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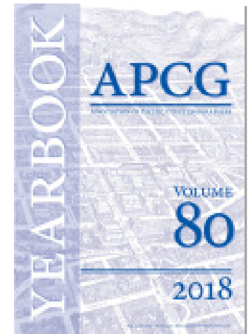

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Three Stories about a Statue

Ronald Davidson
California State University, Northridge

ABSTRACT

In 2013, Glendale, California, installed "Peace Monument," a bronze statue representing "comfort women"—girls and women coerced to work in brothels serving Japanese soldiers during World War II. Japanese groups deny such women were coerced and sued to remove the statue. The conflict over the monument attests to California's deepening ties across a Pacific region haunted by conflicting nationalist memories of World War II. But the monument speaks to other themes as well, including the increasing cultural impact of Korean-American groups on the Southern California landscape, and the recent diversification of subjects honored in monuments both locally and nationally. The paper outlines these three stories about the statue for their interest to West Coast geographers. The larger point is that, as California continues to broaden and deepen its relationships with other Pacific peoples, the state's landscapes will become increasingly multi-layered with stories about these relationships within California's own unfolding modernity.

Keywords: *comfort women; parks; Korean-Americans; Glendale, California*

Introduction

One of the most bitterly contested public monuments in the United States—elbowing for the distinction among those honoring the Confederacy, the Ten Commandments, and a goat-horned Satan making headlines in recent years—is to be found in a quiet corner of Glendale, California. Located in Central Park Paseo, just outside the bustling commercial artery of Brand Boulevard, "Peace Monument" consists of a woman sitting in a chair with a second, empty chair beside her, and a plaque inscribed with text. The tension in the woman's shoulders, the way she holds her hands balled into fists, and—especially—her expression of bitterly endured injustice, defy the serenity of the park and give the monument a disturbing power. The design, however, is not what makes the monument controversial.

The controversy stems from the version of history told by the statue. "Peace Monument" represents South Korea's—and the international community's—understanding of "comfort women," the euphemistic term for the

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Figure 1.—"Peace Monument". The plaque reads:

"I was a sex slave of Japanese military"

- Torn hair symbolizes the girl being snatched from her home by the Imperial Japanese Army.
- Tight fists represent the girl's firm resolve for a deliverance of justice.
- Bare and unsettled feet represent having been abandoned by the cold and unsympathetic world.
- Bird on the girls' shoulder symbolizes bond between us and the deceased victims.
- Empty chair symbolizes survivors who are dying of old age without having yet witnessed justice.
- Shadow of the girl is that of an old grandma, symbolizing passage of time spent in silence.
- Butterfly in shadow represents hope that victims may resurrect one day to receive their apology.

Peace Monument

In memory of more than 200,000 Asian and Dutch women who were removed from their homes in Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, East Timor and Indonesia, to be coerced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Armed Forces of Japan between 1932 and 1945.

And in celebration of 'Comfort Women Day' by the City of Glendale on July 30, 2012, and of passing of House Resolution 121 by the United States Congress on July 30, 2007, urging the Japanese Government to accept historical responsibility for these crimes.

It is our sincere hope that these unconscionable violations of human rights shall never recur.

July 30, 2013

Figure 2.—Central Park Paseo. "Peace Monument" is visible at far left.

girls and women coerced to work as prostitutes for Japanese soldiers from the early 1930s until 1945. Many Japanese—especially the conservative, nationalistic ones who have gained influence in recent decades—dispute that the women were coerced and hence contest the version of history embodied by the monument. Japanese-Americans protested the installation of the monument in petitions, the media, and the courts. By doing so they formed one line of defense against the diffusion of the internationally accepted version of "comfort women" history into public space and consciousness in the U.S. Ironically, then, we see that one of America's most controversial monuments is unknown to most Americans, involving a dispute between two distant nations over events that occurred decades ago.

But this dispute is only one story to be told about the remarkable statue. In this paper I briefly sketch three that I believe to be of significant interest to West Coast geographers. While I devote most of my space here to the controversy outlined above, the article is meant to suggest the richness of the statue in telling multiple geographic stories. This richness reveals much about the place in which the statue is found. The Pacific region is attaining ever-greater centrality in world affairs. As it does, California will continue to broaden and deepen its relationships with other Pacific peoples, and the

state's landscapes will become increasingly thick with stories about these relationships, forged within California's own unfolding modernity. The other two stories outlined here also speak to these themes. They concern the growing cultural presence of Korean-Americans in Southern California, and the belated increase in the diversity of subjects depicted in public monuments both locally and nationally.

1. Far from the Maddening Koreatown

Logically, the first of the three stories concerns the increasing presence of Korean-Americans in the social, economic, and political life of Southern California. But the monument also speaks of the divided and often conflicted nature of this presence.

