Critically Examining “World Uchinanchu” Discourse:
Identity Consciousness among Overseas Okinawan Immigrants and
Their Descendants

Wesley Ueunten

Transcribed and Compiled by
Yoko Tsukuda
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WESLEY UEUN TEN (Transcribed and Compiled by Yoko Tsukuda)
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Introduction

This Working Paper consists of a full script of the lecture “Critically Examining ‘World Uchinanchu’ Discourse” (世界のウチナーチュ言説の批判的検証) by Professor Wesley Ueunten of San Francisco State University. The lecture was held at Seijo University on November 14, 2014, by the sponsorship of Center for Glocal Studies of Seijo University. This paper also includes his reflections on the lecture. There is also a reproduction of the website of the San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai in English and Japanese as an appendix, courtesy of the San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai, which Prof. Ueunten serves as president. I thank the San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai for kindly giving us permission to reproduce the website and newsletter.

The “World Uchinanchu” discourse as Prof. Ueunten calls it, has grown out of the global movement of Okinawan descendants overseas gaining ethnic pride as Uchinanchu. For example, it is represented well in the Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival, in which Uchinanchu all over the world from Hawai‘i to Brazil “return” to Okinawa every five years to celebrate their cultural legacy and acknowledge their diasporic identity. Okinawa as a “local” place becomes global through this movement by those emigrants and their descendants. As a participant and observer of this movement, Ueunten pointed out there is something missing in this discourse—the oppression and exploitation Okinawan people suffered in the past and the political struggles of the present.

Prof. Ueunten was a third-generation Okinawan-American who was born and grew up in Hawai‘i. He lived in mainland Japan and Okinawa for several years each as a student or a researcher, and he has studied and taught in the San Francisco Bay Area. His ethnic background and overseas experience made him familiar with Okinawa and Japan both culturally and linguistically. Naturally, his lecture and the following discussion turned out very unique in several points. Firstly, it was multilingual. Although his lecture was mainly held in English, it occasionally became “chanpon,” mixed with Japanese and the Okinawan dialect called Uchina-guchi. During the following discussion, the audience was allowed to speak to him in Japanese, and he answered in Japanese. The script of his lecture reflects the exact words of each speaker whether they are English, Japanese, or Uchina-guchi as much as possible, with brief translation. I would like to thank Nozomi Hatakeyama, who carefully transcribed the lecture and translated the discussion held in Japanese.

In addition, Prof. Ueunten showed his talent as a musician by singing Okinawan songs with sanshin (so-called Okinawan shamisen) during the lecture. This script includes lyrics of the songs, but unfortunately cannot deliver the beautiful sounds of sanshin and his singing to readers. While he entertained the audience, his singing revealed the “heart” of Uchinanchu he had discussed in his lecture.

His lecture includes his personal journey to search for ethnic roots, stretching from going to Okinawa as a student, learning sanshin in Kawasaki, to involvement in the San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai and the anti-base movement. While he has stayed in academics, he has been very active in Okinawan/Japanese American community and politics. The way he connects his life history to a larger political and historical framework is traditional in Ethnic Studies, an interdisciplinary field established in the late 1960s out of the demands of racial minority students who desired to study their own history and culture, which had been neglected in Eurocentric, white-dominant curricula. Prof. Ueunten belongs to the generation who enjoyed multicultural curricula after the birth of Ethnic Studies, but he found out it is not always easy to work with a community and be politically active simultaneously. As he said in his lecture, “I feel like I’m always dancing, trying to do
both.” His discussion does not only offer an example of how local immigrant communities create and maintain a global network under a diasporic identity such as “World Uchinanchu,” but also forces us to question how academics can serve the communities and the politics of the time they live in.

November 6, 2015

Yoko TSUKUDA
Seijo University
Part 1

Critically Examining “World Uchinanchu” Discourse

1. Critically Examining “World Uchinanchu” Discourse
2. PowerPoint Slides
3. Reflections on My Presentation at Seijo University
Critically Examining “World Uchinanchu” Discourse

Y. Tsukuda (Moderator): OK. Let’s start. Good evening everyone. Thank you for coming to this seminar this Friday night. My name is Yoko Tsukuda. I’m teaching at the Faculty of Law at Seijo University. I’m really glad to have Prof. Wesley Ueunten as tonight’s speaker.

I’ll briefly introduce him. Prof. Ueunten is teaching at the Department of Asian American Studies, College of Ethnic Studies, San Francisco State University, and he is currently a visiting professor of Department of Global Studies, Doshisha University, Kyoto. When I heard he would be in Kyoto, I invited him to Seijo University.

