

# 'But You Guys Wanted Us Here'

*A film tackles the U.S. occupation of Japan*

BY MOÉ YONAMINE

ANPO: Art X War

By Linda Hoaglund

New Day Films.

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[newday.com/films/anpoartxwar.html](http://newday.com/films/anpoartxwar.html)

**"N**o more bases! Out of Okinawa!" I shouted along with the other protesters. In 1999, when I joined this march, I was visiting family in my birthplace, Okinawa—although I've lived in the United States since I was 7. We were marching along Route 58 in opposition to the longtime American military presence in Japan, and especially in Okinawa. The demonstration ended, as it always does, with thousands of locals linking arms to form a human chain around the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Ginowan City—singing songs of resistance and calling for peace, an end to war.

Barbed wire fences lined the right side of Route 58 as far as I could see, drawing the base boundary. On the left side, houses and small stores sat close to the busy road—remnants of the bulldozing of the residential area when the bases were created years ago. A grandmother in her 90s came out of her house, walking carefully. She stood with her hands folded gently in front of her, and bowed repeatedly as we marched. I felt my heart squeeze. My friend and I veered away from the group and walked over to her, wanting her to stop bowing and yet not knowing what to say. She grabbed our hands and squeezed tightly. "*Ganbarinasaiyo,*"

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YAMAZAKI YUTAKA

**Nakamura Hiroshi in front of his painting *The Base* (1957) at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo**

she said. (Don't give up. Keep going.) She let go of our hands and smiled, then began to bow again to the marchers passing by. We bowed back to her and returned to the march. She continued to bow to row after row of marchers until we couldn't see her anymore.

Later that day, I shared this story with another friend of mine, a U.S. marine stationed in Okinawa. Fresh out of high school from Atlanta, he had joined the Marine Corps with hopes that it would help him out of poverty and into college. He was surprised at my marching with the protesters. "But you guys wanted us here. We're here to protect you," he said, unaware of both Japanese history and its domination of Okinawa.

He wasn't alone. I remember statements like his from classmates and teachers: "We won." "You lost." U.S. history class was the worst: "You guys dropped the bomb." And this continued all the way through college. We didn't want the war, I'd want to scream. We were hurt, too, and still are! Where is the history about the many people in Japan who opposed war? Where are the stories of those who opposed all the bombings—Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki?

And where is the history of Okinawa?

The reality is that Okinawa has had a complex relationship with Japan for centuries. Okinawa is the name of the Ryukyus, a chain of islands running far south of the main islands of Japan, which did not officially become part of Japan until the late 1800s. The Okinawan language and culture differ greatly from those of the Japanese, and the ancestry of the people spans the Pacific and Southeast Asia. Since the end of World War II, there has even been an Okinawan/Ryukyuan movement for independence.

Linda Hoaglund's documentary *ANPO: Art X War* highlights Japanese and Okinawan artists—and their powerful, provocative paintings, photos, anime, and films to show the ongoing resistance in Japan (including Okinawa) to the U.S. military presence since 1945. The film focuses on the remarkable Japanese protests of 1960, when masses of people unified against ANPO, the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty. ANPO, which was passed secretly, allowed U.S. bases and even nuclear weapons to be located in Japan in exchange for U.S. protection. The U.S. occupation continued until 1951





**Above: *Sunagawa #5* (1955) by Nakamura Hiroshi, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo.**

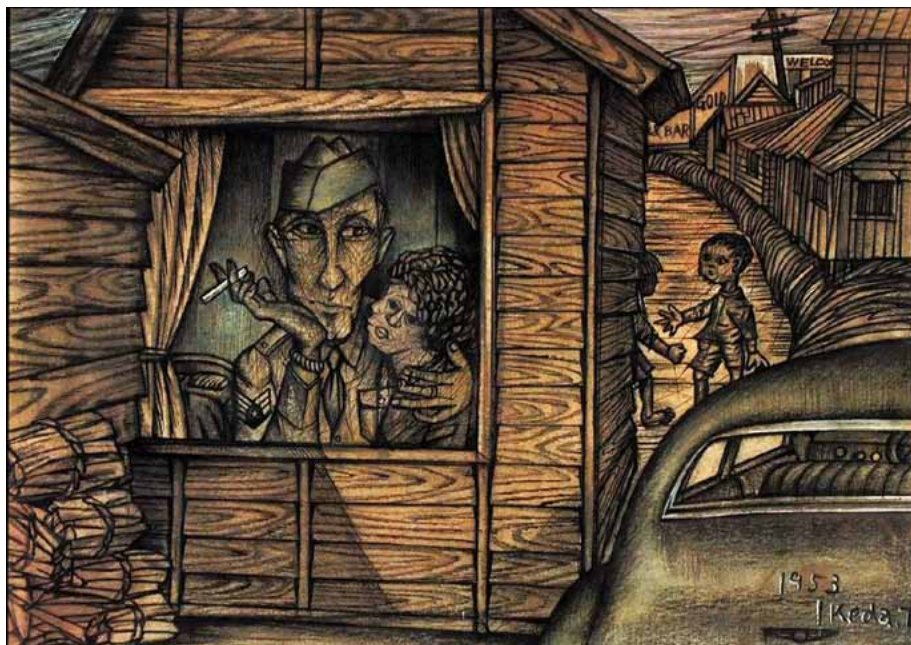
**Below: *American Soldier, Child, Barracks* (1953) by Ikeda Tatsuo, Itabashi Art Museum, Tokyo.**

