

Rape In World War II Memory

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## Abstract

This thesis examines why mass wartime rape occurred during World War II, as well as examining the reasons for the denial or elimination of rape from public memory. For purposes of analysis, the thesis has been broken down into four cases: rape by Japanese soldiers — the “comfort women,” rape by German soldiers, rape by the Russian Red Army, and rape by American soldiers in France. The study looks at different reasons that could help explain why soldiers rape during wartime and what provokes them to rape.

Rape was quite prevalent during World War II, yet it is rarely acknowledged in discussion of the atrocities during this war. So why did the perpetrators cover up their actions? At the conclusion of the war, countries were either deemed the victors or the defeated aggressors and this decision assisted in determining what a country’s narrative will be. All four perpetrating countries chose to repress the issue of rape from public memory because rape disrupts its narrative of World War II in one way or another. Both Russia and the United States repress the memory of rape because it contradicts their heroic narratives. Japan desires to claim victim status due to the dropping of the atomic bombs, therefore acknowledging the “comfort women” or essentially sex slaves disrupts their identity as victims. In contrast, Germans openly admit their role as victimizers of World War II, yet still deny their rapes of Jewish women during the Holocaust. However, German women were the victims of mass rapes when the Russian Red Army invaded Germany.

Only recently has wartime rape been declared a war crime, following the instances of mass rape during the Bosnian War. This brought wartime rape into the public media for discussion. In an effort to determine why soldiers rape, I examined four theories: the pressure-cooker theory, the cultural pathology theory, the systematic rape theory, and the feminist theory. I also hypothesize that rape occurs as a result of soldiers doing what they are taught to do, conquer, occupy, and dominate. The attitude the military fosters in men gives them the feeling that women are a right of conquest upon dominating a territory.

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## Introduction: Sex, Rape, and War

The universal soldier, whether in the Red Army or the SS, in the U.S. Army or the French Foreign Legion, the Iraqi Army or the Serb irregulars, rapes and pillages innocent women; women as universal victim are the booty of every war, the unrecognized and uncompensated targets of war crimes.<sup>1</sup>

As Grossman asserts above, it is very common for innocent women to be raped by soldiers, and rape in the context of war is an ancient human practice.<sup>2</sup> Rape has been openly discussed in regards to many wars, such as the Bosnian War, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, and even in World War I, and yet with the exception of the Asian front, a blanket of silence has covered the atrocity in World War II. Both sides, the Allies and the Axis powers, committed rape during the war, but only now we are finding out about its extent. In this thesis I will argue that in Russia and the United States, admission of rapes contradicts their heroic World War II narratives, while for Japan claiming victim status as their narrative creates political as well as social tensions with the rest of Asia, and the world is not ready for Germany to claim victim status after provoking World War II and perpetrating the Holocaust. I will also argue that because public knowledge of mass rapes can have such a transformative effect on the World War II narrative of all four countries, the governments and its people have repressed rape.

Wartime rape has gained worldwide attention in recent years, since the 1990s, due to the mass rapes that occurred during the Bosnian War. The public

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<sup>1</sup> Atina Grossman, "A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Soviet Occupation Soldiers," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski (London: Routledge, 2004), 165.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathon Gottschall, "Explaining Wartime Rape," *The Journal of Sex Research* 41 (2004): 130.

outcry caused rape during war to be declared a war crime by the International Criminal Tribunal on June 27, 1996, “marking the first time sexual assault has been treated separately as a crime of war.”<sup>3</sup> Since these incidents were so highly publicized in world news, people began to wonder how omnipresent militarized rapes were.<sup>4</sup> Due to these atrocities, feminists and scholars have turned their attention to the issue and they have honed in on the many reasons why wartime rape happens and under what circumstances it occurs.

It is common knowledge that mass wartime rape has been around for centuries, perhaps even since the beginning of war. Jonathon Gottschall touches upon its commonality when he states:

For instance, mass rape is well documented in the wars between the Jews and their enemies described in the bible, in Anglo-Saxon and Chinese chronicles, in Medieval European warfare, during the crusades, in Alexander’s conquest of Persia, in Viking marauding, in the conquest of Rome by Alaric, in the petty wars of Ancient Greeks, and so on.<sup>5</sup>

If so, then why has it rarely been brought up in reference to World War II outside the Pacific theater, and what do new revelations about its prevalence mean for our understanding of the war?

In his 2004 article, “Explaining Wartime Rape,” Gotschall has researched why wartime rape continues to be prevalent in the present and established four theories that he believes are the most important. Gottschall discusses the feminist theory,

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<sup>3</sup> Marlise Simons, “U.N. Court, for First Time, Defines Rape as War Crime,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1996, accessed February 22, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/06/28/world/un-court-for-first-time-defines-rape-as-war-crime.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 109.

<sup>5</sup> Gottschall, “Explaining Wartime Rape,” 130.

the cultural pathology theory, the pressure-cooker theory, and the strategic rape theory. The feminist theory deals with the power hypothesis. Gottschall explains: "That is, rape in war, like rape in peace, is identified not as a crime of sexual passion but as a crime motivated by the desire of a man to exert dominance over a woman."<sup>6</sup> War is about dominance, like imperialism. In this theory, men who rape are portrayed as misogynistic and conditioned to dominate and distrust the female gender. This theory supports the idea that rape in war has more to do with the masculinity of men and the desire nature to oppress and dominate women, than a society's culture and history.

The cultural pathology theory explores various nations' histories in order to see what developmental factors, military or cultural, conspired to cause men from those cultures to commit such a vile crime.<sup>7</sup> Looking into a society's culture is important in determining how the country views women, how militarized the country is, and how harsh military training is. However, culture is more than militarism, and includes other aspects of society, like its patriarchal nature and attitude towards other cultures. In this analysis, rape is not incidental, but functional.<sup>8</sup> Cultural beliefs lead to instances of rape. All of these factors contribute to the cultural pathology theory, which seeks to explain why men rape in particular cases.

The pressure-cooker concept highlights how the wartime environment creates hostile soldiers. Fear, tension, waiting, or in other words the life of a soldier

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Gottschall, "Explaining Wartime Rape," 131.

<sup>8</sup> Gottschall, "Explaining Wartime Rape," 131.

creates boredom and terror. This essentially generates the situation that leads to the eruption of soldier's anger. When there are hostile soldiers among civilian populations, they have the propensity to erupt, creating high rates of rape. This theory can be used to explain why men of many different cultures take part in the practice of mass wartime rape.

Gottschall's strategic rape theory is currently the most popular and influential theory explaining mass wartime rape.<sup>9</sup> Gottschall states:

...increasingly since the Yugoslavian and Rwandan mass rapes, a consensus has been building that wholesale rape represents just another ordinance-like bombs, bullets, or propaganda- that a military can use to accomplish its strategic objectives; rape is a tactic executed by soldiers in the service of larger strategic objectives.<sup>10</sup>

This theory explains rape as a coordinated, planned, and logical weapon of war.

This theory establishes rape as a deliberate act of war, which helps to explain why it is so commonplace throughout history, even though the perpetrating countries have different cultures.

Susan Brownmiller, author of the book, *Against Our Will*, elaborates on the concept of rape as an outlet for masculinity. Due to the intensity of military training and fighting in war, and the feeling of dominance and superiority that war fosters, ordinary men can be transformed into extraordinary men. With this transformation, men become capable of unacceptable actions against enemy civilians. According to Brownmiller: "In the name of victory and the power of the gun, war provides men with a tacit license to rape. In the act and in the excuse, rape in war reveals the male psyche in its boldest form, without the veneer of 'chivalry'

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



or civilization.”<sup>11</sup> As Brownmiller asserts, rape becomes an outlet for masculinity in the theater of war, because rape both enhances and threatens masculinity.

Cynthia Enloe, author of *Manuevers*, addresses the fact that although rape is shocking, when it happens during wartime, “it becomes just an indistinguishable part of a poisonous wartime stew called ‘lootpillagelandrape.’”<sup>12</sup> She says that wartime rape leaves the victims nameless and the perpetrating soldiers faceless. It is hard to bring the topic of rape to public knowledge, because it is nightmarish and it becomes something political.<sup>13</sup> In order to make rape visible, people must first listen to women’s stories, then recognize that although we, as a public, tend to want to know the truth, it is difficult for women to discuss the abuse they received during war. As Enloe writes: “The challenge, therefore, is to make visible women raped by men as soldiers *without* further militarizing those women in the process.”<sup>14</sup> Enloe also goes on to examine different instances of why soldiers rape during particular wars.

I analyze four cases of mass rape committed by Japanese, Russian, German, and United States soldiers in World War II. Since the association between rape and war is a relatively new topic of research, looking at the different theories of why men rape, and investigating the narratives of countries like Japan, Russia, Germany, and the United States since the end of the war is important in order to shed light on the evolving narratives of World War II.

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<sup>11</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 33.

<sup>12</sup> Enloe, *Manuevers*, 108.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Enloe, *Manuevers*, 109.

World War II narratives are quite different for the victors than they are for the vanquished, but rape is not mentioned in any of the narratives of World War II. Both the United States and Russian narratives exclude rape due to its potential to contradict the heroic image of its soldiers. World War II is the “Great Patriotic War” in Russia, and in America it is considered to be the “Good War” fought by the “greatest generation.” If wartime rapes become publicly acknowledged, both of these country’s narratives and remembrance of the war could be called into question not only at home, but on the world stage as well.

German and Japanese narratives are quite different than the Russian and United States narratives because the Germans and Japanese are viewed as the victimizers of World War II. In Japan, the existence of the “comfort women” continues to call into question and contradict Japan’s victimization narrative and although the Japanese government continues to deny its involvement, these women and their experiences have been public knowledge since the 1990s. Since the “comfort women” system was so systematic and strategic, their existence completely contradicts Japan’s narrative of the war. On the other hand, the German people accept their status as victimizers. They were the perpetrators of the Holocaust, they murdered millions of people and they started the Second World War out of anger for their harsh punishment after World War I. The Germans also raped Jewish women, something that neither they nor Jewish women recognize as an aspect of the Holocaust. People don’t know the full extent of what German soldiers did. In addition, if the Russians publically acknowledged the mass rape of German

women by Russian soldiers, this would transform Germany into the victim, a narrative the world is still not ready to accept in reference to Germany.

Japan is the only country whose soldiers raped so systematically and for such a long period of time during World War II and this is why the strategic rape theory helps explain their actions. Rape was a part of the Japanese Imperial Army's tactics, even though Japan has tried to hide this aspect of its history. However, systematic rape is only one reason why the Japanese militarized rape as an instrument of warfare. Japan also fits into the cultural pathology theory because the level of militarization in Japanese education and culture at the time of and leading up to World War II was so high. Additionally, Japanese society was patriarchal, which also led men to believe they were superior to women prior to even entering war.<sup>15</sup> Japan's intense militarization and strict gender roles show how Japanese rapes fit into the feminist theory as well. The Japanese also believed that they were superior to all other races, especially Koreans because Japan occupied Korea before and during World War II. The Japanese occupation of Korea reinforced to Japanese racism, which also explains why Japanese soldiers raped.

The chapter on rapes by German and Russian soldiers fits the feminist and the cultural pathology theories. By examining the relationship between the Russians and the Germans, I analyze why both the Nazi and Russian armies committed mass wartime rape. Most people do not know that German rapes of Jewish women occurred, because the Holocaust is already considered horrific, but the Germans committed more crimes during the Holocaust than are publicly

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<sup>15</sup> Gottschall, "Explaining Wartime Rape," 131.

acknowledged today. The Russian Red Army was known for raping and pillaging its way through Germany and was even called the 'Red Beast,' but the Nazis raped Jewish women from their homeland.<sup>16</sup> Both countries fit into the cultural pathology theory because both were educated to loathe each other after Germany betrayed Russia.

The rapes by United States soldiers best fit the feminist theory. It was common for U.S. soldiers to rape as a way of exerting their dominance over the country they were occupying. In the United States-France situation, prostitution and rape become ways for the U.S. to assert power and control over the French populace they were liberating.<sup>17</sup> These recent revelations of rape present a great challenge due to the triumphant and even heroic collective memory Americans have of World War II. Tom Brokaw states: "They [World War II veterans] will have their World War II memorial and their place in the ledgers of history, but no block of marble or elaborate edifice can equal their lives of sacrifice and achievement, duty and honor, as monuments to their time."<sup>18</sup> This reflects the commonly accepted heroic memory of World War II soldiers and how they have been glorified in the United States narrative of the war. The feminist theory and the widely acknowledged heroic collective memory explain why United States soldiers raped in France and covered it up.

In order to analyze the World War II narratives of the aforementioned countries, as well as analyze the threat to these narratives by rapes, I used a variety

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<sup>16</sup> Grossman, "A Question of Silence," 167.

<sup>17</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 179.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998), 390.

of sources. For Japan, I was able to find published oral histories of the “comfort women” and a documentary with testimonies by Japanese soldiers called *In the Name of the Emperor: The Rape of Nanjing*. In this documentary, two soldiers and one former intelligence agent speak out about their actions in the Nanjing Massacre and their conquering of Nanjing. I was also able to use newspaper articles from recent years to look at how Japan defends its victim status and denies the existence of the “comfort women.” These sources also show that this remains a heated controversy among Asian countries today.

For the United States, I have only one published source detailing rapes in France during World War II, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*, by Mary Louise Roberts. In order to chronicle the true history of the liberation of France, Roberts utilized primary sources such as citizen complaints from the archives in Le Havre, letters to the mayor in Le Havre asking him to urge the American military to set up brothels to halt indecent scenes on the streets, and pictures in the United States National Archives cementing the existence of brothels in France for the military.<sup>19</sup> This topic was more difficult to research, and there were not many details on American rapes during the war, as the United States government concealed them. However, an American military chaplain wrote a pamphlet in 1944 in response to the disproportionate numbers of Negro soldiers

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<sup>19</sup> Jennifer Schuessler, “The Dark Side of Liberation,” *New York Times*, May 20, 2013, accessed January 14, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/21/books/rape-by-american-soldiers-in-world-war-ii-france.html? r=0>.

accused of rape compared to the number of white soldiers accused and tried.<sup>20</sup> The author's pen name was 'A Negro Chaplain' and I used this article in order to find out how attitudes of the time transformed rape into a black crime while America was in France.

