

# Labeled the reporter who “fabricated” the comfort woman issue: A Rebuttal 反論 慰安婦問題「捏造記者」と呼ばれて

Uemura Takashi

Translation and Introduction by Tomomi Yamaguchi

## Introduction

Uemura Takashi, a former reporter of the *Asahi Shimbun*, is currently an adjunct lecturer at Hokusei Gakuen University in Sapporo. In 1991, while a reporter for the *Asahi*, he wrote two articles on Kim Hak-sun, the first "comfort woman" to come forward to tell her story (1991). Because of these two articles, Uemura has been the target of denunciations by nationalists.<sup>1</sup> He has been labeled "the reporter who fabricated the 'comfort woman' issue" and denounced by nationalists as a "traitor." Such bashing took a critical turn for the worse in 2014, to the extent that he and his family risk losing their right to a livelihood.

The article below is a translation of Uemura's first article in which he rebuts the charge that he fabricated the "comfort woman" issue. He published the piece in the influential *Bungei Shunju* magazine's January 2015 issue (publication date December 10, 2014). Uemura made a rather unusual choice in writing this rebuttal for the conservative *Bungei Shunju*. He did so because it was *Bungei Shunju* that criticized him first in its April 1992 issue. He wanted to launch his effort to counter criticisms against him by writing first in the very magazine that initiated the campaign against his articles 23 years ago.



Uemura Takashi, introducing his article in *Bungei Shunju* magazine at a seminar on December 20, 2014. Photo by Tomomi Yamaguchi.

## Attacks on Uemura

The initial criticism of Uemura appeared in *Bungei Shunju* in April 1992, in an article written by Nishioka Tsutomu. Nishioka was the editor-in-chief of *Gendai Korea* magazine then, and is now a professor at Tokyo Christian University. Since that article, Nishioka has continued to criticize Uemura in the pages of monthly and weekly magazines, newsletters of conservative organizations, on TV, and in his book, *Yoku Wakaru Ianfu Mondai* [A Clear Guide to the Comfort Woman Issue] (Tokyo: Soshisha, 2007). The criticism of Uemura's articles on "comfort women," and the image of him as a "fabricator," were spread by Nishioka

and then further disseminated in the writings of other conservatives published in weekly and monthly magazines and books.

In the 2000s, the Internet became a significant means of spreading the image of Uemura as a "fabricator," via blogs, message boards, and social networking services. From the mid 2000s, when the Action Conservative movement (Kodo-suru Hoshu), such as the Citizens' Group Refusing to Tolerate Special Rights for Koreans in Japan (Zainichi Tokken wo Yurusanai Shimin no Kai, better known as Zaitokukai), arose, online-based criticism of Uemura spread to the streets, taking the form of demonstrations and rallies. In such rallies and demonstrations, Uemura's name and photo were often used on placards carried by activists, with phrases such as "fabricator" and "traitor." More than anyone else, Uemura Takashi has been the core target of attacks by groups ranging from mainstream conservatives to so-called "Netto Uyoku" (Net Far Right), as a representative symbol of the evil of the *Asahi Shimbun*.



Zaitokukai's Counter-action against the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Wednesday demonstration<sup>2</sup>" action held in Tokyo. The counter-action was organized by Nadeshiko Action, December 2011. Photo by Saito Masami.

As mentioned above, the attacks against

Uemura crescendoed in 2014. First, an article appeared in *Shukan Bunshun*'s February 6, 2014 issue entitled "Asahi reporter, 'fabricator of comfort women,' to become professor at exclusive women's college." This article was followed by many other articles in weekly and monthly magazines, and the attacks against him intensified on the Internet, along with threats of blackmail and persistent nuisance calls against Uemura.

A second trigger for intensified attacks came in August with the *Asahi Shimbun*'s release of its "re-examination" of the paper's coverage of the "comfort woman" issue. Although the *Asahi* determined that Uemura did not "fabricate" his articles, the bashing against him became even stronger as criticism of the *Asahi* heightened. Uemura has often been mistaken as the writer of the articles on Yoshida Seiji<sup>3</sup> that the *Asahi* retracted and accordingly, criticized for things that he did not write. The accusation of "fabrication" does not stop with Uemura and the *Asahi*. Nationalists characterize the "comfort woman" issue itself as a fabrication, along with the Nanjing massacre and the debate over Prime Minister's visits to Yasukuni shrine, as shown in the leaflet by one of the nationalist groups, Gambare Nippon! Zenkoku Kodo Iinkai (Do your best, Japan! National action committee).<sup>4</sup>



Flyer distributed by Gambare Nippon on

**their boycott movement against the Asahi. The words, "'Comfort women' are the fabrication of the Asahi!!!, surround the photo of Uemura. The adjoining section states that the Asahi fabricated the Nanjing massacre and the Yasukuni issue as well. Flyer scanned by Yamaguchi.**

With *Shukan Bunshun's* article and the resulting complaints to the university, Uemura lost a prospective job at Kobe Shoin Women's University and then faced the risk of losing his adjunct lectureship at Hokusei Gakuen University. The schools were barraged with threatening phone calls, emails, faxes and postcards. In response to this situation, citizens of Sapporo and Tokyo initiated a movement to support Uemura and Hokusei Gakuen University, and formed the *Makeruna Hokusei! no Kai* (Makeruna Kai), Don't Give In, Hokusei! Group.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the movement, in December 2014, the president and the chair of the board released a statement that the university would renew the contract with Uemura as an adjunct lecturer for the next academic year.<sup>6</sup> The complaints and annoyance calls against Uemura and Hokusei Gakuen, however, reportedly increased after news of his renewal.<sup>7</sup>

The attacks extended to Uemura's family, especially his daughter. As he writes in his essay, his daughter is still subject to vicious attacks on the Internet. The fact that he is married to a Korean woman, and that his daughter is half-Korean, may have intensified the bashing against Uemura and his family.

### ***Bungei Shunju's* "Introduction" and criticism of Uemura**

The original Uemura article in *Bungei Shunju* has an introduction by the editors of the magazine, entitled "Why did we publish this essay?" It claims that Uemura's piece presents

two major issues: 1) journalism at risk, and 2) society at risk. The editors of the magazine call on readers to use the essay to reflect on these issues.

The second point, on society being at risk concerns the threats against Uemura and his family, but the introduction devotes only one paragraph to this point. *Bungei Shunju* avoids discussing the fact that it was their magazine that started the attacks against Uemura in 1992, and then again, through *Shukan Bunshun*, published by the same company, in 2014.

It is clear that *Bungei Shunju's* main objective in writing this introduction is to elaborate the claim that "journalism is at risk." *Bungei Shunju* argues that Uemura's response to the accusation of "fabrication" reveals the present risk to journalism.

The two points of criticism against Uemura's articles on Kim Hak-sun are (1) his confusion of the "women's volunteer corps" with "comfort women"; and (2) his failure to include information about Kim Hak-sun's having attended kisaeng school (a school for training female entertainers.) The Japanese nationalists argue that the confusion in (1) is intentional, to achieve the effect of suggesting that the recruitment process of Kim Hak-sun involved forced relocation (*kyosei renko*). Although the recruitment process is not central to the argument that the Japanese "comfort station" system constituted a violation of human rights, the nationalist discourse has been fixated on the "forcible" nature of the recruitment, as if, absent proof of the role of military in violent abduction, Japan has nothing to be apologetic about. As for the second point on kisaeng, the revisionist critics' obsession with Kim's attendance at a kisaeng school is clearly a reflection of their sexism and their discriminatory attitude about women entertainment and sex workers. Uemura states aptly that background as a kisaeng does not



excuse in anyway a woman's being made a "comfort woman" and forced into sexual servitude against her will.

## Uemura fights back

Uemura maintained his silence on these attacks for many years. In 2014, however, as he faced the risk of losing all employment, and with his family members, especially his daughter, facing attack on the Internet, he decided to fight back and started speaking out.

This *Bungei Shunju* essay is his first attempt to spell out his claims. He plans to publish further essays in the February issues of the monthly *Sekai* and *Tsukuru* and will go on writing for publication. He has also started to speak in public. He has been interviewed by Japanese and international newspapers and TV stations. The first public symposium that featured Uemura as the main speaker was held in Sapporo on December 20, 2014, only three days after the decision by Hokusei Gakuen to renew its contract with him for the next academic year. [He is also planning a legal battle.](#)



**Uemura speaking of his experiences to an audience of more than 300 at Hokkaido University in a symposium organized by Makeruna Kai, December 20, 2014. Photo by Yamaguchi.**

As Uemura writes in his essay, the bashing directed against him is not simply an issue of personal attacks. Uemura was the reporter who broke the story of Kim Hak-sun, the first woman to come forward as a former "comfort woman" in Japan. Even though the story did not receive much attention then, looked at historically, the two articles that he wrote on Kim are clearly significant in breaking the half century of silence on the issues. It bears repeating that Kim Hak-sun played a crucial role in the history of the global movement by former "comfort women" and the global movement against wartime violence against women. The importance of Uemura's articles in breaking the story explain why he has been under so much attack. TY

## Uemura Takashi Labeled "the reporter who fabricated" the comfort woman issue: A Rebuttal

### Part I: My article from 23 years ago: It all began with a single audiotape

It all began with a single audiotape. On August 10, 1991, I was at the office of "[The Korean Council to Address the Issue of the Volunteer Corps](#)" (Korean Council) in Seoul.<sup>8</sup> The two members present, one of whom was Ms. Yun Chung-ok, co-chair of the Korean Council, played the tape for me. It was a recording of testimony by a former Korean comfort woman.

The woman's voice in the recording was matter of fact as she reflected on her past: "I would like to forget that experience and live my life, but I cannot. I become angry and cannot stop crying when I think about that time," and "I still feel a chill when I think of that experience."

This woman was born in northeastern China and tricked into becoming a comfort woman when she was seventeen. She was taken to a comfort station in southern China where two to three hundred troops were stationed. There were five women there, each of whom was

given a room. The woman was given the Japanese name of "Haruko" (pseudonym.) The oldest woman spoke Japanese, and she serviced the officers. The other four women were in charge of the remaining 200-300 soldiers and took 3-4 soldiers per day.