for most of Japan; in Okinawa it continued until 1972. Unfortunately, the end of the occupation has not meant the end of U.S. military presence. Today, there are 90 U.S. military bases and 40,000 U.S. soldiers in Japan.

Hoaglund, a filmmaker raised in Japan by American missionary parents, has a unique perspective on this occupation, its many negative effects on the people of Japan and Okinawa, and the nonviolent resistance movement that has endured for half a century in opposition to it. She introduces us to painters, photographers, journalists, and theater directors—all of whom have fought for peace through their art.

For example, journalist Hando Kazutoshi, who survived the war, shares the impact of World War II on the Japanese people: “To be honest, I didn’t like America. The way they attacked and burned the working-class area was actually an atrocity. But it’s also true when our house burned down and I stood on the ruins, I asked myself, ‘Why did Japan wage this stupid war?’”

We meet photographer Shomei Tomatsu, who set out to take pictures of survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: “No matter where I go, I carry



the shadow of war. The world knew about the might of the nuclear bombs but very few knew about the enduring damage.”

Photographer Ishiuchi Miyako captures images of Japanese women used as “comfort women” through a program, called Recreation and Amusement Association, created by the Japanese government to serve U.S. soldiers after the

war. Women were lured or forced into years of sexual servitude, often with the false promise of working in factories or restaurants. Ishiuchi takes us through Yokosuka’s backstreets, in an area outside of a U.S. military base, where the walkway is still lit with provocative neon signs in English. “Historically, the country that wins a war can do whatever it wants to the women and children



of the country that lost. The Japanese military did it, too . . . against the Chinese and also in Korea.”

This is all too familiar for the people of Okinawa. In 1995, the world watched as public outrage ignited over the gang rape of a 12-year-old girl by U.S. soldiers. The massive protests in Okinawa were not due to this single rape alone. Generations of Okinawans are aware of the hundreds of reported cases of violence toward women and children committed by U.S. military personnel. Many U.S. military troops deploy to war from bases in Okinawa and Japan. As Okinawan activist Ashitomi Hiroshi explains in the film, when soldiers come back from war in Iraq or Afghanistan, “typically they drink until curfew. They wind up committing crimes when they’re drunk. They commit rapes and robberies.” A longtime advocate for the rights of women and children in Okinawa, author Takazato Suzuyo refers to the fences along Route 58: “These fences guarantee complete safety, day and night, for the American soldiers and their families. But these fences guarantee no safety at all for the women and children of Okinawa.”

Okinawan photographer Ishikawa Mao asks: “Why are there still so many U.S. bases on Okinawa?” In her photo series *Fences, Okinawa*, Ishikawa sees the young soldiers on the island through a humane lens. “I’ll often say hello to soldiers in the bar district and ask them to let me photograph them,” she says. On one encounter, she met a young man with a tattoo of his grandmother on his back. She asked if she could see it. She recounts through tears: “He feels his beloved grandmother protecting him. He feels like he’s with his family. When I saw that, it made me so sad. Only yesterday he was just a high school kid messing around. Suddenly, he’s a stone-cold killer. But he’ll also be killed. America puts that whole burden on this young man. I have nothing against the soldiers. But I hate the U.S. military. They’ve done so many bad things. I hate the Japa-



HAMAYA HIROSHI (personal archive)

***Days of Rage and Grief* (1960). Protesters face off against Japanese riot police during demonstrations against ANPO.**

nese even more who let them. And I hate us, who let them, even worse than that.”

