

The
TORONTO ALPHA
 Newsletter

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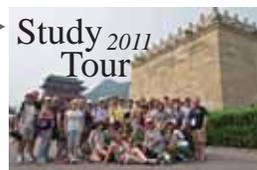
2012 JANUARY ISSUE



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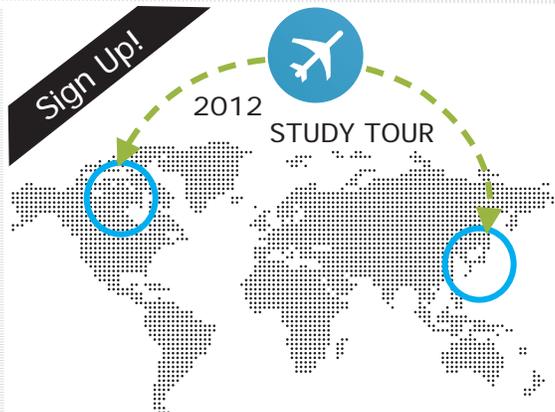
YOUTH
 Voices & Action



▶ December 14, 2011 - Ottawa
 Global Action in Ottawa in support of the Victims of Military Sexual Slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II and their 1000th Wednesday Demonstration in Seoul Korea.

Thank you!

“
 Our heartfelt appreciation to all volunteers and sponsors who have supported Toronto ALPHA's cause, vision, and work in the past years. Thank you for your encouragement and walking with us on this journey.
 ”
 - Toronto ALPHA



Application forms & details are now available!

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a world premiere play by | directed by
 DIANA TSO | BEATRIZ PIZANO

Opening: January 14 to 28, 2012
 Location: Theatre Passe Muraille



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December 14, 2011

Nearly 450 participants!



December 14, 2011 marked the 1000th time of the weekly Wednesday Demonstration. The first Wednesday Demonstration was held nearly twenty years ago, on January 8th, 1992 in Seoul Korea in front of the Japanese Embassy attended by the Grandmas (survivors of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery) every Wednesday, rain or shine, demanding the Japanese government to face their responsibilities on the crimes committed and on educating their younger generation the historical truth.

▶ 1000th Wednesday Demonstration

There were nearly 450 participants at the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration in Ottawa. We commemorate this date as it demonstrates the spirit and determination of the victims of the horrible crime against humanity to pursue justice.



“Declaration to the Government of Japan and the Japanese Parliament”



We, a group of Canadian citizens from different backgrounds and ethnicities, urge the Government of Japan and the Japanese Diet to recognise the historical facts of the System of Military Sexual Slavery enforced by the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War period in Asia. Over 150,000 young Korean girls together with tens of thousands of victims from other parts of Asia were drafted as sex slaves—the so-called “Comfort Women”.

We agree with Canadian writer and humanitarian June Callwood that, “If world peace ever happens, it has to be built on knowledge.” We also believe that true peace and reconciliation can only be achieved among nations through recognising and dealing with the unresolved historical conflicts; we can only learn how to make the future right through admitting past wrongs.

The suffering of the victims, very few of whom endured to become survivors, and the voices of the suppressed, should be heard and attended. The ‘Wednesday Demonstration’—first held outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul Korea on January 8th, 1992—has been the only way available for these survivors to seek justice for such atrocities. On every Wednesday since then, rain or shine, these survivors of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery—affectionately called Grandmas by their fellow Koreans—have been protesting in front of the Japanese Embassy, demanding that the Japanese government face their responsibilities for the crimes committed and begin educating their own people, especially the younger generation, about the historical truth.

Today [December 14, 2011] marks the 1000th time the Grandmas and their supporters have held the Wednesday Demonstration; it is a date worth commemorating because it is a testament to the spirit and determination of the survivors of these horrible crimes against humanity to pursue justice. Today in various parts of the world, people are gathering and urging the Japanese government to hear the voices of the survivors. At ages close to 90, these frail yet determined and courageous Grandmas continue to inspire the world and younger generations.

