

FILM SCREENING EVENT

Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue

Friday, September 27, 2019 4:00–7:00 p.m.

Room 602, Lindner Family Commons, Elliott School of International Affairs
The George Washington University, 1957 E Street, NW. Washington, DC 20052



About the Filmmaker

Miki Dezaki, a Youtuber who was threatened and harassed by Japan's notorious netouyo (Cyber neo-nationalists) for his video on racism in Japan, is not shying away from controversial topics with his debut feature length documentary on the comfort women issue. The film, titled "Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue," dives deep into the most contentious dispute between Japan and Korea, and finds answers to hotly debated questions, such as: Were the comfort women "sexual slaves" or prostitutes? Were they coercively recruited? Were there really 200,000 comfort women? And, does Japan have a legal responsibility to apologize?

Dezaki masterfully interweaves footage from demonstrations, man-on-the-street interviews, news and archival clips with in-depth interviews with the most prominent scholars and influencers from both sides of the debate, including Yoshiko Sakurai (journalist), Kent Gilbert (lawyer/celebrity), Mina Watanabe (secretary-general of the Women's Active Museum), Koichi Nakano (political science professor) and Yoshiaki Yoshimi (historian). "Shusenjo" reveals surprising confessions and revelations that uncover the hidden intentions of both supporters and detractors while deconstructing the dominant narratives. That Dezaki has managed to bring nuance to a sensationalized and often oversimplified issue is just one of the many reasons that "Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue"; is a must-see work.

Synopsis

The "comfort women" issue is perhaps Japan's most contentious present-day diplomatic quandary. Inside Japan, the issue is dividing the country across clear ideological lines. Supporters and detractors of "comfort women" are caught in a relentless battle over empirical evidence, the validity of oral testimony, the number of victims, the meaning of sexual slavery, and the definition of coercive recruitment. Credibility, legitimacy and influence serve as the rallying cry for all those involved in the battle. In addition, this largely domestic battleground has been shifted to the international arena, commanding the participation of various state and non-state actors and institutions from all over the world. This film delves deep into the most contentious debates and uncovers the hidden intentions of the supporters and detractors of comfort women. Most importantly it finds answers to some of the biggest questions for Japanese and Koreans: Were comfort women prostitutes or sex slaves? Were they coercively recruited? And, does Japan have a legal responsibility to apologize to the former comfort women?