There was quite a bit of information on Russian rapes of the German populace, and I was able to use statements from German survivors of and witnesses to Russian abuses. While looking at German rapes of Jewish women, I was able to use testimonies from Jewish women about their experiences, primarily those cited in the book *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*.

By looking at Gottshall's theories and examining the testimonies of survivors, I hope to be able to analyze why soldiers raped in these particular instances and figure out why the perpetrating countries concealed rape from public knowledge. Wartime rape continues to be common although laws regarding the crime have changed. The military fosters a culture of rape, in many ways. For example, soldiers are taught to dominate the enemy and bond with each other. This creates a type of male comradery unique to the wartime setting. Because of this bonding and domination, sex can sometimes be seen as a reward. Do soldiers consciously recognize the horrific acts they are committing? Are governments aware of the abuse committed by soldiers during the war? Rape is an atrocity and needs to be discussed on the world stage. The memory of mass rape during World War II must

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<sup>20</sup> Ronit Y. Stahl, "Stop Rape: A WWII Chaplain's Advice," *Nursing Clio*, March 28, 2013, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://nursingclio.org/2013/03/28/stop-rape-a-wwii-chaplains-advice/>.

become part of the public memory, and understanding why soldiers rape is critical to prevent history from repeating itself.

## Chapter 1: Rape by Japanese — “The Comfort Women”

Mass wartime rape by Japanese soldiers is different than the other cases discussed in this thesis because it has been the subject of worldwide debate since the discovery of the “comfort women” in the 1990’s and the resulting outrage over the Japanese government cover up following the war.<sup>21</sup> The “comfort women” were sex slaves for the Japanese Imperial Army and the vast majority were Korean. The Japanese already had control over Korea, and viewed Korean women as inferior and conquered. Many times these women were not told that their duties would entail sexual services, but instead believed they would be caring for and making the soldiers happy, hence the establishment of the name “comfort women.”<sup>22</sup> The euphemism, “comfort women” conceals their actual roles with positive language. There is more information and knowledge about Japanese rapes in Asia not only because the mass rape was systematic, ongoing, and revealed before the other cases, but also because their existence has profound implications for Japan’s struggle to retain its victimization narrative of World War II.

In Japan’s case, it is not just one theory that can be applied, but three that combine to explain why the Japanese Imperial Army raped many thousands of women from various countries throughout Asia from 1937 to 1945. It is clear from reviewing the history of and controversy behind the “comfort women” system that the systematic rape theory fits quite well with the Japan case. The “comfort women”

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<sup>21</sup> Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 79.

<sup>22</sup> Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, trans. Suzanne O’Brien (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 106.



system was Japan's systemizing of rape under the veil of prostitution. Japanese patriarchy, as well as the racism towards surrounding Asian countries such as China, Korea, the Philippines, and Malaysia, are both reasons why the cultural pathology theory and the feminist theory apply to Japanese rapes in World War II.

The military and government implemented the aforementioned "comfort women" system even before World War II. Yoshimi Yoshiaki, a professor of Japanese history at Chuo University who discovered documents on the "military comfort women" in the Self Defense Force Library in Tokyo, states:<sup>23</sup>

Okamura Yasuji, Vice Chief of Staff of the Shanghai Expeditionary Force, established comfort stations for the army in March 1932 modeled on naval comfort stations. According to his recollection, some acts of rape were committed by Japanese military personnel in Shanghai, prompting him to call on the governor of Nagasaki Prefecture to request a 'military comfort women corps.'<sup>24</sup>

The Shanghai incident in January 1932, a prequel to the Sino-Japanese War, allegedly caused by anti-Japanese actions by the Chinese was the reason the "comfort women" system was implemented.<sup>25</sup> During this incident, "Japanese soldiers raped many Chinese women, and the deputy chief of staff in Shanghai, Okamura Yasuji, set up a brothel in order to prevent further rape."<sup>26</sup> However, their use did not become widespread until after negative publicity following the Nanking Massacre in December of 1937.<sup>27</sup> The Nanking Massacre took place between December 1937 and March 1938 as Japanese troops captured the Chinese capital of

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<sup>23</sup> Kazuko Watanabe, "Militarism, Colonialism, and the Trafficking of Women: 'Comfort Women' Forced into Sexual Labor for Japanese Soldiers," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* vol. 26, no. 4 (1994): 11.

<sup>24</sup> Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 94.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, 49.

Nanjing. During this period, the Japanese “embarked on a campaign of murder, rape, and looting.”<sup>28</sup> The rapes became a serious obstacle to maintaining order in China since the Chinese look at rape with particular outrage. This created a viable environment for the implementation of comfort stations.<sup>29</sup> On December 11, 1937, the Central China Area Army ordered the establishment of more military comfort stations.<sup>30</sup> They were established to prevent more random rapes in Nanking, prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and eventually became perceived as essential to the army’s functioning, since it acted as a release of emotions and energy so that soldiers could allegedly remain calm among civilians.<sup>31</sup>

Although “comfort women” came from all over Asia, the vast majority of them were Korean because Japan already viewed Koreans as an inferior race prior to the start of World War II. In 1930, Kanji Ishiwara, a general in the Japanese Imperial Army and one of the central plotters of the Manchurian invasion wrote, “The four races of Japan, China, Korea, and Manchuria will share a common prosperity through a division of responsibilities: Japanese, political leadership and large industry; Chinese, labor and small industry; Koreans, rice; and Manchus, animal husbandry.”<sup>32</sup> The Japanese placed Koreans near the bottom of the hierarchy, proving that the Japanese already viewed Koreans as inferior.

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<sup>28</sup> BBC News, “Scarred by History: The Rape of Nanjing,” *BBC News*, April 11, 2005, accessed February 23, 2014, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/223038.stm>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Ienaga Saburo, *The Pacific War, 1931-1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan’s Role in World War II* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 12.

In addition, since Korea had a patriarchal Confucian society, Korean girls allegedly remained innocent and pure until marriage. Japan annexed and occupied Korea from 1910-1945, so the Japanese believed they were superior well before the war. The Japanese annexation also meant that Japan had a ready supply of virgin women and was able to further exert its dominance over the Korean populace through its women. Purity and chastity appealed to the Japanese Imperial Army since the spread of venereal disease among Japanese prostitutes was increasing. In order to prevent the spread of such diseases that weakened soldiers' physical strength, Korean virgins were procured. The racial prejudice towards these women made them suitable as "comfort women" since they were considered inferior to the Japanese.<sup>33</sup>

The "comfort women" system involved coercion, slavery, and deception during the recruitment process, as well as once the women were procured.<sup>34</sup> Women from Korea, China, and the Philippines were deceived into becoming "comfort women" by being sold, lied to about receiving a good job, or misled about the duties of a "comfort woman" in general. Hwang Keum-ju, a former Korean "comfort woman," says she was drafted by the Japanese and believed she was going to a factory to use her skills knitting and sewing for the war effort, but soon realized she had been deceived. She asked a soldier where the factory was. "Then he told me that the factory was right here. I asked him what kind of factory it was, and he

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<sup>33</sup> Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 31.

<sup>34</sup> Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual slavery and prostitution during World War II and the US occupation* (London: Routledge, 2002), 174.

laughed and said it was a baby-making factory. I could not believe my ears.”<sup>35</sup>

Another Korean woman, Mun Pil-gi, was lured into becoming a “comfort woman” by being convinced that she was going to Japan to receive the education she had been longing for, for many years. A Korean man told her he could take her to a place where she could study and make a lot of money.<sup>36</sup> It became common for procurers to play into what women longed for the most, making them easy targets. Yoshiaki states:

According to a 1930 survey of the state of the nation in Korea, 36 percent of Korean men were literate, while a mere 8 percent of Korean women were. Trapped in these circumstances, the girls were easily deceived by procurers’ appealing offers of good work in factories and such and then led off.<sup>37</sup>

Agents often took advantage of women’s feelings of oppression, their poverty, and were able to lure thousands of women into sexual slavery.<sup>38</sup>

Once “comfort women” were established within the military, the number of women who were forced into this form of sexual slavery continued to grow throughout the war until the system ended in 1945. According to the *New York Times*: “It has been estimated that at least 200,000 women from Korea, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Burma, Indonesia, Australia, and the Netherlands were forced to serve as ‘comfort women’ for the Japanese Imperial Army.”<sup>39</sup>

However, currently, some Japanese officials and the countries from which the

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<sup>35</sup> Sangmie, Choi Schellstede, ed. & Hwang Keum-ju, *Comfort Women Speak*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, 104.

<sup>37</sup> Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, 105.

<sup>38</sup> Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women*, 106.

<sup>39</sup> Phyllis Hwang, “Oblige Japan to Pay Reparations to Former ‘Comfort Women,’” *New York Times*, December 13, 2000, accessed November 15, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/13/opinion/13iht-edhwang.t.html>.

Japanese recruited kidnapped women contest this number. Other relevant documents regarding the exact number of exploited women have either been hidden or destroyed, so it is now impossible to determine how many women were actually considered “comfort women.” It is also challenging to calculate the exact number of women involved since many of the women died or were killed during and after the war. Tanaka states: “...the best estimates range from 80,000 to 100,000. According to the Japanese military plan devised in July 1941, 20,000 comfort women were required for every 700,000 Japanese soldiers, or 1 woman for every 35 soldiers.”<sup>40</sup>

Although the justification for the establishment of the “comfort women” was to prevent rape, these estimated 100,000 women were raped, often many times a day for months or even years.<sup>41</sup> These women went through near-death experiences everyday as they waited to be raped by the Japanese soldiers or waited for transportation to the next comfort station. They were treated like military supplies, with no reference to the fact that they were human. Many times, “comfort women” were transported to the front lines in army ships, trucks or railways, and even army planes. It is also common knowledge that the head of Army supplies was responsible for controlling transport and it is assumed they made decisions regarding the transport of women from various locations.<sup>42</sup>

Comfort stations were located all over Asia, as the “comfort women” were transported to where they were most needed. The conditions the women were subjected to were horrifying, as a former Korean “comfort woman,” Kim Dae-il,

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<sup>40</sup> Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 99.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Tanka, *Hidden Horrors*, 98.

recalls. "Each of us was assigned a number for identification, and a small space of four feet by six with one *tatami*, a Japanese straw mattress, for the floor."<sup>43</sup> Within these small spaces, women were dehumanized and reportedly raped until they were bleeding. Some soldiers even threatened them with death if they did not follow their orders. Kim describes the abuse she received:

It was common practice for soldiers to manhandle us, but the soldiers of Sixth Army division from Kyushu were the worst. They would frequently beat us. One day a drunken soldier walked into my cubicle, stuck his bayonet on the *tatami* mat, and yelled at me, 'You must have heard of the Sixth Division. I am the one. I will kill you if you do not do as I say.'<sup>44</sup>

From Kim's statement, we understand that the "comfort women" were military sexual slaves.

The "comfort women" were physically alive, but emotionally dead with each transaction.<sup>45</sup> During her experience as a "comfort woman," a Korean, Hwang Keum-ju remembered how a Japanese soldier tore her skirt and cut under the skirt and underpants because she would not strip for him. She was a virgin. Hwang Keum-ju could not walk for ten days after being raped to the point of unconsciousness and woke up in a pool of her own blood.<sup>46</sup> The women had no ability to defend themselves and had even less power than women in Asia had to begin with. The Japanese degraded and reduced these women to the point of helplessness through sexual domination. They did not care if the women's bodies were swollen or bleeding; they would still force sex on the women until their desires

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<sup>43</sup> Sangmie Choi Schellstede, ed. & Kim Dae-il, *Comfort Women Speak*, 25.

<sup>44</sup> Sangmie Choi Schellstede, ed. & Kim Dae-il, *Comfort Women Speak*, 26.

<sup>45</sup> Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 174.

<sup>46</sup> Sangmie Choi Schellstede, ed. & Hwang Keum-ju, *Comfort Women Speak*, 7.

were satisfied.<sup>47</sup> The Japanese Imperial Army systematically transformed sex into brutality and oppression instead of a gentle and joyful act of love.

These women went through hell during their time as sex slaves to the Japanese Imperial Army. In addition to experiencing continual sexual assaults, they were beaten, abandoned (in some situations), left to die, and sometimes even murdered.<sup>48</sup> Many received no supplies and little rationed food. A former “comfort woman” stated: “One meal in two days was a good one.”<sup>49</sup> Women were also often subjected to even worse conditions if they did not comply with the soldiers’ orders.

Japanese soldiers were constantly trying to enlist more women as “comfort women” as they conquered and occupied new territories. In fact, the Japanese forces in Palembang developed meticulous plans to enlist Australian nurses. These nurses were prisoners of war, taken by the Japanese forces. Tanaka states:

First, they demoralized the women with appalling living conditions and deprived them of sleep and food. In the next stage, they provided the nurses with relatively comfortable housing and sufficient food. They used a British woman as an intermediary to try to persuade the nurses that there would be considerable improvement in their conditions if they complied. When this persuasion did not work, the officers employed the threat of starvation. Even this tactic failed, and the poor conditions were reimposed.<sup>50</sup>

White women were often treated slightly better than Korean or Chinese women.

The fact that white women were persuaded speaks to the racism that is often associated with this system, as Korean women could not refuse. In all areas of Asia, the Japanese army used deception, deceit, and force to lure women into the system

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Sangmie Choi Schellstede, ed. & Hwang Keum-ju, *Comfort Women Speak*, 8.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 91.

of “comfort women.” Victims and witnesses described the army as constantly in search of new women and cultures to dominate.

In order to gain a better understanding of why the Japanese instituted the “comfort women” system, it is important to look at the prevalence of prostitution and the subordination of women in Japan before the war. Prostitution became a major source of Japanese income as the state started to exploit prostitutes for its own economic gain prior to World War II.<sup>51</sup> When Japan realized the sex industry was beneficial to the government, labor brokers took advantage of poor families by deceiving fathers into sending their daughters to sex factories to work. Historian Misiko Hane has written: “Many of the girls were sold into bondage by impoverished peasant families, victims of economic necessity and a feudalistic sense of loyalty to the family.”<sup>52</sup> The poverty of many rural Japanese families was manipulated in order to lure women into prostitution prior to the war. The patriarchal society of Japan made this possible.