Koreans have only relatively recently joined the "ethnic quilt" of Southern California in a substantial way (Allen and Turner 1997). True, Los Angeles was already the Korean capital of the United States in the 1930s, but it achieved that distinction with a population of just 650 Koreans. Their cultural and spatial center at the time was the Korean Presbyterian Church on West Jefferson Boulevard. Hawai'i's admission to the Union as a state in 1959 triggered a wave of Korean immigration to Southern California, but truly dramatic growth in their numbers occurred only after immigration reform in 1965. In 1970, Los Angeles County was still home to just 9,000 Koreans (Ableman and Lie 1995); however, that population would increase by 20,000 a year through the decade (Starr 2004). By 1980, Koreatown had emerged as a major ethnic enclave, serving as the community's economic center and symbol of Korean-Californian cultural presence. Koreatown gave tangible form to the Anglo establishment's stereotype of Koreans as "quintessential American immigrants" who had arrived "in great numbers, established businesses, and prospered" (Starr 2004, 162). By 1990, the 600,000 Koreans in Southern California comprised the largest Korean community outside Korea (ibid.).

But the Korean immigrant narrative is not a simple linear one about the growth and integration of "a" (i.e., coherent, unified) Korean community into Southern California's economic or social mainstream. In 1992, the "worst civil disturbance in contemporary American history" (Starr 2004, 137) took form largely as an attack on Korean-owned businesses by Koreatown's African-American and Latino neighbors; Korean-owned businesses sustained half of the nearly $1 billion in damages caused by the riot (Starr 2004). Economic competition had fueled resentments between Koreans

and the other groups for years. These resentments had been expressed, for example, in African-American boycotts of Korean-owned stores in New York, and in Latino allegations that Korean business owners paid employees less than the minimum wage (Sabagh and Bozorgmehr 2003). Resentment was enhanced by the culture gap that distanced Koreans—conditioned by Korean-Confucian mores, and not prone to polite small talk with strangers, for example—from other ethnic groups. Still, Koreans felt that they had played hard by American rules, and as a "model" immigrant group felt deeply affronted by the Riot, subsequently asking the Korean government to demand an apology from that of the United States (Starr 2004). The Riot thus brought into relief divisions between Koreans and other ethnic groups, and engendered in Koreans a sense of betrayal by the dominant society.

The rioters who attacked Koreatown were presumably directing animosity toward Koreans conceived monolithically, as a group. This is, in a sense, understandable, as "K-Town," with its plethora of Hangul-only signage and restaurant menus, bespeaks a hermetically sealed world of ethnic inside-ness and unity. In truth, however, Koreatown is best seen as a symbol of Korean disunity. The Koreans who built, and, after the Riots, rebuilt Koreatown were also fleeing it. With an inheritance of Confucianism and the memory of crushing labor exploitation under Park Chung-Hee's 1961–79 dictatorship, Korean immigrants fervently strove to liberate themselves from working-class life. Success in this endeavor has mandated living outside of Koreatown. Viewing Koreatown as an inner-city neighborhood with crime problems and struggling public schools, upwardly mobile Koreans have escaped into suburbia. Thus the nighttime population of Koreatown is multi-ethnic, with Latinos comprising the majority resident group (Lee and Park 2008). Koreans live dispersed throughout the region, with notable populations in the South Bay, the San Fernando Valley, Pasadena, La Crescenta and, of course, Glendale (Ableman and Lie 2015). As numerous scholars have shown, suburban living is not conducive to community making (Putnam 2000). Koreans were slow to connect via homeowners associations, and Korean churches remain divided along denominational lines. The largest Korean voluntary association, Korea Federation, has a history of infighting and failed to effectively represent Korean interests in the wake of the LA Riot (Ableman and Lie 1995).

Against this backdrop of division, the "comfort women" monument tells a somewhat contrasting story about how Koreans as a group are attaining greater recognition in Southern California (and the state as a whole). At a

local level, the monument shows the collective impact that the 10,000 Korean residents of Glendale (approximately five percent of the city's total population) are having on the city's fabric (Mikailian 2016). Even individualized in suburbia, Koreans constitute a sufficient percentage of the town's population to be molding landscapes in their image (Cosgrove 1989). Half a dozen churches in or close to Glendale are Korean, and Korean restaurants are scattered along the central corridors of Glendale's business district. Bibigo, a Korean-American fusion restaurant, has taken its place alongside Chipotle and Cinnabon in the local mall food court and in others across Southern California. To these landscape elements we may now add the "Peace Monument," in a place of honor in Central Paseo Park.

The monument's existence, and placement in a symbolically central location, hint at an affinity between Glendale's dominant ethnic group—Armenians—and Koreans. Armenians, of course, are also trying to shame a foreign state (Turkey) into taking responsibility for its historic mistreatment of their people. One may find it slightly odd, indeed, that Glendale's central park does not also have an Armenian Genocide memorial; such memorials are located in nearby Montebello and in downtown Los Angeles, while the Glendale Public Library contains a Genocide Memorial Collection (Glendale Public Library 2017). It is notable that members of the Korean and Jewish communities in New York have found analogous common ground. In 2011, a Korean-American civic group collaborated with the Kupferberg Holocaust Center of Queensborough Community College to arrange a meeting of former "comfort women" and Holocaust survivors (Lim 2015). The confluence of historic memories creates grounds for solidarity among ethnic groups, which can facilitate their sense of belonging.

