

Ks Police

2/28/01 (Wed.)
Los Angeles Times

s after the City Council ac-
his plan. "I have a respon-
under the law to see that
person's civil rights are pro-
"

ny in Riverside believe that
ty has taken substantive
s on its own to rid its Police
tment of bad cops and race
nce Miller's death.

I some residents and city of-
believe that Lockyer's
is the beginning of a dan-
s trend: interfering with lo-
overnment. Many officials
said they were tempted to
Lockyer's plan to the point
they have openly discussed
mes of attorneys they could

the attorney general in-
that he would take the case
rt and win, and the City
it voted to adopt the plan.

Councilwoman Terri
pson said before voting for
an: "I'm going to fold."
eed, many city officials said
wasn't much choice.

hat we heard today was a
pride," said Leach, who was
five months ago as part of
ty's independent campaign
rove the Police Department
s relationship with minority
unities.

um absolutely positive that
uld have filed a lawsuit.
was no choice, really."

Even most of the City Council
members who voted to adopt the
plan were skeptical of the notion
that Lockyer's proposal was a
"partnership"—a "partnership,"
said Councilman Chuck Beaty, "in
which trust is hardly a considera-
tion."

"We've been presented a deal
that we can't afford to refuse,"
Beaty said.

Councilman Ed Adkinson dis-
agreed and was the only one to
vote against accepting Lockyer's
plan. He said the city has spent
more time and money defending a
city ordinance that restricts the
operating hours of a local pool
hall.

"It's been gnawing at me," he
said. "I don't think [Lockyer] has
the right to require a higher
standard for Riverside than in
other cities. That right lies with
the people of this city. The leader-
ship of the city belongs to the peo-
ple of Riverside, and not to the at-
torney general."

That has changed—at least as
far as reforming the Police De-
partment goes.

The reform package will cost
the city about \$785,000 this year,
and \$275,000 each year after that.
The Police Department has an an-
nual budget of about \$50 million.

Korean War Workers Sue 2 Japanese Firms

■ **Law: Using a 1999 statute, elderly men in South Korea and the U.S. join to seek reparations from Mitsubishi and Mitsui for forced labor.**

By K. CONNIE KANG
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Nearly 60 years after they were
forcibly taken to Japan to work,
they say, as slave laborers, eight
elderly Korean men in the United
States and South Korea have
teamed up to file lawsuits in Los
Angeles against two giant Japanese
companies, Mitsubishi and Mitsui.

In their Superior Court com-
plaints Tuesday, the plaintiffs
charged that they were abducted
from their homes and taken to Japan
to do slave labor for the two con-
glomerates during World War II.

Attorneys for the men are asking
the court to certify the cases as
class action, which would enable
others to join the litigation. They
are seeking reparations for lost
wages, compensation for pain and
suffering and punitive damages.

The plaintiffs' lawyers brought
the suits under a 1999 California
law that permits former con-
scripted workers to lodge claims
against Japanese companies with
subsidiaries in the United States.

Representatives of Mitsubishi
and Mitsui in California and New
York were not immediately avail-
able for comment Tuesday.

With President Theodore Roose-
velt's blessing, Japan gained con-
trol of Korea in 1905, then annexed
it five years later. For the next 35
years, it ruled the Korean penin-
sula with a brutal hand.

Hundreds of thousands of young
Korean men were conscripted to
work in mines and munitions facto-
ries in Japan and Manchuria and on
the Sakhalin Islands to help build
Japan's war machine.

Japan's agents also forced an es-
timated 100,000 young Korean
women—called "comfort
women"—to work as sex slaves for
Japanese soldiers. Some of those
women have taken their cases to
courts in the United States and
Asia, where they are pending.

"I still grind my teeth when I look
back at those years," said Oh-Hun
Kwon, 81, one of the eight named
plaintiffs. Kwon, now a Los Angeles
resident, said he was abducted from

his home in Seoul in March 1944,
and spent the war years working for
Mitsubishi Shipbuilding in Yoko-
hama, Japan, alongside American
and British prisoners of war.

The Koreans say they worked 12
hours a day without pay and slept
on wood floors in unheated bar-
racks. After Japan's defeat, they
returned to Korea.

"I hope I can see Japan brought
to justice before I die," said
Syeong-Kyoon Ahn, 78, a Korea-
town resident and another named
plaintiff.

His work at Mitsui Shipping in
Okayama was so grueling that he
developed a hernia, he said. In May
1945, he received seven telegrams
from his family, telling him that his
mother was gravely ill.

"Even then, my supervisors
would not give me a week off to go
home to see my mother," he said.

Numerous efforts by victims to
hold the Japanese government ac-
countable have been mostly unsuc-
cessful.

In addition to having the benefit
of the 1999 California law, the
plaintiffs are optimistic because
they have a strong legal team rep-
resenting them.

Members include lawyers who
successfully represented Holocaust
survivors against businesses across
Europe.

"World War II began for Ameri-
cans in 1942, but for the Koreans,
the atrocities [go] back to 1929,"
said Century City attorney Barry
A. Fisher, a lead lawyer in both
cases. The suit covers Koreans who
worked for Japan from 1929 to
1945.

Fisher said this case was the first
joint legal action by conscripted
workers in both Korea and the
United States.

The timing of the suit's filing
coincides with the anniversary of a
significant event in Korean history,
Fisher said. On March 1, 1919, Ko-
reans rose up in massive demon-
strations against Japanese rule.
More than 7,600 unarmed Koreans
were killed and 45,562 civilians
were injured in the protests.

ant Vendors' Dreams



KEN LUBAS / Los Angeles Times

lancers and a band march down Figueroa Street to celebrate the
ng of a market in a former warehouse near Exposition Park.

in construction. But the cou-
ver gave up hope of someday
ing their own business again.
ree weeks ago, Flores and her

Already, the *mercado* is home to
such groups as the Assn. of Com-
munity Organizations for Reform
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