Japan had always been a patriarchal society, but discrimination against women worsened during and after the Meiji era, as much of the feudalistic patriarchal family system became the law.<sup>53</sup> Women were not allowed to take part in politics and unmarried women were often employed in menial factory jobs, if they were allowed to work at all. The demeaning view of women in Japanese society

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<sup>51</sup> Fujime Yuki, “The Licensed Prostitution System and the Prostitution Abolition Movement in Modern Japan,” *Positions East Asia Cultures Critique* vol. 5 no. 1 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 140.

<sup>52</sup> Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 150.

<sup>53</sup> Kichisaburo Nakamura, *The Formation of Modern Japan: As Viewed from Legal History* (Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1962), 96.



made their exploitation appear acceptable. According to Japanese law, women were not even viewed as adults. The Meiji Civil Code of 1898 legally subordinated women. The code stated: "A wife needed her husband's consent before entering into a legal contract...The household head's permission was required before women under twenty-five (and men under thirty) could legally marry."<sup>54</sup>

The poverty of many agrarian families in the Tokugawa era and Meiji period compelled them to sell their daughters to brokers and factories in order to survive. Hane states: "The need to survive by selling their daughters to the brothels was ordinarily a tragic experience for the family members and even for those who were merely acquainted with the girls."<sup>55</sup> The exploitation of women by their own family was a common practice for poor Japanese families who felt they had no other options. Due to their poor economic status, many parents were in no position to question where they were sending their daughters since they were too desperate for money.

This pervasive patriarchal society in Japan acted as the foundation for the even harsher attitude towards women of other "lesser" countries and cultures. The Japanese developed an intolerant attitude towards Koreans and Chinese because this is what they were taught as Japan became more militaristic and expansionist. Teachers prepared a report about the first Sino Japanese War to be displayed on a school bulletin board stating: "September 22, 1894. Battle report. Japanese troops defeat Chinese at P'yongyang and win a great victory. Chinese corpses were piled

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<sup>54</sup> Gail Lee Bernstein, "Introduction" in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 8.

<sup>55</sup> Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, Women, and Outcasts* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1982), 211.

up as high as a mountain. Oh, what a grand triumph. Chinka, Chinka, Chinka, Chinka, so stupid they stinka.”<sup>56</sup> Young school children were taught racist songs like that during school, are therefore shared wholeheartedly in Japanese racist contempt. Other popular songs of the era had racist verses:

Evil Chinamen drop like flies, swatted by our Murata rifles and stuck by our swords. Our troops advance everywhere. We brush the Chinese army aside and cross the Great Wall.’ ‘The battle for Asan was fierce; we caught the Chinks by surprise, they’re running for Hwangju now, pigtails between their legs.’ ‘The Chinese are scared. They run away saying, ‘We can’t be the Japanese Imperial Army,’ pigtails swinging in the breeze.<sup>57</sup>

The repeated use of the term “Chink” shows the intense racist contempt towards Chinese people in the era leading up to World War II. Racism was taught to school children and in classrooms.

In the years leading up to and during the Second World War, the Japanese government censored everything during this time period, from movies to textbooks,<sup>58</sup> and the public was essentially gagged and blindfolded by the Japanese political system.<sup>59</sup> By limiting public knowledge to what the government deemed appropriate, the populace knew nothing else and most automatically came to support the government’s position on anything.<sup>60</sup> This harsh racist sentiment of Japanese soldiers toward neighboring countries allowed them to forcibly seize women to serve as “comfort women” and racially rank those women to determine who served the officers or regular soldiers in the army. Japanese soldiers ranked

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<sup>56</sup> Saburo, *The Pacific War*, 23.

<sup>57</sup> Saburo, *The Pacific War*, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Saburo, *The Pacific War*, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Saburo, *The Pacific War*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

these women the same way they ranked women in the already well-established prostitution system in Japan before the war.<sup>61</sup>

Japanese racism became obvious in their categorization of the “comfort women.” According to Watanabe Kazuko,

Comfort women were usually placed in hierarchies according to class and nationality. Many Korean women seem to have come from lower-class worker and farmer families. Korean and other Asian women were assigned to low ranking soldiers, while Japanese and European women were for higher-ranking officers.<sup>62</sup>

Discrimination against Korean prostitutes began well before this, as Korean prostitutes were paid less and often worked in worse conditions than Japanese prostitutes.<sup>63</sup> The sex slaves in World War II also experienced this discrimination. Margaret Stetz, a professor at the University of Delaware, argues that “Without the existence of mutually reinforcing ideologies of race, class, gender, these women would not have been victimized as they were, both during and after World War II.”<sup>64</sup> Although all prostitutes were seen as vulgar and inferior, the Japanese used this “prostitution” system to display their power over the Korean population in terms of gender, class, and race.

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<sup>61</sup> Fujime Yuki, “The Licensed Prostitution System and the Prostitution Abolition Movement in Modern Japan,” *Positions East Asia Cultures Critique* vol. 5 no. 1 (New York: 1997), 148.

<sup>62</sup> Watanabe, “Militarism, Colonialism, and the Trafficking of Women: “Comfort Women” Forced into Sexual Labor for Japanese Soldiers,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* vol. 26, no. 4 (1994): 10.

<sup>63</sup> Sarah C. Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 9.

<sup>64</sup> Margaret Stetz and Bonnie B.C. Oh, “Introduction,” in *Legacies of the Comfort Women of World War II*, ed. Margaret Stetz and Bonnie B.C. Oh (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), xii.

Japanese racism towards women in Korea also stemmed from the Japanese belief that Japanese women were better than other women. Watanabe states:

In Japan women tend to be divided into two categories for men: mothers and prostitutes. Mothers produce the soldiers as well as male children in the patriarchal institution of marriage and family, while prostitutes give the pleasure of sex in the equally patriarchal institution of prostitution.<sup>65</sup>

As Japan modernized and militarized, Japanese men began to believe that most Japanese women were “too good” to serve as prostitutes. From imperialism stemmed the belief that Japanese women were there to give birth to the emperor’s children, and women of lower races, such as Koreans, were there to tend to the sexual desires of Japanese men. The racism that imperialism created among the Japanese soldiers fostered the intense contempt that led to the terrible “comfort women” system.

“Comfort women” went through horrifying experiences that they were very reluctant to share for cultural reasons. For the longest period of time, the very existence of “comfort women” was not public knowledge, as the surviving women were unwilling to come forward about their experiences. This reluctance stems from Confucian ideas that a woman’s virginity and sexuality belong to the men in her family. The patriarchal society in Japan and in countries like Korea, China, and the Philippines, where most of the former “comfort women” were born, as well as Japan’s racist sentiment towards other countries prior to the war, continued to exist after the conclusion of war, forcing women into silence. “So long as prostitution was regarded as a moral offense against chastity, the ex-comfort women had little choice

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<sup>65</sup> Kazuko Watanabe, “Militarism, Colonialism, and the Trafficking of Women,” 10.

but to hide in shame.”<sup>66</sup> The “comfort women” were reluctant to come forward due to the continued presence of these sentiments and therefore repressed their experiences.

Despite this reluctance, however, some former “comfort women” did begin to come out during the 1990’s, leading to questions around the world regarding the accuracy of the World War II narrative in Japan. “The comfort women issue is a symptom of the changing role of women in Asia, and of movements toward greater democracy and increased concern with human rights.”<sup>67</sup> Throughout the late 1980’s and early ‘90s, the world began to adopt more liberated and modern views of women’s rights. These modern views ended the more than 40 years of silence about the “comfort women” issue.<sup>68</sup> The first “comfort woman” to emerge from the shadows of shame was a Korean woman, Kim Hak-sun, in August of 1991. Following Kim Hak-sun’s testimony, two other former “comfort women” were inspired to step forward and join her in taking legal action against Japan for their assaults.<sup>69</sup> It is the testimonies of these women that brought forth the controversy concerning gender inequality and the World War II narrative, over Japan’s failure to recognize or pay reparations to these women.

The “comfort women” issue is relevant in today’s society for rightists in Japan, as well as feminists. For feminists, the issue is about the ongoing sexism in Japanese society, and for rightists, it is about World War II. Today, feminist activists

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<sup>66</sup> George Hicks, “They Won’t Allow Japan to Push the ‘Comfort Women’ Aside,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1993, accessed November 17, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/10/opinion/10iht-edhi.html>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

support the surviving “comfort women” and highlight the idea that virtually nothing has changed in Japanese society since the end of the war. The same prejudices persist and although it is now illegal, prostitution remains a major part of Japanese society. Japan still has a patriarchal society and women remain subject to severe discrimination and abuse from men. Not only that, but the Japanese still hold the same Social Darwinist beliefs that they are superior to other Asian nations like Korea, Taiwan, China, and the Philippines. Although “comfort women” do not exist today, prostitutes from those same countries are still procured in many of the same ways prostitutes and “comfort women” were procured prior to and during the war.

Racism, sexism, and patriarchy still play dominant roles in Japanese society, creating an uncomfortable environment for women. Although Japan boasts of peace and prosperity, a system of sex slavery continues to exist within the country today.<sup>70</sup> Women are still tricked into coming to Japan by agents working for smugglers who promised jobs at factories, and the ability to pay debts fast, send money home, and make their family happy.<sup>71</sup> The same low class families that were once sources of “comfort women,” continue to be the focus of labor brokers looking for women to be smuggled into Japan for prostitution. The smuggling and trafficking of women stems from Japan’s economic dominance and the racism of Japanese towards foreigners that still exists today. In 1996, Noriko stated:

Trafficking of women and mistreatment of women migrants are products of the economic disparity between Japan and neighboring Asian countries; the Japanese government’s continuing policy of exclusion toward foreign workers; and the intersection of racism,

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<sup>70</sup> Noriko Murata, “The Trafficking of Women,” in *Voices from the Japanese Women’s Movement*, ed. AMPO (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 117.

<sup>71</sup> Murata, “The Trafficking of Women,” 116.

sexism and consumer capitalism that makes Japanese men believe they can simply buy women from poor countries with money, in Japan or abroad.<sup>72</sup>

Many Japanese men still feel that it is acceptable to buy women for sex in today's society, which shows that racist beliefs and patriarchy still hold a prominent place in Japanese culture. It does not seem to matter that prostitution is illegal today, as it has become a larger industry than ever before. Feminists have finally begun to make the connection between "comfort women" and the cultural apparatus responsible for the current trafficking of women.<sup>73</sup>

The "comfort women" have also created political controversy because the Japanese government and others have been reluctant to admit their role as victimizers as opposed to victims of World War II. Japan claims victim status in its narrative of World War II because it was allegedly responding to the threat of western imperialism when it began the war, and suffered unprecedented hardships from the aftermath of two atomic bombs.

Many Japanese fail to recognize that they too were perpetrators of horrendous crimes such as the "comfort women" system despite the fact that Japanese soldiers have admitted to committing these atrocities. In the documentary, *In the Name of the Emperor: The Rape of Nanjing*, Ueha Fuichiro, a former soldier said: "I was ordered to rob, to rape and to burn" upon entering

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<sup>72</sup> Murata, "The Trafficking of Women," 119.

<sup>73</sup> Kazuko Watanabe, "Militarism, Colonialism, and the Trafficking of Women," 12.

Nanjing.<sup>74</sup> Another former soldier, Azuma Shiro, admitted to raping women when he stated:

Pikankan means let see a woman open up her legs. Chinese women didn't wear underpants. Instead they wear trousers tied with a string. There was no belt. As we pulled the string, the buttocks was exposed. We 'pikankan.' We looked. After a while we would say something like...its my day to take a bath and we took turns raping them. IT would be alright if we only raped them. I shouldn't say alright, but we always stabbed and killed them.<sup>75</sup>

These men openly admit to raping women and taking advantage of innocent women, yet Japan continues to deny its existence. This controversy has become key to the struggle over the narrative of World War II in Asia. If Japan admits it established this system of sexual slavery, Japanese will no longer be cast solely as victims of the war; and this admission could change their narrative of the war.

In 1991, when the former military "comfort women" filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government, they demanded a revision of Japanese school textbooks identifying this atrocity as part of the colonial oppression of the Korean people.<sup>76</sup> The revision of school textbooks was important to "comfort women" in order to properly educate the Japanese children about the horrifying actions their country took against enemy nations during World War II.<sup>77</sup>

Young students in Japan read vague, whitewashed descriptions of Japan's actions during World War II. Robert E. Yates, a writer for the *Chicago Tribune* in

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<sup>74</sup> Christine Choy and Nancy Tong, *In the Name of the Emperor: The Rape of Nanjing*, DVD, directed by Christine Choy and Nancy Tong. New York: Filmmakers Library, 1998.

<sup>75</sup> Choy and Tong, *In the Name of the Emperor*.

<sup>76</sup> Kazuko Watanabe, "Militarism, Colonialism, and the Trafficking of Women," 3.

<sup>77</sup> Ronald E. Yates, "Japanese Debate 'Revised' History," *Chicago Tribune*, June 17, 1986, accessed November 17, 2013, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-06-17/news/8602130244\\_1\\_saburo-ienaga-japan-federation-japanese-schools](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-06-17/news/8602130244_1_saburo-ienaga-japan-federation-japanese-schools).



1986, stated: “When Hino Arai, 12, opens his 400-page history book to the chapter on World War II and the events leading up to it, he reads that Japan’s army made ‘inroads’ into China in 1933 and that in 1937 it ‘captured Nanking.’”<sup>78</sup> Although Yates wrote this before the “comfort women” spoke out, it is still relevant because it illustrated how Japan censored its textbooks on issues regarding World War II. Outside Japan, however, it is common knowledge that the Japanese massacred their way through China and decimated cities and towns along the way.<sup>79</sup> Japan has disguised its aggression during World War II by revising textbooks that describe Japan’s actions in terms that mask their assault on Asia.

The Education Ministry exercises its power over authors to screen textbooks prior to their use in the classroom in order to deem them “appropriate” for kids to read. However, this process has allowed the Japanese government to prevent young children from learning the truth about Japan’s activities during World War II.<sup>80</sup> The truth must be taught to young children because if it is not known, there is greater chance that young kids will be taught the same concepts that led to the “comfort women” system in the first place. Revising textbooks to exclude Japan’s aggression in China and Asia, means denying the existence of the “comfort women.”