Koreans' sense of belonging in California is evident in another way. In 2016, despite heated opposition from Japanese groups, Koreans successfully lobbied California educators to include a reference to "comfort women" in the tenth-grade curriculum. The revised History/Social Science standards include the following statement:

> "Comfort Women" is a euphemism that describes women who were forced into sexual service by the Japanese Army in occupied territories before and during the war. Comfort Women can be taught as an example of institutionalized sexual slavery; estimates on the total number of Comfort Women vary, but most argue that hundreds of thousands of women were forced into these situations during Japanese occupation. On December

> 28, 2015, the Governments of Japan and the Republic of Korea entered into an agreement regarding the issues of Comfort Women. (CDE 2017)

The inclusion of this statement is a victory for Koreans. Not only does it implicitly promote their cause against nationalist Japanese on the "comfort women" issue, but it also testifies to the simple fact that Koreans are Californians, that their history is California's history. As a Korean-American activist said, "When we immigrate, we bring our language, culture and history.… That's the wealth we bring to this state" (quoted in Kim 2016). The tragedy of "comfort women" is part of that history.

2. Truth, Lies, and Monuments

A second story to be told about "Peace Monument" concerns the contested memories of historical events the monument symbolizes. The Japanese, we will see, dispute the accuracy of the "comfort woman" narrative etched in the monument's plaque. But narratives embodied in public monuments become particularly resistant to challenge; monuments bestow the histories they represent with the dignity of established truth. As Dwyer and Alderman write, monuments' "location in public space, their weighty presence, and the enormous amounts of financial and political capital such installations require imbue them with an air of authority and permanence. Naively understood, they appear to be above political bias and worthy of admiration, a lasting and official witness to the past" (Dwyer and Alderman 2008, 167–8). Monuments are verities sublimated into the immortal testimony of stone—and thus can be a powerful way to spread fiction. Historian James W. Loewen gives a gem of an example involving Confederate monuments:

> Take Kentucky, where the legislature voted not to succeed. Early in the War, Confederate Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston ventured through the western part of the state and found 'no enthusiasm, as we imagined and hoped, but hostility.' Eventually, 90,000 Kentuckians would fight for the United States, while 35,000 fought for the Confederate States. Nevertheless, according to historian Thomas Clark, the state now has 73 Confederate monuments and only two Union ones. (Loewen 2015)

Clearly, monuments have a considerable power to deceive.

For Japanese who do not accept the Koreans' version of "comfort women" history, the spread of that history into monuments therefore constitutes a major problem. And spread it has: since the first "comfort women" monument was installed in Koichi City, Japan, in 1989, more than thirty others

have appeared. Eight are in the United States, with the rest in the Philippines, South Korea, China, Taiwan, and Australia (all except for the U.S. countries that had "comfort stations") (Maripo 2017). But one should not deduce that I offer this story from a perspective entirely sympathetic to the Japanese. As we will see, Korean groups began creating "comfort women" monuments to combat blanket Japanese denials of the "comfort women" system—denials voiced most stridently by nationalists who offer cartoonishly revisionist histories of the war era. The larger story, then, concerns competing nationalist histories, and the victory of Korea's version of events over Japan's in the international arena and in monuments now on U.S. soil. The Glendale monument has played a special part in this competition, surviving a series of lawsuits aimed at its removal and establishing the immunity of "comfort women" monuments like it to legal challenge.

The story properly begins with a resurgence of Japanese nationalism—and with it "comfort women" denial—in recent decades. Perhaps the main reason for the rise has been growing frustration with the constraints placed on the Japanese military by the Japanese Constitution and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. Japan's Constitution, imposed by the occupation in 1947, bans the country from maintaining a military. However, at the start of the Cold War, the West wanted Japan to be part of an East Asian bulwark against spreading communism. Occupation leader General MacArthur therefore urged the opening of a constitutional loophole sufficient to allow Japan to create what would eventually be called Self Defense Forces (SDF). Technically an extension of the police, the SDF is in fact one of the world's most sophisticated militaries. The Constitution does, however, strictly limit Japan's potential use of this military. The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, meanwhile, contextualizes this potential use within an overall United States military hegemony (McCormack 2007). Nationalists have never approved of these arrangements, and since the conclusion of the Cold War their view has gained popularity. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the bipolar world order destabilized Japan's geopolitical environment, creating a more complex and shifting field of potential threats and enemies. In this new context, fewer Japanese have confidence in the ability of the U.S. to protect Japanese interests. Not so long ago (in 1853), after all, Commodore Perry appeared in Sugamo Bay with a fleet of steam-powered U.S. Navy ships demanding a port treaty with feudal, isolationist Japan. In that seminal moment, Japan discovered the danger of being caught with anachronistic social and defense structures in a dynamic world. Japan's anxieties over shifting, unpredictable

threats in the post-Cold War context are rapidly being eclipsed by concerns about two constant ones: China and North Korea. China's expanding network of military bases in the South China Sea, and North Korea's development of nuclear weapons, are, in effect, today's "black ships" to Japanese nationalists, signaling a need to improve Japan's military capabilities and loosen its Constitutional bindings.