"I was kept under lock and key and wanted only to escape. I kept wishing the soldiers not to come to me." A military doctor examined them once a week. After being forced to work for several months, she was able to escape, and went back to Seoul after the war. She got married, but both her husband and child died. At the time, she was living a quiet life, relying on welfare.

She told her life story quietly in a thirty-minute recording. According to the Korean Council member, however, before she began speaking, she had been weeping. I was surprised and found myself trembling. At long last, *halmoni* (grandmother) had resolved to speak out.

I still cannot forget that day of twenty-three years ago when I listened to the tape. Among "comfort women" forced to offer sexual services to Japanese soldiers during the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II, there were many Korean women, but none of them had spoken of their experience in post-WWII South Korea. Thus, it was a major piece of news that this woman had begun to speak of her past to the Korean Council. Ms. Yun had been investigating the comfort woman issue for many years, but she had finally located someone in Seoul who had actually experienced being a comfort woman.

In South Korea at the time, interest in the comfort woman issue was extremely high, and women's organizations started to investigate. The person playing the central role in this effort was Ms. Yun Chung-ok, the one who had let me listen to the tape. Born in 1925, Ms. Yun had been a professor at Ewha Women's University, a prestigious private women's university, where she specialized in English

literature. She had just retired about that time. She said that she had begun investigating comfort women around 1980, and in January 1990, she serialized four articles entitled "Report on the Volunteer Corps (*chongsindae*)" in the Korean *Hankyoreh* newspaper.

In South Korea at the time, "volunteer corps" (*chongsindae*) was the term used to refer to comfort women. The serialized articles were the result of Ms. Yun's research following the traces of the volunteer corps from Hokkaido to Okinawa, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, and so forth. The articles met with an overwhelming response in South Korea.

Matsui Yayori, a member of the editorial board of the *Asahi Shimbun*, introduced Ms. Yun in the "Hito (people)" column of the paper published on August 18, 1988. According to the article, when Ms. Yun was a freshman at Ewha Women's University (at the time, Ewha Women's College) in 1943, all the students were fingerprinted on a blue sheet of paper in the basement.

As Ms. Yun explains in the article, "My parents were worried that I would be taken away and forced to join the 'women's volunteer corps,' so they made me withdraw from the college." She went back and graduated after the war but kept thinking of the fate of the comfort women of the same generation. She writes, "I felt that I was the only one who had escaped...." I had heard a similar story from Professor Yun in the summer of 1990 when we met at her office at Ewha Women's University. She must have a sense of survivors' guilt.

The day before I was to meet with Ms. Yun at the Korean Council office, she told me at her nearby residence:

The woman recently came to the office of the Korean Council, accompanied by a friend. She was coming forward because she found

herself "unbearably angry that the Japanese government would not recognize the existence of the volunteer corps." It is likely that she is the only woman in South Korea at present testifying to having been a comfort woman.

When I finished listening to the tape, Professor Yun said to me, "I will continue writing down these oral histories." I understood from what she was saying that the time had finally come when comfort woman testimonies would be written into history.

At the time, I was a reporter assigned to the city news department at the *Asahi's* Osaka Head office.<sup>9</sup> I had gone to South Korea just to listen to this recording. Before my trip, I asked Ms. Yun Chung-ok to let me interview the witness, but she told me that she was refusing to be interviewed by the mass media, and that she could not even let me know her name. She could, however, let me listen to the recording. There was not to be an interview, and I could not even ask questions. Still, I thought this was important news. Because the information was from a trustworthy source, I judged that the taped testimony would be unproblematic.

The previous year, I had visited South Korea for two weeks and collected information in various parts of the country. Even though I did my best to search for comfort women I could interview, I could not find any. One year later, however, a victim had begun to speak out.

My investigation complete, I hurried to the Seoul Bureau of the paper and started to write.

I wrote the following lead for the article:

[Seoul, August 10, Uemura Takashi] During the Second Sino-

Japanese War and World War II, "Korean military comfort women" were taken to the battlefield in the name of the "women's volunteer corps" and forced to engage in acts of prostitution with Japanese soldiers. One such woman has been identified, and she is living in Seoul. "The Korean Council to Address the Issue of the Volunteer Corps" (Yun Chung-ok, co-chair; comprising 16 organizations with 300,000 members) has begun recording her life history. The Korean Council shared the tape-recording of the woman's story to an *Asahi* reporter. In it, the woman says, "When I think of the experience, I still feel unspeakable horror." Nearly a half-century after the war, the women who have done their best to hide their experiences have finally started to speak out.

### The information I had been searching for

In this lead to my article, I used the term, "women's volunteer corps." Just ten days earlier, on July 31, the Seoul Bureau Chief had written an article headlined "The Korean military comfort women issue: North and South Korea to cooperate in demanding compensation." The article reads:

Yun Chung-ok, co-chair of the Korean Council to Address the Issue of the Volunteer Corps (16 organizations, about 300,000 members), which has been investigating the circumstances in which Korean comfort women were sent to the battlefield under the guise of the "women's volunteer corps" during the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War, has disclosed that when the

symposium on "Peace in Asia and the Role of Women" was held in Tokyo in May, she had met with a representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), and they had decided to jointly demand compensation for Korean comfort women from the Japanese government.

My article was a follow-up on the activities of the Korean Council. At the time, in South Korea, it was understood that the "women's volunteer corps" meant the "comfort women." This was reflected in the name of the organization, the Korean Council to Address the Issue of the Volunteer Corps, the organization started up by Ms. Yun Chung-ok and her partners. The confusion over the two terms became fixed soon after WWII. The Japanese media was following the usage established in South Korea.

In the body of my article, I wrote that this woman "was tricked and made into a comfort woman." I was aware that the situation was not the sort of forced removal entailing violent abduction.

Because I used the term "women's volunteer corps," however, I would be subject to attack by some members of the media for twenty-three years. But I did not expect it at all back then.

The article had the headline, "Even now the tears come with that memory: former Korean comfort woman overcomes reticence to speak out. Korean organization records her story." It was featured as the top story in the city news section of the *Asahi Shimbun's* Osaka Head Office edition on the following day (August 11, 1991.)



**Uemura Takashi's August 11, 1991 article in *Asahi Shimbun*, Osaka Head Office edition.**

I was very grateful to the *Asahi* Seoul Bureau Chief, as it was he who was the first to tell me about this story. He had called to let me know that Ms. Yun was interviewing the former comfort woman and suggested that I report on it.

I wrote about these circumstances in an article in the November 1991 issue of the *MILE*, a magazine published in Osaka dealing with issues pertaining to the Korean peninsula (*MILE/mirae* means "future" in Korean). It is titled, "Once again, the Korean comfort women issue has been thrust upon Japan." It starts off with the words, "I've heard that a former Korean comfort woman living in Seoul has begun speaking out. Uemura, why don't you come and report on it?"

This is in reference to the fact that it was when I happened to call the Seoul Bureau Chief on a different matter that he gave me the



information I had been looking for. This is how the Bureau Chief recalls the story now.

Uemura had sought gathering information on comfort women the previous year, but he had not succeeded in finding any. Since he had been following the issue for some time, I thought I should give him this information. At the time, we had two correspondents in the Seoul Bureau, but we were extremely busy with post-Cold War issues such as both South and North Korea joining the United Nations at the same time. Uemura often came on business to Seoul, so we were in touch all the time. I even thought of him as half a member of the Seoul Bureau. Uemura happened to call me at just the right time, so I suggested that he cover the story. The information I got from Ms. Yun is still recorded in my notebook.

And in fact, in the Bureau Chief's notebook is the jotting, "audio tape at (Korean Council) office." There are also other details gathered by the Korean Council that correspond to the bio of the former comfort woman they were interviewing (Ms. Kim Hak-sun-to be explained).

Although my article was featured as the top story in the city news section in Osaka, it was not published in the edition from the Tokyo Head Office that day. It would be featured in the Tokyo edition on the following day. The title was simply "A comfort woman recounts her pain-interview in South Korea." The article looked like a four-column, boxed article. The number of characters was about half of the original Osaka version. Passages such as "in the name of the 'women's volunteer corps'" and "she was tricked and made into a comfort

woman" were deleted. The entire article consisted of her account of the experience.

Still, I thought that it was an important step forward. I went back to Osaka on the 12th. I had no idea that just two days later, on August 14, this former comfort woman would come forward in public and hold a press conference.

## **Part II: Summer 1990: Striking out, time and again, in the search for former comfort women**

From 1990, the previous year, I would go to South Korea in search of former comfort women who would speak of their experiences. I wanted to take on the issue in the summer feature on peace at the Osaka Head Office's edition of the *Asahi*.

It all began with a suggestion from my supervising editor. The editor in the Osaka city news section, my boss at the time, had a deep interest in the comfort woman issue. He had been in charge of the series "My War" in the 1980s, when he was an editor at the Chiba Bureau. He said that he had written on a former Japanese comfort woman living in a nursing home at the southern tip of the Boso Peninsula.

That editor suggested to me, "Aren't there any comfort women in South Korea? Couldn't we get their testimony?" We decided to look for them.

In June that year, Upper House representative Motooka Shoji (Socialist Party) asked a question in a budget committee meeting about Koreans being forcibly taken as laborers during WWII. He also asked about comfort women and demanded that the Japanese government launch an investigation. The chief of the Employment Security Bureau of the Ministry of Labor responded, "It was private dealers who took them around to accompany the military. We cannot investigate it." The statement angered South Koreans.



In South Korea, a military dictatorship had governed for a long time, but in 1987, with the Seoul Olympics one year away, the democratization movement gained momentum. Mr. Roh Tae-woo, head of the ruling party that supported the military government (subsequently, president of South Korea), announced the June 29 Declaration, and democratization of the country began. The women's rights movement became active, and the issue of Korean comfort women during the Japanese colonial period was one of its chief causes.