The Japanese government has even sent members of its Parliament across the Pacific in order to protect its victimization narrative by requesting the removal of a small memorial in Palisades Park, New Jersey. “The monument, a brass plaque on a block of stone, was dedicated in 2010 to the memory of so-called comfort

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<sup>78</sup> Yates, “Japanese Debate ‘Revised’ History.”

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Yates, “Japan Debate ‘Revised’ History.”

women, tens of thousands of women and girls, many Korean, who were forced into sexual slavery by Japanese soldiers during World War II.”<sup>81</sup> A civic group known as the Korean American Voters’ Council championed this monument. However, even this small monument was perceived as threatening the victim status of Japan in World War II, and the establishment of the monument reignited the longstanding tensions between South Korea and Japan. While in New Jersey, the Japanese parliament “sought to convince the Palisades Park authorities that comfort women had never been forcibly conscripted as sex slaves.”<sup>82</sup> In denying the existence of “comfort women,” the Japanese remain victims, but once the women’s suffering is recognized, that narrative of World War II becomes unconvincing. This incident took place in 2012, proving that Japan remains deeply concerned about preserving the narrative to explain its actions during the war.

Although Japan issued an official apology acknowledging its role in setting up the brothels in the Kono Statement in 1993, since then, the country has reneged on this apology, and may even revise it.<sup>83</sup> This apology was issued by a cabinet secretary, Yohei Kono, and was never accepted by the Diet, creating a situation that compelled most surviving former “comfort women” to reject the apology. In 2007, the 57<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, hinted he might revise the apology,

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<sup>81</sup> Kirk Semple, “New Jersey Town’s Korean Monument Irritates Japanese Officials,” *New York Times*, May 18, 2012, accessed on November 15, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/19/nyregion/monument-in-palisades-park-nj-irritates-japanese-officials.html>.

<sup>82</sup> Semple, “New Jersey Town’s Korean Monument Irritates Japanese Officials.”

<sup>83</sup> Martin Fackler, “Japan Hints It May Revise an Apology on Sex Slaves,” *New York Times*, December 27, 2012, accessed November 14, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/28/world/asia/japan-might-revise-apology-on-wartime-sex-slaves.html>.

publicly suggesting that the 1993 cabinet secretary's apology was unnecessary.<sup>84</sup> Mr. Abe brought the potential revision to public knowledge again in December 2012. Abe, Japan's current Prime Minister, continues to push the revision of the Kono Statement, as he, along with other rightists, deny that women were coerced and claim that the military had no involvement in forcing them into the "comfort women" system.<sup>85</sup> "By denying use of coercion and refusing to contemplate compensation for the victims, Japan is ensuring that a history of bitterness with its Asian neighbors will not be laid to rest."<sup>86</sup>

Japan continues to push aside the "comfort women" issue to this day and denies the use of force, threat, and deception in the treatment and procurement of these women. In addition to presenting a challenge to Japan's victimization narrative of World War II, the "comfort women" issue is poised to remain a point of contention for future relations between Japan and Asia. The "comfort women" reveal the most horrific consequences of Japanese patriarchy, racism, and wartime 'amnesia.' So, unless Japan admits to administering the brutal and racist "comfort women" system with force and deceit, the anger from the rest of Asia will not be assuaged.<sup>87</sup> Although an official apology could change the narrative and position of Japan during World War II, it is the only way to subdue anger from neighboring

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<sup>84</sup> Tom Zeller Jr, "The Politics of Apology for Japan's "Comfort Women," *New York Times*, March 5, 2007, accessed November 17, 2013, <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/03/05/the-politics-of-apology-for-japans-comfort-women/>.

<sup>85</sup> Fackler, "Japan Hints It May Revise an Apology on Sex Slaves."

<sup>86</sup> Hicks, "They Won't Allow Japan to Push the 'Comfort Women' Aside."

<sup>87</sup> Hicks, "They Won't Allow Japan to Push the 'Comfort Women' Aside."

countries that were decimated and assaulted during the war, and recognize the suffering of the former “comfort women.”

## Chapter 2: Rape Committed by Germans and Russians

The memory of rapes committed by Germans and Russians in World War II is not widely discussed and sometimes barely touched upon in either country, or is deliberately “forgotten.” This chapter will discuss the reasons why rape is omitted from Germany’s and Russia’s public narratives of the war. Thus rapes are not well publicized in public memory and if the rapes become well recognized in the media, it could threaten the wartime narrative of the countries of the perpetrators, but also provide peace to the women whom rape has silenced.

Recognizing the prevalence of rape during war is important for making women visible and a part of war memory, but revealing the truth about rape during war often contradicts the public narrative of the perpetrators’ country. For instance, rape is quite contradictory to the Russian narrative of World War II, often referred to as the “Great Patriotic War.” Although Germany obviously does not have a heroic narrative like Russia, it continues to exclude rape from the atrocities Germans acknowledge committing. Germany has reason to hide these atrocities due to the power it exerted over the conquered and how the Holocaust is remembered today. However, even the Jewish Holocaust memory is largely a male memory of events. Jewish women have been blended into the overarching Jewish narrative of suffering that excludes specific mention of rape, yet the experience was arguably more horrifying for them than for their male counterparts.<sup>88</sup> With the implications now that some rapes were even committed by Jews, the Jewish population has even

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<sup>88</sup> Zoe Waxman, “Rape and Sexual Abuse in Hiding,” in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, ed. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 129.

more reason to silence those memories. Rochelle Ruthchild even referred to the subject of Jewish male rape against Jewish women as “especially unthinkable.”<sup>89</sup>

When thinking about what caused rapes German and Russian soldiers committed during war, it is important to think back to Gottschall’s theories. Both Russians and Germans fit the feminist theory, which describes rape as motivated by a man’s desire to exert dominance over a woman.<sup>90</sup> In Germany, it is clear that both soldiers and German officials raped to exert power and dominance over Jewish women, whether in concentration camps or the ghettos.

In addition to the feminist theory, the Red Army’s rape of Germans can also be analyzed with the pressure cooker and the cultural pathology theories. Russian actions fit the pressure cooker theory, because once the Red Army stepped onto German soil, their hatred for Germans erupted into mass rape and destruction.<sup>91</sup> All of their pent-up hostility towards Germany was finally released. At this point in the war, rape was about avenging the motherland, which also makes the strategic theory applicable to the Russian case. Rape was not incidental when the Red Army entered Germany, but for revenge. The Red Army was a very developed military, and after the German invasion of Russia, the war became about annihilation and vengeance.

German rapes of Jewish people can be explained with the cultural pathology and feminist theories. These theories are important in explaining German actions,

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<sup>89</sup> Rochelle G. Ruthchild, “The Gender of Survival,” review of *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, edited by Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Women’s Review of Books*, September/October 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Gottschall, “Explaining Wartime Rape,” 130.

<sup>91</sup> William I. Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom: A New History of the Liberation of Europe* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 160.

because although rape was technically illegal according to *Rossenhande*, which prohibited the co-mingling of Jewish and German people, and not part of official strategy, it still occurred. Germans lined up Jewish women from the ghettos to give them their labor assignments, and strategically chose specific women to be placed in brothels as sex slaves or raped in the barracks that evening.<sup>92</sup> German soldiers would rape to humiliate these women further and to prove they were superior to Jews. It is clear that Germans were constantly seeking to prove their dominance, from forcing Jews into ghettos and further humiliating them by forcing them to do tedious tasks and live in squalor. It is clear that it was ingrained into Nazi culture that the Jews were inferior as a people. The Nazis acted on this belief system in a grand way by raping Jewish women.

Although Gottschall's theories assist in explaining why men rape, Gottschall's theories do not discuss the idea that women were taken as war prizes. Men have long felt that women were their "right of conquest," and rapes occur in every war.<sup>93</sup> Susan Brownmiller argues that Soviet men often set their sights on the "bodies of the defeated enemy's women" in order to emphasize their victory by raping them.<sup>94</sup> In this case, women essentially became the reward for the Red Army's victory over Germany. This prize theory helps explain why the Red Army raped and pillaged their way through Germany and East Prussia.

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<sup>92</sup> Sinnreich, "Rape of Jewish Women," 110.

<sup>93</sup> Beevor, "They Raped Every German Female."

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

## Rape by Germans

If women's Holocaust experience has been marginalized, the topic of sexual violence, an issue still surrounded by taboos, silence, and shame, is even more so. If it is discussed in the context of the war and the Holocaust, the main focus is rape of German women by Soviet soldiers, especially toward the end of the war.<sup>95</sup>

When one thinks of the Holocaust, 6 million Jewish deaths, concentration camps, the gas chambers, and ghettos all come to mind, but rarely is rape discussed. It is rarely discussed due to female shame, official Nazi policy against "comingling," and hints of sexual violence committed by other Jews. Rape was common during World War II in Germany and the Holocaust throughout Europe, yet women who survived rape during the war neither talk about their experiences nor write about them.<sup>96</sup> Waxman states: "Women who experienced sexual violence during the Holocaust are faced with the dilemma of attempting to relate their experiences in a context that insists that rape and sexual abuse do not belong to the history of the Holocaust, or remaining imprisoned by memories they cannot share."<sup>97</sup> Rape has never been a part of the Holocaust narrative and therefore women fear that they cannot talk about their rape experiences.<sup>98</sup> Because one of the main horrors rape victims experienced is not included in Holocaust memory, they fear their experiences may be misunderstood. Therefore, rape is not only important in fleshing out the rarely discussed horrors of the camps and ghettos, but also to

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<sup>95</sup> Ruthchild, "The Gender of Survival."

<sup>96</sup> Waxman, "Rape and Sexual Abuse," 124.

<sup>97</sup> Waxman, "Rape and Sexual Abuse," 128.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.



challenge traditional Holocaust narratives by making women more visible in those memories.<sup>99</sup>

Jewish women were not the only ones who wanted to forget the rapes, and German soldiers also desired to erase their actions from memory. Not only was it considered an embarrassment and shameful for a Jewish woman to have been raped by a German soldier (or raped by anyone), but it was also taboo for Germans to “co-mingle” with the Jewish race. *Rassenschande* (racial defilement) was an essential principle and one of the radical foundations of the Third Reich and stated that rape or any sexual relations that involved a Jewish female and an Aryan man violated this fundamental Nazi policy.<sup>100</sup> Despite contradicting the central Nazi policy regarding *Rassenschande*, the rape of Jewish women did occur during the Holocaust.<sup>101</sup>

Co-mingling was against the law, yet widespread abuse happened as result of the psychological breakdown and exertion of a soldier’s power through domination. Nazi “racial” ideology also allowed various types of sexualized violence against Jewish women to take place inside the camps. The Nazis separated the different races in the camps and gave them different labor assignments, based on race. Brigitte Halbmayr, a social scientist who focuses on racism, notes that certain forms of violence were directed at Jewish women, such as forced abortion, forced

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Steven T. Katz, “Thoughts on the Intersection of Rape and *Rassenschande* During the Holocaust,” *Modern Judaism* 32 (2012): 294.

<sup>101</sup> Helene J. Sinnreich, “The Rape of Jewish Women during the Holocaust,” in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, ed. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 108.

sterilization, and “medical” experiments.<sup>102</sup> According to Nazi beliefs, Jews were worthless and they had to be punished and prevented from producing inferior babies.<sup>103</sup>

Although rape was specifically prohibited in the German genocidal plan, also known as the Final Solution, it was a form of torture for Jewish women during the Holocaust in the streets, the ghettos, and the camps.<sup>104</sup> The perpetrators of sexual violence against Jewish women included members of the SS, German soldiers, concentration camp guards, non-German allies and collaborators, civilians, and even fellow prisoners.<sup>105</sup>

In some instances, rapes during the Holocaust were organized. Many Jewish women were forced to serve as prostitutes, essentially sex slaves, for German officials or even for Jewish men in positions of power in the ghettos. Powerful Jews often treated Jewish women very badly, in order to keep their own families protected and safe. These women were often forced into Nazi brothels after being rounded up on the street by Nazi soldiers.<sup>106</sup> There was even a brothel at Auschwitz, which remains one of the lesser-known aspects of concentration camp life.<sup>107</sup> The women who were forced into these brothels endured horrifying trauma.

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<sup>102</sup> Brigitte Halbmayr, “Sexualized Violence against Women during Nazi ‘Racial’ Persecution,” in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, ed. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 40.

<sup>103</sup> Halbmayr, “Sexualized Violence during ‘Racial’ Persecution,” 40.

<sup>104</sup> Sinnreich, “Rape of Jewish Women,” 117.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Sinnreich, “Rape of Jewish Women,” 116.

<sup>107</sup> Mareike Fallet and Simone Kaiser, “Concentration Camp Bordellos: The Main Thing Was to Survive All,” *Spiegel Online International*, June 25, 2009, accessed

Waxman states: “The effects of service in military brothels were devastating. The multiple rapes that women endured there damaged them psychologically and physically. In some cases, women’s reproductive organs were so damaged that they could not bear children afterward.”<sup>108</sup> Women were mutilated from the damage they were forced to endure during multiple rapes in these brothels and during their time as sex slaves.

Women were not only plucked off the streets and sent into brothels, but also raped within the ghettos in which the Nazis placed them. Despite the fact that rape was explicitly against Nazi *Rossenchande* policy, local Nazi leaders, both military and civilian, tended to deviate from that policy, creating a culture of widespread rape and sexual abuse, which became common in ghettos like Lodz and Warsaw.<sup>109</sup> When the Nazis or Jewish officials of the ghetto raided the homes of other Jews, they not only robbed and looted the homes, but also raped the daughters and wives of Jewish men in front of them, just as the Japanese did in China and other Asian countries they dominated. This is clear evidence that the act meant domination and humiliation of the Jews. A Warsaw doctor testified: “One continually hears of the raping of Jewish girls in Warsaw. The Germans suddenly enter a house and rape 15- or 16-year-old girls in the presence of their parents and relatives.”<sup>110</sup> The fact that Jewish officials were also raiding the homes of families in the ghettos provided Jews with reason to stay silent about the rapes because revealing that Jewish men were

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March 10, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/concentration-camp-bordellos-the-main-thing-was-to-survive-at-all-a-632558.html>.

<sup>108</sup> Sinnreich, “Rape of Jewish Women,” 117.

<sup>109</sup> Sinnreich, “Rape of Jewish Women,” 112.

<sup>110</sup> Sinnreich, “Rape of Jewish Women,” 110.

raping their own people could be perceived as undermining the victim status of the Jews.