As Japanese nationalists seek to empower the military, they also strive to burnish its historical image. Nationalists typically applaud the performance of the Imperial Army during World War II, crediting it with thwarting Western colonialism in Asia. They also tend to downplay or deny its record of atrocities—including that of the "comfort women" system.

To the origins of the "comfort women" controversy we now turn. For decades after World War II, shame muted "comfort women" survivors, and few discussed their experiences publicly. This changed in the 1980s, when some former "comfort women" began to speak out. The Japanese government initially denied their accounts, but coverage of the topic by a major Japanese daily newspaper, the *Asahi Shimbum*, prompted the government to admit a degree of historical guilt. In 1992, Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi apologized for the "comfort women" system while visiting South Korea. The Japanese government conducted its own research on "comfort women." Shortly after the findings were released in 1993, Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei stated that Japanese forces had been directly or indirectly involved in running comfort stations, and that some of the women had been coerced (Qui et al. 2013). In 1994, looking ahead to the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama expressed "profound and sincere remorse and apologies" for Japan's use of "comfort women" (Mofa 1994). Soon after this, Japanese middle schools began adopting textbooks that for the first time mentioned "comfort women" (Malasky 2001). In short, Japan generally appeared to accept the accounts of surviving Korean "comfort women"; so too did the international community. The narrative that the Japanese Imperial Army coerced perhaps 200,000 women into a system of sexual slavery became, in Soh's phrase, "the transnational paradigmatic story" about "comfort women" (2008, 51).

However, Japanese nationalists have never accepted this version of events, insisting that "comfort women" were paid prostitutes, not "sex slaves." Nationalists additionally insist that the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations settled all war reparations issues between the two countries (Soh 2008), and Japan therefore owes neither apologies nor redress to surviving "comfort women."

Do the Japanese nationalists have a valid point? Are there grounds for challenging the internationally accepted, "paradigmatic story"? Or is this group laboring purely under nationalist delusions? Careful scholarship suggests that the paradigmatic story may indeed be flawed. Without denying the immense suffering of "comfort women" or the brutality of the Imperial Army in its use of them—or survivors' rights to official apology and redress—it is important to acknowledge that valid grounds for debating aspects of the paradigmatic story do exist. The work of anthropologist C. Sarah Soh—widely praised by reviewers in scholarly journals (e.g., Moon 2011; Cheng 2009; Totani 2011; Koikari 2010)—suffices to establish the legitimacy of engaging in such debate.

Briefly, Soh (2008, 50) argues that the paradigmatic story was produced when accounts by Korean "comfort women" survivors were amplified within an emotionally charged, ethnic-nationalist discourse in Korea. This narrative rapidly won international support in the 1990s context of emerging global feminism and an emphasis on defining women's rights as human rights, particularly in war. Media coverage of mass rape in the Bosnia conflict gave additional impetus to the movement (ibid.).

But Soh argues that the story adopted by the international community was framed too narrowly around the actions of the Imperial Army alone. "Comfort women," she writes, must be seen in the broader contexts of patriarchal capitalism, social class, colonialism, and war. Because Soh offers a respected scholarly position that challenges an international understanding, I think it worth quoting her summary statement at length:

> I contend that the personal tragedies of comfort women arose, in part, from the institutionalized everyday gender violence tolerated in patriarchal homes and enacted in the public sphere (including the battlefront) steeped in what I call "masculinist sexual culture" in colonial Korea and Imperial Japan. Notwithstanding South Korean nationalists' homogenizing rhetoric of the comfort women as sex slaves who were deceived as volunteer labor recruits or chŏngsindae, my research findings strongly suggest that most Korean comfort women survivors were not mobilized as chŏngsindae.
>
> Whereas some Korean survivors stated having been kidnapped, others revealed that they were "sold" to human traffickers by their indigent parents. In fact, compatriot "entrepreneurs"—men and some women from colonial Korea who not only procured girls and women for the Japanese army but also, in many cases, managed or ran comfort stations—lured the majority of them. Furthermore, some chose to run away from home in

> order to escape domestic violence and maltreatment or the oppression of crushing poverty, fervently aspiring to become modern autonomous "new women." Their valiant acts of self-determination in pursuit of education and autonomy to craft modern gendered selves deserve scholarly exposure and recognition in a more nuanced and post-nationalist understanding of Korean women's tragic history of foiled aspirations and horrific ordeals under patriarchy, colonialism, and total war. (Soh 2008, 3-4)

In Soh's view, the conventional account is misleading since it only indicts the Japanese military for the "tragic history" of "comfort women." The account omits the fact that women and girls from *wealthy* Korean families did not wind up as "comfort women"; that Koreans played a significant role in luring these girls and women into the system; and that some "comfort women" had voluntarily left their oppressive, patriarchal homes in response to new opportunities materializing within the colonial-capitalist sphere before becoming lured into the "comfort women" system. Other aspects of the paradigmatic story—such as the 200,000 count—do not fare well in Soh's analysis either; she suggests 50,000 as a baseline figure. Soh adds, "If South Korean activists and the media are serious about uncovering the truth about comfort women, as they have long demanded Japan do, it is also important that they self-critically reflect on their unthinking promotion of a comforting nationalist mythology" (2008, 59).