At the time, I worked at the foreign news section of the Tokyo Head Office of the *Asahi*. In the summer 1987, I was sent by the company to spend a year studying at the Korean Language Institute of Yonsei University in Seoul. When I came back to Japan in November 1989, I started to work at the city news section of the Osaka Head Office. Because I could speak Korean, I was assigned to the "ethnic issues" beat, in other words, dealing with *zainichi* Koreans (Korean residents in Japan). I rented an apartment in the Ikuno Ward of Osaka and began life among Korean residents. I wrote serialized articles under the title "Iut saram" (neighbors). In order to report on these issues, I frequently traveled to Seoul.

In the summer of 1990, I asked a Korean female journalist friend, "Would it be possible to interview *halmoni* who were comfort women?" She responded, "There is a woman whom I interviewed before." If I could see this woman, I could report her story... I began preparing for my trip to South Korea.

In the aforementioned *MILE* (November 1991 issue) article, I wrote about my summer of 1990.

Thinking that if I went there, I would be able to see the woman, I visited South Korea in a casual frame of mind. The woman,

however, had already died. At that point, I had no leads whatsoever. After that, I went around South Korea with information gathered from various organizations, beginning with Ms. Yun Chung-ok, then professor at Ewha Women's University.

With the introduction of a fiction writer, I met a woman known as the "Manchurian *halmoni*" in a village in Kyonggi-do.

People said that when she was feeling well, she would occasionally tell stories of her time in Manchuria. She was living alone in a place far from her hometown, on welfare, and poor. The writer told me, "I think she was probably in the volunteer corps." When I told the woman I had come from Japan and started to ask her questions in Korean, however, she would only say, "I've forgotten my past. I've never even been to Manchuria" and would not respond at all.

I received information that a woman in Pusan was saying, "I know a woman who was a comfort woman." I asked a student of Professor Yun at Ewha Women's University to join me, and we went there together. But this woman only said, "I don't know anything." ... Sometimes people would tell me, "Former comfort women will never tell, because telling their stories would be even more difficult for them than dying." They said that the women left behind in foreign countries could tell their life stories because their ties with their homeland were broken, but

women living in Korea would never speak out. When I asked my journalist friends, they also said they had no clues. In the end, my investigation ended in vain.

I had struck out. Why shouldn't I have? I was 32 years old then. For those elderly women, even if I could speak Korean, I was still a youngster from Japan, which had plundered Korea during the colonial period. Even if they had been forced to work as comfort women, they would never speak of those harsh experiences to a Japanese.

The editor who had suggested that I report on this matter later became a senior editor at the Tokyo Head Office. He wrote a column entitled "From former comfort women" for the "Window: From the Editors' Office" column in the evening edition of September 2, 1992.

At the time, the only former comfort women "storytellers" were originally from the Korean peninsula, one currently living in Okinawa and the other in Thailand. Everyone else remained silent. .... In May 1990, the occasion of President Roh Tae Woo's visit to Japan activated the movement to ask Japan for postwar compensation for the "comfort women." Yet, new witnesses did not appear. We sent a reporter to South Korea for two weeks but still could not find anyone. Upon his return to Japan, the disappointed reporter heard about a woman running a Korean barbeque place in Osaka who might have been in the "volunteer corps." He managed to track it down and became a regular. But he was told, "Even if that were so, she'll never talk to you about it. Stop wasting your

money."

Two weeks after my most recent thwarted attempt, I met a woman who was working for the Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families. As I kept visiting the Association for information about comfort women, we came to be drawn to each other.

The Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families is an organization formed by former soldiers and civilian employees of the military who were caught up in the war during the colonial period as well as bereaved families. As it turns out, this woman was the daughter of Yang Soon-im, who was a female board member of the Association at the time. In Korea, however, children generally use the surnames of their fathers. The mothers do not change their surnames after marriage, so mothers and daughters have different surnames. For this reason, I did not know when I started dating her that the woman was a daughter of Yang Soon-im. But even when I found out, I gave it no thought.

At first, the mother, Yang Soon-im, was opposed to our marriage. The Association had brought its first lawsuit against Japan to demand compensation. She had a strong reluctance for her daughter to marry a Japanese while fighting the Japanese government. But the daughter and I had met as "individuals," and we did not care about our "nationalities." The daughter kept to her resolve, and came to Osaka with just an overnight bag. In February 1991, we registered our marriage at the office of Ikuno Ward, Osaka, where my apartment was located.

### **Part III: Ms. Kim Hak-sun comes forward: Press conference by a former comfort woman**

Having been unable to get testimony from a former comfort woman the previous year, I took very seriously my initial reporting on the

comfort women's beginning to speak out and the sense that the issue was developing, even though it was based on an audiotape. I had not been able to interview the woman directly, but having been told she would not meet with a reporter, I had thought there was nothing else I could have done.

But ... I was to learn in Osaka that this former comfort woman had held a press conference, using her real name, on August 14. I think I learned this through communication from the Seoul Bureau. The woman's name was Ms. Kim Hak-sun, and it was reported that she was 67 years old, living in Jongno-gu, Seoul.

Articles about this woman appeared in the morning edition of the Korean papers on August 15. I was filled with bitter regret since I had returned to Japan never imagining that she would hold a press conference. If I had stayed in Seoul for just a little longer, I could have covered the story directly.

I proceeded to interview Ms. Yun Chung-ok in Seoul by phone and read the articles that I had the Seoul Bureau fax to me. I wrote a follow-up report for the Osaka evening edition on the same day.

A former comfort woman (women's volunteer corps) who was interviewed by "The Korean Council to Address the Volunteer Corps Problem" of South Korea (Yun Chung-ok, co-chair) came forward as a witness, using her real name in Seoul on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>. TV stations ran the story on the evening news, and South Korean newspapers gave it major coverage on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>. Reaction is spreading.

As is evident from my article, I used the term,

"comfort woman (women's volunteer corps)." That was owing to the then fixed understanding that comfort women equal women's volunteer corps.

Let's check the articles in the Korean papers. As we can see from the newspapers dated August 15, 1991-"I who suffered as a volunteer corps comfort woman" (*Dong-a Ilbo*); "I belonged to the volunteer corps" (*JoongAng Ilbo*); "Standing without shame as a living witness to the volunteer corps" (*Hanguk Ilbo*)-Ms. Kim Hak-sun herself used the term "volunteer corps" at the press conference.

Why did Ms. Kim speak out? In response to my question, Ms. Yun Chung-ok said, "When I interviewed her for the second time on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Kim said, 'The Japanese government won't admit to the existence of the volunteer corps. I am angry' and announced that she wanted to go public with her experience. Until then, we had been interviewing her in a closed-door setting, but we hastily decided to make her testimony public before the Korean press corps."



**Kim Hak-sun's press conference at the Korean Council, August 14, 1991**

Strangely enough, however, Ms. Kim Hak-sun's first appearance in public did not attract much attention from the Japanese correspondents

stationed in Seoul. A database search turned up nothing on the press conference in either the *Mainichi* or the *Yomiuri*. Usually, when there is an important story in the Korean papers, the Japanese papers pick it up. This time, however, there was no trace of it.

Of Japanese papers, it was only the *Hokkaido Shimbun* that succeeded in conducting an interview with Ms. Kim Hak-sun. It is said that the paper had put in a request with the Korean Council in advance to let them know when a comfort woman came forward to speak out. The paper had an article at the top of the city news section of the morning edition of the 15<sup>th</sup>.

"The Japanese Government should take responsibility." Former Korean comfort woman comes forward. Drafted with no knowledge of her situation, each day filled with extreme suffering.

A Korean woman from Seoul, who in the prewar years was taken to the battlefields in the fair name of the "women's volunteer corps" and was raped by Japanese soldiers and officers as a military comfort woman, identified herself to the Korean Council to Address the Issue of the Volunteer Corps on the 14<sup>th</sup>. She consented to an exclusive interview with the *Hokkaido Shimbun*. .... Ms. Kim Hak-sun. According to the explanation offered by Ms. Hak-sun, she was sixteen years old in 1940 when she was forcibly taken into a comfort station for Japanese troops in Tiebizhen in central China together with three other Korean women.

Here, too, the lead sentence refers to "the fair name of the women's volunteer corps" and to

her having been "forcibly taken."

Recently, I asked the former correspondent who wrote this article, "Did you write that piece after seeing the Osaka edition of the *Asahi* paper?" He replied, "I had no idea that you had covered the story." This term, "women's volunteer corps," was used conventionally at the time.

That same year, on August 18, the *Hokkaido Shimbun* introduced Ms. Kim Hak-sun with an article headlined "Another kind of forced removal" as the sixth in a series of articles entitled "Fifty years after the outbreak of war." According to the article, Ms. Kim Hak-sun had visited the office of the Korean Church Women United in late July. It states that Ms. Kim Hak-Sun approached a "staff member in charge of the Korean women's volunteer corps (military comfort women) issue" and said, "I was a member of the women's volunteer corps."

With respect to this matter, in its feature article published on November 17, 2014, titled "Reflecting on the comfort woman issue," the *Hokkaido Shimbun* refers to Ms. Kim Hak-sun. The paper explains that it had used the phrase, "in the fair name" of the "women's volunteer corps," because "in South Korea, there was a period when the labor volunteer corps and comfort women were considered to be the same." The former reporter who wrote the piece is quoted as saying, "the woman also said so," making clear that Ms. Kim Hak-sun herself had also used the term, "women's volunteer corps."

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* has also used this expression. Based upon an interview of Ms. Yun Chung-ok on the occasion of her visit to Japan, an article in the August 24, 1992 morning edition of the Osaka *Yomiuri* reads, "It is thought that of the approximately 200,000 women taken away as part of the women's volunteer corps, there were about 80,000-100,000 sent to the battlefields as "comfort women," but there are no accurate



numbers given the lack of official documents. .... Ms. Kim Hak-sun of Seoul is one of those women."

