



## KAN-WIN Statement on “Comfort Women” Advocacy

As advocates for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence, we at KAN-WIN are dedicated to “comfort women” advocacy. Our vision for a better world aligns with the spirit of the “comfort women” survivor-activists, who in demanding their own justice, cry for the justice that is due to anyone who has experienced sexual violence. To be part of this global movement is our declaration that KAN-WIN will not stand idle or tolerant to state-sanctioned rape and torture. As an agency comprised of immigrants and Asian Americans, the matter has never been about “where” or “when” sexual violence happens, but on *how* we can challenge the base conditions that permit this violence to be mundane and commonplace.

We believe that survivor leadership is imperative in cultivating a meaningful movement to eradicate gender-based violence, and we continually learn and gain inspiration from the “comfort women” survivor-activists. In leading the movement for redress, these women have bravely shared their experiences, spoken out against perpetrators and deniers, and advocated for themselves and other survivors of sexual violence.

Our work is grounded in a mission to eradicate gender-based violence everywhere and create the conditions necessary for a life free of oppression and harm. As such, we understand there is an unequivocal link between interpersonal violence and systems that enable, perpetuate, and hide harm. In other words, to tackle domestic and sexual violence as a separate or distinct occurrence from state violence would be shortsighted, if not imprudent to our pursuit of a better world. Violence left unaccounted only works to breed further violence. Denying acts of violence and oppression does not lead to their erasure but in fact, exacerbates experiences of trauma, making their impact not only life-long but intergenerational as well. Therefore, KAN-WIN is committing to an advocacy agenda composed of public education, art and curation, and civic engagement to resist the organized efforts to deny and erase the “comfort women” survivors’ stories.

We vow our work to be culturally competent. Our work then must reckon with the traumas and frictions that brought our communities together to the United States. Many of our clients and their families are frequently in contact with the state and/or endure traumas related to colonialism, war, militarism, division, migration, and acculturation. As we move through the world, our pain travels with us—we do not abandon our diasporic histories at the border nor do we have the privilege to look away from its scars. What we do have is the power to join the voices inviting us toward justice and healing. What we have is the obligation to make this history and movement known to our communities. Particularly as immigrants and Asian Americans, our



advocacy must rigorously make the connections between gender-based violence and the state, past and present, apparent. After all, making these connections would be to demand accountability from a harm-doing state. Thus, our commitment to “comfort women” advocacy parallels, frames, and informs our day-to-day client work—both are guided by consideration for each of our multifaceted narratives and leads with trauma-informed care.

At the same time, KAN-WIN approaches our “comfort women” advocacy from the angles of feminism and gender, not nationalism or partisanship. We join the survivors in their long movement to build a world free of violence and to assert that women’s rights are human rights. We work to help amplify the stories of survivors; we do not draw attention to their stories so that they can be co-opted, scrutinized, or questioned. We are unswayed in the importance of this distinction.

From its intergenerational dimension to profuse emotional toil and struggle for resolution, the “comfort women” movement epitomizes the journey of healing in all its complexities. Our aspiration is for our communities to learn from the survivor-activists, join their ongoing fight for justice, and strengthen our own work towards a world free of oppression and violence.