I have presented Soh's critique of the paradigmatic story in order to show that grounds exist for challenging the story. I do not therefore seek to legitimize any particular revisionist alternative that Japanese nationalists have attempted to put in its place. Indeed, revisionist histories are often so dubious that they undoubtedly distract from the legitimacy of nationalist qualms with the paradigmatic story. Consider the booklet *Comfort Women Issue from Misunderstandings to Solution*, published by the group Japanese Women for Justice and Peace (JWJP). Amidst photos of cherry blossoms and Mt. Fuji, the booklet makes claims such as "Japan is (sic) classless society" and "We have very little sense of discrimination" (Yamamato and Hosoya 2016, 12); neither claim holds up to even a cursory observation of Japanese society. The booklet goes on to offer a monolithically sunny portrait of "comfort women" as having been cheerful and willing prostitutes who "enjoyed their daily life" (ibid. at 39) and even became "rich" (ibid. at 38). Thus, we might say, nationalist groups such as JWJP proffer a cartoonishly one-dimensional, revisionist account.

Nationalist influence has spread high into the ranks of Japan's leadership. Many senior members of the Liberal Democratic Party deny Japanese war guilt; many also belong to nationalist organizations such as the influential Nippon Kaigi (McNeill and McCurry 2015). Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is a "supreme advisor" to the group (ibid., Mizohata 2016). These officials have repeatedly challenged global understandings of "comfort women," though with little success. In 1996, Abe requested that a UN Commission on Human Rights report be revised, citing a U.S. textbook's reference to "comfort women" as a reason to "correct" the international account (McNeill and McCurry 2015); he was refused. In 2001, the Japanese government approved a new junior high-school history/civics textbook that omitted all references to "comfort women" (Hirata 2010). A storm of international condemnation followed. In 2014, an Abe-appointed government panel released a report claiming that the 1993 Kono statement had reflected political, not strictly factual, considerations (Tiezzi 2014). When challenged about his stance on "comfort women" by a sophomore at Harvard University the following spring, Abe defended the Kono statement (Yoshida 2015). In 2015, Japan and Korea negotiated an agreement to settle the "comfort woman" issue. Japan would contribute 1 billion yen (about $8.3 million) to Korean survivors, but not as "reparations"—meaning that it would not represent an admission of legal guilt. The agreement was to be "final and irrevocable" and end all further criticism of Japan on the issue (Whan-woo 2017). But "comfort women" survivors, international activists, and Korean opposition candidates denounced the agreement since survivors had not been consulted and the deal fell short of their demands. These groups continue to criticize Japan on "comfort women" (Oba 2017). The Japanese government appears to have lost the battle against "comfort women" monuments in the U.S. as well.

How did the "comfort women" controversy take form as a battle over monuments on U.S. soil? In 2007, at the urging of Korean-American groups, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution (H.R. 121) calling on Japan to accept responsibility for the "comfort women" system. The wording of the resolution is significant, since it shows the U.S. government did not commit itself to the paradigmatic story. The resolution states that Japan "should…formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of young women into sexual slavery (comfort women) during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands"; in addition, Japan should "refute any claims that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the 'comfort women' never occurred"

(House 2007). Thus the resolution does not insist that all "comfort women" were coerced by the Japanese military, only that some unspecified level of coercion took place. Japan, however, ignored the resolution, which was non-binding and expired at the end of that session of congress (DeClercq 2017).

The House's failure to prompt action by Japan motivated Korean-Americans to switch tactics and create "comfort women" monuments in U.S. cities. A handful of such monuments already existed in other countries (Maripo 2017). The groups that have advocated for the U.S. memorials have argued that they are not intended to promote anti-Japanese feelings, and are meant to raise awareness about sexual trafficking broadly (Horikoshi 2015, Kim 2014). Some of the monuments do not employ cautious wording, however, as the House resolution did, instead unleashing the full brunt of the paradigmatic story into public space and consciousness.