Not only did the rape of Jews take place within the ghetto, but also outside the ghetto when they were taken for forced labor. Once the women were in line, Nazi men selected which would be raped in the barracks at night.<sup>111</sup> Jewish women were afraid to even leave their homes. Evidence of at least one rape has been publicly known since 1960, yet only recently has the widespread rape within ghettos become more publicized and discussed.<sup>112</sup> In the case of the Lodz ghetto, Hans Biebow, the German who was in charge of the German Ghetto Administration, was said to be more concerned with running a profitable ghetto by making money on his contracts than following the sadistic tendencies of the Nazi party.<sup>113</sup> However, it is clear from the many rapes that occurred in the ghettos that this was not true. As in the Warsaw ghetto, widespread rape became a part of social culture in Lodz. Jakub Poznanski recalled the rape of a Jewish girl in an entry in his diary:

Ejbuszyc and Blachowski told us something horrible that happened at 36 Lagiewnicka Street. Dr. Sima Mandels, a pediatrician, was there with her engineer husband and her two children. The tragedy occurred when Hans Biebow noticed their beautiful 16-year old daughter. One evening when he was drunk, he grabbed her in the hallway, dragged her into his office, and tried to rape her. The girl tried to defend herself and started screaming. It was then that "the master of life and death" shot her in the eye. The mother started crying in despair. In order to silence her, Biebow ordered the entire family shipped out immediately. The same happened to the chief physician Dr. Miller, who spoke up for the Mandels family. He was deported with his wife and little son.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Sinnreich, "Rape of Jewish Women," 113.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

The silencing of rape occurred throughout the Holocaust and World War II and after the war. Yet, like the aforementioned example, there were witnesses and survivors who lived to tell the stories of those who were silenced.

Just as Jewish women were raped in the ghettos, the concentration camps also became places for deeper horrors for women that are rarely acknowledged by the public today. It was common for women to be dragged from the barracks by guards and raped night and day.<sup>115</sup> Even young girls were raped. In one instance, Sara M. was lured out of her barracks at Ravensbruck concentration camp with candy and led to small room. She survived and testified:

There were two men there and there were some other people in the room I think. I was put on a table. From what I remember, [it was] a table or it could have been a high table. I was very little so it seemed like it was very high up from where I was and I was very violently sexually abused. And I remember being hit, I remember crying and I wanted to get out of there. And I was calling people and screaming and I remember one thing that stands out in my mind that one of them told me that they would stand me up on my head and cut me right in half. And they wanted me to stop screaming and I've had nightmares about that most of my life.<sup>116</sup>

This type of abuse was frequent in concentration camps and it is still unknown whether or not the administration knew about the sexual assaults. In another instance, a woman confided in the commandant at the Bruss-Sophienwalde camp, telling him she was raped and became pregnant. The commandant had her publicly gang-raped and deported to Stutthof.<sup>117</sup> This instance provides proof of the

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<sup>115</sup> Sinnreich, "Rape of Jewish Women," 111.

<sup>116</sup> Sinnreich, "Rape of Jewish Women," 112.

<sup>117</sup> Sinnreich, "Rape of Jewish Women," 111.

importance of including women's memories when examining the history of the Holocaust by bringing the woman's experience during war into public knowledge.

In a newspaper article published by *Speigel*, Fallet and Kaiser wrote, "Concentration camp brothels remain a hushed-up chapter of the Nazi-era horrors."<sup>118</sup> They further write, "It [Buchenwald brothel] was the fourth of a total 10 so-called 'special buildings' erected in concentration camps between 1942 and 1945, according to the instructions of Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS."<sup>119</sup> The brothels were erected in order to fulfill the rewards scheme Himmler implemented in the camps, "whereby prisoners' 'particular achievements' earned them smaller workloads, extra food or monetary bonuses."<sup>120</sup> Himmler believed that by offering hard-working prisoners the women in the brothels, there would be increased productivity in the camps and factories. Visitors to these brothels included foreman, heads of barracks, and camp occupants given the 'bonus' as reward for hard work.<sup>121</sup>

In his book, *The Concentration Camp Bordello: Sexual Forced Labor in National Socialistic Concentration Camps*, published in 2009, Robert Sommer outlines the hierarchy of the brothel system. He cites an Austrian resistance fighter Antonia Bruha, who survived the Ravensbruck camp, who reported "the most beautiful women went to the SS brothel, the less beautiful ones to the soldiers'

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<sup>118</sup> Mareike Fallet and Simone Kaiser, "Concentration Camp Bordellos: The Main Thing Was to Survive at All," *Speigel Online International*, June 25, 2009, accessed March 11, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/concentration-camp-bordellos-the-main-thing-was-to-survive-at-all-a-632558.html>.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

brothel. And the rest ended up in the concentration camp brothel.” Kaiser and Fallet wrote, “More than 60 percent of them were of German nationality, but Polish women, those from the Soviet Union and one Dutch woman were transferred into the special task forces.”<sup>122</sup> It is important to note that Jewish women were not a part of the brothel system, just as Jewish men were prohibited from visiting the brothels for racial hygiene reasons.<sup>123</sup>

Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz, a prisoner at Dachau also described the brothel system in his concentration camp journal: “You wait in the hall. An officer records the prisoner’s name and number. Then a number is called, and the name of the prisoner in question. Then you run to the room with that number. Each visit it’s a different number. You have 15 minutes, exactly 15 minutes.”<sup>124</sup> There were many rules associated with brothel visits. For example, only the missionary position was allowed and the men had to visit the hospital barracks before and after each brothel visit to receive disinfectant ointments. On the other hand, the use of contraception was left up to the women. The SS were not as worried about pregnancies since most women had been forcibly sterilized or rendered infertile from their suffering in the camps. However, Fallet and Kaiser write, “In the event of an ‘occupational accident,’ the SS would simply replace the woman and send her to have an abortion.”<sup>125</sup>

Although men often visited the brothels for sex, many times they did not reach the point of intercourse because men were no longer strong enough. Some men simply

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

desired the presence of a woman or to talk to a woman since many concentration camps were segregated by gender.

During the Nazi occupation in Ukraine from 1941-1945, young Jewish girls were assaulted there as well. Whether it was sexual slavery while doing their job as household cleaners for Nazi officials or violent torture, abuse was widespread during the occupation. Anna Dychkant, in her testimony about her friend Silva, stated that Jewish girls were taken to a commander's house and raped until they became pregnant, at which time they were killed, so that they could not have children.<sup>126</sup> Such assaults were commonplace within the context of the extermination of 1.5 million Jews during the occupation of Ukraine from 1941-1944.<sup>127</sup> For Jewish women and girls, extermination was often preceded by gang rape and unthinkable torture. After being murdered, they were thrown into specially dug ravines.<sup>128</sup> One-eyewitness account even states:

At the opposite side of the ravine, seven or so Germans brought two young Jewish women. They went down lower into the ravine, chose an even place and began to rape these women by turns. When they became satisfied, they stabbed the women with daggers, so that they even did not cry out. And they left the bodies like this, naked, with their legs open.<sup>129</sup>

The fact that many women were killed following rape partially explains why a veil of silence has fallen over these atrocities.<sup>130</sup> Any Jewish woman or girl could be

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<sup>126</sup> Anatoly Podolsky, "The Tragic Fate of Ukrainian Jewish Women under Nazi Occupation, 1941-1944," in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, ed. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 96.

<sup>127</sup> Podolsky, "Fate of Ukrainian Jewish Women," 97.

<sup>128</sup> Podolsky, "Fate of Ukrainian Jewish Women," 98.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Podolsky, "Fate of Ukrainian Jewish Women," 100.



raped, regardless of age, illness, or pregnancy.<sup>131</sup> To most Ukrainian Jewish women, nights were the worst time during the German occupation, as policemen and Romanians went out in search of girls to rape and bring back to the Nazis. Policemen's soldiers were supplemented with extra food rations for finding unregistered Jewish girls.<sup>132</sup> Life during occupation was in some ways just as awful as being in a ghetto or a concentration camp.

According to Zoe Waxman, whether Jewish women were sent to the ghettos or concentration camps, they experienced the brutal hardship of sexual assault, which is why many women were more afraid of abuse than the gas chambers that waited at the concentration camps.<sup>133</sup> Due to the immense fear of abuse, women went to extreme measures to hide themselves from Nazis and other officials. Some concealed themselves by hiding in open sight by passing as Aryans, disguising themselves as men and boys, separating from family members, or even exchanging sex for shelter.<sup>134</sup> Some Jews were able to hide in open sight because they were already partially assimilated into non-Jewish culture.<sup>135</sup>

Some Jewish women were also able to hide themselves by disguising themselves as the opposite gender. This form of hiding shows that rape was associated with gender identity; in other words, the act of rape is one of female subordination and male dominance.<sup>136</sup> Many Holocaust survivors, including Pearl

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<sup>131</sup> Podolsky, "Fate of Ukrainian Jewish Women," 99.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Waxman, "Rape and Sexual Abuse," 128.

<sup>134</sup> Waxman, "Rape and Sexual Abuse," 126.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> Monika J. Flaschka, "Only Pretty Women Were Raped: The Effect of Sexual Violence on Gender Identities in Concentration Camps," in *Sexual Violence Against*

Gottesmann who was imprisoned in the Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp, truly believed that “only pretty women were raped.”<sup>137</sup> Sharon Marcus, a scholar of rape, writes:

Masculine power and feminine powerlessness neither simply precede nor cause rape; rather, rape is one of the culture’s many modes of feminizing women. A rapist chooses his target because he recognizes her to be a woman, but a rapist also strives to imprint the gender identity of feminine victim on his target.<sup>138</sup>

Rape showed that men were dominant over women and that the victim was subordinate to the perpetrator, but men first had to know that their victims were women.

During the Holocaust, when women in the camps began to grow back hair or regain color in their faces, they became more vulnerable to rape. Women were able to better hide their femininity since their hair was sheared off upon entrance to Auschwitz and other camps. The shearing of a woman’s hair was an attempt to remove any sense of human persona or personal identity she once had. In this sense, hair became a major gender identity marker for prisoners. To soldiers and officials alike, having hair meant appearing womanly; therefore the loss of hair took away the woman’s feminine identity.<sup>139</sup> If a woman had hair, she was seen as looking feminine, and most women lacked this feature in the camps. Gottesmann recalls a fellow concentration camp inmate getting raped for being pretty and feminine. She described what happened to her friend: “[S]he was beautiful, and her

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*Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, ed. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 78.

<sup>137</sup> Flaschka, “Only Pretty Women Were Raped,” 77.

<sup>138</sup> Flaschka, “Only Pretty Women Were Raped,” 78.

<sup>139</sup> Flaschka, “Only Pretty Women Were Raped,” 85.

hair grew in, started to grow in very nice, so they picked her out to rape her.”<sup>140</sup>

Gottesmann is one of many survivors who described themselves without hair as a “monolithic mass” or “animals” or even “sub-human.”<sup>141</sup> The relationship between hair, feminine identity, and beauty is repeated in many testimonies.<sup>142</sup> Another survivor of Auschwitz, Isabella Leitner, recalls the danger of women at the camp regaining their feminine identity, “Our hair has grown in a bit. We can actually begin to use a comb.... *With our newly found womanhood*, we attract the attention of the men of our world. We are our very attractive selves again.”<sup>143</sup> The growth of even the smallest amount of hair, as Leitner references, as well as curves, well-developed breasts, or even a healthy look, such as sunburn, caused the women to be targeted for sexual assault.<sup>144</sup> “All of these memoirs and oral testimonies suggest that the survivors, as historical subjects, linked rape, of men or women, with some concept of femininity.”<sup>145</sup> By fearing the re-growth of hair in the camps, survivors grew to fear their own humanity.

Male-on-male rape occurred as well. During World War II, Jews were not the only people placed in concentration camps; gypsies, communists, and homosexuals were put in the camps as well. Although male-male rape is rarely discussed and not widely recognized, it did occur in the camps. Victims of male-male rape were also described as attractive. An Auschwitz survivor described seeing a group of young boys she believed were going to be abused for sexual purposes: “Full faces, not

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<sup>140</sup> Flaschka, “Only Pretty Women Were Raped,” 77.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Flaschka, “Only Pretty Women Were Raped,” 82.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Flaschka, “Only Pretty Women Were Raped,” 84.

<sup>145</sup> Flaschka, “Only Pretty Women Were Raped,” 89.

starved, not in rags, clean, neat, well-fed young boys, twelve, fourteen, from all the windows.”<sup>146</sup> Very little research has been done on the topic of male-male rape, as it is still considered as taboo after all these years. According to Monika Flaschka, after all this time, interviewers are still taken aback when a survivor tells them what happened.<sup>147</sup>

For survivors of the Holocaust, their suffering has never been forgotten. From nightmares to simple reminders during their daily lives, the Holocaust will be with them forever. However, although both men and women remember their experiences during the Holocaust with a sense of horror, women continue to have a troubling time relating the full extent of their experiences and understanding of the Holocaust to that of their male counterparts. Women continue to feel excluded from the story of the Holocaust. Most men do not know what it is like to fear rape every day of their lives and it is hard for women to convey this experience to them with the stigma of shame that is associated with rape.

When reflecting on the events that occurred during the Holocaust, Germans are placed in a difficult position. It is necessary for the country’s historical narrative to recognize the atrocities the Nazis committed, yet it is difficult to admit their ancestors took part in the largest genocide known to mankind. Following the conclusion of the World War II, and the reunification of East and West Germany, the country established Holocaust education programs for all German youth.<sup>148</sup> Part of

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<sup>146</sup> Flaschka, “Only Pretty Women Were Raped,” 86.

<sup>147</sup> Flaschka, “Only Pretty Women Were Raped,” 88.

<sup>148</sup> Gregory Wegner, “The Power of Selective Tradition: Buchenwald Concentration Camp and Holocaust Education for Youth in New Germany,” in *Censoring History:*

this program included teaching students and older German citizens the nature of the genocidal atrocities at the old site of the Buchenwald concentration camp. However, this education program still does not recognize Buchenwald brothels. Although brothels and rape are not mentioned, this is still important in order to foster a greater sense of social justice among Germans today.<sup>149</sup>

But, in order to fully understand the extent of rape on the Eastern front of the war, it is necessary to gain a more complex understanding of Germany's victimizer status. Germans are considered the victimizers of the war, however, scholars also need to acknowledge the existence of German victims at the end of the war, particularly female rape victims.

