

Hello everyone and welcome to this presentation, I am glad to be a part of the student research symposium this year. My name is Katie Hashimoto, and I am a 4th year undergraduate student here. Today I am going to talk about the dual colonization of Okinawa by both Japan and the US military, and this has created issues of gendered and militarized violence against the local women and girls.

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So, I'd like to start off with a quote by Suzuyo Takazato who is an Okinawan feminist and peace activist, a prominent leader in the Anti-base movement, and founder of the organization called Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence.

Takazato here states "The past 50 years Okinawa has been sacrificed. There have been crimes committed, human rights violations, and all-around suffering. We don't want it anymore."

Now I wanted to start off with this quote because it lays the foundation for the issues, I will be getting into this talk today. Takazato had said this back in 1995 while she had been leading a protest against the US military bases and this protest had a turnout of about 85,000 people - this was the largest political rally Okinawa had ever seen - and I will be going into what this protest was about in a bit. But going back to this quote here, Takazato and these protestors are really bringing to light 1) the prominence of these issues - so the suffering, the human rights violations - and 2) the longevity of the US military base presence on the islands.

The year 1995 marked the 50th year anniversary since the end of World War II and the Battle of Okinawa - which was known for being one of the bloodiest land battles in the Pacific. Okinawans have suffered greatly from the war, and while I don't think statistics cannot paint the entire picture and horrors of war, I want to note that this battle had killed nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ of the *entire* Okinawan population who were caught in the crossfire between the US and Japan and

completely destroyed the island - *their home*. These deaths don't include the trauma from war, the Okinawans forced to take up arms with the Japanese imperial army, and the women forced to serve as comfort women - a euphemism by the JIA to describe what was sexual slavery.

The 50 years that Takazato was referring to was the suffering from the war and after. After World War II, Okinawa had become a US territory - a prize for winning and *this* was when US military base presence began.

The post-World War II conditions in Okinawa were not great, this was a time of extreme poverty, and hardships. Upon protest and resistance to US rule, Okinawa was reverted back to Japanese control in 1972 in hopes of base reduction/removal, but this was not the case.

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Currently, (point to map) this is the state of Okinawa. Despite making up less than 1% of Japan's total land mass, Okinawa hosts approximately 75% of all US bases in Japan. Again, what I am discussing today is *dual* colonization, this (point to map) is a depiction of the triangulated postcolonial condition of Okinawa sits in between Japan and the US military.

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At this point I am going to pivot slightly into what my research is focused on - so the latter half of my thesis: How was this dual colonization produced gendered and militarized violence.

The 1995 protest I started off with was in response to the gang rape of a 12-year-old Okinawan girl by 3 US military GIs. As I mentioned earlier this crime has sparked massive public outcry, reaching international news - and some of you may remember hearing about this.

What happened was on September 4th, 1995, in a small town called Kin - the host of the marine corps Camp Hansen - a twelve-year-old Okinawan girl was walking home from school,

stopping at a stationary store along the way. Upon leaving, she was ambushed by three American GIs who kidnapped her in a car they had rented for the Labor Day weekend. They forcibly grabbed her, threw her in the backseat, beat then raped her in an isolated sugarcane field. After the assault, they dumped the girl from the car - bleeding and unconscious - and threw her schoolbooks and their underwear in the trash. The girl managed to crawl to a nearby house to get help, and unlike many cases of rape and sexual assault, the victim and her family reported the case to the police (Pollack, 1996).

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Kendrick Ledet, Rodrico Harp, and Marcus Gill were all found guilty of rape (“Americans Charged”, 1995). Gill and Harp spent a mere seven years of imprisonment, while Ledet received just six and a half, all three men were released from prison in 2003. During the trial, when recounting their reasoning, Gill explained that the three didn’t have any money to pay for a sex worker, “Let’s go rape a girl,” he proposed. “It was just for fun.” (Elgeridge, 2020)

Exacerbating the pain and anger felt by the victim and the community, Admiral Richard Macke - the then commander of the U.S. military forces in the Pacific - commented to reporters, “What fools! ... For the price they (the U.S. Servicemen) paid to rent the car, they could have had a girl (i.e., prostitute).” (Schmitt, E. 1995).

