

‘Singers in the Band’
A screening and Symposium on Military Sex Trafficking
CSW 58 March 15, 2014

Network for Peace through Dialogue was a co-sponsor of a unique CSW58 side event: titled: “Singers in the Band”, a screening and symposium on US military sex trafficking.

“Singers in the Band” is a powerful documentary which exposes how three governments, the military of the United States, and “licensed” promoters collaborate to lure Filipina women into the slavery of human sex trafficking. This collaboration of governments and the military hold these women in bondage to be prostituted to US Military personnel in Korea. The documentary traces how military culture and training prepares soldiers for war and killing. This documentary elucidates the violence that the military are perpetrating on women in many different capacities. This documentary shows how the military culture, global sex trafficking, and prostitution are inextricably linked and creates massive marketing opportunities for traffickers.

The trafficking exposed in the documentary is a terrible scam. Lured by “licensed promoters” women in the Philippines are recruited as singers. They prepare, practice, buy clothes, incur debt, with the promise that they will be singing in social clubs in Korea. When they get to Korea, there are no social clubs, only brothels which are designated only for the USA military personnel.

The documentary was introduced by David Goodman, the producer-director. For a very long time he has had a commitment to the Philippines since he visited there in 1985 to research the effect of US bases on that country. Then participants viewed the documentary.

Responders to the film were carefully chosen. The first was a rabbi, assigned many years ago to Olongapo when the US Naval bases were still active there. While he knew that Filipina women were available for purchase for the sailors on leave, he was shocked to learn that some preferred Asian boys who were also available. He recognized the complicity of the navy in providing these opportunities for the US sailors for their rest and relaxation. He also made the link that now there are 26,000 service people who have

reported that they have been sexually violated by their own colleagues in the military.

Ann Wright, former career military and diplomat, the second responder indicated that the military taught to kill their enemy now extends to killing their own people. It is estimated that 1 in 3 women in the military have been sexually assaulted by male soldiers. 10% of those assaulted are males! The military violence is also felt at home. The district around Fort Benning has the highest domestic violence reports in the entire country.

The final responder was from the Network for Women Peacebuilders. She reminded the group that women bear the brunt of war. 80% of those currently killed in recent wars in this age are women and children. Yet women are not active in the peace making process or in the negotiating conversations toward peace. Only 7% of women are involved in serious negotiation toward the peace when the violence of war stops. UN Resolution 1325 calls for women to be included during planning for repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction ...all that needs to be done when the war finally stops.

Betty Reardon closed the session reminding us that the concept of war as a being a solution or a goal must be abolished. Abolition of war must become our goal. Focusing on the preparation, the allocation of resources toward war ends are the primary cause of all the evils presented in this symposium.

Kathleen Kanet
March 25, 2014

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