### **Rape by the Red Army**

In January 1945, Soviet Marshal Gerogi Zhukov rallied his men, who were about to cross into German soil:

'The great hour has tolled! The time has come to deal the enemy a last and decisive blow, and to fulfill the historical task set us by Comrade Stalin: to finish off the fascist animal in his lair and raise the banner of victory over Berlin! The time has come to reckon with the German fascist scoundrels. Great and burning is our hatred! We have not forgotten the pain and suffering done to our people by Hitler's cannibals. We have not forgotten our burnt-out cities and villages. We remember our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, our wives and children tortured to death by Germans. We shall avenge those burned in the devil's ovens, avenge those who suffocated in gas chambers, avenge the murdered and the martyred. We shall exact a brutal revenge for everything.'<sup>150</sup>

During World War II, the Russians suffered the greatest number of casualties of any country involved in the war. In fact, William Hitchcock states: "The latest

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*Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany and the United States*, ed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 235.

<sup>149</sup> Wegner, "The Power of Selective Tradition," 235.

<sup>150</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom*, 161.

scholarship reports that somewhere between 23 million and 26 million Soviet citizens died in the war. Of these, 8.66 million were soldiers; the rest, civilians: women, old men, and children.”<sup>151</sup> During the German invasion of Russia (code name: Barbarossa), the German army laid waste to Russian territory and it was not until the Red Army began to push the Germans back that the Russians realized the degree of destruction experienced by their people. Hitchcock writes: “In the towns and villages that the Germans had occupied, and which had now been liberated by the fighting, the Red Army soldiers came across astonishing atrocities that served to fire up their own sense of outrage and quickened their desire for vengeance.”<sup>152</sup> With this realization, the Red Army quickly made the invasions of Poland, Warsaw, and Berlin about something very different than simple warfare.

In an article of his recently published book, *Berlin: The Downfall, 1945*, Antony Beevor claims that following the Wehrmacht invasion of the Soviet Union, any kind of behavior became acceptable for Red Army soldiers, and this gave them the idea that almost any cruelty would be allowed, including rape.<sup>153</sup> When the Russians invaded Germany, they demolished its cities, laying siege to everything and everyone in their path. Due to the harshness the Germans displayed towards Russia during the German invasion, Stalin and the Red Army did not feel it necessary to refrain from violence during their invasion of East Prussia, all the way to the capital, Berlin. William Hitchcock states: “For Soviet citizens, the war against Germany was

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<sup>151</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom*, 131.

<sup>152</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom*, 137.

<sup>153</sup> Antony Beevor, “They Raped Every German Female from Eight to 80,” *The Guardian*, April 30, 2002, accessed September 26, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/may/01/news.features11>.

something that it could never be for their western comrades in arms: a war of survival and, in its final months, revenge.”<sup>154</sup> Many Soviets set aside any ill will they had towards Stalin in order to unite and fight back against German invaders.<sup>155</sup> “The Soviet soldiers descended onto Germany in a tidal wave of rape, beatings, wanton violence, looting, destruction, murder.”<sup>156</sup>

For German women in Berlin during 1945, rape became a common, collective experience, which confirmed prior beliefs about the “Red Beast” Germany had been fighting for years.<sup>157</sup> During World War II, Hitler employed Joseph Goebbels as the Reich Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany. During his time as the head of the great Nazi propaganda machine, he characterized not only the Red Army, but also Russian citizens as animalistic and sub human.<sup>158</sup> One newsreel, released in 1945, showed a white fence and a family, and the words “Protect our women and children from the Red Beast” flashed across the screen.<sup>159</sup> German women expected rape, as the propaganda reels presented the German republic with visions of the Red Beast storming through German land in a wave of destruction and assault.

The Red Army violated large numbers of German women and girls as retaliation for Russian women and girls who were harmed by Germans.<sup>160</sup> Hitchcock describes rape through the experience of a young German girl named

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<sup>154</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom*, 132.

<sup>155</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom*, 133.

<sup>156</sup> Hitchcock, *The Bitter Road to Freedom*, 160.

<sup>157</sup> Atina Grossmann, “A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers,” *October* 72 (1995): 53.

<sup>158</sup> Grossmann, “Question of Silence,” 50.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Hitchcock, *A Bitter Road to Freedom*, 160.

Josephine. Josephine was captured by a carload of Russians, raped and tossed out onto the road like a broken rag doll.<sup>161</sup> Josephine describes the night after her rape:

Terrible hours followed, particularly for the women. From time to time, soldiers came in, also officers, and fetched girls and young women. No shrieking, no begging, nothing helped. With revolvers in their hands, they gripped the women round their wrists and dragged them away. A father who wanted to protect his daughter was brought out into the yard and shot. The girl was all the more the prey of these wild creatures. Toward morning, she came back, terror in her childlike eyes. She had become years older during the night.<sup>162</sup>

These particular rapes took place at a time of day that many German women referred to as “hunting hours.”<sup>163</sup>

Hunting hours referred to the dangerous time after the Soviet soldiers left where they had been drinking that evening and walked around the city in search of women to rape. This was usually in the middle of the night. Sometimes soldiers even broke into the apartments of German citizens and looked for women. For example, on the night of February 24, “a group of 35 provisional lieutenants on a course and their battalion commander entered the women’s dormitory in the village of Grutenberg and raped them.”<sup>164</sup> Sometimes when the Red Army invaded German homes and males tried to protect their wives, sisters, or daughters, they were shot.<sup>165</sup> This was common throughout Berlin and East Prussia as the Red Army continued to sack German territory.

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<sup>161</sup> Hitchcock, *A Bitter Road to Freedom*, 163.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Beevor, “They Raped Every German Female.”

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*



Drunkenness provided the added motivation for Russian soldiers to invade German homes and rape women. At night, soldiers went out on drinking sprees in groups and got belligerently drunk. Once soldiers started drinking, it became dangerous to try and restore order. Antony Beevor states: "Drink of every variety, including dangerous chemicals seized from laboratories and workshops, was a major factor in the violence."<sup>166</sup> Once Soviet soldiers began drinking it was nearly impossible to stop them, creating an appalling situation for German women. When the soldiers drank too much, they often couldn't complete the act of rape and this sometimes led to obscene mutilation of women.<sup>167</sup>

Many German women were only able to leave their homes during the wee hours of the morning when the Red Army soldiers were sleeping off their nights of rape and drunkenness. The film, *A Woman in Berlin*, depicts the situation, as the main character has to sneak out of her home to get fresh water and scrounge for food.<sup>168</sup> This film was adapted from an anonymous diary about one German woman's experience in Berlin during the Soviet occupation. While the Red Army occupied Berlin, however, no woman was safe inside or outside the home during the day or night. Grossman states: "After April and early May when women had mainly been raped in their cellars, public spaces became sites of danger as women ventured out to look for food, fuel, or water, scrounge through ruins, try to locate relatives or recuperate belongings."<sup>169</sup> According to Antony Beevor, women in Germany "bore

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<sup>166</sup> Beevor, "They Raped Every German Female."

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> *A Woman in Berlin*, DVD, dir. by Max Färberböck (2008).

<sup>169</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 58.

the brunt of revenge for the Wehrmacht crimes” in the Soviet Union.<sup>170</sup> Many Germans declare that the Red Army soldiers raped all the women who stayed behind in East Prussia.<sup>171</sup>

Antony Beevor states: “Domination and humiliation permeated most soldiers’ treatment of women in East Prussia.”<sup>172</sup> As was the case in the Japanese cases of rape, this motivation also played a major part in the rape of German women. As Susan Brownmiller observes, rape is the act of the conquerer, aimed at emphasizing his victory by dominating the defeated countries’ women.<sup>173</sup> By the time Red Army soldiers reached Berlin in March of 1945, German women were regarded as a casual right of conquest.<sup>174</sup> Rape became a part of the Red Army occupation and invasion of Germany, especially in Berlin, as soldiers avenged their wives and children who were assaulted during the German invasion. At this point in the Soviet invasion, the Red Army laid claim to everything that belonged to Germany, including women.

The story of rape also became part of the German narrative of survival.<sup>175</sup> As rape became commonplace, German women began to use their own bodies to survive through prostitution. It became common practice for German women to take up with one soldier for protection for themselves or daughters, for privileges or to shield themselves from rape by others. Women became prostitutes for many reasons, and some prostituted themselves to officers to ensure the greatest amount

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<sup>170</sup> Beevor, “They Raped Every German Female.”

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. *A Woman in Berlin*, DVD, dir. by Max Färberböck (2008).

of protection. Grossmann quotes a German woman's reaction after a series of rapes during the first chaotic week of Soviet occupation from April-May 1945,

Then I say loudly, 'Damn it!' and make a decision. It is perfectly clear. I need a wolf who will keep the wolves away from me. An officer, as high as possible, Kommandant, General, whatever I can get. For what do I have my spirit and my little knowledge of foreign languages? As soon as I could walk again I took my pail and crept onto the street. Wandered up and down... practiced the sentences with which I could approach an officer; wondered if I didn't look too green and wretched to be attractive. Felt physically better again now that I was doing something, planning and wanting, no longer just dumb booty.<sup>176</sup>

This quotation comes from the anonymous narrator of the diary, *A Woman in Berlin*.

Throughout the film adaptation of the this anonymous diary, the main character takes up with an officer in her area and is protected from many of the dangers of being a woman during this period. She was given food, alcohol, water, and had a man standing watch outside of her apartment most of the day to prevent random rape.<sup>177</sup>

Whether it was rape or prostitution, there were serious consequences from these Russian assaults. As a result of rape, many German women became pregnant with unwanted children. Doctors in Berlin made it their priority to establish medical wards for assaulted women. These wards were established strictly for the abortion of babies that came as a result of rape by a foreigner, whether the foreigner was French, American, or Russian. One German army surgeon referred to gynecology work in his diary when he stated:

There is much medical work on the gynecological ward. On orders of the British and American authorities all pregnancies, which can be proven to have resulted from rape (mostly by Russians) are to be

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<sup>176</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 55.

<sup>177</sup> *A Woman in Berlin*, DVD, dir. by Max Färberböck (2008).

terminated. There are also many illegal abortions by quacks, which are then admitted infected into the hospital.<sup>178</sup>

Even though abortions were once illegal in Germany, this was quickly suspended to accommodate women who wanted abortions following assault at the conclusion of the war.<sup>179</sup> Germans did not want to have mixed race children, as many still believed they were superior.<sup>180</sup>

In order for women to receive abortions, it was required that they submit certified statements detailing the circumstances of their unwanted pregnancy.<sup>181</sup> Women did their best to appeal to the doctors in any way possible to ensure that their affidavit was successful. From socio-economic reasons to threats of suicide, women would do anything possible to abort their unwanted child. One woman wrote:

On the way to work on the second Easter holiday I was raped by a Mongol. The abuse can be seen on my body. Despite strong resistance, my strength failed me, and I had to let everything evil come over me. Now I am pregnant by this person, can think of this only with disgust and ask for help. Since I would not even consider carrying this child to term, both my children would lose their mother. With kind greetings.<sup>182</sup>

Affidavits like these became common, as women were desperate to get rid of babies that resulted from violence. However, the memory of these rapes has been excluded from the Russian history of the invasion and occupation of Germany.

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<sup>178</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 56.

<sup>179</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 55.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 57.

<sup>182</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 59.

Grossmann states: "After the rubble was cleaned up, and the men were home, the pregnancies aborted (at least 90 percent apparently were, especially in Berlin), and the VD treated, the initial explosion of speech about the rapes was muted, at least in public."<sup>183</sup> There are many reasons for the repression of the memory of sexual assaults that plagued German women throughout the Red Army's invasion and occupation of Berlin and East Prussia. In Russia, the subject was silenced to improve the electoral chances of the Communist Party during the first open election in Berlin in 1946.<sup>184</sup> If the Communist Party won the election, which it did, it would have led to further triumph over German socialist policy. At home in the USSR, Red Army soldiers tended not to discuss the topic as many continued to believe they did nothing wrong, especially considering how much destruction the Germans inflicted on Russia during their invasion. For Germans, the subject of rape by the Red Army became one of humiliation for men and shame for women.<sup>185</sup>

Germany was a patriarchal regime during World War II, so naturally, the rape of German women became a story of humiliation for German men, since it signaled their failure to protect Germany and "their" women. Upon the "remasculinization" of German society, men were ashamed not to have been around to protect their wives from these atrocities.<sup>186</sup> It was humiliating to them to admit that their wife had had sex with many other men, even if it was by force. It became quite difficult for German men to confront their wives' rapes (if they even knew),

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<sup>183</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 61.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

and this difficulty contributed to the women's suppression of their personal horrifying memories.

Many German women suppressed the memory of their assaults as a way to protect their husbands from the aforementioned humiliation, while also preventing the acknowledgment of their disgrace of being with a Russian alien. The rape of German women was frequent as German men were often at war and not home to protect their families, further humiliating them when they returned home to discover that the Red Army had assaulted their families. For example, in the film *A Woman in Berlin*, when the main character's husband returned from war, he told his wife that she had shamed him for associating with and prostituting herself to the Red Army officer for protection. In the end, he left and she was unsure if he would return.<sup>187</sup> Grossmann writes, "Rape came as just one more (sometimes the worst, but sometimes not) in a series of horrible deprivations and humiliations of war and defeat: losing your home, becoming a refugee, having your menfolk killed, maimed, or taken prisoner, your children die or sicken of disease and malnutrition."<sup>188</sup> German women also did not want to risk the reactions of their menfolk by publicly acknowledging the fact that they had been raped.<sup>189</sup> German women knew they had no choice in the matter, yet men still treated them with shame. These aforementioned examples gave German women good reasons to suppress the memory of their experiences.

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<sup>187</sup> *A Woman in Berlin*, DVD, dir. by Max Färberböck (2008).

<sup>188</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 53.

<sup>189</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 61.

