

LA Times: Glendale unveils 'comfort women' statue, honors 'innocent victims'

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Glendale unveils 'comfort women' statue, honors 'innocent victims'

By BRITTANY LEVINE AND JASON WELLS
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Glendale city officials on Tuesday were resolute in their decision to install a 1,100-pound metal statue at Central Park memorializing Asian women and girls who were held as sex slaves by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II.

Before a standing-room-only crowd of about 300 people, officials hailed the monument to so-called comfort women as a lasting testament to the pain and suffering endured by an estimated 200,000 sex slaves from Korea, China, Indonesia and other occupied countries during the war, the [Glendale News-Press](#) reported.

“The Glendale City Council took a bold step. It took strong leadership to bring about justice, to bring about awareness of the human rights issue,” said Chang Lee, a city planning commissioner and member of Korea Sister City Assn.

The statue had been strongly opposed by Japanese nationalists who, despite the historical record, insist comfort women were acting on their own accord as prostitutes. A group of opponents, based mostly in Japan, sent thousands of form letter emails protesting the monument, but to no avail.

“We stand on the side of history. We stand on the side of truth,” Councilwoman Laura Friedman said to the pre-reception crowd in the Central Library, adjacent to the park. “[The monument] stands to honor and recognize the innocent victims of all wars.”

The statue of a woman in Korean dress sitting next to an empty chair was officially unveiled at a larger ceremony in Central Park, where nearly 500 people had gathered to watch.

There to witness the purple drape falling from the statue was Bok Dong Kim, an 88-year-old former comfort woman who travels the world to promote historical recognition of what she and so many like her went through. She has done so in the hopes of exerting political pressure on Japan to more formally recognize what comfort women endured on the front lines of the war.

“I feel like we have come halfway already,” Kim said through a translator. “I feel very, very happy — very satisfied that we are building the peace monument here in the United States.”

Glendale council members received political pressure throughout the ceremony Tuesday, but were resolute in defying sex slave deniers.

“Today, the city of Glendale stands united with its Korean population. It stands united with the truth,” Friedman said.

At Central Park, that resolve will be on display for years to come in the form of a metal statue of a girl sitting alone with a bird perched on her shoulder. Behind her on the ground is a mosaic of an older woman standing up, but crouched over.

After the ceremony, Kim sat next to the girl and held her hand.