### The impact of Kim's coming forward

On August 14, 1987, an article containing the phrase "in the name of the women's volunteer corps" appeared with the headline, "Telling the truth about comfort women: third work by theater troop Yumeya conveys tragedy of 'women's volunteer corps,'" in the Tokyo evening edition of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. A *Mainichi Shimbun* article dated July 12, 1991, also writes about "Korean women conscripted under such guises as the 'women's volunteer corps' were deprived of their freedom and forced to serve Japanese soldiers at comfort stations in various places." Ms. Yun Chung-ok herself was offering such explanations at the time. In an interview appearing in the evening edition of the *Mainichi Shimbun*, on December 9, 1991, Ms. Yun stated, "For us, the volunteer corps means, precisely, comfort women. During the war, many women who were taken to the war in the name of the women's volunteer corps were made comfort women."

The first person to write about Ms. Kim Hak-sun for the *Mainichi* was a woman reporter in the city news department. She introduced Kim in the "Eye of the Reporter" column of September 28, 1991, writing that she had met Ms. Kim Hak-sun in late August. The first mention of Ms. Kim Hak-sun in the *Yomiuri* was in the aforementioned article of August 24 of that same year, which reported on Ms. Yun Chung-ok's visit to Japan. Because the article was not signed and only appeared in the Osaka edition, the writer was likely a reporter working for the Osaka Head office of the *Yomiuri*.

Thus, it was not the Seoul-based correspondents of the *Asahi*, *Mainichi* and *Yomiuri* who were writing the first reports on Ms. Kim Hak-sun.<sup>10</sup> That was a time when only particularly interested reporters covered the

comfort woman issue.

What I would like to emphasize further is, as I have already stated, that information about Ms. Kim Hak-sun, prior to her coming forward, came from the Seoul Bureau Chief of the *Asahi*.

In his book *Yami ni Idomu! (Challenging the Darkness! Tokuma Bunko 1998)*, the author, Mr. Nishioka Tsutomu, professor of Tokyo Christian University, writes "Reporter Uemura is married to the daughter of Yang Soon-im, the board member (at the time) of the Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families, which brought a lawsuit against Japan and is currently fighting the case. Reporter Uemura could write the first report on Ms. Kim Hak-sun because he received information from his mother-in-law." This, however, is not true.

What I would like to point out first is that it was Ms. Yun Chung-ok's "Korean Council" that had been interviewing Ms. Kim Hak-Sun, and that the Korean Council is an entirely different organization from the Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families to which my mother-in-law Yang Soon-im belongs. The Korean Council is an alliance of progressive organizations, while the Bereaved Families Association is an organization whose membership consists of those victimized by the war and bereaved families, and it takes a conservative stance. Their political orientations are different.

Ms. Kim Hak-sun and Yang Soon-im met for the first time on September 19, about forty days after August 11 when I wrote the article on Ms. Kim Hak-Sun's taped testimony, that is, before she made her identity public.

In the diary kept by my mother-in-law Yang Soon-im, there is an entry concerning the situation at the time. According to the diary, she met Ms. Kim Hak-sun at a restaurant in the New Naeja Hotel in Seoul on September 19. A Korean parliamentary representative introduced them to each other.

The diary entry is as follows: "Ms. Kim Hak-sun, who recently attracted media attention, was also present. .... A parliamentary representative introduced Ms. Kim to me, but we only exchanged greetings and never talked to each other. ... Perhaps it was because Ms. Kim, too, did not know anything about me, that she remained silent after the initial greeting." Ms. Kim later joined the Bereaved Families Association, but at the time, Yang Soon-im seems to have been standoffish with Ms. Kim Hak-Sun, who was attracting media attention.

Ms. Kim Hak-sun's coming forward greatly influenced other former comfort women, who had thus far remained silent. In its September 30, 2011 issue, *Shukan Kinyobi* asked one such woman, Ms. Lee Yong-soo, to reflect on that time.

It was June 1992 when I came forward, and I was the twenty-ninth person. Many women had watched Ms. Kim Hak-sun's press conference on TV, and impressed by her courage, they came forward, saying "I, too, was a comfort woman." I did not have the courage, and went to the office of a newspaper in my hometown of Daegu and asked, "I have a friend who used to be a 'comfort woman.' Whom should she contact?" At the Korean Council in Seoul, I lied to Professor Yun Chung-ok (co-chair) saying, "I came here to consult about my friend." But finally, I confessed, "In fact, I am that 'comfort woman.' The professor and I hugged each other and cried.

After Ms. Kim Hak-Sun, many former comfort women followed in her footsteps to testify in South Korea. Given this situation, the Japanese government issued the Kono Statement in August 1993. In South Korea, more than 200

women have come forward as former comfort women. Former comfort women also came forward to testify in the Netherlands, the Philippines, Taiwan, Indonesia, China, and elsewhere. In February 2007, three former comfort women, including Ms. Lee Yong-soo, the one who said she had gained courage from Ms. Kim Hak-sun, testified at a public hearing of the subcommittee of the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs. In July of that same year, the House passed a resolution asking the Japanese government to apologize to former comfort women. Ms. Kim Hak-sun's coming forward served as a major stepping-stone to make the comfort woman issue a global concern.

Incidentally, was my first article (Osaka edition, August 11, 1991) introduced in Korean newspapers? A translator friend of mine who is studying abroad in Seoul searched the databases and microfilms of nine major papers, such as the *Dong-a Ilbo*, but found no indication that my article had been introduced. I also asked another friend who works for the Yonhap News Agency whether Yonhap news had introduced my article at the time, and the answer was "No." The Korean media of the time had paid no attention whatsoever to my August 11 article. It was the press conference of August 14 when the existence of Ms. Kim Hak-sun attracted media attention for the first time in Korea.

My article had no influence on the Japanese and Korean media, but it turns out that unbeknownst to me, I was observing a critical moment of historical change.

#### **Part IV: The other article targeted by critics: Why I did not write about Kim Hak-sun's kisaeng background**

During the period when I worked for the city news department of the *Asahi* Osaka Head Office, from November 1989 to March 1992, I wrote only two bylined articles on Ms. Kim Hak-sun. One was the article written before she

came forward, dated August 1991; the other was an article in the Osaka edition of the *Asahi*, dated December 25 of the same year, on Ms. Kim Hak-sun's testimony to her attorneys. The December article was part of a series, "What the Pacific War was for women." For this article as well, I have been bashed by a segment of the media.

The headline of my December 25 article is "My youth gone forever. Half a lifetime filled with bitterness. Former military comfort woman Ms. Kim Hak-sun files a lawsuit against the Japanese government." The article reads as follows:

Thirty-five former comfort women, former soldiers and civilian personnel and their bereaved families belonging to the Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families of South Korea brought a lawsuit seeking compensation from the Japanese government on the sixth of this month at the Tokyo District Court. Three of the plaintiffs were comfort women. Two of them were unnamed, but Ms. Kim Hak-sun (67, resident of Seoul) disclosed her name and came to Japan. This is the first time that former comfort women have brought suit. In order to prepare for the lawsuit, the defense lawyers and the Association to Clarify Japan's War Responsibility (Nihon no senso sekinin wo hakkiri saseru kai, "Hakkiri Kai")<sup>11</sup> visited South Korea four times. I accompanied the lawyers for their interviews with the former comfort women and heard detailed stories from Ms. Kim. I quote below from a transcription of her recorded testimony. (City News Department,

Uemura Takashi)

"I was born in a rural area in Jilin Province, Manchuria (present-day northeastern China). We were in Manchuria because my father was a civilian helping out the Independence Army. My father died about 100 days after I was born, and my mother and I went to Pyongyang. I was so poor that I quit school after the fourth grade (elementary school). After that, I supported myself as a nursemaid's work and the like.

"If you go there, you can earn money.' So I was told by someone who was working for the local district. He did not tell me what the job was. It sounded tempting, and together with a friend who lived in the neighborhood, I decided to take up his suggestion. It was the spring of 1939, when I was sixteen (seventeen by East Asian age count)." ...



### Uemura Takashi's article, Dec 25, 1991

It was earlier that year, on August 11, when I reported on the existence of a former comfort woman. Only days later, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of that month, she came forward with her real name (Kim Hak-sun). Subsequently, Ms. Kim Hak-sun decided to join the lawsuit to be brought by the Association for the Bereaved Families (Kim Jong-dae, then president) and became a member of the organization. In preparation for the lawsuit, the team of lawyers for the plaintiffs (headed by attorney Takagi Ken'ichi) was scheduled to interview Ms. Kim Hak-sun on November 25. With the permission of the team, I was present at the interview and wrote my article on that basis. The interview took place in Seoul, about one month prior to the article's publication. That was my first meeting with Ms. Kim Hak-sun.

### The *Yomiuri Shimbun*'s approach to reporting on me

A representative example of the criticisms directed at my article is an article entitled "Re-examining the *Asahi*'s reporting on 'comfort women' (2)," published on August 29, 2014. In the *Asahi Shimbun*'s special feature of August 5, "Thinking about the comfort women issue (1)," states that "There is no distortion of evidence in the article" by Uemura on comfort women and rejects the charge of factual fabrication. The *Yomiuri* had launched a series

criticizing the *Asahi* series on August 28. "Re-examining the *Asahi*'s reporting on 'comfort women' (2)" was the second in that series.

I was surprised by the *Yomiuri*'s approach to me regarding this "Re-examination" article. And I have the feeling that I was deceived. Let me explain the situation. Just before 2 pm on August 28, the *Yomiuri* sent a fax to the public relations department of the *Asahi* with the subject heading "Questions for Mr. Uemura Takashi" and a text consisting of six questions. The fax sender asked, "Could you let us know by 7pm, August 28, whether it will be possible to interview him?" When this was communicated to me by the *Asahi* PR department, I replied by the same avenue, "I will do the interview." While I was composing my answers the next day, I received notification from the PR representative of the *Asahi*'s Tokyo Head Office: "The article is already out." The *Yomiuri* had demanded "answers" from me, but without hearing any of my "answers," they had written an article criticizing me. It almost seems as if they were convinced that I would reject their interview request and had already prepared their article on that premise. It looks like a case of conclusions coming first.

The *Yomiuri* article deals in its entirety with the Uemura article. It has the subheading "An unmentioned past."