He received his bachelor’s degree in Ethnic Studies from the University of Hawai‘i and Master of Arts in Sociology from the University of Hawai‘i. He received his doctoral degree in Ethnic Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. His research interest is Okinawa and transnational Okinawan Americans. As his name, Ueunten, shows, he was born in Hawai‘i and he is the third generation Okinawan American.

Let me introduce just a little bit about his publications. He has published many articles in Japanese and English. His recent publications include "Okinawan Poems and Songs in the Diaspora." This is an article in a book, "Okinawa: Human Migration, Literature, and Diaspora," which was published in 2012. Another article, "Reflections on the State of Okinawan Performing Arts in the United States" is included in a book, "Ryukyuan/Okinawan Performing Arts: Research for Passing It Down the Generations and Introducing It to the World," which was published in 2012.

He is also very active in the community in San Francisco. I met him when I was a graduate student of the Ethnic Studies program at San Francisco State University. At that time, he was also a graduate student at UC Berkeley. Actually he was my sanshin teacher in Berkeley. I learned sanshin, a kind of Okinawan shamisen. He is still teaching Okinawa shamisen and he brought his sanshin tonight, so I’m looking forward to listening to his lecture and his music. Actually, he is fluent in Japanese, too. He even asked me if he should do his lecture in Japanese, but his lecture will be in English. But the following Q and A session will be bilingual. You can ask questions in Japanese or English. So, can you start the presentation? The title of his lecture is “Critically Examining ‘World Uchinanchu’ Discourse.”
1. Critically Examining “World Uchinanchu” Discourse

Wesley Ueunten  
(San Francisco State University)

Ueunten: Thank you, Yoko [Tsukuda] and thank you for coming here on a Friday night. I know you were busy or it’s the end of a long week, so I’m very honored and it’s a pleasure to be here. I’m bit nervous because [there are] people I know from the past…I feel like I have to do a good job, but I think what will help is that you to realize that I grew up in Kauai. Kauai is very inaka… a very rural place. One thing we like to do is to tell stories…tell stories…I don’t know how to say it in Japanese…in Okinawan it’s called yuntaku, but how to explain it in Japanese?

Audience 1: We just say it oshaberi.

Ueunten: OK, oshaberi…so anytime, just ask me questions or make a comment because what I’m talking about is what not too many other people are talking about. I’m not sure if people understand what I’m talking about or I’m not sure if I’m not crazy or something. But I’m talking about critically examining the world Uchinanchu discourse, so it’s little bit controversial or different. So please feel free to ask questions or make comments. Maybe to start off, I’ll show you YouTube videos. Just to give you an idea of what I’m talking about—Okinawa world Uchinanchu discourse…some expressions of it...

<Showing YouTube clips from the Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival>
● “Naha Daiko/Chinagu Eisa Hawai’i Concert—‘Kagiyadefu’ and ‘Shinkanucha,’” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crh7lwIAqi0 (Okinawan music)  
● “Taiko Requios (Festival Internacional de Dança e Música) - 2ª parte,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp5FDWSiXLI (Okinawan music with Spanish and Japanese comments)  

Ueunten: I just wanted to give you a taste of or example of what I’m talking about. This “world Uchinanchu discourse”…I really don’t like using the post-modern or Cultural Studies term, “discourse”, but I don’t know what else to use. This “world Uchinanchu”…is the discussion of what is “Uchinanchu” throughout the world…I’ve been part of this movement…actually I’m a participant…so I’m looking as a participant, but also I’m somewhat of a scholar because I’m in a university. So, sometimes I feel torn apart. I want to be part of it, but at the same
time, I need to be critical of it. So that’s the context of what I’m talking about.

**Okinawan Identity Movement in Hawai’i in the 1980s**

And also not only the context of my positionality, but the context of time...because as I was growing up in Hawai’i...so you know well in Hawai’i, up to the 1970s and 80s, if you ask any Okinawan Nisei and Sansei, “what are you?” Most, maybe nine out of ten, would say, “Oh, I’m Japanese,” or “I’m American,” or “I’m local.” So, that was up to the 80s.

And in the 80s, things changed in Hawai’i. In Hawai’i, there was this kind of Okinawan identity movement. People started saying “I’m Uchinanchu” right around the 1980, 81, and 82. That had a lot to do with what was happening in the rest of the US... the civil rights, black power movement. On the West coast, there was the Third World Liberation Front, Asian American Movement, Yellow Power. So, that kind jumped to Hawai’i, where Japanese Americans and Okinawan Americans were beginning to say, “I’m Japanese” or “I’m Okinawan” or “I’m local.” So, that’s what I witnessed as I was growing up.

