

Testimony

Estelita Basnano Dy
Born in the Philippines, 1930



Estelita Basnano Dy at the 14th Asian Solidarity Conference for Resolution of the Issue of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan in Seoul, Korea

“I hope they [the people] can help us [victims of Japanese military sexual slavery] continue the fight even after we are all gone.”

In 1944, Estelita Basnano Dy and her mother were working at the Japanese airfield in the Philippine city of Bacolod when the U.S. military air-dropped flyers, announcing their encroaching arrival and asking people to stop working. With Japan losing the war and the U.S. military approaching, the Japanese soldiers put a concerted effort into capturing guerrillas. Later that same year, during their search for guerrillas, the Japanese soldiers spotted Estelita selling eggs and chickens in a market.

Along with other girls, Estelita was pushed into a truck and taken to a “comfort station” in Talisay. Estelita was fourteen when she was locked in a “comfort station” and repeatedly raped for three weeks. When she resisted, she was beaten.

At one point, they hit her head so hard that she lost consciousness for three days. During the daytime, Estelita washed the soldiers’ clothes and cleaned the station, labor for which she was never paid. At night, she was gang-raped by the soldiers.

The Japanese Imperial Armed Forces established and operated “comfort stations” in their occupied territories from the 1930s through the end of WWII in 1945. Hundreds of thousands of women and girls from across Asia were forced into Japanese military sexual slavery during these years.

Upon the news that the U.S. military was close to Talisay, the Japanese soldiers abandoned their military post, leaving Estelita and other captives free to escape.

“I never told my husband about what happened to me because I was ashamed of being raped ...”

She later married and had five children, but kept silent about her past trauma until she heard testimonies from other victims of Japanese military sexual slavery. In 1993, she gained courage to break her long-kept silence and joined the Task Force on Filipino Comfort Women (now Lila Pilipina).

“Even if all the comfort women pass away, we still have children. They’ll still be here to continue our fight for justice.”

Photo credit: Korean Council

Sources: Asian Boss. “Meet Estelita Dy: A Filipino Comfort Woman Survivor,” *YouTube* video, 4:12. Nov. 13, 2019. www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7FXmsLBqNI&t=54s

Korean Council, *A to Z Guide for Just Resolution of the Japanese Military “Comfort Women,”* South Korea, 2020, pp. 23–25.