The first such monument was commemorated in Palisades Park, Bergen County, New Jersey, in 2010. Eastern Bergen County has lured suburbanizing Asians from New York City since the 1980s. Koreans have concentrated in Palisades Park, where they constitute half of the town's 20,000 residents (Perez-Pena 2010). Led by the group Korean American Civic Empowerment, they successfully established the monument in the County Courthouse's "ring of honor" alongside others for the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, African-American slavery, and the Irish potato famine (Lim 2015). The monument, a plaque set in stone, features an illustration of a Japanese soldier reaching toward a thinly clad woman squatting in a fetal position. The inscription reads: "In memory of the more than 200,000 women and girls who were abducted by the armed forces of the Government of Imperial Japan 1930's–1945 known as 'Comfort Women.' They endured human rights violations that no peoples should leave unrecognized. Let us never forget the horrors of crimes against humanity." The monument's statement that 200,000 women were "abducted" by the Japanese military is the core claim of the narrow-frame version of history that Soh terms the paradigmatic story. Inscribed on a public monument, however, the claim appears as objective truth. The claim was broadcast in media coverage of the monument's installation as well (e.g. Piccirillo 2013).

Two years after the Bergen monument was established, controversy erupted when Japanese officials visited Palisades Park and requested the monument's removal. Days later, South Korean officials arrived to request that it stay. Pro- and anti-monument petitions emerged (Associated Press 2012). It is notable that the Japanese officials did not request the monu-

ment be modified to avoid misrepresentation, but taken down altogether. When the delegation made the request—offering the town cherry trees and a donation of library books in exchange for the monument's removal—city officials were shocked. "I couldn't believe my ears," said the deputy mayor, a Korean-American. "My blood shot up like crazy" (Semple 2012). A second delegation arrived from Japan later in the month and, as reported by the *New York Times*, challenged the monument's version of history by asserting the anti-paradigmatic story. "They said the comfort women were a lie, that they were set up by an outside agency, that they were women who were paid to come and take care of the troops," the article quotes the mayor as saying. "I said, 'We're not going to take it down, but thanks for coming'"(Semple 2012). Japan not only failed to get the monument removed, but energized Korean-American groups to establish "comfort women" memorials elsewhere (ibid.).

The second one was installed later that year (2012) at the Veterans Memorial in Nassau County, Long Island (*Japan Times* 2014). The stone memorial features a lithograph of a group of four dirt-smeared and wretched-looking Korean "comfort women," one of whom is pregnant. According to Soh—describing the photograph that was used as the basis for the lithograph—the Chinese 8th Army had recently captured the women in reconquered territory, apparently thinking them Japanese (2008). The monument is inscribed with the core claim of the paradigmatic story that "more than 200,000 women and girls…were abducted for the use of sexual slavery by the armed forces of the government of imperial Japan." In 2013, the New York State Legislature passed a resolution formally recognizing the monument. The resolution was inscribed on stone tablets that now flank the original monument (*Japan Times* 2014). Thus the paradigmatic story received validation by the mutually reinforcing authorities of the Legislature and the public monuments themselves.

In 2013, a proposal to establish a monument in Fullerton, California, was rejected by the City Council. The Council's rejection was not prompted by Japanese interference, or any qualms the Council may have had with the historical accuracy of the proposed monument, but because the Council felt that the "comfort women" issue was "the providence of world governments and not individual local governments" (Kheel 2013).

Glendale proved less reluctant, proclaiming "Comfort Woman Day" on July 30, 2012, and installing its monument the following year. The plaque this time describes the "more than 200,000 Asian and Dutch women who were removed from their homes in Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philip-

pines, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, East Timor and Indonesia, to be coerced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Armed Forces of Japan between 1932 and 1945." The statement does not claim that the Japanese army kidnapped the girls and women who became "comfort women," but that it did subsequently hold them in "sexual slavery." However, the plaque's upper half, which describes the monument's symbolism, states: "Torn hair symbolizes the girl being snatched from her home by the Imperial Japanese Army." In sum, if the plaque ever so slightly loosens the paradigmatic story's frame, it does not expand it to include any of the additional actors or context that Soh, for example, finds critical.

If the somewhat loosened framing of the Glendale monument can be interpreted as subtly improved from that of previously installed monuments from the viewpoint of Japanese nationalists, its larger significance was worse. In Glendale, anti-monument activists formed a Maginot Line, filing what would become a series of lawsuits seeking the removal of the monument. If the effort succeeded, local governments might balk at installing such monuments in the future, and existing monuments could be challenged with hope of success. The lawsuits were initiated by local Japanese-American resident Michiko Shiota Gingery, and the "comfort woman" denier group Global Alliance for Historical Truth (GAHT); Gingery passed away during the course of these lawsuits (United States Court 2016).

Although GAHT's complaint referenced a "contentious and politically-sensitive international debate" about "comfort women," the legal basis of the suit had nothing to do with the monument's historical claims. Rather, GAHT contended that by installing the monument, the City of Glendale had violated the U.S. Constitution by undermining the federal government's foreign policy (Ellsworth 2017). At the time Glendale approved the monument, the argument ran, the U.S. government was not calling for Japan to "accept historical responsibility" for its "crimes," as the monument does. Rather, the Obama administration had a hands-off policy and wanted Japan and Korea to amicably resolve the "comfort women" dispute between themselves (ibid.).