So, around 1984, I went to Okinawa as a scholarship student. In Okinawa, there was *kenpi-ryugaku* (県費留学)...“Okinawa shison imin kenpi ryugaku” (沖縄子孫移民県費留学) or something like that. There’s still a prefectoral scholarship for overseas Okinawans to study in Okinawa. Back then, it was at Ryukyu Daigaku [University of the Ryukyus], but now you can study also at Geidai [Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts]. So I went on this scholarship and I remember that I met other Okinawans in the group. There were eight of us...one from Hawai’i, me, one from the US mainland, one from Peru, one from Argentina, one from Canada, and two from Brazil.

And it was really interesting because I was from Hawai’i, full of this Okinawan pride, “I’m Uchinanchu, I’m Uchinanchu.” And my senpai (先輩), the person from Hawai’i who came the year before, he learned Okinawan dance. Before that, all of the people from Hawai’i either learned Okinawan dance or sanshin. I learned sanshin. We’re so proud to be Okinawan... “I’m Uchinanchu.” But at that time, in the mid-80s, the other Okinawans from Brazil, Peru, and Argentina, they really downplayed their Okinawan-ness. They preferred to say “I’m Nipponjin.”

At that time, this world Okinawan discourse hadn’t developed much outside of Hawai’i or parts of Okinawa. That’s what I have been seeing over the years. Back then, Hawai’i was the center of this diaspora identity, but now it’s changed. I think now Peru, Brazil, and Argentina, they seem to have a lot of more people doing sanshin and dance. And for interesting reasons, I think a lot of this has to do with dekasegi phenomenon...a lot of nisei and sansei came [from South America] to Japan and Okinawa. So there is this transnational movement back and forth. So, I’m looking at that. Also, there was a boom, the ethnic or Okinawa boom from maybe the late 80s.

So, right in 1989, I got my Master’s in Sociology at the University of Hawai’i and I came on the Monbusho (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) scholarship to study here at Okinawa Bunka Kenkyujo (Institute for Okinawan Studies) or Hosei Daigaku (Hosei University). So, I came here and my research topic was comparison of Okinawan identity in Hawai’i and Okinawan identity here...*hondoniokeru* (本土における)...like on the Japanese mainland.

**The Okinawan Boom in Japan in the 1990s**

So, in 1989, I came here and at that time, I was learning sanshin in Kawasaki. A lot of Okinawans
there would hide their identity. They wouldn’t say they were Okinawan. A lot of people there have to change their names and they distanced themselves from Okinawa back in 1989. But, around the 1990s, it switched again. I remember that there was an album produced by Sakamoto Ryuichi and he used Okinawan music. And then, little by little, you hear Southern All Stars, Rinken Band, Ne-ne-zu, and this kind of Okinawa boom happening. So all of those things I witnessed in my involvement in this Okinawan diaspora movement.

Anyway, this is a picture from 2011 Uchinanchu Taikai. So, it’s so contrasting….when I was young, people were hiding their identity. Even when I went to Kawasaki, Tsurumi in 1989, people were hiding their Okinawan identity. But, now it switched around. So I started learning sanshin in Kawasaki in 1989. In the beginning, there were only about four or five people learning sanshin from my sensei. They all spoke in Uchinaguchi, Okinawan [dialect]. But, two years later, with this Okinawa boom, we had like twenty people, most of them were not Okinawans, wanted to learn sanshin. So, it changed. Everything became done in Japanese. This Okinawa boom really took off…it was the so called ryukyunokaze (The Wind of Ryukyu).

**Sekai no Uchinanchu Taikai**

So, I’m very proud to be part of this movement because it’s good to have a vibrant identity, but at the same time, when I went to the Sekai no Uchinanchu Taikai, the first time in 2001, then I went in 2011, I noticed some certain themes at the taikai. Especially in 2001, there was a theme of “Bankoku no Shinryō” (万国の津梁) —bridge to all nations, the internationalism. So, Okinawa was seen as the focal point of Japan’s internationalism. That was a large part of the taikai theme.

Another one was the immigrants’ stories. I was talking with Tsukuda-sensei about the immigrants, how to define immigrants. For me it’s very interesting [to ask], “What is an immigrant?” “How do you define an immigrant?” In the case of world Uchinanchu discourse, the immigrants—imin (移民) that word pertained largely to adventurous young men…they go to Hawai’i or South America or the mainland US. And that’s before WWII, senzen. Usually in the stories, women come later and women sort of support them. So, it’s kind of an androcentric or male-centered narrative. And it’s usually stories about upper mobility success overseas in the strange land. It’s a good story, so I’m proud of it because more or less my family followed that. So it’s something to be proud of.

