

# **Speech at Rally in Support of Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery**

**Sydney, August 14, 2019**

My name is Nick Deane. I am the convenor of the Marrickville Peace Group and one of two NSW representatives on the national committee of IPAN, the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network.

I'd like to begin in the customary way, by paying my respects to the original owners of the land on which we stand, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. I salute their elders past and present. This always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

Now, in uttering those words, which are now often spoken rather routinely by speakers like myself, there is actually a direct connection with the matter we are here to remember and talk about. Both the treatment of the original inhabitants of Australia and the treatment of 'Comfort Women' in Korea were the product of similar economic and political systems. For both were brought about by imperialist powers that did not hesitate before using violent means in their pursuit of wealth. And the common feature that always raises its head whenever we see that combination of desire for riches backed up with willingness to use force, is and remains war – that combination's inevitable consequence.

War, as Smedley Butler told us, is a racket, through which the rich get even richer. War is bad for everybody. War is a scourge. War brings nothing but misery and suffering and the destruction of human creations. War on the ground is always fought by working men and women, not by those in command, regardless of which 'side' the worker is working for. The bayonet is a tool with a working person at either end of it. War is failure at the highest level of government – failure to negotiate the way through differences.

The overwhelming majority of the victims of every war since WW1 have been innocent, non-combatant civilians. In the case we remember today, those victims were the 'Comfort Women'. In other times and in other places, they have been other women and children. Look at what is happening in the Yemen at this time. War brings out the very worst in people, no matter of what race or nationality – witness the Abu Ghraib atrocity in Iraq and the My Lai massacre in Vietnam. All of these events are linked. They all take place in times of war. And wars inevitably take place when the pursuit of wealth sanctions the use of violence.

War benefits no party other than those who manufacture, sell and distribute weaponry – who are, of course, the arch exponents of the very system that produces the wars that keep their armaments industry in business and rich.

The technology of warfare has reached a point where the level of death and destruction it brings makes it no longer an acceptable way to resolve international problems. It may have served some positive purpose several centuries ago, but no longer. Mankind at large must find a new way to sort out its problems. War must be declared redundant.

We are faced with immediate and monumental problems with the climate crisis. If ever there was a time for humankind to work together so as to come through this crisis with some sort of civilisation intact, that time is now. But what do we see happening? Our

leaders, who know full well that the climate crisis is upon us, can only respond in the same, old and discredited and redundant manner. They foresee 'instability', which is to say a situation in which they may lose control. So how do they respond? They try desperately to retain their control by purchasing more weapons, enlisting more into their armed forces and getting prepared for fighting – as though that will be a 'solution' to the crisis. As this crisis deepens, unless there is sudden and drastic social change, we will see more war. Which means that we will see more events like the Frontier Wars in this country; like the current war in Yemen; like My Lai and Abu Ghraib; more war-driven atrocities like the exploitation of the 'Comfort Women' in Korea.

This is not the time to be increasing expenditure on all things military. It is precisely the time to stop this process of escalating militarism. Now, more than ever, we need to find a better way of moving forward. Now, more than ever, we need to cut back on military spending and divert resources into means for reducing and alleviating the effects of the climate crisis.

Australia, by aligning itself so closely with the USA, the most war-like nation on the planet, is choosing a path that has war as its destination. If we continue on this path, we will see repetitions of atrocities like 'Comfort Women'. We do not have to go down this path. The ordinary people of the world want peace above all things – the chance to live and prosper in a world where problems and pleasures are shared. We, the people, want to live without being in a constant state of fear and anxiety. We, the people of the world, want peace. Yet our so-called leaders offer us one thing only at this time of crisis. They promise us 'perpetual war'.

Enough of war. Enough of war crimes. Enough of atrocity. Enough of 'Comfort Women'. It is time to stand up and speak out and call for peace.