Mr. Uemura writes once again about Ms.



Kim's hardship-filled life in an article printed on page 5 of the morning paper on December 25, 1991 (Osaka Head Office edition). In his reporting, however, Mr. Uemura never refers to the fact that Ms. Kim's mother gave her up for adoption for the sum of 40 yen to a "house that trained kisaeng." Kisaeng are women who perform music and dance at venues such as parties, and it is said that some kisaeng became comfort women. Moreover, Ms. Kim has testified that she was told by her adoptive father, "You can earn money in China" and was taken by him to Beijing. In Mr. Uemura's series of articles, the person who tricked Ms. Kim is represented as "someone working for the local district," and the reader cannot tell that the person was actually her adoptive father.

There are two points of criticism of my article here: 1) the article does not discuss the fact that she was adopted into a kisaeng training house, and 2) it does not make evident that it was her adoptive father took her to China.

Let me discuss the second point first. In the interview session with Ms. Kim Hak-sun conducted on November 25 where I was present, she never mentioned her adoptive father. This fact can be confirmed in No. 2 of the *Hakkiri Tsushin* (newsletter) put out by the citizens group, the Association to Clarify the Post-War Responsibility of Japan, whose members were also present at the interview and recorded the testimony. This issue of the newsletter was published around the time of the filing of the lawsuit on December 6. The relevant passage reads as follows:

When I was seventeen, the town head came to me and kept saying, "There's a certain place where you can make money." I decided to go with a friend of mine, whom I called by her Japanese name, "Emiko," and together we got on a truck with many other Koreans.

The interview summary, prepared by the plaintiffs' team (in Japanese), also states, "In spring 1939, when the plaintiff was seventeen (East Asian count), the head of the town district where the plaintiff lived convinced her 'you can earn money if you go there,' and she decided to leave with another girl from the same town named Emiko in order to work."

Both pieces have approximately the same content as my article,

and the adoptive father does not appear. There are minor differences in terminology based on translation style from the original Korean, but both versions state that someone from the town encouraged them to go off to work. The October 3 issue of *Shukan Posuto* magazine also raises the "adoptive father" issue with such observations as "Mr. Uemura should have recognized at that time (of the November 25 interview-UT) that this was not a case of forcible removal (by the military) but of being sold by a parent"; or, "If she had referred to 'the adoptive father of the [kisaeng] call office' but Uemura modified it to 'someone working for the local district,' it is decisive evidence of intentional fabrication." My article, however, has the same content as the aforementioned second issue of *Hakkiri Newsletter*. Had they read the *Newsletter*, they would have had a clear grasp of the content of the interview. It is desirable for writers to check basic sources before they write their articles.

Let me return to the first point. Kisaeng is the Korean version of geisha. To be sure, I did not write about the kisaeng school. The aforementioned *Hakkiri Newsletter* No. 2 records Ms. Kim as saying "I had made up my mind to enter a performing arts school in Pyongyang that trained kisaeng and to make my living as a performer in future."

The summary of the interview prepared by the plaintiffs' lawyers, however, did not include this

segment. Thinking that "It's not as if it's acceptable for a kisaeng to be forced to become a comfort woman," I did not attach much significance to the kisaeng issue. It was also not as if being a kisaeng made it more likely for someone to become a comfort woman. From the first time I heard her taped testimony, Ms. Kim said that she was "tricked into becoming a comfort woman."

On December 6, 1991, 35 members of the Association for the Bereaved Families, including Ms. Kim Hak-sun and two other former comfort women, brought a lawsuit at the Tokyo District Court against the Japanese government to demand compensation for losses incurred because of colonization and the war. The complaint describes Ms. Kim Hak-sun as follows:

From the age of fourteen, she attended a kisaeng school for three years, but in the spring of 1939, when she was seventeen (East Asian count), persuaded that she could "earn money over there," she was taken, together with a woman who was one year older (called Emiko), by her adoptive father to China.

Reference to an "adoptive father," unmentioned by Ms. Kim Hak-sun at the November 25 interview, was added. The complaint is not

identical to the summary of the interview, and it is likely that this segment was added to the complaint just before submission.

The complaint was released to the mass media when the case was brought to court. The *Asahi* reporter in charge of covering the trial, however, did not refer to kisaeng in his front-page article in the evening edition of December 6.

On August 29, 2014, the *Yomiuri* ran an interesting article on a special feature page, separate from the serialized article of the same day. The headline reads, "We have been guided by caution in our reporting since 1992." The article refers to the paper's use of the term "forcibly drafted" in its article in the evening edition of December 6, 1991 that reported on the three comfort women, including Ms. Kim Hak-sun, who had brought suit. That is, at the time, the *Yomiuri* interpreted the former comfort women including Ms. Kim Hak-sun as having been "forcibly taken away." Moreover, concerning Ms. Kim Hak-sun, the article stipulates, "We did not refer to her background at the kisaeng school." Nor did the *Yomiuri* mention the adoptive father in its pages at the time. The article also notes that the *Yomiuri*, too, had confused "comfort women" and "women's volunteer corps" in their articles prior to 1992.

As I compared the two articles on separate pages of the August 29 issue of the *Yomiuri*, I was overcome by a sense of enervation. What the *Yomiuri* refers to as an

"unmentioned past" in my article was also "unmentioned" by the *Yomiuri*. It had even ventured to use the expression, "forcibly drafted."

During the month of August, the *Yomiuri* criticized me a total of three times for "not referring to kisaeng." If so, I rather think that it behooves the *Yomiuri* to examine why it had failed to refer to kisaeng in its articles.

Ms. Kim Hak-sun has been attacked for having attended a kisaeng school. Nishino Rumiko and Kim Puja, the two editors of *Shogen mirai e no kioku Ajia "ianfu" shogenshu (Testimonies - Memories for the Future: Asian "Comfort Women" Testimonies I, Akashi Shoten 2006)*, which includes the interview of Ms. Kim by the Korean Council, refer to this matter in their "Afterword."

In contemporary Japan, the tendency to deny the wrongs committed by Japan in the past, to humiliate the victims as having been motivated by money or practicing a trade, and to erase the existence of the "comfort women" from the Japanese "national memory" is becoming stronger. ... For example, the fact that Ms. Kim Hak-sun's being from a kisaeng call office has become grounds for attacking her. .... Without even

having become a kisaeng, Ms. Kim Hak-sun was taken to Beijing by her adoptive father. There, when she walked out of an eatery, she was taken by Japanese soldiers and made a "comfort woman." Even if they had a background as kisaeng, the injury inflicted on women when they were taken by the Japanese military to a comfort station and made into "comfort women" can in no way be justified.

I don't think it matters whether Ms. Kim Hak-sun attended a kisaeng school. Whatever her background, it was not her wish to become a comfort woman. Can we not recognize her victimization?

In the evening edition of the five national papers (published by their Tokyo Head Offices) of December 6, 1991 when the lawsuit was brought, none, including *Sankei*, refers to Ms. Kim Hak-sun's "kisaeng" background.

In the July 4, 2014 issue of *Shukan Kinyobi*, university lecturer Mr. Nogawa Motokazu makes the following point.

It stands to reason that none of the papers touched on the matter of the "kisaeng" background. Ms. Kim Hak-sun's claim concerns the

fact that, having been told, "You can make money there," she was taken to a Japanese military comfort station and forced to engage in prostitution. This has nothing to do with her having been a kisaeng. And to attack this eminently reasonable omission of reference to kisaeng as an act of "fabrication" simply reveals the deeply rooted sexism on the part of those who deny the "comfort woman" issue.

## **Part V: Described as a reporter who fabricated the comfort woman issue: A rebuttal to Nishioka Tsutomu**

Use of the term "women's volunteer corps" became a curse that intensified in 2014, resulting in attacks that threaten my right to a livelihood.

An article appeared in *Shukan Bunshun*'s February 6, 2014 issue entitled "Asahi reporter, 'fabricator of comfort women,' to become professor at exclusive women's college." The article definitively describes my article from twenty-three years ago, of August 11, 1991, as a "fabrication." This piece was a part of the magazine's special feature, "All-out effort, rage special: Shoot the 'underbelly' of South Korea!" It is an example of the so-called "anti-Korean" articles. With this article, an image of me as "the reporter who keeps running away, teaching the comfort women issue in college courses" was created. As a result, my career change fell through.



In November 2013, when I was Hakodate Bureau Chief of the *Asahi*, I was selected to become a tenured professor of media studies at a Christian university, Kobe Shoin Women's University. Since 2012, I had been working as a part-time lecturer at the local Hokusei Gakuen University in Sapporo. I experienced the pleasure of learning with young people, and decided on a career change so that teaching could be my profession. I signed the contract with the Kobe Shoin Women's University in December.

In April 2010, when I was fifty-one years old, I entered the graduate school of Asia-Pacific Studies at Waseda University, my alma mater, as a non-traditional student. When I worked at the Tokyo Head Office of *Asahi*, I was a member of the reporting team for a long-running series entitled "Newspapers and War," dedicated to investigating the war responsibility of the *Asahi Shimbun*. I did research on the Keijo Bureau of the *Asahi*, located in Seoul during the colonial era. I learned then that the Osaka edition of the *Asahi*, on the occasion of the signing of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty of August 1910, published an editorial putting forth the view that "For Koreans, to become Japanese signals good fortune, and the actions of Japan in Korea signify civilization. ..." Thinking that this kind of newspaper discourse might have created the deeply rooted contempt for Koreans among Japanese, and wanting to study the issue further, I went to graduate school. Since spring of 2009 when I was transferred to Hokkaido, I became engrossed in a long-running series, "The Ryomas of the North," on the descendants of Sakamoto Ryoma who moved to Hokkaido.<sup>12</sup> This was because I was attracted to the democratic aspirations of Ryoma's descendants, who engaged in the People's Rights Movement and the effort to prevent war between Japan and the United States. With such projects in mind, I wanted to focus on teaching and writing as a college professor.