This comment made by Macke is one that is echoed across many rape charges that occur in military camp towns - in these cases, rape is often rationalized by whether or not a payment was made hence the commodification of women’s and girl’s bodies and sexuality. This is especially prominent the greater the “economic gap existing between the country deploying military presence and the country receiving military presence” is.

What happened to the 12-year-old girl is never okay, and sadly it is not the only case of rape and violence committed against the local women and girls in Okinawa, it was one of many.

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The year 1995 marked the 50th year anniversary since the end of World War II, and it also marked 40 years almost to the exact date of the infamous Yumikochan rape and murder.

Yumikochan was a 6-year-old girl who had been raped and murdered by an American soldier stationed in Okinawa. This was during the time in which the US had occupied Okinawa post World War II, and again this was also a time where Okinawa had been facing extreme poverty, and racial & sexual violence. The Yumikochan rape and murder, and the 1995 rape case was by no means a marker for the start of end of violence perpetrated against Okinawan women and girls, these cases were but two in a long string of gendered and militarized violence.

In 2016, Okinawa had another massive anti-base protest, ignited by yet another rape and murder, this time it was 20-year-old Rina Shimabukuro. Around 8 pm Rina had just texted her boyfriend that she was going on a walk and left the apartment they shared, Rina never came home and the next morning she was reported missing by her boyfriend.

Rina was killed by Kenneth Franklin Gadson, an ex-marine, who was working as a civilian contractor on Kadena Airbase at that time. Tens of thousands of people rallied together to once again to protest the presence of the US military bases NO RAPE NO BASE signs read at these demonstrations.

More recently, and in my hometown of Chatan Rushane Joel McKoy - a U.S. civilian worker for the Army and Air Force Exchange Service had pleaded guilty in the fall of 2021 for 2 separate incidents just months apart, first for stealing a shoulder bag containing 7,000 yen (about \$62), and 2) for the attempted rape of a local woman.

McKoy ended up with a four-year prison sentence for attempted rape and theft convictions but what I want to note here is that in researching this case I found out that on a rape conviction could bring more than five years in prison with hard labor, according to the Japanese penal code. However, spokesman from Japan's Ministry of Justice noted that it is possible to receive less time for attempted rape. A theft charge on the other hand could bring up to 10 years in prison or about \$4,500 in fines.

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“No rape, no base” signs read at the protests following the case of Rina Shimabukuro.

Anti-base protestors continue to repeat this sentiment today as it shines light onto the connection between US base presence to sexual violence against the locals,

The disproportionate number of US military bases on Okinawa was an agreement made by both Japan and the US from the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty, in 1972 when Okinawa was reverted back to Japanese control the Japanese administration allowed the US bases to remain despite decades of public outcry. Since then, no major US military bases have been removed from Okinawa.

Now at this point many of you might be wondering what is being done to address these issues. When I first started learning about this, I wondered how could these issues go on for so long?

And so, I bring us back to some of the activism work that is being done in Okinawa. As I mentioned earlier the Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence is a key feminist non-governmental organization within the anti-base movement. Apart from leading protests, this organization also works to document the crimes committed by US personnel against Okinawan women. The booklet which was 6 pages when it was first published in 1996, is now 26 pages

long since the most recent publication in 2016 - a indicator of the history of the suffering women have endured as a sacrifice for Japan's security, and they continue to bear the burdens of hosting US military bases. But one of the challenges that come from trying to document sexual assault is the underreporting - this is why I mentioned earlier that statistics cannot paint the entire picture of the severity of the issue.

What I shared today in this rather brief presentation is only a snippet of the triangulated postcolonial conditions of Okinawa today, these conditions encompass the compromised safety of women and girls - as I talked about - land displacement, environmental issues and so on. But I want to be careful clump all of these issues together. Too often gendered violence gets swept under the rug or serves as the igniter for anti-base protests but then gets over shadowed by other issues. The link between the military and gendered violence cannot be overlooked in examining Okinawa's postcolonial reality, women's security should be included when talking about overall security of Okinawa. Thank you all for taking the time to listen to my presentation and now I'd like to spend this time answering any questions that you all might have.