Due to the suppression of such memories, women were forced to keep their experiences private. However, some German women still passed their memories onto their daughters, telling them everything from the bombing raids, to the flight from the advancing Red Army, and most importantly about the rapes and constant fear of rape.<sup>190</sup> When passing on their experiences, women made sure to note their lack of guilt and shame, since they actually had no choice and little say in what happened to them during the war. Germany was also unwilling to acknowledge the crimes its soldiers committed that led to the Russian perpetration of rape, as that might imply that their crimes provided Russians with a reason to be angry.<sup>191</sup>

Russian soldiers do not like to admit that they raped and assaulted their way through East Prussia and Germany. Beevor refers to the situation today when he states: "The subject of the Red Army's mass rapes in Germany has been so repressed in Russia that even today veterans refuse to acknowledge what really happened."<sup>192</sup> Though it is hard to believe, one reason for the repression of the memory of rape is that many Russians claimed that most women were compliant. According to Beevor, "The capacity of Soviet Officers to convince themselves that most of the victims were either happy with their fate, or at least accepted that it was their turn to suffer after what the Wehrmacht had done in Russia, is striking."<sup>193</sup> Many soldiers believed that what they did was not rape, but rather engage in consensual sexual relations. James Mark, a professor of History at the University of Exeter states:

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<sup>190</sup> Grossmann, "Question of Silence," 62.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Beevor, "They Raped Every German Female."

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

One documentary film-maker found that many ex-Red Army soldiers still refused to accept that rapes had occurred at all, admitted only consensual sexual relations or claimed that Eastern European women deliberately use sex to spread diseases in order to weaken the fighting capabilities of the Red Army.<sup>194</sup>

As Marks conveys above, many ex-Red Army soldiers truly did not believe that their actions were wrong, which in turn led to the suppression of the memory of rapes, and an inaccurate history of the war in Germany.

Many Russians have no remorse for the atrocities they committed by invading Germany. Merridale writes: “For those who entered into it- the majority of Russian, and probably even Soviet, citizens- the mood was self-righteous. ‘Our cause is just,’ Molotov assured the Soviet people in 1941. However far their army marched, and whatever atrocities it committed, most did not stop believing that.”<sup>195</sup> Most soldiers had such a great sense of nationalism for the Soviet Union and Stalin and such anger toward the Germans, that they felt they were simply defending their country and way of life. “This was not a war over trade or territory. Its guiding principle was ideology, its aim the annihilation of a way of life.”<sup>196</sup> Though the invasion of Germany was once about avenging the motherland, revenge is no longer a part of the Russian narrative.

Today, World War II is known as “the Great Patriotic War” in Russia. There is even an entire park named after the war, “Park of Victory in the Great Patriotic

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<sup>194</sup> James Mark, “Remembering Rape: Divided Social Memory and the Red Army in Hungary 1944-1945,” *Past and Present* 188 (2005): 135.

<sup>195</sup> Catherine Merridale, *Ivan’s War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 373.

<sup>196</sup> Merridale, *Ivan’s War*, 3.



War,” where many commemorations take place each year.<sup>197</sup> War commemoration in Russia has become an industry, continuing the hero narrative created by Stalin following the defeat of Fascism and Hitler.<sup>198</sup> This narrative transforms Red Army soldiers into heroes, leaving out the horrible experiences they went through and the atrocities that many committed. Catherine Merridale, a professor of contemporary history in London writes: “The archives themselves, those cities of manila files, were closed to almost everyone, and certainly to scholars. Whole areas of wartime life, including desertion, crime, cowardice, and rape, were banned from public scrutiny.”<sup>199</sup> The atrocities and crimes of cowardice meant nothing and became shadows of the past when the Soviet Union create its glittering narrative of heroism. This narrative can be seen everywhere throughout Russia today, on any monument regarding the war. Merridale writes: “The Russian government, too, has an interest in preserving a good memory of war, for the victory over Fascism remains the greatest achievement that modern Russia can claim.”<sup>200</sup> Therefore, in covering up the atrocities they committed, such as rape, which Stalin referred to as “having a bit of fun with a woman,” Russians protect one of the defining moments of their national history.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 377.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 375.

<sup>200</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 10.

<sup>201</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, 375.

### Chapter 3: Rape by American Soldiers

At the end of the twentieth century the contributions of this generation would be in bold print in any review of this turbulent and earth-altering time. It may be historically premature to judge the greatness of a whole generation, but indisputably, there are common traits that cannot be denied. It is a generation that, by and large, made no demands of homage from those who followed and prospered economically, politically, and culturally because of its sacrifices. It is a generation of towering achievement and modest demeanor, a legacy of their formative years when they were participants in and witness to sacrifices of the highest order. They know how many of the best of their generation didn't make it to their early twenties, how brilliant scientists, teachers, spiritual and business leaders, politicians and artists were lost in the ravages of the greatest war the world has seen.<sup>202</sup>

This quote by Tom Brokaw embodies the way Americans have come to view the generation of World War II soldiers. Brokaw even highlights the extraordinary soldiers of this era in the title of his book, *The Greatest Generation*, published in 1998. Immediately following the conclusion of World War II, many Americans wanted to remain in the dark about the horrible aspects of the war. No one wanted to hear about the horrifying experiences, and this created the setting necessary to transform the soldiers into the "greatest generation." These soldiers were often ordinary people who either willingly dropped their lives to go to war to defend America's lifestyle or were drafted into battle, but either way, the more triumphant the narrative became, the more Americans looked to these soldiers with awe. In fact, this view of soldiers has become even more reverential following the attack on the trade centers on 9/11. Today, we still look back on this generation as a generation that helped define America, a generation of heroes.

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<sup>202</sup> Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation*, 11.

The accomplishments of the generation of World War II soldiers are indisputable. John Bodnar recalled an on air quote by David Brinkley, during his 1994 narration of the television program, *Pearl Harbor: Two Hours That Changed the World*:

Brinkley ended on a note of triumph, however, when he said that the United States vanquished both the Japanese and Germans in the war, put Western Europe back together, wrote a democratic constitution for Japan, and then was able to “stand off” the Soviet Union in the Cold War. In his estimation this was a ‘heroic performance by one of history’s great countries.’<sup>203</sup>

It was these accomplishments that transformed an army of soldiers into America’s “finest youth.” These soldiers were loyal to their country and defended the democracy that America cherished.<sup>204</sup> From D-Day to the German defeat to defeating Japan with the atomic bomb, the United States won the war and secured America’s position of power in the world. Since the conclusion of the war, memorials, ceremonies, and anniversaries all celebrate the heroic version of America’s role in World War II. We have come to celebrate and cherish our troops even more today, following the conclusion of more controversial wars like Vietnam and the ongoing War on Terror at home and in Iraq and Afghanistan. This celebration also stems from the transformation of the U.S. military from a conscript army to an all-volunteer force.

Presidents like Bill Clinton have cited this narrative of heroism and recognize World War II as one of the defining moments in American history.<sup>205</sup> Everyone has

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<sup>203</sup> John Bodnar, *The “Good War” in American Memory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 205.

<sup>204</sup> Bodnar, *The “Good War,”* 201.

<sup>205</sup> Bodnar, *The “Good War,”* 207.

ties to World War II in some way, and having a tie to the “greatest generation” brings people back to their roots and ensures that these heroes of our nation are never forgotten. For example, when Americans memorialize D-Day, they recall the fact that the battle on this day had a direct impact on defeating Hitler. This day has become one of great importance because upon remembrance, people generally experience great patriotic fervor and view those who fought with honor.<sup>206</sup>

American memory of the war centers on the mythical idea that the defeat of the Germans was successful largely because of American soldiers’ devotion to freedom and their willingness to fight for it.<sup>207</sup> As Americans, we do not appreciate nor do we acknowledge the contributions of our allies, especially the Chinese and Russians. When we recall the war, we do not think of the horrific actions many soldiers had to perform in order to win; rather we view the war with a glossy perspective. David Kennedy, a historian at Stanford University, states: “Our culture has embalmed World War II as ‘the good war’ and we don’t revisit the corpse often.”<sup>208</sup> We, as Americans, do not like to think of our soldiers as committing horrific acts, such as killing or raping civilians. America’s failure to recognize all sides of the war is noticeable in Hollywood’s portrayal of World War II, as it supports the heroic narrative in the majority of representations.

Hollywood’s version of World War II tends to challenge the realities of life, like portraying soldiers as returning home from war as better human beings than

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<sup>206</sup> Bodnar, *The “Good War,”* 205.

<sup>207</sup> Bodnar, *The “Good War,”* 206.

<sup>208</sup> Schuessler, “The Dark Side of Liberation.”

when they left for battle. Bodnar refers to this unblemished nature of American soldiers in film,

The average American soldier is a good man able to wage deadly warfare without becoming corrupted by the violence; he is the opposite of the brutal figures of Germans and Japanese that appeared in most Hollywood productions about the war. In the hands of Brokaw, Ambrose, and Spielberg, he is not only able to fight the good fight but to come away from the experience a better man.<sup>209</sup>

In this mythical version of war, American soldiers come home in most films unscathed by the horrors of killing people and being a part of the bloodbath of war. Soldiers come home with no depression or posttraumatic stress disorder. However skewed this version may be, this is how we view the greatest generation, the veterans of World War II.

Our perception of the war removes the realism of the war and promotes an idealistic portrayal of it. The heroic version that our country created is so abstract that it erases the actual heroism the soldiers felt, while at the same time whitewashing and obscuring the dying and suffering and atrocities that occurred on the battlefields during World War II.<sup>210</sup> Although this narrative of heroism acknowledges the great task the soldiers accomplished during the war by beating Hitler, it fails to acknowledge the atrocities of the war, such as rape. If rape by U.S. soldiers was acknowledged in conjunction with World War II, it could undermine the heroic portrayal of the war and make history more nuanced, by revealing that

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<sup>209</sup> Bodnar, *The "Good War,"* 214.

<sup>210</sup> Bodnar, *The "Good War,"* 231.

some Americans did have the capacity for cruelty, a quality that has been primarily been assigned to our enemies.<sup>211</sup>

Although honoring our soldiers is an important facet of remembrance of World War II, our narrative of the war leaves out many aspects of the conflict that we fail to recognize due to their potentially disturbing nature, such as the sexual activity of GIs during war. It is important to recognize World War II not only for its heroes, but also to understand the truth, and it is critical to acknowledge the truth before it is lost with the death of a generation. However, one thought to consider is that perhaps only after their death will the country be capable of looking at these atrocities' objectives. Rape is one of the little known atrocities perpetrated by the US military during World War II. Very rarely is rape discussed in context with the US military and only recently has it become a more widely analyzed topic. It has not been debated in the past due to its ability to undermine the popular image of American heroism. However, it did occur, especially in France during the liberation period and also in Japan.

After the attack on Normandy, the United States military was able to liberate France from German control. According to Roberts' book *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*, the French were overjoyed by this liberation and one café owner was quoted in saying, "We held out arms outstretched to take our liberators into our hearts. We accepted the gift of liberation as one great friend accepts a gift from another friend."<sup>212</sup> The French had gone through a horrid period of German occupation and attacks, so when the US came, most French were

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<sup>211</sup> Bodnar, *The "Good War,"* 236.

<sup>212</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 75.

overjoyed. However, shortly after liberation, the feelings the French had towards the American liberators took a drastic turn for the worse. The same café owner from Harvais went on to state: "Today my hands have dropped to my sides and my heart has become one of stone. We expected friends who would not make us ashamed of our defeat. Instead there came incomprehension, arrogance, incredibly bad manners and the swagger of conquerors."<sup>213</sup> This feeling of anger and hatred towards American soldiers became increasingly common as the liberation and occupation period continued throughout 1944 and 1945.

Rape became a way for American soldiers to assert control over enemies and allies. Mary Louise Roberts writes, "In general, rape was probably the most widespread war crime in the European theater of war, although its violence had different meanings in various areas."<sup>214</sup> Due to America's role in liberating Europe from Nazism and Hitler, rape and sexual assault became some soldiers' way of flexing power over dominated areas and civilians.<sup>215</sup> According to US JAG statistics, American soldiers raped at least 500 German women during the occupation period.<sup>216</sup> But, American soldiers raped both enemy women and Allied women in France. Soldiers must have viewed their duties in France with a sense of conquest rather than liberation, and United States statistics only include the numbers of rapes of "enemy" civilians.

U.S. rapes of French women also occurred. Prior to the occupation and even after the US became involved in the war, American soldiers often equated France

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 197.

<sup>215</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 198.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

with brothels and pretty women. This stemmed from the US military strategy of using sex as propaganda to promote the Normandy campaign to soldiers. Roberts writes: "In this sense, soldiers were literally *seduced* into fighting the war."<sup>217</sup> Already under the impression that women in France were sexually available in every way possible, soldiers began to prove their dominance of France through sex. According to Roberts, "By late summer 1944, scores of women throughout the Norman countryside had claimed to be sexually violated by American soldiers. Fear and panic were felt throughout the region."<sup>218</sup>

Once the Americans landed in France, racial tensions also led to the proliferation of rape accusations.<sup>219</sup> During World War II, the US army remained segregated and black American soldiers were often discriminated against. From remaining in port cities to working in service units, blacks were left out of major battles during the war.<sup>220</sup> Black soldiers were not only confined to service units, but they were also set up to fail by receiving inadequate and racist training. Southern officers who knew the Jim Crow Laws led them.<sup>221</sup> After acknowledging that some of its soldiers were committing rapes and getting involved with prostitutes, the United States military claimed that rape was a "black crime."<sup>222</sup> They transformed rape into a "Negro problem" in an effort to contain the damage to America's

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<sup>217</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 63.

<sup>218</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 74.

<sup>219</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 201.

<sup>220</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 203.

<sup>221</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 199.

<sup>222</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 257.



reputation, and in the process made black soldiers the scapegoats for rape accusations.<sup>223</sup>

The perception was that it did not take much to turn black men into violent, hypersexual human beings. In order to transform rape into a black crime, the United States used the common stereotype of black men as hypersexual and violent beings.<sup>224</sup> This was quite an old and well-established belief in the early 1900s, especially in regards to drugs and alcohol. In 1914, Edward Williams wrote on the front page of the *New York Times*:

Once the negro has reached the stage of being a 'dope taker'—and a very few experimental sniffs of the drug make him an habitue—he is a constant menace to his community until he is eliminated. For his whole nature is changed for the worse by the habit. Sexual desires are increased and perverted, peaceful negroes become quarrelsome, and timid negroes develop a degree of 'Dutch courage' that is sometimes almost incredible.<sup>225</sup>

This perception of black men as prone to becoming hypersexual beings while intoxicated was transferred into the theater of World War II.