Both state and federal courts rejected this argument. GAHT was additionally penalized under California's anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) statute, which punishes frivolous lawsuits aimed at stifling free speech (FeND 2017). In its affirmation of the district court ruling on the case, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit wrote that Glendale established the monument to advocate against "violations of human rights," and that doing so was "well within the traditional responsi-

bilities of state and local governments" (United States Court 2016, 13). The court added that establishing the monument did not "intrude on the federal government's foreign affairs power" (ibid. at 2): angering Japanese officials was not the same thing as disrupting U.S. foreign policy.

After these losses, GAHT unsuccessfully attempted to bring the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. In an *amicus curiae* brief supporting GAHT's efforts, the government of Japan and other groups challenged the plaque's historical claims. The brief states that Glendale "has adopted a one-sided view" of the "comfort women" issue; that the plaque's characterization of the women as "sex slaves" was taken "out of its proper historical context"; and that the monument "sets in stone the views of one set of interests while silencing historically-supported contrary viewpoints" (Ellsworth 2017, 4). The Supreme Court did not take up the case, and so did not respond to these claims.

GAHT's failure to get the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case signaled to observers that "comfort women" monuments were safe from legal challenge. Almost immediately, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution to install a "comfort women" monument. Installed in St. Mary's Square, on the edge of Chinatown, in September, 2017, "Women's Column of Strength" made San Francisco the first "major U.S. city" to have such a memorial (McGrane 2017). The statue breaks with the pattern of previously established ones in the U.S. by implicitly foregrounding China's "comfort women" and by more powerfully and plausibly speaking to the broader issue of sexual abuse via the "comfort women" example. The design—selected from more than forty proposals—features three teenage girls, Chinese, Korean, and Filipino, standing atop a pedestal and facing outward in a triangle formation. "Shown holding hands, the women form a circle that suggests their solidarity with all sexual abuse survivors" reads the proposal (CWJC 2017). Near them stands the elderly figure of Kim Hak-sun, honored as the first "comfort woman" to publicize the issue by speaking out in 1991 (McGrane 2017). The design foregrounds the women's unity and strength as sexual abuse survivors, as opposed to their specific historical experience as "comfort women." The inscription, however, follows the established pattern asserting that "hundreds of thousands of women and girls…were sexually enslaved by the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces" (ibid.).

The somewhat enlarged scope of the memorial did little to mollify Japanese-Americans, who still felt themselves placed in the crosshairs. They asked why the city needs a monument concerning "an issue that is a point of

controversy between Japan and its neighbors" (Horikoshi 2015). Additionally, they claim that "comfort women" memorials "seriously hurt" Japanese relations with both the U.S. and Korea (Green 2015). A Japanese-American who was interred at Manzanar said, "I don't want my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren to again suffer from anti-Japanese profiling" (ibid.). Alongside these sympathetic objections were others more prone to offend. For example, the Mayor of Osaka, Toru Hashimoto, wrote a nine-page letter of protest in which he characterized "comfort women" as a wartime "necessity" that gave soldiers a chance to "rest" (Sabatini 2015); after the statue was installed, Hashimoto's successor, Hirofumi Yoshimura, threatened to terminate Osaka's sister-city relationship with San Francisco (Fortin 2017). In the international media storm that followed the release of Hashimoto's letter, the mayor's comments were typically pitted against the paradigmatic story presented as fact. The lede of an Al Jazeera (2013) account was representative: "The Japanese military's forced prostitution of Asian women before and during World War II was necessary to 'maintain discipline' in the ranks and provide rest for soldiers, an outspoken nationalist mayor has said." The narrow frame admits no nuance: Al Jazeera's lede suggests that *all* "comfort women" were coerced by the Japanese military. While the Osaka mayor's comments were appalling, the media's reinforcement of a narrow-frame "correction" obscures vital complexity.

The most controversial "comfort women" statue of all has no plaque or inscription. Otherwise identical to the monument in Glendale, the statue wordlessly conveys the paradigmatic story directly to the Japanese political establishment. This monument was installed in 2016, not in the U.S., but near the Japanese consulate in Busan, South Korea. What makes it so controversial is not only its location (a similar monument had been placed near the Japanese embassy in Seoul in 2011, with less uproar), but the fact that it was installed after the 2015 Agreement was made (Han and Griffiths 2017). Following its installation, the Japanese government recalled its ambassador in Seoul and its consul general in Busan and cancelled economic discussions with Korea (Oba 2017). The Japanese argue that the statue violates the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, according to which a host state must protect a mission and prevent any "impairment of its dignity" (FeND 2017; Vienna Convention 7). Japan wants both statues removed before it pays the $10 billion yen called for by the Agreement (Whan-woo 2017).

While Japan may have a valid complaint against the statues on the basis of the Vienna Convention, creating an uproar over it may have been poor

politics. Japan, more than Korea, wants the 2015 Agreement to succeed; many Koreans came out against the Agreement for its terms. In addition, Park Geun-hye, the Korean president who negotiated the Agreement with Japanese Prime Minister Abe, was subsequently impeached on corruption charges. The Agreement's association with Park discredits it further among Koreans. Japan's outburst over the "comfort woman" statue places the Agreement under further strain. By giving expression to nationalist anger, Japan raised "the profile of the dispute" and stoked "Korean doubts about Japan's sincerity in addressing its wartime wrongs" (Oba 2017).