We echo their demands for the Japanese government to take responsibility in order to restore the dignity and honor of the victims, and assume a position of moral leadership among the international community.

The following is a list of our demands to the Japanese Government and the Japanese Parliament:

1. The government of Japan must officially admit and apologize for its military’s role in the trafficking and sexual slavery of women in Asia Pacific from 1930 to the end of the World War II. To realize this, all relevant official documents should be fully disclosed to reveal the truth.
2. The Japanese Diet must pass the Special Bill on the so called “Comfort Women” issue as soon as possible, in order to realize official apology, recognition of government responsibility, and compensation through legislation.
3. The government of Japan must not allow any public statements that deny the issue of Japanese military Sexual Slavery. Further, any such statement must be promptly and officially condemned by the government of Japan.
4. The government of Japan must educate its present and future generations for the purpose of non-repetition through teaching the correct history in Japanese textbooks.

Study Tour | ASIA

“

On July 14th 2011, a group of 40 educators from Canada, the United States, Germany and Japan gathered in Beijing to start the Peace and Reconciliation Tour organized by Toronto ALPHA (Association for Learning and Preserving the History of WWII in Asia). The tour lasted for 15 days, visiting Beijing, Harbin, Nanjing, and Shanghai in China and Seoul, South Korea.

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► Journals by the Participants...

July 16 Beijing

The devastation experienced by individuals who suffered was made personal and tangible through the testimonies of the victims. The hardship of the forced labour survivors at the slave labour camp in Japan made me shiver. One survivor stated that she did not feel like a human because of her experience, I saw the deep sadness in her eyes and a wound too deep to heal.

July 18 Harbin

As we walked into this building, I found myself totally unprepared for the close encounter with such level of desensitization and dehumanization. It is appalling to think that fellow human being could treat one another in such an evil way. My bones were chilled, but I also felt anger knowing that most of those responsible for such hideous criminal acts had largely escaped justice.

Right in front of us were 2 living witnesses whose lives were ruined by the extreme cruelty of humanity. Madam Li's father was taken by the Japanese Imperial Army for live experimentation while her mother was still pregnant; Mr. Li was contaminated by the chemical weapons the Japanese Imperial Army left behind after the war. Since then, their nightmares never stop.

July 20 Nanjing

We visited the former Jinling College and met a Nanking Massacre survivor. She narrated her painful story, traveling back and forth in time. She began by saying "I don't know how many times I have told my story; I had died many times". Her words pierced my heart. I had a hard time holding back my tears. I returned to the hotel, sat in the dark and had a long cry. After coming to China and Nanjing I feel a great responsibility to do something. I can no longer say "I don't know". Nanjing can happen to any country. We can never assume it won't.

Join Us
in
2012!



The 2012 Peace and Reconciliation Study Tour organized by Toronto ALPHA will take place from **July 6 to 21, 2012**. Application forms and information are now available. To inquire, please visit us online!

"For the first time ever, the itinerary will also cover Hong Kong!"



info@torontoalpha.org
www.torontoalpha.org

Study Tour | ASIA

July
23 Shanghai

Today we visited the site of a former 'Comfort Station', the House of Horror to many innocent young women. I stood in the courtyard and closed my eyes. Echoes of innocent women and young girls begging, crying, praying, and screaming for mercy were bouncing back and forth. I also imagined the raucous laughter, the shouted insults and threats of the Japanese soldiers. I looked up at the balconies that encircle it. How many of those young girls sought to end their unbearable pain and fear by jumping from the second-storey balconies onto the stone-paved ground? None of us left this house with a smile.



July
25 Seoul

Grandma Gil, another survivor of Japanese military sexual slavery, shares her heart wrenching stories with a voice shaken with anger and disparity. No Grandma Gil, I don't want you to relive your pain again; I pray that you will live a new life with happiness and love.

July
26 Seoul

Having the chance to exchange ideas with a group of Japanese teachers this morning provided us with a better understanding about the suppression and difficulties some conscientious teachers are facing in Japan. It also gives a much broader perspective about the continuous denial by the Japanese government. In the afternoon, we travelled to the House of Sharing, a complex in the countryside where several survivors of



Japanese Military sexual slavery reside. If anyone should have a tranquil and peaceful place to live, it would be these women who suffered unspeakable torture for so long. I felt a sense of happiness and relief for the grandmas who live here surrounded by people who support and love them.