This stereotype of black men as hypersexual created the necessary setting for the military to make rape into a black crime. Due to the overwhelming number of black soldiers in service units that remained stationed in towns and villages, the military argued that these men had more opportunities to meet women and essentially unleash their sexual energy through rape.<sup>226</sup> Officials also argued that

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Edward Huntington Williams, "The Drug-Habit Menace in the South," in *Drugs in America: A Documentary History*, ed. David F. Musto (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 363.

<sup>226</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 203.

black soldiers left behind in the service units had more opportunities to drink alcohol than white soldiers who were active on the front. Roberts writes: "Alcohol, ComZ officials believed, worsened the situation by triggering black aggression, thus 'turning a man into a beast. The blacks have difficulty in carrying alcohol, and when they imbibe large quantities they lose their senses.'"<sup>227</sup> Not only did military officials believe in this violent "hypersexuality" of black soldiers, but this racist sentiment echoed across the entire military from soldiers to judges, resulting in unfair trials for black soldiers accused of misconduct.<sup>228</sup> Judges often described rapes by black soldiers as "orgies" or "sexual saturnalias," describing rape as an act of "bestial lust."<sup>229</sup>

The US military made a huge effort to transform perceptions of black American soldiers and represent them as beasts who would do anything to fulfill their sexual desire, even through rape, and the majority of rape accusations from French women were directed at black soldiers. As in the US, a preexisting racist sentiment existed within the French population.<sup>230</sup> The French harbored these sentiments due to their colonialist perception of Africans. The French also thought Africans were savage and prone to violence and hypersexuality prior to World War II.

When African Americans arrived in France for the first time during the First World War, the French simply transferred these prejudices about Africans onto them. French civilians were "instructed" about black men of the Ninety-Second Division fighting in France, namely,

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<sup>227</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 205.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 240.

their “lust” for women, and their “unbridled” sex drive. In short, they were told that every black man was a “potential rapist.”<sup>231</sup>

Since the French already viewed African Americans with a sense of fear, it was not hard for civilians to take part in racial scapegoating and blame black soldiers for everything, even if they didn’t do it.<sup>232</sup>

Black soldiers bore the brunt of the blame for rapes even though white American soldiers also played a part in raping French women as they were moved from town to town, pushing back German forces. According to Roberts, white soldiers who were moving from town to town were actually more prone to rape women because they had less of a chance of being caught, as they were leaving town the next day.<sup>233</sup>

The United States did not widely recognize or acknowledge the prevalence of rape accusations against black soldiers in order to keep the issue of rape from getting publicity in newspapers. Any publicity that could be used to disrupt the unity and comradeship of the United States war effort became illegal.<sup>234</sup> Roberts writes:

‘Extreme censorship is the only explanation. Control over information represented business as usual for the War Department, particularly inasmuch as the rape hysteria possessed a racial element.... Because one of its chief aims was to portray the American people as united in common struggle against the enemy, the Office of Censorship restricted publication of any material depicting racial conflict, including violent confrontations on US military bases.’<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 243.

<sup>232</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 244.

<sup>233</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 204.

<sup>234</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 230.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

Americans were judging every governmental action during this time period, and therefore censorship became imperative not only to keep unity and patriotism alive, but also to silence reports about rape that occurred in France during liberation.

However, rape did not go completely unacknowledged. A black American military chaplain wrote a pamphlet in 1944 titled "Let's Look at Rape!" This is a six-page document written in response to the "troubling racial demographics of the American men accused of rape by French women in the fall of 1944."<sup>236</sup> This pamphlet was distributed to all army chaplains to read and redistribute to soldiers.<sup>237</sup> The author stated: "All of these complaints did not stand up under investigation, but on October 15 64 negro soldiers were charged and awaiting trial for this crime as against 11 white soldiers."<sup>238</sup> The number of black soldiers accused of rape compared to white soldiers was astronomical. The author, who identifies himself only as 'A Negro Chaplain,' wrote, "Negro troops do not amount to more than 10% of the American Army in France, these figures show that 9 negro soldiers are accused of this crime to one white soldier, and that nearly 6 are facing trial for each white soldier."<sup>239</sup> Black soldiers had an extremely negative stigma in France from both American and French soldiers.

One article even alluded to the idea of a hypersexual Negro soldier when they drank alcohol. The Chaplain stated: "That cognac can get YOU into very, very bad trouble. Remember drunkenness is never an excuse for YOUR crime."<sup>240</sup> Since the

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<sup>236</sup> Stahl, "Stop Rape: A WWII Chaplain's Advice."

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Stahl, "Stop Rape: A WWII Chaplain's Advice."

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

pamphlet focused on black soldiers, it sent the message that one black man's actions represented the actions of all black men. This article is unique because it opposes skewed racial demographics regarding acts of rape in France during the U.S. liberation.

August 25, 1944, is officially known as the day Paris was liberated from Nazi power by the American allies.<sup>241</sup> France still celebrates its liberation from German control on that day today. On August 26, 1944, the *New York Times* printed an article by the Associated Press that stated: "On all sides the liberating French and Americans were greeted by hungry Parisians, mad with joy, who had fought alone against German oppressors since they were called to arms last Saturday."<sup>242</sup> The French lined the streets of Paris as the United States army tanks rolled down the Champs Elysees.<sup>243</sup> Following the victorious battle of Normandy, it became clear that the Allies would liberate Paris from Nazi occupation. Although the rhetoric of US military actions in France was that we were liberating the country, evidence of rapes imply that U.S. soldiers may have perceived their role in France as conquerors rather than liberators.

Throughout United States history, it is probable that American soldiers have raped enemy civilians for multiple reasons, such as revenge, bonding, enhanced masculinity, domination, or even humiliation. However, it has become difficult to do research on such American atrocities during World War II not only because it has

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<sup>241</sup> The Learning Network, "Aug. 25, 1944- Paris Is Liberated After 4-Year Nazi Occupation," *New York Times*, August 25, 2011, accessed

<sup>242</sup> The Associated Press, "Allied Forces Help French to Rid Capital of Nazis," *New York Times*, August, 26, 1944, accessed February 7, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0825.html#article>.

<sup>243</sup> Learning Network, "Aug. 25, 1944."

been silenced through censorship, but also because rape is officially prohibited per US military regulations now and then. J. Robert Lilly, professor of criminology and sociology from Northern Kentucky University, writes, "The US military has a long history of prohibiting and punishing soldiers who have violated this proscription [on rape]."<sup>244</sup> If the United States forbids rape from happening, then why did it happen and why was it covered up?

The United States had reason to cover up rapes during its wartime exploits in Europe in World War II in order to protect the developing narrative of heroism as the "greatest generation." If rapes by U.S. soldiers were revealed, a more negative light could be cast on veterans, tainting the narrative we promote to this day. Though the reasons for the cover up have been less straightforward while examining other perpetrators, like the Germans, the United States' narrative has been so unambiguous and highly publicized following the conclusion of the war that changes may have serious ramifications for veterans and national memory itself.

According to Lilly, due to the United States' long history of prohibiting rape by soldiers, "It is therefore reasonable that it [the United States] has not employed or developed rape as a cultural or genocidal weapon, an element of male communication, pay, privilege, pillage, or sexual comfort."<sup>245</sup> While examining this case in particular, it is clear that the United States military did not utilize rape as weapon of war in World War II and it was not systematic in any sense, because it was so widely condemned by the military. However, the feminist theory clearly

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<sup>244</sup> J. Robert Lilly, *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe during World War II* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 28.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

applies to the case of rape in France by American soldiers. Many times, U.S. soldiers probably raped civilians to demonstrate their dominance over France and Germany. Although France was actually an ally of the United States and it is clear that we were liberating France from German rule, the soldiers could have perceived this as conquest. Although it can be argued that American soldiers raped as a response to the brutal combat (pressure cooker theory), as Normandy was a tough and bloody battle, Roberts argues that for American soldiers, rape became a way to assert dominance over a territory.<sup>246</sup> Roberts was able to find archives in France with citizen complaints of rape, archives in the United States, and letters to the mayor in Le Havre, France, pleading for brothels due to indecency in the streets.<sup>247</sup> It is impossible to know why soldiers in the US military raped French women during liberation, or even find out how many women were actually raped due to the censorship and many rumors during the war. Lastly, it is also impossible to find out if the perpetrators were black or white because of the tendency to blame black soldiers.

Today, rape in the US military is a hot issue inside the military and in the field. Congress is now discussing the prevalence of soldier-on-soldier rape within the military. Last year, there was a congressional hearing on the subject of rape in the military, led by female Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). The bill she proposed would make significant changes to how the military deals with sexual assault.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 198.

<sup>247</sup> Shuessler, "The Dark Side of Liberation."

<sup>248</sup> Jennifer Steinhauer, "2 Democrats Split on Tactics to Fight Military Sexual Assault," *New York Times*, November 1, 2013, accessed March 3, 2014,

Historians are also examining past wartime rape. In a recent publication, *Kill Anything that Moves*, by Nick Turse, the prevalence of violence in the US military during the Vietnam War is chronicled and stems from his research with many Pentagon files and interviews with veteran soldiers about orders they were given in Vietnam. Turse studied long suppressed documents and files that chronicled the true events that occurred during the Vietnam War. Due to the publication of this book and recent discussions about rape in the United States military, it is becoming more acceptable to talk about wartime rape.

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/02/us/politics/2-democrats-split-on-tactics-to-fight-military-sex-assaults.html? r=0>.



## Conclusion

Narratives about World War II tend to be viewed as black and white. Nations tend to claim victor or victimizer status, but this makes the narrative too simple. War has never been and never will be strictly black and white, and in all cases analyzed here, the information regarding mass rapes during World War II complicates and undermines these claims. People tend to dislike more nuanced versions of the war, which is one reason why many of the horrors experienced by victims and soldiers during war were covered up following its conclusion. A nation's identity is constructed around how wars are remembered, and by acknowledging rape in public memories of World War II, the current identities of Russia, the United States, Germany, and France may all be affected. Nations remember certain aspects of war because it serves a greater national purpose for its narrative.

In the United States, when American soldiers returned home from World War II, civilians did not want to hear about their truthful experiences; rather they wanted to hear about the heroic actions they performed to help America and the Allies win the Second World War. That generation of people and soldiers are the "greatest generation," heroes of American history, and to view them as anything other than this would undermine the U.S. narrative of the war.

The Russians also disregard their role in mass rapes due to their own heroic narrative. Once Germany turned its back on Russia and invaded the country, Russia joined the Allies and assisted in the ultimate defeat of the Nazi army at the cost of tens of millions of lives. The Russians refer to World War II as "The Great Patriotic

War” and this narrative has not changed. Even today, Russians refer to this as a heroic period in Russian history.

In contrast, Germans have been viewed as the victimizers and aggressors since the end of the war, even in Germany. It was the Germans who started the war, it was the Germans who were the perpetrators of the Holocaust, and it was the Germans who caused the death of so many innocent civilian lives, as well as deaths of soldiers. When one thinks of Germany during World War II, the Holocaust immediately comes to mind and Germans agree. It is hard to consider Germany as anything but the victimizers in the war, and the world is not ready to see German women as victims of Russia’s mass rapes.

Japanese actions during the war have been publicly controversial in recent years due to testimonies from surviving “comfort women” from Korea, China, and elsewhere. These women spoke out about the horrors of sex slavery they were forced into, yet the Japanese government continues to deny its involvement. Japanese actions during the war were brutal and aggressive, and the fact that the government continues to try to cover up this version of history by focusing on Japanese suffering creates tensions between neighboring countries that were Japan’s victims. As Japan continues to try to claim victim status in World War II, tensions also continue.

In all of the cases of mass rape in World War II, each nation has put a lot of effort into concealing the atrocities from public knowledge. Whether the country was the victimizer or the victor, they all have reasons for trying to conceal this terrible part of history, but they cannot keep it silent forever. As more and more

cases of rape during war begin to be revealed and publicized, questions about the experience of and motivations for rape during war continue to grow. What was the real war like for all concerned, including women?

It is very difficult to fully comprehend why soldiers during war decide to commit mass rapes and murders of innocent people, but there are many reasons why they conceal their actions. Looking back on their actions, some war veterans may keep their experiences and actions during war bottled up, because atrocities committed during war are not something to discuss at the dinner table. The topic is also horrific and could lead to people looking at their veterans in a more negative light. Some veterans blocked out what happened during the war to move on with their lives because discussing it could bring them back to the horrors of the time. The veteran's experiences also contradict the commonly accepted narratives.

Rape is always about more than just sexual fervor, and the governments whose soldiers committed such horrific acts actively conceal it. Scholars and historians increasingly recognize wartime rape as an unacceptable war crime due to the number of recently discovered instances of mass rape. Cynthia Enloe writes: "The sheer variety of wartime rape sites may lure us into reducing the cause of wartime rape to raw primal misogyny."<sup>249</sup> Whether rape is about misogyny or culture, or is systematic and a part of military strategy, is just another act of war committed out of anger or revenge, every soldier is different when it comes to committing a crime like rape. As a researcher, I will never know why Japanese, Russian, German, and American soldiers chose to rape during World War II, but it

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<sup>249</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Manuevers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 134.

probably stemmed from the idea of conquest. When soldiers entered a territory, they had been taught to conquer, occupy, and dominate. Gender views and patriarchy can also be incorporated into explaining why soldiers rape, as these may be a part of their culture. This could be because soldiers simply view everything in the conquered country as theirs, because they are the superior power.

Andrew Cohen, a contributing editor for *The Atlantic* writes, "Some young men go to war and act heroically, and others do not. We make celebrities of the former and we sweep the latter under the rug."<sup>250</sup> Making the discussion of rape public will not make soldiers heroic, and many governments seem to fear that it would create a negative view of soldiers from countries like the United States that cherish and give gratitude to them for fighting the war. It is hard to discuss such chilling topics without transforming the narrative and undermining patriotism, but history is also about the present and learning the truth is necessary to those who were forced to remain silent and excluded from original war memory.

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<sup>250</sup> The Editors, "The Best Book I Read This Year," *The Atlantic*, December 9, 2013, accessed February 18, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/12/the-best-book-i-read-this-year/282018/>.

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