The article that *Shukan Bunshun* deemed a "fabrication" was the piece I first introduced in this essay, that is, the front-page article of the city news section of the Osaka *Asahi* edition of August 11, 1991. This is how Mr. Nishioka Tsutomu comments on it in the *Shukan Bunshun* article:

The article by reporter Uemura states, "taken to the battlefield in the name of the volunteer corps," but the volunteer corps was an organization for mobilizing workers for munitions factories and had nothing to do with comfort women. Moreover, the woman who came forward at that time wrote in her complaint that she was sold by her parent and became a comfort woman, and said the same in an interview with a Korean paper as well. Mr. Uemura did not touch on these facts and wrote the piece as if there had been a forcible removal. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to call his article a fabrication.

I repeat: the "women's volunteer corps" and "comfort women" were used with the same meaning in Korea at the time. As supported by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*'s acknowledgment of its own confusion, I was not the originator of this usage.<sup>13</sup>

## I did not write the phrase, "forcibly taken away"

In its "'Re-examination' of its coverage of the 'comfort woman' issue" of August 5, 2014, the *Asahi* admitted to a confusion of the terms "volunteer corps" and "comfort women" and deemed the usage mistaken.<sup>14</sup> It wrote that there was a misuse of the terms in my own article, too. My writing "in the name of the 'women's volunteer corps," however, in no way meant "forcibly taken away under the Imperial ordinance mobilizing the women's corps for factory service." In my article I had written, "tricked into becoming a comfort woman" and not that the woman was forcibly taken away.

According to the database, this article had 956 characters. On the following day, the same article was shortened to 472 characters and placed on the second page of the city section of the morning edition published by the Tokyo Head Office. In this version, the segment "in the name of women's volunteer corps" that I wrote in the Osaka headquarters edition was deleted. If this woman was "forcibly taken away under the Imperial ordinance mobilizing the women's corps for factory service," that would have been an important point indicating forcible removal, and it would have constituted the core of the article. In that case, even if the article needed to be shortened, that segment would presumably not have been cut.

Regarding the round of criticisms, Professor Kimura Kan of Kobe University Graduate School presented an interesting perspective in his article posted on the Japanese version of the *Huffington Post*, "What should the *Asahi* have re-examined with respect to the comfort woman issue?" (August 26, 2014). Referring to my having written an article with the phrase, "in the name of the women's volunteer corps," Professor Kimura writes,

What is clear is that

Uemura's description was not based on testimony by Kim Hak-sun that he had obtained through his own investigation. ... The coverage by Uemura was merely repeating the same "conventional phrase" about comfort women that the *Asahi* itself had been using. In that sense, it is impossible to assign a distinctive significance to the content of Uemura's coverage in relation to all the reports published in that paper.

Given the conditions of the time, this is the natural way of looking at the matter.

The latter half of Mr. Nishioka's comments in the *Shukan Bunshun* article states, "[Ms. Kim wrote] in her complaint that she was sold by her parent and became a comfort woman and said the same in an interview with a Korean paper as well. Mr. Uemura did not touch on these facts and wrote the piece as if there had been a forcible removal."

The complaint was completed just before the case was filed in court in December. It was August 14 when this woman came forward and was interviewed by the Korean papers. Both events took place after the publication of my article. My first article, dated August 11, only reported on the existence of a former comfort woman. Is it possible to criticize the first report of an event on the basis of subsequently published content?

Moreover, Mr. Nishioka states that "She wrote

that she was sold and became a comfort woman in her complaint," but that is not what is written in the complaint. The Korean papers wrote, "The adoptive father who took me could not get any money from the Japanese military, and I believe I was taken from him by force" (*the Hankyoreh*), and "The adoptive father, who intended to use the young women to do "business" with the Japanese military, was instead confronted by the bayonets of the Japanese military and had to hand her over to the military without having received a penny. Ms. Kim and the other woman were forcibly taken into the comfort station of the unit" (*Dong-a Ilbo*). Writing about Ms. Kim Hak-sun in his book, *Ianfu to Senjo no Sei (Comfort Women and Sexuality in the Battlefield*, Shinchosha 1999), Mr. Hata Ikuhiko, historian, only speculates that "The situation is unclear as to how she went to China with her adoptive father and became a comfort woman, and it is possible that she was resold there."

### **The *Shukan Bunshun* article derailed my life.**

"Because of that *Bunshun* article, we are getting complaint calls such as 'Why are you hiring this kind of person as a professor?' I would like to talk with you." This was a call that came to my cell on the evening of January 31 (Friday) from the chief secretary of Kobe Shoin Women's University. Thinking that the misunderstanding would be resolved if I explained the situation clearly, I composed an explanatory statement for the university.

On February 5, I met with two vice presidents and the chief secretary of the university in a small conference room in a hotel in Kobe. I was about to distribute the documents and the statement that I brought from Sapporo to the three. But all three refused to accept them.

Then the vice presidents said, "This has nothing to do with whether what was written in the article was true or not. If we let things go on like this, it will have an effect on the numbers

of prospective students applying. The image of Shoin will be damaged. We are not in a position to accept you as a faculty member in April, Mr. Uemura, so we would like to discuss this with you." In other words, they wanted me to decline to work at the university. There was not a hint that these three people had any intention to protect an instructor to whom they had made a job offer. I was not just angered, but dumbstruck by their appalling behavior.

It is said the issue was discussed at the university's faculty senate meeting the following day, February 6. According to an article by a *Hokkaido Shimbun* reporter in the December 2014 issue of the monthly magazine *Tsukuru*, the administration presented the case as follows.

Due to the article in *Shukan Bunshun*, the university is receiving threats. We would like to avoid a situation in which we are attacked by extremist organizations that could draw in our students. The trustees have decided that it would be difficult to have Mr. Uemura work for us.

Subsequently, I had a Kobe-based attorney represent me and negotiated with the university, but it would not change its position. I did not know anyone at the university because I had been hired through an open recruitment process. Given that the problem was the weekly magazine that labeled me a "reporter who fabricated," I thought that the university was also a victim. I gave up on working for the university and decided to settle the matter out of court.

Nishioka Tsutomu had written an article criticizing me in the monthly *Bungei Shunju* (April 1992). There he asserted,

It was not just the *Asahi*, but all newspapers in Japan that failed to report in detail on the process of Ms. Kim's being taken away. Consequently, the great majority of Japanese have ended up believing that it was the Japanese authorities, wielding their power, who forcibly made Ms. Kim into a comfort woman.

But the fact is, I have never once written of Ms. Kim Hak-sun as having been "forcibly taken away." On the other hand, other papers have written stories using such phrases as "forcibly taken away" and "abduction." The *Yomiuri*, in its evening edition of December 6, 1991, described the three comfort women who brought suit—Ms. Kim Hak-sun and the unnamed others—as having been "forcibly drafted." The evening edition of *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* on that same day carried an article headlined "Ms. Kim Hak-sun (67), forcibly taken as a military comfort woman." The *Mainichi*, in its "People" column in the morning edition of December 13 put it as "In the spring when she was fifteen years old, Ms. Kim was abducted by Japanese soldiers." The obituary of Ms. Kim that appeared in the *Mainichi* in the evening edition of December 16, 1997 stated, "Ms. Kim was forcibly taken away as a comfort woman to the base at the front line in China in 1941." It is a mystery why I, who have never written "forcibly taken away" am held to have written as if forcible removal had taken place, and papers such as the *Yomiuri* that clearly wrote "forcibly drafted (forcibly taken away)" have taken the position of bashing me. This is an exceedingly remarkable situation.

Of course, I am not blaming the other media sources for writing "forcibly taken away." It is in part the consequence of minor differences in Ms. Kim Hak-sun's testimonies. Mr. Hata Ikuhiko, in his *Comfort Women and Sexuality in the Battlefield*, questions the contradictions

among Ms. Kim Hak-sun's legal complaint and the other three testimonies. Was she forcibly taken away, tricked, or sold in human trafficking? Given the small shifts in Ms. Kim's story, listeners could interpret her story in various ways.

Yet, there is one consistent element in Ms. Kim Hak-sun's claims: that against her will, she was made a comfort woman and forced into sexual servitude to Japanese officers and soldiers. Whatever the process she went through to become a comfort woman, isn't the important point that we must face the fact that a teenaged girl was made to become a comfort woman. Isn't it necessary for us to try to draw close to the pain and mortification she endured?

Ms. Kim Hak-sun died in December 1997, having steadfastly rejected the compensation money provided by the Asian Women's Fund.

According to the book by the president of the Korean Council, Ms. Yun Mihyang, *Twenty Years of Wednesdays* (2011, Japanese translation published by Toho Shuppan), Ms. Kim Hak-sun left 20 million won that she saved over time by economizing and stipulated in her will that it was to be used "for those who are in need."

The impression I had when I first met Ms. Kim Hak-sun remains strong. She had wavy hair and a refined expression. I could envisage the traces of a seventeen-year old girl. She must have been a truly beautiful girl, I thought. She had not been able to speak of her painful feelings for almost half a century. Having overcome her sense of shame, she had come forward and testified courageously. To think that there are people who want to bash such a woman, saying, "Her testimonies have contradictions," and "She was just a prostitute, a licensed prostitute." Such words sound like an instance of second rape to me, and I feel pain and sadness every time I hear these voices.



## Part VI: Days of bashing: Contract for a university position cancelled

Mr. Nishioka Tsutomu's article on in the April 1992 issue of the monthly *Bungei Shuju* is said to be the first piece of criticism directed at me. At the time, Mr. Nishioka never contacted me for an interview. For that reason, I did not take him seriously at first. After the publication of the magazine, however, I was told by my boss to write an internal report. The *Asahi Shimbun* Company concluded that there was no problem with the content of my articles. After that, the company never took up the issue again.

I thought of writing a rebuttal in the weekly *Asahi Journal* magazine, but my boss advised me not to do anything. So I did not.

Back then, Mr. Nishioka wrote that the "volunteer corps" issue represented a "significant misunderstanding of the facts," and with the "kisaeng school issue," that "readers could be forgiven if they thought he had intentionally tried to conceal some of the facts." He did not, however, go so far as to use the term, "fabrication."

