

**Open Letter in Support of Professor John Mark Ramseyer**  
**February 8, 2021**

To: Prof. Eric Helland, Prof. Jonathan Klick, and the *International Review of Law and Economics* Editorial Board

Dear *IRLE* Editors,

We, the undersigned, are historians of modern Japan and East Asia. We write in support of our colleague, the renowned Harvard Law School Professor John Mark Ramseyer. His essay in the March, 2021 issue of your journal is the latest target of American “cancel culture”. As with all of his other work on modern Japanese history, law, and political economy, however, Ramseyer’s “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War” is an eminently scholarly effort rooted in a remarkable breadth of source material—a great achievement deserving of praise, not censure.

Prof. Ramseyer has native fluency in Japanese, which sets him apart from those now attacking him. He is also a legal specialist as well as an historian, giving him added insights into the legal history of Japan. Ramseyer’s linguistic and analytical talents enable him to range freely in Japanese-language and other archives. Because of Prof. Ramseyer’s rigorous adherence to scholarly discipline and his facility with Japanese sources, his findings are highly persuasive to others who share his firsthand grasp of source documents and the broader context of modern East Asian history, as seen from the inside and not from the point of view of distant countries.

The diplomatic history of Japan and the Republic of Korea also confirms the substance of “Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War”. The South Korean and Japanese governments have discussed the wartime and colonial period and its aftermath at great length and have arrived at very carefully worded statements, including a key 2015 agreement on the comfort women issue, which take into full account the historical realities between the two countries. Prof. Ramseyer’s essay is therefore well within the academic and diplomatic mainstream, and is bolstered by the work of other scholars and researchers in Japan and South Korea, as well as in the United States.

But in history as in diplomatic relations, there is never any finality. We are always in search of a better understanding of the past and of the Other. So, instead of “cancelling” the work of a gifted and conscientious scholar, we encourage our peers to engage with Prof. Ramseyer’s scholarship and so to establish ever more firmly the foundation of historical truth. Our calling is never to suppress, but always to explore, in fruitful dialogue with others similarly in pursuit of knowledge. This calling knows no national boundaries, and is beholden only to shared and sincere endeavor. We are therefore grateful to the *International Review of Law and Economics* for its commitment to academic freedom, even—especially—on subjects as contentious as the comfort women. We support you, and Prof. John Mark Ramseyer, in your scholarly integrity.

Signed:

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| 1. EZAKI Michio     | Vice-President, Historical Awareness Research Council |
| 2. KATSUOKA Kanji   | Lecturer, Meisei University                           |
| 3. Jason MORGAN     | Associate Professor, Reitaku University               |
| 4. NISHIOKA Tsutomu | Professor, Reitaku University                         |
| 5. SHIMADA Yōichi   | Professor, Fukui Prefectural University               |
| 6. TAKAHASHI Shirō  | Professor, Reitaku University                         |