**Missing Stories in Sekai no Uchinanchu Taikai**

But then, there’s something missing and it kind of bothered me at that time. The reason that bothered me was because right now I live in the Bay Area near San Francisco and our kenjinkai (prefectural association) is 80-90 percent women who are in their 60s, 70s, 80s, or more like 70s, 80s, 90s. Most of them are married to American servicemen, people who were in Okinawa at the military or with the civil service…they worked for the military. So I know there’s the world Uchinanchu taikai in 2001 and even the last time in 2011, it’s like iminjanai mitai (do not look like immigrants)…they’re not kind of excluded from the story. And I’m from Hawai’i, and I see Hawai’i-Okinawans. They’re really Uchinanchu…they had big parade.

Back in 2011, what was really interesting is if you count all the number of kenjinkai that were in the parade—one each had a banner—maybe about half or more were kenjinkai from places like Atlanta, Chicago, Washington State, maybe about at least 20-30…I have
to look it up. But a large proportion of kenjinkai were represented in the sekai no Uchinanchu taikai parade. Members of those keijinkai were predominately women married to American servicemen who lived on the US mainland, but their stories seemed to be subsumed in the larger other narrative. That’s why I started thinking I’m medachitagariya (attention seeker) or I want chiyahoyasarerunogasuki (to get attention), but in our kenjinkai no one paid attention to the San Francisco Okinawa kenjinkai. There was one member of our kenjinkai—Kohama-san, who was 97 years old. When the news focused on the parade, it was only on him. The women married to American servicemen were out of this picture. So not that I’m feminist or gender scholar, but I noticed that there’s clearly a lack of class and gender analysis. The stories of Okinawan immigrant women were there, but then they’re subsumed in the larger male narrative.

And then post-war immigrants were kept, especially war brides or GI brides, also Okinawans who went to South America during the years of occupation of Okinawa. So, things like stories of colonial Okinawans in Bolivia…Kozy Amemiya writes that the reason they created the opportunities for Okinawans to go to South America was as way to channel access Okinawans. Especially in the Cold War period, they were afraid of Proletariats, right?…landless peasants. So, her work seems to suggest that there was a plan to get rid of people who could be disaffected and protest against the US occupation. They actually created these colonies in Bolivia and also had this opportunity for Okinawans to go to Argentina, Brazil, or Peru. If you look at the percentages of Okinawan and Japanese speaking Okinawans in South America…a large part are postwar immigrants. That is left out of the discussion. So, at sekai no Uchinanchu taikai, they often talk about 「南米行ったなら純粋なウチナーグチ使って るよ (They use “pure” uchinaguchi.)」 It’s true. But we don’t look at some of the reasons why they use junsuina uchinaguchi ( 純粋なウチナーグチ ). Some of them were Issei who went before the war, but a lot of them, like in Bolivia, in my ryugakusei (international student 留学生) group, the eight of us, the Bolivians used perfect uchinaguchi. And why is that? Because they’re postwar immigrants. In Bolivia and Colonial Okinawa, they spoke only uchinaguchi…so Shuri (首里) people spoke Shuri dialect, Gushikawa (具志川) people spoke Gushikawa dialect…so they spoke really well. And a lot of this is because they’re postwar immigrants. So the nisei were still speaking uchinaguchi.

And the other part of stories that is missing is the dekasegi…the dekasegi came to Japan and Okinawa from the 80s and 90s. So, they are left out. Another one is the US military bases. I noticed they were very much out of the picture. In the sekai no Uchinanchu taikai and the convention, we were talking about “Uchinanchu…Uchinanchu jotoyasa (it’s great)…Uchinanchu, Uchinanchu” and overhead was [a sound] like “dadadadada”…that was a US marine helicopter...“dadada” and the jet was “shuuuuu”…if you look on the street, there was a military transport vehicle, but it doesn’t enter the sekai Uchinanchu discourse. Maybe that’s…それは当たり前 (natural), but it kind of bothered me. So anytime, if you have questions or comments, please.

I took this slide from another presentation I made in China. When I was in China, I gave a talk on the Okinawan diaspora. I wanted to appeal to the Chinese that we’re from Ryukyu Kingdom…I was also playing the word “matters.” Okinawan diasporic identity matters. My present research is…I’m looking at two things. One is a sociological question—“why do second, third, and fourth generations of overseas Okinawans have a strong sense of Okinawan identity?” I guess what I’m talking about is the historical and sociological contextualization of the Okinawan diaspora. I’m looking at Okinawan diasporic identity
“matters”. It’s a wordplay…but, using the word "matter" as a noun, looking at matters that are related to Okinawan diaspora. That’s from the sociological perspective. But, I’m also trained in Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies. We look at things like self-determination. So, I’m looking at why or how Okinawan diasporic identity matters as a verb in the diaspora. So, it’s political contextualization. “Okinawa identity matters.” So, it’s a wordplay, but I’m serious about it because one [reason] is sociologically, as a scholar, I want to see what are the matters related to Okinawan diasporic identity…what are the factors that make it so that second, third, fourth, and fifth generations of Okinawans have a strong sense of Okinawan identity.