"About your inquiries on a faculty personnel matter. The contract with Mr. Uemura Takashi, who was scheduled for hiring (April 2014) as a result of open recruitment, was cancelled as of March 7, 2014. Mr. Uemura will not be assuming a post at this university." This was an announcement posted by Kobe Shoin University on its website. Through discussion with the university, I had decided on cancelling the contract with mutual consent. It was an unusual announcement. On the Internet, postings appeared praising the university's decision.

At the end of March, I quit my job at the *Asahi*, and the only work that remained to me was the adjunct lecturer position at Hokusei Gakuen University in Sapporo. This is a job I have had since 2012, when I was still working for the *Asahi*, and this is my third year. This university

is a private Christian school, and I am in charge of the "Special Course on International Exchanges" designed for international students. I teach about Japanese culture and social issues. I also use the *Asahi* newspaper as a text for information about Japan and the world. I am not teaching the comfort woman issue there. Most of the students are from South Korea, China and Taiwan, but Japanese students can also take the course.

Hokusei Gakuen released a Peace Declaration in 1995, on the occasion of the fifty-year anniversary of the end of WWII. It promises grave reflection on Japan's past invasion of Asia and emphasizes the importance of human rights education. The declaration resonates with me as it overlaps with my own aspirations as a reporter. I introduce this declaration in my classes. It has given me pleasure to involve myself with students from Asia at this university. However, this spring, I started being tracked and stalked on the Internet, with posts such as "Uemura is a part-time lecturer at Hokusei Gakuen." From early May, I began getting crank calls at home. For example, a woman's voice said, "I shouldn't have to tell you anything-you should be able to tell why I'm calling. Don't try to run away, just explain." How could they get my number even though it's unlisted and therefore unavailable through information?

I typed my home phone number on the Internet through Yahoo! and found a post. It says, "We have received information that Uemura has bought a house near his daughter's school and is living a luxurious life. How can he live like this? Let's all of us look into this! The phone number is 011-xxxx-xxxx." I decided not to answer my home phone any more.

From around this time, Hokusei Gakuen University also began receiving crank calls and emails demanding my resignation. In late May, a threatening letter saying, "Fire him!" was sent to the president and the chair of the board

of trustees. "Heard you hired an *Asahi* reporter, Uemura Takashi, to be a lecturer. The guy who fabricates stories. A traitor. An enemy of our country. I'll torture him to death. Fire him, fast. If you don't, I'm gonna hurt your students as punishment from heaven." "When you fire him, post it on your website."

The letter was typed on a personal computer and had a postmark from the Kansai region. The sender's name was not written, and about ten straight pins were enclosed.

Another threatening letter arrived in late July. On September 12, a phone call came, saying "Looks like he's still working there. I'm gonna bomb the school." The man who made the call was arrested for obstruction of business in late October and received a summary indictment. He lived in Niigata, and I did not know him at all.

The *Shukan Bunshun* magazine, for its part, tenaciously continued its coverage. In the August 14 & 21 double issue, there was an article with the headline, "Instigator of comfort woman issue, *Asahi* reporter fired by exclusive women's college, heading for the north country." The article ends with "If it turns out that he's been using the article he fabricated with Korean students to rub in the 'wrong image of Japan,' it's a terrible act of treachery." The article presupposes a situation and proceeds to criticize me as a traitor. I was staggered.

This summer, a weekly magazine reporter came to my house. I happened to be out. The woman reporter from *Flash* magazine left a politely written letter: "Other weekly magazines are reporting in a one-sided way. I would like to hear directly from you where the truth lies." But I was surprised when the magazine came out. In the magazine's August 19 & 26 issue, there was a photograph of me walking my dog in front of my house with the headline, "'Fabricator of military comfort woman story' *Asahi* reporter loses new job as college

professor." They had taken the photo without my knowledge.

The reporters of *Shukan Shincho* secretly took photos of me reading *Shukan Shincho* magazine in my front yard and biking with my dog, and published them in the September 11, 2014 issue.

These attacks on me by weekly magazines were posted on the Internet, and the voices exclaiming "Fire Uemura" spread even further.

## Part VII: Don't give in, Uemura! What had I done wrong?

"They're talking about me on Twitter. Twitter's scary because it has so much power to spread information." This is what my daughter started telling me on August 10.

In May, my daughter was chosen as the Hokkaido representative of the "High School Students Ambassadors for Peace." It is an organization for peace activism by high school students, and her selection was covered in the newspapers. We were worried that she might be attacked on the Internet, and our concern proved right. In early June, a post saying "Hey, isn't this Uemura's daughter?" appeared on the Internet, and abusive posts against my daughter increased rapidly. I did not tell her about this as I did not want to worry her.

In fact, my daughter was aware, too, but wasn't telling me. The Twitter incident made us both realize that other knew what was going on. The photograph of my daughter from her school's website was spreading on the Internet.

That photo was posted on an anti-Korean blog. There is also a post, dated August 10, saying, "How many Japanese people suffered because of her father? We've got no choice but to go after her until she commits suicide."

The blog also had many abusive posts about my daughter "Expose that photo!!! 100%

support!!! Makes complete sense, doesn't it, because that lot wrecked the international reputation of the Japanese and infringed on the national interest of Japan." "Hey, she looks Korean. Well of course, she's half-Korean." In one hour, twenty-nine such comments were posted.

This seventeen-year old girl was not even born when I wrote the articles in question. Why did her photo have to be posted with such abusive comments?

The attacks on the Internet were not limited to my daughter. I have a son who is a senior in college. A high-school classmate of his, who happens to have the same surname Uemura, was mistaken as my son, had his photo posted on the Internet, and is being targeted with abusive comments. Someone entirely unconnected has been drawn in. I apologized to him, but it's not as if that's a solution. I have been extremely frustrated.

After *Shukan Bunshun* described me as the "Asahi reporter who fabricated the comfort women" at the end of January, I got in touch with the *Asahi* head office: "A reporter from your company is being called a 'fabricator.' Please conduct a re-examination as to whether I really fabricated the story or not." I did this because I could not leave the situation as it was. I was then investigated several times over many hours by the re-examination team formed by the company, and the resulting article appeared as part of a special feature on the comfort woman issue on August 5. The re-examination confirmed that "there had been no distortion of the facts in the articles," and there was no "fabrication" in my articles. However, because the *Asahi* withdrew its articles covering the late Yoshida Seiji, who testified that he had participated in the forcible removal of comfort women, intense bashing against the *Asahi* ensued. As a result, far from recovering my reputation, I was bombarded by even more bashing.

Why has such bashing continued for so long? I do not think that the biggest reason for the attacks is my use of the phrase, "volunteer corps," or my failure to touch on "kisaeng." There are only two bylined articles that I wrote on Ms. Kim Hak-sun when I was a reporter at the Osaka city news department. I did not write the famous article of January 1992, on the discovery of the historical documents indicating the establishment of comfort stations by the Japanese imperial army. I have not written any articles on Mr. Yoshida Seiji. After working for the Osaka city news department, I went back to the foreign news department, then went to the Middle East and became the Teheran Bureau Chief in Iran from August 1993 to November 1996. I did not write anything on comfort women during this period. There are only nineteen signed articles with the words, "military comfort women," that I wrote when I was a correspondent in Seoul from December 1996-August 1999.

I tried to think of the reasons why I was targeted.

1) That I was a reporter for the *Asahi*, and reported on the existence of Ms. Kim Hak-sun, the first to come forward as a comfort woman, before any other paper, in a signed article. With Ms. Kim Hak-sun's appearance, other comfort women began to speak out, and the comfort woman issue became a significant international issue.

2) With the late reporter Matsui Yayori at the head, the *Asahi Shimbun* as a whole enthusiastically covered the comfort woman issue. There is animosity toward these reporters' understanding of history and their liberal stance. Among those who criticize the *Asahi*'s reporting on the comfort woman issue are some who are calling for the *Asahi* to cease publication.

3) The fact that I am married to a Korean woman.

4) Even though the mother of my wife (my mother-in-law) was found not guilty, she had been arrested and indicted for fraud. While she was preparing for a new lawsuit by bereaved families, she was put on trial on a charge relating to a fraud case. She was found not guilty in the district and high courts, and the decision was finalized in August 2014.

Given this situation, the understanding that writing on the "comfort woman issue" leaves you open to attack seems to be spreading within the *Asahi Shimbun*. It seems to me that reporters are shrinking away. Seeing how a senior person in the company has been so ferociously attacked, this might be a natural reaction. But isn't that, in fact, the aim of the forces attacking me? I would like junior reporters to do their best, and I know I also have to face up to the situation directly.

I have rarely asked for help. "Because you are under contract, you should be able to continue teaching in the second semester. But the vast majority of faculty and staff at Hokusei Gakuen University want you to quit next year. I will do my best to support you, but the situation is very difficult." In August, a faculty person supporting me said this with a sigh. A crisis threatens. But I like Hokusei very much, and I don't want to quit. I made up my mind and consulted a woman involved in a citizen's movement, and asked her, "Please help me in resolving this problem." I also explained the situation to local journalists. One after the other, they all told me, "I would like to support you." And yet, the unusual situation besetting me was not reported by any of the media, an effect of the bashing against the *Asahi*. At long last, *Shukan Kin'yobi* reported on it in the September 19 issue, but the mainstream mass media did not follow up on it.

### Protest emails and cheering emails

"Why don't we send emails of support to the University?" The woman that I consulted first came up with the idea in early September, and

thus began the movement to send emails of encouragement. According to the university, in August, before the movement started, there were 807 protest emails and only twenty in support. After September, however, the situation changed. By the end of October, there were 333 protest emails, while there were 1011 supportive emails, three times the protest mailings.

On September 30, the *Mainichi Shimbun* reported that a threatening letter was sent to Tezukayama Gakuin University (Sayama City, Osaka) where a former *Asahi* reporter worked as a professor. This professor had written an article on the late Yoshida Seiji when he was a reporter. The threatening letter demanding that the professor be fired arrived on the 13<sup>th</sup>, and the professor resigned the same day. This professor had been my boss when I was a reporter in the foreign news section. Is it permissible that a reporter who had written an article based on false testimony that he had found credible at the time be driven from a university? I was deeply shocked. With this incident, my case came to be reported widely in Japan.

