant for public display.
- + How should we memorialize rape or sex crimes?



How does the
CWJC rhetorically
use the genre of a
statue to represent
Asian/American
women?



“Comfort Women”

- + Whose voices should be heard?
- + What does it mean to memorialize sex crimes and trauma?
- + Who has the right to Asian women’s memory?





1. Historical Overview
2. Japan's response
3. Analysis and Conclusions

Comfort Women

- + Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)
- + Korean, Chinese, Filipina, Indonesian, Dutch, and more Asian women were forced into sexual slavery
- + There were anywhere between 200,000-400,000 “comfort women”



+ Photo by Sergeant A. E. Lemon: Chinese and Malayan comfort women in 1945. Part of the *Imperial War Museums* collection.

Kim Hak-Sun

- + First “comfort woman” to speak out in August 1991
- + Inspired over 240 other women to share their testimonies
- + Began the “Comfort Women” Movement



Historical Denialism and Japan

+ Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and other government officials have directly questioned Japan's involvement in the comfort stations and suggested that the women were not coerced but were paid volunteers or sex workers (Pike 3-4).

Popular Japanese Culture works to romanticize the “comfort women” experience



Story of a Prostitute (春婦伝, *Shunpuden*) is a 1965 Japanese film directed by Seijun Suzuki.



Tamura
Taijirō's 1947
novel -
Shunpuden



From *Girls Trying to Bring About National Pride*, a 2016 Japanese Manga by Akiko Tomita



From Yoshinori Kobayashi's 1998 manga. Translates as "...becoming military comfort women meant tremendous upward social mobility and... it is really impossible to imagine forced mobilization"

“Comfort Women” Statues

- + 60 “comfort women” statues
- + The 2017 *Column of Strength* was the first statue in a major U.S. city



Memory War

+ In October 2018, Japan officially ended six decades of intercultural relationships between sister cities Osaka and San Francisco refused to take down the *Column of Strength* (Ingber).



From "The J Facts" published in *Will* magazine, April 2014.
Story by Mitsuhiro Fujii. Illustration by Yuuzan Ookumo. Produced by Rompa Project.



Analysis and Conclusions





“Comfort Women” Statues

+ *Statue of Peace* (right) appeared in 2011 in Korea outside the Japanese Embassy





이등박문(이토 히로부미) 죄악 15개 조항

1. 한국 경제발전을 소멸한 죄
2. 한국 주권을 침탈한 죄
3. 동양인의 인권을 짓밟고, 일본을 위대한 나라로 만들기 위하여
4. 동양인 학살을 자행한 죄
5. 동양을 강탈하여 황금지대를 만든 죄
6. 동양을 전 세계적으로 침략하여 세계를 지배하려 한 죄
7. 동양인의 인권을 짓밟고, 일본을 위대한 나라로 만들기 위하여
8. 동양인 학살을 자행한 죄
9. 동양을 강탈하여 황금지대를 만든 죄
10. 동양을 전 세계적으로 침략하여 세계를 지배하려 한 죄
11. 동양인 학살을 자행한 죄
12. 동양을 강탈하여 황금지대를 만든 죄
13. 동양을 전 세계적으로 침략하여 세계를 지배하려 한 죄
14. 동양인 학살을 자행한 죄
15. 동양을 강탈하여 황금지대를 만든 죄

李
國
人

일본은 식민지 시대에 동양을 침략하여
동양인 인권을 짓밟고, 일본을 위대한 나라로
만들기 위하여 동양을 강탈하여 황금지대를
만들었다.







Column of Strength





+ This diversity embodies feminist scholar Lynn Fujiwara's concept of coalitional building through multiplicity, where the groups build lines across color, affiliation, and culture that insight "shared political investments and a consciousness of difference and power" (258).





Column of Strength



Kim Hak-Sun

+ Many historical deniers worked to discredit Kim and tried to make her seem untrustworthy and greedy.