But, at the same time, my field of study has a political direction. I’m from Ethnic Studies, Asian American Studies. We look at the political context of identity. So, I’m looking at how Okinawan identity matters as a verb. I think most of you are familiar with Okinawa, but I’ll just remind you that Naha is actually closer to Manila than it’s to Tokyo, and if you go to Yonaguni, you can see Taiwan clearly. Even though this is a different prefecture, but Amami Islands are part of the original Ryukyu Kingdom. So, someone said if you look at the length of the Ryukyu Islands, it’s about the same size from Germany to Italy...It’s really long and [it includes] a lot of spaces. There’s a scholar named Epeli Hau'ofa. He is a Tongan scholar. He flipped the discourse of islands. He said “instead of islands in the ocean, we are an ocean of islands”, meaning the Western viewpoints of islands is they’re isolated by the ocean. That’s a western viewpoint, but this scholar, he was looking at Polynesia and saying “what if we reframe it to see we are an ocean of islands? Oceans actually connect different places. Islands are connected to mainlands.” So, he flipped it around. "Yu" of Okinawa

Changing “Yu” of Okinawa

Another thing I’m looking at is “yu.” In Japanese, it is “yo” (読). There’s a famous song by Kadetkaru Rinsho 嘉手苅林昌, 「唐ぬ世から大和ぬ世、大和ぬ世からアメリカ世、アメリカ世からまた大和ぬ世・・・」[Kara nu yu kara Yamato nu yu, Yamato nu yu kara America yu, America yu kara mata Yamato nu yu...](From the Chinese age/world to the Japanese to the American, and to the Japanese again)] In Okinawa, you is particular to Okinawa. Yu is time and space. It’s not only time, it’s also political influence of China over Okinawa and later of Yamato, and then America. It seems to be time and space collapse together. So, it’s particular to Okinawan experience.

There’s a famous song "Bankoku no sinryo" (万国の津梁), that is the term they use in the sekai no Uchinanchu taikai comes from this time period. We look at the time before Ryuku shobun (琉球処分) as tonuyu (唐ぬ世 the Chinese age/world), but also we put it together with Ryukyu’s golden era of trade, from the 1400s or 1500s. I’m not sure if you are familiar with this history, but you can look at the exiles in China. There was a fair amount of Okinawans who were part of the upper class who exiled themselves to Fujian (福建) mainly.

Then, Sotetsu jigoku (ソテツ地獄 Sago Palm Hell)...it’s 1910s and 1920s. After the WWI, sugar prices went down and it’s somewhat related to emigration and the relationship between Okinawa and Japan. Selling and buying of sugar was controlled by mainland interests. Okinawans were raising prices as a cash crop to buy food and necessities, to pay for taxes and debts. They were producing what they don’t consume and consumed what they don’t produce. They
grew sugar and other things to sell as cash crops. It’s an island economy, like Hawai‘i and other places. So, *Sotetsu jigoku* is related to that relationship.

It’s also related to a large scale of overseas emigration. In 1899, they left Okinawa and reached Hawai‘i in the 1900s. And *Ikusayu* (戦世 the time of war) 1940, from April to June. I hear an estimate of one fourth to one third of the population was killed. And then, *Amerikanuyu* (アメリカuren世 the American age/world) came. Some people argued that even since the reversion in 1972, it’s still been *Amerikanuyu*.

Because, when I was at UC Berkeley, I did study with people doing Cultural Studies and postmodernism, I would like to play with words…with the same kanji “yo” (世) and “se” (世) like Issei, Nisei, and Sansei, some of the words we use commonly in our vocabulary. If you study them, they tell you a lot. Generations in the American sense, one of the roots is “gen” or “gene.” Generation is also related to “gender” and “genealogy” etc., things that are related to race category creation. We need to discuss the words. When we say “generation”, Issei, Nisei, and Sansei, we are using the words, but whenever we use the words like “generation” and “gender”, we should raise a flag because the same words are also related to other words like “eugenics”, “genocide”, and “genealogy.” We use the words so commonly, we don’t problematize them or we don’t analyze them critically, especially the word, “genealogy.”

**Construction of Okinawan Diasporic Identity**

As a Sansei Okinawan, one way I constructed my Okinawan identity was through the family genealogy. My father’s side is, “Yukachu”, upper class. In Okinawa, there’s a big division between people with genealogies and people without genealogies. My father’s side were originally people with genealogy. My mother’s side was *mizunomi byakusho* (peasants水吞百姓). My grandmother had tattoos. There was a big difference between my father’s side and my mother’s side. I tried to create my identity looking at my genealogy. My father’s name is “Sensuke”, his father was “Senfu”, his father was “Senjun”…all of them had Sen. If you think of genealogies, there was gender as well. Women in genealogy were defined by their relationship to men. 誰かの奥さん、誰かの妹. [Somebody’s wife or somebody’s sister.] When we look at the words we use, we should take a more critical view.