July
27 Seoul

Here comes the finale of the tour. This morning we had a chance to listen to the testimonial of a Japanese veteran who once was trained how to kill in China. I wonder how many times the scene of killing his first victim appeared in his mind after the war; perhaps in another way he is also a victim. Past participants mentioned that attending the Wednesday demonstration in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul was the perfect finale of the tour. I definitely agree. Though it was the first time the grandmas could not attend the demonstration which started 10 years ago, and despite the heavy rain downpour, our hearts beat for the grandmas.

“ The tour has been beyond my expectations. This educational excursion was an informative yet very trying experience. I was physically situated in the Chinese cities and exact sites where people suffered. Listening to painful survivor testimonies, blinded by the graphic artifacts and evidence of the memorial museum, my emotions were boiled up with a mix of anger, sadness, overwhelm, and frustration. I was enraged and saddened by learning how humans can harm one another to such an extent. I was overwhelmed by the wealth of information I could not have known. And I was frustrated with how little the international community has faced this issue. I wondered why we as Canadian educators have failed to tell the story of the war in Asia. I wonder why we still say WWII started in 1939. I also wonder what I can do to ensure the Asian Holocaust is not forgotten. I feel that now, more than ever, it is my responsibility to share their stories with others so that change and justice through education can be brought for the victims.

”



YOUTH DIALOGUE
SOCIAL JUSTICE AND HUMANITY

5th Youth Dialogue

Join Us!

The Youth Dialogue is an ongoing bi-monthly project providing a platform for youth voices across Chinese, Korean, Japanese and other ethnic communities in Toronto. The dialogue unites students and youth leaders who have an interest in social justice, humanity studies, and global peace to understand the ongoing struggle in the shared history of the Second World War amongst East Asian nations. It is hoped that these youth voices would become a strong force in the process of peace making and reconciliation among nations. This ongoing event is co-organized by Toronto ALPHA and Toronto Article 9* Peace Group.

** Toronto Article 9 Group was initiated by a group of Japanese Canadian peace activists. Their mandate is to fight against the proposed abolition of Japanese Constitution Article 9 that prohibits an act of war by the state and the keeping of arm forces with war potential.*



▶ Youth Dialogue | Social Justice & Humanity



Theme | Social Justice through Art

Date: January 28, 2012
Time: 11am to 4:00pm

Art Workshop Followed by Special Play Performance: "Red Snow" at Theatre Passe Muraille
Admission Fee: \$15.00 (includes show ticket and complimentary lunch)
Guest Speakers: Jasmine Wong, Facing History and Ourselves, and Sheena Resplandor, Harmony Movement



play writer
Diana Tso



guest speaker
Jasmine Wong



guest speaker
Sheena Resplandor



www.redsnowcollective.ca
www.artsboxoffice.ca

YOUTH in ACTION



Michelle Kwong

Prior to working with ALPHA, I had heard of the Nanjing Massacre and the comfort women issue exactly three times. The first was when I was twelve years old: my dad had taken me and younger brother to ALPHA's showing of Iris Chang's docudrama. I left the theatre crying, the horrendous images of raped women were imprinted into my mind. I could not believe that such horrendous crimes were possible; worse, I did not have any prior knowledge of it whatsoever. Another was during my grade 10 history class. The final was my interview with Flora, held in an office stacked with moving boxes. Here, the passion and initiative of the people involved with ALPHA amazed me. These people continue to amaze and inspire me.

Since connecting with Toronto ALPHA, I wanted to raise awareness of these atrocities. With the express consent of my teachers, I organized two presentations from ALPHA in history classes. They were followed by a viewing of Iris Chang's docudrama, during which all students were respectfully quiet. Sixty more students are now aware of this issue; however, I strove to enlighten more. The following year, I founded the ALPHA Youth Committee at my school. I hope that students will be able to attend all of ALPHA's youth events: the dialogues, the conferences and workshops. My initial goal has never changed: I hope to continue raising awareness of these atrocities through education so that the world can live in peace.



