The “comfort” of Ignorance in Education: A continuation of Japan’s history problem.

As I've discussed this before, I believe that is an important issue for people to understand the value of learning from past mistakes and the consequences of ignoring what has happened. We’re in a time were many people would rather stick their fingers in their ears than listen to the provocative truth, because it is upsetting. No one wants to be held accountable for the things they do especially if it brings a lot of feelings of shame. So, Within this article I will be continuing on the topic of Japan's relationship with its history, this time I'll be focusing on the topic of comfort women.

What are “comfort women” and who were they?

“Comfort women” were forced sex slaves for the Imperial Japanese army between 1932 - 1945, before and after World War II. Many of the women had been as young as 14, where they were told that they were getting jobs in factories or being sent to work in nursing units. many of the women were either kidnapped or coerced into becoming these comfort women in fear of their families being executed. Over an estimate of 90% of women didn’t survive the war, as the Army tried to cover up their vile acts by executing the women in the comfort stations, as if to erase the victim’s history.

Kim Bok-Dong (died this year in January) was one of the surviving comfort women and she talks in this interview with Asian Boss at the age of 92. She recalls about how all young korean men were conscripted into the Japanese military as they were under Japan’s rule alongside with other occupied countries like Taiwan, China etc. She talks about how girls were forced to leave their families to go and work,as well as how she was told that she was going to a factory to make uniforms for Japanese soldiers because they were short-staffed and that she would return once she was old enough to marry. Kim states if you said no you would’ve of been exiled. She was the youngest on the ship of women being taken to he comfort stations as the women were around 20 or 19 and she was only 14 years old (15 in Korean age). 14 years old. She had no choice but to comply or she would be beaten for disobeying. They would have sex with soldiers everyday and the soldiers stood in long queues. In the interview she also tells Asian Boss tried to cover up their existence by turning them into nurses at the army hospitals where she worked as a “nurse” for a year. After Japan was defeated, she was able to return home after 8 years of abuse. All she ever wanted was a formal apology from the Japanese government and people still think that the survivors want to get money.

After watching this interview, I like many others in the comment section of this video felt shocked. How could this war crime go unnoticed and ignored? How come we’ve never learnt about this in schools? How do we all know about the holocaust and how it affected jewish people but about the lives of these women. Denial is a powerful weapon we often overlook. Just like how some people in Japan have denied the fact of the Nanking Massacre, they’ve also been lead to believe these survivors were paid or were lying about it.

I simply can’t comprehend the idea of somebody lying about this heinous war crime. This was even more apparent down the comment section of the video as one of the comments referred Kim Bok-Dong as a “famous fake sex slave” another comment claimed that “Actually, [the]

Japanese government didn't for Korean women to join military prostitutes [...]many peasants sold their own children to the recruiters". This is the consequence of teaching a bias perspective of history. Observing these reactions honestly made me feel angered that people would think this way, it's like they've lost their sense of empathy and that'd the big issue. The person that made that comment may have been the result of an educational system that has to them to believe that people would lie about experiencing this inhumane situation. It's so easy to dismiss them as idiotic or uneducated, but this type of behaviour seems to be increasing.

Historical bias is without a doubt still prevalent in Japan, but also an issue of deniability in other countries too. It has helped to create a number of young people who choose to be ignorant, rather than understand and confront their countries past. In my opinion, people should be able to be about to talk about the dark parts of history, no matter how uncomfortable it makes you feel because no nation is perfect. If Germany is able to thoroughly learn about Nazi's and Adolf Hitler, Japan should be able to acknowledge its past. I'm not going to sit here pointing my fingers at countries as the UK has some of its own problems of confronting its own history of imperialism and colonialism.