Combating Gendered Stereotypes

- + Refiguring the Dragon Lady persona through the representation of an older activist who is guardian over those who have experienced sexual trauma.





+The Column of Strength plaque

**“우리가 가장 두려워하는 것은 우리의 이 아픈 역사가 잊혀지는 것입니다”
— “위안부” 생존자**

이 기림비는 1931년부터 1945년까지 열세 개의 아시아 태평양 국가에서 ‘위안부’ 라는 미명 하에 일본제국군의 성노예가 되어야 했던 수십만 명의 여성과 소녀들의 고통을 증거하기 위해 세워졌다. 이들 여성 대부분은 전시 감금 중에 사망하였다. 이 어두운 역사는 생존자들이 침묵을 깨고 나와 용감하게 증언을 시작한 1990년대까지 거의 은폐되어 있었다. 이들은 성폭력을 전쟁의 전략으로 이용하는 것은 정부에게 책임을 물어야 하는 반인륜범죄에 해당한다는 세계적인 선언을 이끌어냈다.

이 여성들과 전 세계에 걸친 성폭력 및 성을 목적으로 한 인신매매 근절 노력에 이 기림비를 바친다.

“Ang pinakapinangambahan namin ay ang makalimutan ang aming mapait na kasaysayan noong World War II.” – dating “Comfort Women”

Saksi ang Monumentong ito sa pagdurusa ng daan-daang libong kababaihan at batang babae, na tinatawag na “Comfort Women.” Sila ang mga pinagsamantalahan at inalipin ng Imperyal na Hukbong Sandatahan ng mga Hapones (Japanese Imperial Armed Forces) sa labintalong bansa sa Asya Pasipiko mula 1931 hanggang 1945. Namatay ang karamihan sa mga babae ng habang bihag sa panahon ng giyera. Sa loob ng maraming dekada hanggang sa kasaysayan, ika-20 na siglo, nanatiling nakatago ang malaking bahagi ng kanilang katahimikan. Nakatukang hanggang sa buong tapang na binasag ng mga nakaalpas ang kanilang bilang stratehiya ng sila upang mamulat ang mundo at maipahayag na ang seksuwal na karahasan bilang stratehiya ng digmaan ay krimen laban sa humanidad, at dapat papanagutin ang mga panuhalaan.

Iniaalay ang bantayog na ito sa alaala ng “Comfort Women,” at upang tuluyan nang masagpa ang seksuwal na karahasan at pangangailaki ng kababaihan sa ka buwan ng mundo.

Steven Whyte
American, b. England 1969
“Comfort Women” Column of Strength
Bronze, steel © 2017

sfac san francisco arts commission

**“Our worst fear is that our painful history during World War II will be forgotten.”
—former “Comfort Woman”**

This monument bears witness to the suffering of hundreds of thousands of women and girls euphemistically called “Comfort Women,” who were sexually enslaved by the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces in thirteen Asian-Pacific countries from 1931 to 1945. Most of these women died during their wartime captivity. This dark history was largely hidden for decades until the 1990s, when the survivors courageously broke their silence. They helped move the world to declare that sexual violence as a strategy of war is a crime against humanity for which governments must be held accountable.

This memorial is dedicated to the memory of these women, and to eradicating sexual violence and sex trafficking throughout the world.

Gift of the “Comfort Women” Justice Coalition
Collection of the City and County of San Francisco

Our worst fear is that our painful history during World War II will be forgotten.” – “Comfort Woman” Survivor