Although the current struggles in Okinawa are mentioned, this thought-provoking film fails to emphasize an important point: The burden of ANPO and the U.S. military presence in Japan is not equal. Okinawa, whose island chain comprises less than 1 percent of Japan’s landmass, houses 74 percent of Japan’s U.S. military bases. But no one asked the Okinawans about this presence. Violence against women and children, disregard for the rights of thousands of landowners on whose property the bases were built, and environmental destruction from military training are everyday concerns for the people of Okinawa. Generations of Okinawans have assembled peaceful protests demanding the end of what has been widely felt is discrimination against the island people. Prior to his 2009 election, Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama promised to move the Futenma base off the island. Just months later, stating that he could not find an alternative site, he recommitted Japan to maintaining the U.S. military bases in Okinawa, reigniting generations of frustration.

Meanwhile, many of the young men and women stationed in Okinawa know little about the history or the

local sentiments against ANPO and what it symbolizes. My Marine Corps friend believed he was in Okinawa to help the people. He carried with him the ignorance acquired from a lifetime of schooling in the United States. These are pieces of people’s history that have not been told.

Here in the United States, I have met sympathetic people both from both Japan and the United States who say that the best solution is to remove the bases from Okinawa. Many, though, suggest moving the bases to Guam. Every time I hear this, I am reminded of the many Okinawan elders who have said to me that they will not support the same burden being shifted to another indigenous island people. They know firsthand the violence against humanity and the destruction of land and sea that prevails from the evils of war and years of military presence.

Continuing to maintain the U.S. military presence in Japan is a costly choice for both nations. The larger question of “Why war?” is one that is being raised currently all over Japan. *ANPO: Art X War* encourages us to raise critical questions, questions that I hope teachers have the courage to raise with their students—before these young people travel to another country as soldiers and say, “But I thought you guys wanted us here.” ■

# Teaching Ideas for ‘ANPO: Art X War’

Here are some activities that teachers could use with high school students in conjunction with the film *ANPO: Art X War*. All supplemental materials are available at the Zinn Education Project website: [zinnedproject.org/posts/16800](http://zinnedproject.org/posts/16800).

## Gallery Walk

Before they view the film, post photos and artwork from the film in stations around the classroom. Have students talk together in small groups at the stations and answer the following questions: Where do you think this is? What is happening? What do you think the photographer/artist is trying to express? What clues in the photo/artwork lead you to that conclusion?

## Mixer

Before they view the film, provide each student with background information on one of the six main photographers and artists. Have students read their roles, underline the key parts, and then, on the other side of the role sheet, write down three important pieces of information about their role. This will encourage them to speak freely in character. Ask students to walk around the classroom, meeting the five other individuals one-on-one to find out: Who is this character? Where are they from? What are they concerned or angry about? Have students come back together as a class for a group discussion. Ask: What surprised you or struck you as important? What similarities did you notice in the characters you met? What differences emerged?

## Visual Organizer

Have students take notes using a visual organizer while watching the film. Ask them to pay attention to the six main photographers and artists. What was each photographer/artist’s main point? How did they express their sentiments through their artwork? What questions do you have for that artist? What themes recur throughout the images in the film?

## Interior Monologue

After viewing the film, ask students to choose someone or something from the documentary and write from that voice. Some questions to consider: What did you see? What did you experience? How did it feel to you at that moment in time? What is your message today as you reflect on the past and present? What do you want people to know? Some possible points from which to write include: the man yelling at the Japanese riot police in the photo by Hamaya Hiroshi, the woman with the U.S. soldier or the cigarette in the soldier’s mouth in the painting by Ikeda Tatsuo, the farmers confronting the riot police or the fence around the farmland in the painting by Inoue Chozaburo, or a villager or the photographer in



URESHINO KYOKO

“A Little Girl Killed by a U.S. Military Truck,”  
from *One Million Screams* (1968).

the photo “A Little Girl Killed by a U.S. Military Truck” by Ureshino Kyoko.

## Talk Back

Have the students look at a collection of quotes from the film. Ask them to pick three to five quotes that stand out and “talk back” to those quotes in their own voice. Ask: What is your response? What do you want to ask? What do you agree or disagree with? What part of the quote resonates with your own life? What does the quote remind you of?

## Textbook Critique

As a class, analyze your history textbook. What part of the history included in *ANPO: Art X War* can you find in the text? What is left out? How do you account for these omissions? Based on what you learned in *ANPO: Art X War*, if you were the author of this text, what additional information would you include? What might you change?

## Trial

Ask students to look at Ureshino’s “A Little Girl Killed by a U.S. Military Truck.” Hold a trial around the question “Who is responsible for the death of this child, Nariko Tsugayama?” Possible “defendant” groups for the trial: U.S. soldiers standing over Nariko; local Okinawan politicians observing the scene; people or groups who are not in the scene—for example, U.S. politicians and military leaders who stationed U.S. troops on Okinawa, the ideology of militarism, and the international public that has allowed the continuing occupation of Okinawa.

—M.Y.