Raymond Siu

I joined Toronto ALPHA as a Chinese-English translator around the beginning of the summer of 2010. I started off helping the organization translate academic articles, essays and interviews of survivors of the Nanjing Massacre and since then, I have learned so much about this period of history.

capable of doing if I were pushed to the edge? We like to view evil as something that 'others' commit; and we tend to see ourselves as somehow separate and above 'them'. I think it is this kind of self-righteous dichotomization that eventually leads to these acts of brutality. From my work with ALPHA, I have begun to realize that we all have within us, a seed for peace and a seed for violence. We are every bit as capable of acts of compassion as we are acts of violence, and it may largely depend on what circumstance we find ourselves in. This is why ALPHA's message is so important and why I continue to volunteer, learn and grow in this wonderful organization.

As a Chinese Canadian myself, I know it is easy, even convenient to be angry and hateful, and put the blame on the Japanese people. However, this issue is much more than putting the blame on others. When we delve into these kinds of atrocities, it makes us question our very own humanity. Could I be capable of these kinds of horrors? Would I commit those acts of violence if I were in those situations? What am I



Saerom Youn

As a Korean-Canadian, having moved to Canada at a young age, I haven't received any formal education in Korea regarding the war atrocities in WWII in Asia. However, when I heard that the Japanese government, to this day, was refusing to accept what's happened, refusing to apologize to the individuals affected by the atrocities, the blood in me boiled, urging me to go onto do something about it.

the events that took place outside of Korea, like the Rape of Nanjing, as well as the biological and chemical warfare which included lethal human experimentations. As a student studying life sciences at University of Toronto, having partaken in research personally, I knew what a grave matter this was. The fact that such injustice was still not being acknowledged by the rest of the world due to cold blooded politics behind the issue, irked me, and after meeting the survivors myself, my heart ordered my body to take action, doing what little I can in University of Toronto. This is the driving force behind the formation of U of Toronto ALPHA.

I must admit in the beginning, I was only aware of what has happened in Korea: How the country, then called Choson, was forcibly taken by the Japanese imperial army. After attending ALPHA's Conference last fall however, my view on the subject widened significantly, and I started to feel passionate towards



Dear Halmoni...

▶ Letters from the Student ALPHA Club members as they reflect on the Korean Grandmas and their stories...

“Your story made me feel sad after hearing what horrors you experienced. On your behalf, I pledge to make the Japanese government apologize before you die so you can rest in peace.”

- Sammy Ye

“Your story sincerely touched my heart. I had no idea that this kind of thing happened. I am shocked that the Japanese still have not owned up to their mistakes. You are so courageous to have been able to go through so much, and still stand strong and talk about it. I will try my best to become informed and tell as many people as possible so that your efforts do not go to waste. You are an inspiration to many people. Stay strong!”

- Jasmine Choi

“Your story made me feel shocked, angry, horrified, and upset. One action I will take on your behalf is protesting in front of the Canadian Japanese embassy in the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration. Do not lose hope. I have heard your story and I will do everything I can to let others know. Stay strong.”

- Cici L.

“Your stories made me feel inspired to ensure that history will not repeat itself. One action I will take on your behalf will be to educate others

and to allow your stories to be shared, and forever remembered.”

Rowena Tam

“Your story has moved me. I hope that one day peace will be restored to your heart. I will try my best to inform my peers of the unjust actions that the Japanese government have performed.”

- Anonymous

“Your story made me feel deeply appalled by the conditions you faced. One action I will take is to treat everyone with respect.”

- Kevin S.

“Your story has made me understand the devastation of the past and how truly fortunate I am. Thank you for sharing your story. One action I will take on your behalf is to share this incident with my friends and family. Much love.”

- Anonymous

Ruina Bao, founder of The ALPHA Club at Elliot Pierre Trudeau Secondary School is currently a Grade 11 Student at their school.