

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Thirteenth Congress
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 1027

Introduced by GABRIELA Women's Party List
Representative LIZA LARGOZA-MAZA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

For Filipinos who survived and are old enough to remember World War II, the Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1945 was a time of devastation and human suffering: women being raped and bayoneted, children being killed, men being massacred. But how many of the younger generations remember the tragedies that befell hundreds of thousands of Filipinos, especially those made into "comfort women" by the Japanese Imperial Army?

All too often, there is an historical silence about the brutality and sexual slavery endured by Filipino women under Japanese occupation. Some survivors of World War II lament that even policymakers have neglected their obligation to recognize and demand justice for such victims of Japanese atrocities.

More than half a century has passed since the end of the war and yet the harrowing experiences and continuing struggle for justice of the Filipino comfort women still remains officially unacknowledged in our history books and curricula.

Such silence only adds to the historical injustice.

War is indeed marked by violations of human rights, but not often is it recognized that military sexual slavery must be one of the cruelest violations. During World War II, the Japanese Imperial Army went on a path of conquest and domination, violating women's human rights by establishing "comfort women stations" in countries such as Korea, China, and the Philippines, wherein they forced hundreds of thousands of women to endure systematic rape and military sexual slavery. This form of violence against women inflicted both physical and psychological suffering upon these women, so that even after the war, those who survived continued to live in silence and shame.

In the decades after the war, many men – including Americans – were celebrated as war heroes and given public support and recognition by the State; in contrast, the Philippine government failed to acknowledge the comfort women's wartime experiences and their heroic participation in the war of resistance against the Japanese.

Finally, in 1992, with the help of women's groups and advocates such as Lila Pilipina and GABRIELA, the surviving comfort women brought this historical injustice to the public eye. Lola Pacita Santillan and Lola Rosa Henson were among the first Filipino women to come forward and publicly admit having been forced into sexual slavery during the last world war. But sadly, ten years later, the number of comfort women fighting for justice is dwindling. Some like Lola Rosa and Lola Pacita have now passed away and many more comfort women may die without seeing the dawn of their quest for justice.

Around the world, however, there is growing recognition that the crimes of sexual slavery by Japanese Imperial Army were violations of women's human rights and international humanitarian law. The 1996 United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Rights report by Special Rapporteur Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, as well as the 1998 UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities report by Ms. Gay J. McDougall, give strong support to the comfort women's demands for a formal apology and legal compensation from the Japanese government.

Unfortunately, past and present Philippine history books fail to mention their sacrifices and martyrdom despite the harrowing experiences of Japanese Imperial Army sexual slavery and the injustice being done to them by the continuing refusal of the Japanese government to indemnify and formally apologize to these women and their families.

It is therefore the duty of every educational institution to inform and educate our people about the lives and heroism of the Filipino comfort women during the Japanese occupation, as part of a nationalistic and human rights based curriculum on the struggles of women.

It is important for every Filipino to honor and support these victims of military sexual slavery in their call for justice, and to condemn any and all forms of violence against women and other violations of women's human rights.

This bill seeks to rectify this historical injustice by proposing the inclusion in the history books of elementary, secondary, and collegiate curricula the lives and heroism of Filipino comfort women during the Japanese occupation. In doing so, this bill seeks to bring voice and recognition to the courageous struggles of these women.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is highly and earnestly recommended.

Liza Largoza-Maza

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AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE INCLUSION IN THE HISTORY BOOKS OF ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND COLLEGIATE CURRICULA THE LIVES AND HEROISM OF FILIPINO COMFORT WOMEN DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. The lives and heroism of Filipino comfort women during the Japanese occupation shall be included in the history books of elementary, secondary, and collegiate curricula throughout the country.

SEC. 2. The Secretary of Education shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 3. The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be charged to the appropriations for the Department of Education under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for its continuous implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 4. This act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in the Official Gazette or in any two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,