We are at the crossroads of Okinawan diasporic identity. We have a great revival of Okinawan identity through a worldwide Uchinanchu movement. The worldwide Uchinanchu movement was tolerated or even encouraged by the Japanese government. It seems interesting. *Sekai no Uchinanchu taikai* is sponsored and it’s organized by the Okinawan prefectural government which is under the Japanese government and you wonder “why would a separate identity actually be encouraged by the government?”

Also, Okinawan diasporic identity is developed with little reference to the past and present political reality of the homeland. In my opinion, it’s becoming increasingly apolitical. Post-WWII Okinawan history is not really taken up so much in this worldwide Uchinanchu discourse. From my observation at *seikai no Uchinanchu taikai*, or also around Bay Area or when I go back to Hawai‘i, most of the time when people talk about Uchinanchu and *Sekai no Uchinanchu Taikai*…the whole history of the 1950s, *shimagurumi toso* (All-island struggle島ぐるみ闘争), is left out. I did a little research on *koza bodo* (Koza Riotコザ暴動), but no one knows about that. The protest against the US military occupation is largely left out. I feel we are at risk of becoming increasingly irrelevant [in discussion] of past struggles and become irrelevant [in discussion] of present political realities. Bringing up these issues, I think a lot of people in
Hawai‘i might get angry at me, even in my kenjinkai. Whenever I talk about the political situation in Okinawa, they say “kichi hantai dame yo” (Don’t be anti-US military bases) or “don’t be anti-American.” It’s very difficult to talk about these issues, but I hope that we have opportunities for different sides to talk about these issues. So, there’s very little dialogue between the Sekaino Uchinanchu Taikai discourse and kichi hantai discourse. They almost exist in the different worlds. They’re not even in the same “yu.”

How to Write and Tell History

Let me play sanshin….but before I sing sanshin, we should have new questions——“How do we write and tell our history?” “What do we leave for the next generation?” “In what language?” “In what voice?” and “Whose voice will that be?” The reason why I bring that up is because sekai no Uchinanchu taikai is a big event, with speeches, musical performances, art performances, and at most of the events I attended at sekai no Uchinanchu taikai, we are looking at the stage or screen and next to me might be an Okinawan Nisei or Sansei from Brazil, Guam, or Philippines. I never talk to them. I never get to talk to them. So, it’s certainly not a bottom-up discourse, but it is a top-down discourse. That’s why I’m worried about it. Whose voice is it? Whose language is it going to be in?

The reason why I feel strongly about this is because my Okinawan identity came from a local place, my mother or from Okinawan experiences in Hawai‘i, but now it seems to be coming from top-down. It’s a very different discourse. It’s not a bad discourse, but local Okinawan identity has been subsumed by this bigger story. I’m not saying we should get rid of the big story, but we should be more critical of the big story and support smaller stories or smaller narratives like Okinawans in Hawai‘i or experiences of people like my grandmother. My grandmother of Hawai‘i had
tattoos, hajichi ハジチ. I grew up seeing her tattoos, but just a little bit. Mostly here on her left hand...so I only saw a little bit. She wouldn’t show it to everyone. But I heard later from my mother that my grandma made her own tattoos because by the time she was born, it had been outlawed. The ban against tattoos in Okinawa was in 1899 or 1900. My mother was born in 1893, so when she was a teenager, I heard she and her friends made tattoos. Her story is important, her resistance against this law. Also, when she went to Hawai’i during the Prohibition days, she made alcohol and sold it. Those local stories are wiped out. Now, it’s only “Uchinanchu!!!!” and “Eisa!!!!” I’m not saying it’s bad, but supporting other smaller stories is important.

**Balancing Political Issues with Culture**

**Audience 2:** You talked about the movement, World Uchinanchu discourse which excludes political issues happening in Okinawa and Hawai’i. I read an article in Ryukyu Shimpo which explains how you called for Okinawans in America to write letters to protest against the US bases. I interpreted it as an act that came from political identity or their citizenship as people who could talk to the States. I’m aware that there’s coalitions and collaborations between Okinawa and Hawai’i. So, I was wondering if you could tell us little bit more about your effort.

