

The first civil organization formed in the US to advocate “comfort women” issue

Author: Comfort Women Action for Redress and Education

The Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issues, Inc. (WCCW) was formed in 1992, shortly after the first public testimony of Hak-sun Kim broke out. The “comfort women” issue was silent in the Korean American community, and it was virtually unheard of among the American public.

In 1992, the co-founders of the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, Chung-ok Yun and Hyo-jae Lee, sought to bring this issue to the international community, including UN. The first trip of one of the survivors, Keum-ju Hwang was organized to Geneva, UN, via United States.

Following is the chronicle of early activities carried out by WCCW until 1995. WCCW has stayed active throughout the years until now, as an all-volunteer non-profit organization, participating in the campaign to pass H.Res.121 in 2007, building a “comfort women” memorial in the Fairfax County building garden in 2014, campaign to demand acknowledgement and apology from the Japanese Prime Minister Abe in 2015 during his visit to the US, and engaging in various educational activities such as summer internship programs and exhibits and film screenings.

1992

November: Grandma Hwang Keum-ju, a former “comfort woman” of Japanese military sexual slavery during WWII testified at the United Methodist Church in Greater Washington that is covered by WTTG-TV (Fox 5).

December: Washington Coalition for Comfort Women Issues Inc. was founded and Ms. Dongwoo Lee Hahm elected the founding president.

1993

September: Washington Post publishes (October 1, 1993) a letter by the WCCW to Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa.

November: 24 U.S. Members of Congress send a petition to Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa urging his government to investigate the wartime sexual slavery regime known as the “comfort women.”

1994

February: Forum on Comfort Women co-sponsored with Georgetown University Law Center Student Association, Washington, DC.

March: Presentation on “comfort women” at the International Women’s Day Symposium on Women’s Human Rights around the World sponsored by the University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia.

May: Sponsors a forum on “Comfort Women” in Washington, DC with Mr. Kenichi Takagi, Attorney-at-Law, Tokyo, Japan. **June:** Organizes the Asian and American United to Redress Japanese War Crimes rally in front of the White House during Japanese Emperor Akihito’s visit. WCCW demands President Bill Clinton raise the “comfort women” issue with Emperor Akihito.

October: Videotapes interviews with 15 surviving “comfort women” in Seoul in order to preserve their testimonies and to produce the documentary Comfort Women.

1995

April/May: First exhibition and the film screening of Comfort Women held at the United Methodist Building, near the U.S. Capitol and the Supreme Court.

September: WCCW representatives attend the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace convened by the United Nations 4-15 September 1995 in Beijing, China. Exhibition and screening of the Comfort Women documentary.

November: Exhibition and screening of Comfort Women at the Korean American Women UN Seminar held in New York City.

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