

Journal Reflections and Takeaways by Educators on 2006 Study Tour to Korea and China

John Knight contemplates, “I was left with a significant statement by the professor, when he mentioned that to have a true peace between Japan and China more understanding and education needs to take place”.

Julia Beck questions, “How could I learn enough about the history of this little-known event to facilitate the transmission of the experience of the survivors and the subsequent atrocities perpetrated by the Japanese military to my students and staff?”

Eugene Koh writes a poem about the thoughts of the comfort woman, (an excerpt)

I was fifteen, gentle and innocent,
But you came and ripped me
From the warmth of my parents' home,
The tenderness of a mother's arms,
To be fed, like two hundred thousand others,
To your countless lusty wolves,
Which defiled and devoured me
And tossed me, broken and scarred,
Into the cold scornful sea.

Charles Leskun writes, “Where is hope? What are the prospects for the future of these former slaves? The hope comes from revealing the truth. The hope comes from knowing that we teachers, who now have been invited into this village will take up the call and not break faith with them.”

Tim Waterhouse comments, “Arriving in Nanjing in the early afternoon, I’m immediately struck by its natural beauty – the tree lined streets and its quiet dignity, and its ancient walls and bridges. Knowing what happened here in 1937 makes Nanjing’s stature today all the more remarkable”.

Julia Beck observes, “Sixteen solemn educators heard of the seven weeks of terror, the fall and occupation of Nanjing, pens poised ready to note the brutal facts, asking discrete questions and preparing themselves for subsequent days of deep reflection on the nature of “man” and “his” ability to cause misery for others without ever learning or controlling “his” excesses. After a moment of silence, we each wondered, stunned silence, surrounded by the emptiness one feels in the face of such ignominy, such inhumanity.”

Philip Connolly explains with admiration, “The courage of Madame Minnie Vautrin, the American deputy president of the then Jin-Lin Women University, protecting such a large area with thousands of women inside and thousands of Japanese soldiers outside with nothing more than a garden fence surrounding the compound was incredible. To imagine this small woman of unimaginable strength holding back the violence and the aggression of the Japanese soldiers is unbelievable.”

George Hall remarks, "I am left impressed with the variety of memorable moments and perceptions that came up in the large group discussion. Our meeting with Professor Bu and editor Rong brought a lot of knowledge and discussion on Japan's use of biological and chemical weapons. The rightwing power in Japan is remarkable in keeping the denial of such warfare and experimenting. The support this element has had from the USA in their collaboration in this cover-up suggests the struggle for truth, reconciliation and peace has many hurdles to yet overcome!! "

Irene- Frances Matwijec remembers, "Victims told their stories of how they were contaminated by the contents of these bombs and the physical and mental fatigue that followed. There is no recognition of these hardships inflicted on Chinese civilians by the Japanese government."