**Ueunten:** I always have to balance things because I was in the Bay Area. I was involved in the anti-base movement. After the 1995 incident in Okinawa¹, some Okinawan women activists came to the Bay Area. At that time, it was very shocking for me because my Okinawan identity was based on Ryukyu Okoku 琉球王国 that existed hundreds of years ago and I skipped all the things that happened after ryukyu shobun 琉球処分. A lot of things I’m critiquing now is how I created my identity, but when the women activists came in 1996 and I heard from them...from their side of identity, it seems like what constructed my Okinawan [identity] came falling down...so that was a shock. That’s how I got involved in the anti-base movement. But I always have to balance because I’m also at kenjinkai, because I do sanshin and I’m part of Okinawa kenjinkai Bay Area. Most members are married to American servicemen, so they don’t want to talk about the base issues. In the Okinawa Kenjinkai, I hear someone say...“kiwotsukete”「気を付けて」(Be careful) or “seiji to bunka wa isshoni suruna.”「政治と文化は一緒にするな」(Don’t mix politics with culture). I get these subtle messages, “do not do Okinawa kenjinkai cultural activities mixed with the base activities.” The feeling is very strong in the kenjinkai on the mainland. In Hawai’i, it’s also...it might be changing, but there’s still reminiscence of WWII experience or Japanese loyalty was in doubt...loyalty was masculinity.

There’s this strong need to show “we have been very loyal and very American.” If you go out of that, people are afraid...for some reason, there’s a lot of resistance to be critical of the US, especially of the US military in Okinawa. I keep meeting Okinawans who are critical about bases in Hawai’i. But, they kind of get ostracized. I feel like I’m always dancing, trying to do both. I’m trying to figure out how I can bring two discourses together. They don’t seem to be listening to each other. Maybe you can help. But, I’m perplexed by that. When there’s a call for letters to be written by Okinawans in the US, not too many people follow. People do, but not on a mass level. To me, it’s very interesting because when you think about diasporas in the past, Chinese diaspora or even Jewish diaspora or Indian diaspora, Korean diaspora.

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¹ Three US servicemen stationed in Okinawa raped a 12-year-old local girl in 1995. Since they were not immediately handed over to Japanese police due to US-Japan Status Forces Agreement, this incident caused furious anger among Okinawan people and led to the large anti-base demonstration.
In the past, they were very political. For example, Sun Yat-sen (孫文). He went to school in Hawai‘i and a lot of his nations he gathered for the Chinese Revolution were from Hakka, the minority in Hawai‘i. But our Okinawan diaspora is very neutralized. Our consciousness is muted. I don’t want to push a political agenda too far. But, it seems like our consciousness of what’s happening in Okinawa is almost like sekai no Uchinanchu taikai, and its discourse becomes a smoke screen.

**Audience 3:** I’m an Okinawan from Hawai‘i. I lived in Hawai‘i until my 30s. I considered myself more as Japanese, I wasn’t too aware of my Okinawan identity. Only thing that was Okinawan for me was going to the Okinawan party on January 1st, beginning of the year, shinnenkai 令和 for our association. That’s all I remember. But, it was fixed in my head …there’s singing, and dancing… a flat table and a lot of people. So, I wasn’t really aware of Okinawan [identity] while I was living in Hawai‘i. This is up until the 1970s. I became more aware after I came to Japan. All the information I’m getting from you is actually sort of confusing. My question is…I get mixed messages… Is the military really unwelcomed in Okinawa or is it something that’s being pushed by certain elements in Okinawa? I’m not sure if there is this anti-military. I saw a program two or three weeks ago on NHK. It was really interesting to me because at the end, it said “the question is not anti-American because Okinawans are not anti-American.” They might be anti-government, but it’s not a matter of being anti-American. So, my question is “what is the problem?”

**Ueunten:** I can’t answer because I’m not from Okinawa. I can’t speak for Okinawans. But, one problem is lack of democracy within Okinawa itself. I can give you an example that happened a few years ago. The election [for Governor of Okinawa] is on the 16th [of November 2014]. The present governor, four years ago, ran on a platform of saying he’s not going to accept new base construction in Henoko. The person who is running against was clearly anti-base. But, largely because of that promise, he won. But last year December 25th, he shocked everyone by approving the base. So, he breached his campaign promise. A lot of people were angry. As an indication that a lot of people, especially those in Nago area, were angry, a few days later, the anti-base candidate for mayor of Nago was reelected. Even though the opposing candidate had been supported by the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party), there’s a lot of support from that side…He still won.

There’s strong sentiment against the base, especially for now in Henoko. A lot of people feel in this base issue, they’re not only listening to the Okinawan’s opinions. Then, for me, it’s very complicated because I have relatives who work on the base. Their livelihood depends on the base. So, that’s not that simple. I’m confused as well, but I see there’s a larger dissatisfaction or anger at what’s happening with the bases 60 or 70 years later. I’m not saying that we should all become anti-base. We should be more conscious about what’s happening.