"Peace Monument" symbolizes Korean nationalist resistance to Japanese nationalist denial of wartime wrongdoing. In a quiet corner of a Southern California park, the statue appears to sit outside the battlefield, as it does outside the truth. Neither the paradigmatic story the statue embodies nor revisionist substitutes proffered by Japanese groups pass muster with serious scholars such as Soh. But rather than "sit outside," perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the statue stretches the battlefield as it stretches the truth. Glendale has now joined the fight on behalf of Korea, and so is playing a role on a larger stage.

3. A (Bronze) Woman's Place

A third story of outstanding significance—one belied by the short space I am able to devote to it here—is revealed by squinting to see only the female form of the statue, not the "comfort women" context. Doing so draws our attention to an altogether different issue: the historic paucity of public monuments honoring women, and the recent increase in their number. The previous dearth of such figures is ultimately explained by millennia of sexist insistence that a woman's proper place is in the home. The fact that in the mid-twentieth century a political philosopher of Hannah Arendt's standing could admiringly write of the public realm of Athens—open only to free, adult males—suggests how profoundly the equation of public with male has been embedded in the western consciousness (1958). Feminist thinkers have challenged this equation in recent decades, critiquing the essentialist conception of sex that underpins a public sphere that so privileges eminent white males (Griffin 1996).

One legacy of the West's androcentric public culture has been a paucity of monuments that honor women. As Warner (1985) points out, the monuments that have taken the female form have often been allegorical representations of ideal states (justice, liberty) denied to actual women at the

time that the monuments were created. The bulk of U.S. national landmarks, meanwhile—centering on battle sites, presidents' homes, and other places of political significance—depict men as the flesh-and-blood protagonists of actual historical change (Dubrow and Goodman 2003). The City of Los Angeles has stayed true to this trend. A 1986 survey found that only four percent of city monuments spoke at all to women's history (Hayden 1999).

Popular histories of Los Angeles share this monumental neglect, downplaying the importance not only of women but of minority groups generally. As Hayden observes, influential Los Angeles writers "may go downtown, but never or rarely to East LA or South Central. The focus of their landscape analysis becomes houses, swimming pools, cars, and pop culture" (1999, 86). Hayden singles out Reyner Banham and Charles W. Moore for most inspiring the cliché that the soul of Los Angeles is to be found in "Disneyland, swimming pools, and freeways" (ibid. at 87) and not at all among its minorities.

Gratifyingly, on a national scale the monument pattern has shown signs of change. Blair and Michel (2007) date the start of this change with the installation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) in 1982. The VVM initiated a "mania" for installing memorials, they note, not seen since the conclusion of the Civil War. The post-VVM monuments have tended to be more democratic in design; the VVM itself names the war dead but does not hierarchize them by rank, for example. They also tend to honor more-diverse social actors, including women. Glendale's "comfort women" statue takes its place in this national context, reflecting the greater ethnic and social diversity of individuals featured in public monuments.

There remains a long way to go, however. To gain a rough approximation of just how far that distance is in Los Angeles, I checked the list of the city's historic-cultural monuments maintained by the Office of Historic Resources. Different methods of tabulation would produce varying results, but I decided to approach the task as someone with essentially a tabula rasa—a young child, say, scanning the list and hoping to learn city landmarks and history. How many names on the list would this child recognize as male versus female? Accordingly, I did not count monuments with only surnames in their title. In addition, monuments named after both a man and a woman went uncounted. This method undoubtedly biases my results toward undercounting the number of male- versus female-named monuments, since the preponderance of the surname-only listings most likely refer to men. At any rate, in the list of 1,138 declared city monuments as of February 2017, 236 had gendered names, and the score was startling: 116

male, 20 female (Office 2017). The "comfort woman" statue clearly speaks to more than one type of injustice toward women.

Conclusion

I have adumbrated three stories told by "Peace Monument": those of increasing Korean-American influence in Southern California; clashing Korean- and Japanese-nationalist war memories; and the belated diversification of subjects honored by public monuments. The statue contains too many stories for a conventional article that focuses on just one. No doubt the statue's richness reflects the dynamism of the larger context in which it is found. The Pacific region is attaining ever-greater centrality in world affairs. Californians will continue to forge new and complex relationships with other peoples in this region within their own modern experience. As they do, geographers can expect the landscape to become increasingly rich in multi-layered stories to tell.

Note

1 Yet nationalists go even further, denying the Nanjing Massacre and Imperial Army misdeeds generally. They also claim the war was justified—and in fact victorious for Japan—as a fundamentally anti-imperialist effort. This entire narrative is explicitly promoted in the Yushukan Museum at Tokyo's Yasukuni shrine, where Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and other nationalists have gone to worship (Ravitch 2014). That nationalists hold such beliefs does little to burnish their historian credentials on the "comfort women" issue.

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