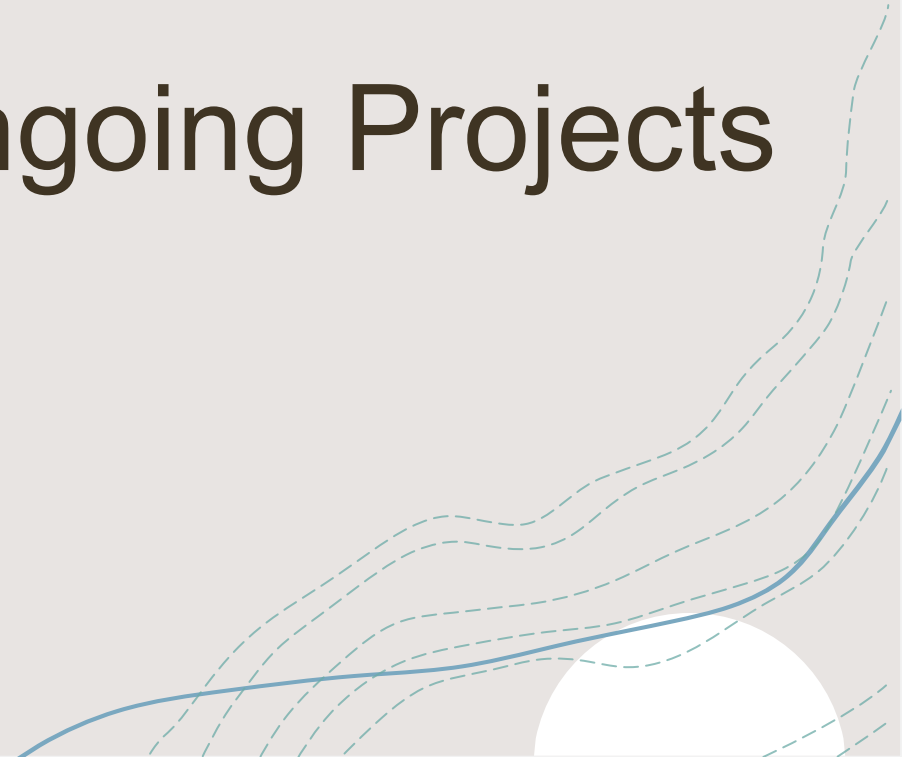


Genres of Memory and Asian/American Women's Activism





Ongoing Projects





Thank you!
Questions?

Dr. Katie Bramlett
California State University East
Bay
katie.bramlett@csueastbay.edu

Works Cited

- + Chun, Dongho. "The Battle of Representations: Gazing at the Peace Monument or Comfort Women Statue." *positions asia critique* 28.2 (2020): 363-387.

“Comfort Women”

- + The phrase “comfort women” comes from the Japanese phrase “慰安婦” which roughly translates into “comfort women” or prostitute.
- + The term is often used in quotes of the connotation of the words denotes a sense of well-being or state of existence that undermines the brutality the women endured—the comfort provided was for the Japanese Army and not the women themselves.

Asian / American

- + Terese Guinsatao Monberg and Morris Young's "Beyond Representation: Spatial, Temporal and Embodied Trans/Formations of Asian/Asian American Rhetoric"
- + David Palumbo-Liu's *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier*.
- + "the *solidus/slash* acts as both border and bridge and perhaps provides both a textual and graphic representation of movement, relationship, and a reaching across and beyond—beyond the nation-state. . . [and includes a] dynamic, unsettled, and inclusive movement between Asian and American as subject, or between Asia and America as imagined global geographies" (Palumbo-Liu)

Seven Unmet Demands of the Comfort Women Activists

1. Full acknowledgement of the Japanese government's responsibility for the sexual enslavement of women for its military
2. Official apology
3. Direct, legal reparations
4. Thorough investigation of the crime
5. Prosecution of any surviving perpetrators
6. Ongoing education in Japan's public schools
7. Building of museums and memorials

From P. Kim 196-197

Historical Denialism

- + Eric Heinze defines historical denialism as “conduct by governments aimed at curtailing critical public awareness of salient histories” (44).
- + Methods to cast doubt on the comfort women include impugning their character, misinterpreting historical material, misreading testimony, and more (Myung-Hee 49).