Because the *Asahi* had concluded that there was no fabrication in my article, I decided to agree to be interviewed by other companies. To date, I have been interviewed by such entities as the *Hokkaido Shimbun*, the *Mainichi Shimbun*, and NHK. I met with the reporters in person, showed the evidence, and explained patiently, in detail. This is because they listened to my story with the attitude of "wanting to know the truth." They did not report my article as "fabrication." My case drew attention from foreign media, and the *New York Times* also came to interview me.<sup>15</sup>

Supportive people started to gather around me. There were people who had helped me in my reporting, and others I was meeting for the first time. Listening to my story, they all thought that there was something very wrong about the



unusual situation I had been faced with.

"If, after Shoin and Tezukayama, Hokusei knuckles under to these threats, there will be stopping this trend." People who shared this view formed a citizen's group to support Hokusei Gakuen University, the "Don't Give In, Hokusei! Group (Makeruna Kai), on October 6. Forty-three people, including novelists Ikezawa Natsuki and Morimura Shinichi, scholars such as Hara Hisao, former editor-in-chief of Kyodo News, journalists and lawyers became sponsors, and 401 people, including Nonaka Hiromu, former secretary-general of the Liberal Democratic Party, and Ueda Fumio, the Mayor of Sapporo, endorsed the organization. Press conferences were held in Tokyo and Sapporo. The founding charter states that the "Threatening attacks directed at Hokusei Gakuen University and Uemura's family are acts of terrorism against liberty and democracy." Kobayashi Setsu, Professor emerita of Keio University and one of the sponsors, asserted that "If Uemura loses his job, his right to a livelihood will be threatened. To incite his daughter, who is a minor, to commit suicide is a crime. This is nothing but terrorism." I was deeply touched.

In their editorials, newspapers, including the *Yomiuri* and the *Sankei*, criticized the threats against the university. Many organizations, such as the Japan Civil Liberties Union (Kitamura Yoichi, trustee and head), the Tokyo Bar Association, the Sapporo Bar Association, and the Japan Pen Club, have released statements. Gathering voluntarily to support Hokusei Gakuen University, three hundred eighty attorneys throughout Japan joined the complaint to seek criminal prosecution for obstruction of business filed at Sapporo District Court.

Complainant co-chair, attorney Nakayama Taketoshi, released this message before filing the complaint.

I fear that allowing threatening acts (against the university) to kill freedom of press and speech will lead to that road we once traveled. Nor can we ignore the ugly violation of the human rights of Mr. Uemura Takashi, his daughter and family. I hope our action will contribute to a swelling of public opinion committed to the establishment of peace and human rights.

I felt anew, keenly, that this was not just an issue about me. Facing crisis, I was able to gain the support of many people. I decided to squarely confront the situation facing me. Then an email from a woman lawyer in Sapporo came in. She wrote, "Mr. Uemura, maybe you need to take this opportunity, while some of the women forced to become "comfort women" are still alive, to examine the issue as a journalist." Looking back, I realized that I had kept avoiding the comfort woman issue.

Twenty-three years ago, I wrote the article "Once again, the Korean comfort woman issue has been thrust upon Japan" in the aforementioned Osaka magazine, *MILE*. I wrote about the situation around the time that Ms. Kim Hak-sun, appeared in public, the first former comfort woman to do so. I concluded the article as follows.

Fifty years after the start of the Pacific War, light is about to be shed on the dark side of history. We Japanese have to be humble before this history, and we must make haste with the task of unearthing the record. Neglecting to do so is tantamount to standing by and watching the *halmoni* die.

An issue is "once again thrust upon Japan":

aren't these words sent by the 32-year old Uemura Takashi, reporter in the Osaka city news department, to the 56-year old, Uemura Takashi, adjunct lecturer of Hokusei Gakuen University? There are forces in the Japan of 2014 that attack and intimidate those who try to fix their gaze upon the dark side of history. There are also people who refuse to surrender and are raising their voices. My younger self seems to be telling me, go stand with them and confront those forces.

The media criticism of my coverage on the comfort woman issue started with the April 1992 issue of *Bungei Shunju* magazine. The criticism escalated to the point of calling my articles "fabrication." For that very reason, I decided that I should write out my counterevidence and publish the essay in the *Bungei Shunju* magazine first.

I am not a "reporter who fabricates."

I cannot give in to unjust bashing.

### Special thanks to Norma Field for her editorial assistance.

**Uemura Takashi** is a former reporter of *Asahi Shimbun*, and currently an adjunct lecturer at Hokusei Gakuen University in Sapporo. Born in Kochi in 1958, he worked for the *Asahi Shimbun* as a reporter from 1982 until March 2014. In 1991 he wrote two articles on the first "comfort woman" to come forward, Ms. Kim Hak-sun. He has been criticized as a "reporter who initiated the comfort woman issue," and a "reporter who fabricated his articles." Intense attacks against him and his family became a major social issue in 2014. Aside from work experience in the city news sections in Osaka and Tokyo, Uemura also worked at the *Asahi's* Teheran, Seoul, and Beijing Bureaus, and he ended his career with the *Asahi* as chief of the Hakodate Bureau.

**Tomomi Yamaguchi** is an associate professor of Anthropology at Montana State University.

She is the author of "Feminizumu no Shiten kara Mita Kodo-hoshu Undo to Ianfu Mondai." ("The Action Conservative Movement and the "Comfort Women" Issue From a Feminist Perspective"). *Journalism* (November 2013): .81-91, and "Gender Free" Feminism in Japan: A Story of Mainstreaming and Backlash." *Feminist Studies*, 40, no.3 (Fall 2014): 541-572.

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### Related Articles

- Yoshimi Yoshiaki with an introduction by Satoko Norimatsu, [Reexamining the "Comfort Women" Issue. An Interview with Yoshimi Yoshiaki](#)

- Asia Pacific Journal and Hokusei University Support Group, [Japan's Fundamental Freedoms Imperiled](#)

- Jeff Kingston, [Extremists Flourish in Abe 's Japan](#)

- Nishino Rumiko and Nogawa Motokazu, [The Japanese State's New Assault on the Victims of Wartime Sexual Slavery.](#)

- Uemura Takashi (translated by Norma Field), [Journalist Who Broke Comfort Women Story Files 16.5 million Yen Libel Suit Against Bungei Shunju: Uemura Takashi's Speech to the Press](#)

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Asia Pacific Journal and Hokusei University Support Group, ["Japan's Fundamental Freedom Imperiled,"](#) on the attacks against Uemura.

<sup>2</sup> "Wednesday demonstration," officially named "Wednesday demonstration demanding Japan to redress the comfort women problems," held

by former "comfort women" and their supporters. It takes place every Wednesday in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

<sup>3</sup> Yoshida Seiji (1913-2000) was a WWII veteran and a writer whose testimony was retracted by Asahi's re-examination of its "comfort woman" coverage in August 2014. Yoshida claimed that he forcibly took women away to make them serve as "comfort women." Asahi concluded that this testimony should be deemed a fabrication because of the lack of supporting evidence. See [Asahi's re-examination page](#).

<sup>4</sup> Gambare Nippon, Zenkoku Kodo Iinkai (Do Your Best Japan! National Action Committee) is a right-wing organization founded in 2010. It was initially chaired by Tamogami Toshio, a retired Air Self-Defense Force chief, and now, by Mizushima Satoru, the president of Channel Sakura, a right-wing Japanese TV production company and an online broadcaster. See [here](#).

<sup>5</sup> See [Asia Pacific Journal and Hokusei University Support Group](#).

<sup>6</sup> The [December 17 statement](#) by Hokusei Gakuen.

<sup>7</sup> Reported in TBS's News 23 show of December 23, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> The organization's official name in Korean is "Hanguk Chongsindae Munje Daech'aek Hyobuihoe " and in Japanese, "Kankoku Teishintai Mondai Taisaku Kyogikai." "The Korean Council to Address the Issue of the Volunteer Corps" is a direct translation into English, but the organization uses as its official English name "The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan.) In this article, I will use the direct translation, "The Korean Council to Address the Issue of the Volunteer Corps."

<sup>9</sup> *The Asahi Shimbun* has four head offices in

Tokyo, Osaka, Seibu and Nagoya. Local editions are edited and published in these head offices. Uemura covered urban news in the Tokyo and Osaka head offices. See [here](#).

<sup>10</sup> This is in response to criticisms leveled at Uemura by conservative revisionists who question the need for an Osaka-based reporter like him to go to Seoul, given that the *Asahi* had its own Seoul-based correspondents.

<sup>11</sup> The official name of the organization in English is the Association to Clarify the Post-war Responsibility of Japan," but I used the direct translation from the Japanese name here.

<sup>12</sup> Sakamoto Ryoma (1836-1867), born in Kochi, was a figure who played an important role in connecting the Satsuma and Choshu clans and overthrowing the Tokugawa Shogunate. Only a month after the Tokugawa Shogunate's demise, Ryoma himself was assassinated. Having been featured in many novels, films and TV dramas, he remains a popular historical figure in Japan today. Because Uemura Takashi is originally from Kochi prefecture, he said in his public talks that he liked Ryoma and felt an attachment to him.

<sup>13</sup> The Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (wam) is currently holding an exhibition on the history of the *Yomiuri*'s coverage on the "comfort women" issue from the 1980s to 2007. For more information, see [here](#).

<sup>14</sup> On the re-examination, see the *Asahi Shimbun*'s website, ["Thinking about the comfort women issue."](#)

<sup>15</sup> *The New York Times* article appeared in the December 2, 2014 issue. Martin Fackler, ["Rewriting the War, Japanese Right Attacks a Newspaper."](#) *The Hankyoreh* also ran an [article](#) on him in December 21, after the publication of Uemura's *Bungei Shunju* piece. The [Japanese version](#) of the same piece.