When I created my Okinawa identity, one thing that was really strong in my Okinawan identity creation was a movie, *The Teahouse of the August Moon* that starred Marlon Brando. That was actually a progressive movie. It parodied the US going to Okinawa and saying, “We’re here to bring democracy and civilization.” It was a parody of that, but at the same time, it portrayed Okinawa as a native and happy place. It was a Hollywood portrayal of Okinawans. That movie was made in 1956. 1956 was the height of shimagurumi toso 鳥居み鬨争, the anti-US military base movement. Tens of thousands of Okinawans were on the street, protesting. What was happening in Okinawa and Okinawa in *The Teahouse of the August Moon* were so different. So, I was confused as well… “Which is the real Okinawa?” We’ll never know. I’m
in Kyoto [now] and I’m around a lot of Buddhists. You know how Buddhists believe that everything is in construction. So, we don’t know what the real thing is. Okinawa is the same. I’m confused as well. But, one way out of all the confusions is to talk and have honest discussions. I’m Uchinanchu, but I’m also American. We have American interests in Okinawa. So, not only my thoughts, but also my feelings are mixed up.

Audience 2: I just wanted to say that when it comes to US bases in Okinawa, I think the Japanese government is responsible…much more responsible than the US government because the Japanese government put the bases there. But, at the same, I haven’t really heard from Okinawan Americans in the US protesting. So, I was very impressed to hear about your story.

Tattoo as a Metaphor of Deleted History

Audience 4: I have a question about the tattoos on the left hand. Why is it important as a story?

Ueunten: I believe that the tattoos are metaphor of “deleted history.” Generally speaking, female immigrants’ history isn’t represented in “the world Uchinanchu” discourse. Their history needs to be known. As all the histories have their discourses, the tattoos have their discourses. Okinawa has a long traditional history and as we trace back the history, we know that Okinawa used to be a matrilineal society. This history is very important for me. But, what has made Okinawan identity now is “history of Ryukyu”, “male-centered culture” and “genealogy,” but if we look at the past when they practiced having tattoos, we would know a different history based on matrilineality.

Audience 4: タトゥーは沖縄の歴史や文化の中で、何を表しているのですか？
Audience 4: What do the tattoos represent in the Okinawan history and culture?

Ueunten: 昔、女性は若い時に刺青を入れ始める。結婚しても刺青をさらに多く入れていくような文化があり、女性同志でお互いに刺青を入れ合っていました。一方、男性は刺青を入れませんでした。そして、階級や地域によって刺青は違いました。しかし、ある時突然に、日本の法律で刺青を入れることが禁止され、禁止されたことにより過去の歴史が分からなくなってしまったと言えます。自分のルーツを探るために色々な道はあると思いますが、「高速道路」のようなもので沖縄の歴史は、女性中心主義の歴史である。琉球空手もルーツを探る方法として人気のある方法です。しかし、ルーツを巡るたびに違った道、小さな道があって、その一つが刺青であると私は考えています。私たちのルーツを探るためにはそのような小さな道も大事なんじゃないかと思います。では、今、お話したことを表している歌を歌ってみましょう。

Ueunten: In the past, women started to have tattoos on their bodies at younger age and they added more after they married. Women made tattoos each other. But, men didn’t have such culture. Tattoos were different among social classes and regions. But, tattoos were
suddenly outlawed by the Japanese law and we have lost a lot of history because of the ban. There are many ways to trace back our history, but I feel that the common way for Okinawan people is to know history of Ryukyu or male-centered history. Some people try to find their roots by practicing Ryukyu karate. But, I believe that there are different, smaller ways to trace back our history. I think one of the ways is looking at our tattoo culture. Those smaller ways are very important. To illustrate such a practice of tracing back smaller ways to our past, let me sing a song.

I’m going to sing a very famous song, “Tinsagu nu Hana” (balsam flowers). When you put balsam flowers in water, the water turns red. You can dye your fingers red with the water. The lyrics in the first verse tell us that we need to keep in our mind (chimu) what our parents teach us just like the red color stays on our fingers. To put it in English, “knowledge is not only quantity but quality.” The lyrics in the second verse describe the same thing. It says that we can count stars in the sky if we try to, but we can’t count what our parents teach us. As for the third verse, my interpretation changed from when I heard it for the first time. I had thought the lyrics meant “children sail as they look at their parents” because the East Asians are influenced by Confucianism and they respect their parents. But, I realized it meant the opposite, “parents sail as they look at their children.” I think this song has an alternative meaning. My mother taught me this song when I was young. She told me that I should be proud of my identity as an Uchinanchu. But, she was ashamed of being an Okinawan Nisei and never sang this song in public. She didn’t make Okinawan food. She didn’t use Okinawan language, nor sing Okinawan songs. Okinawan was her hidden identity.

<Prof. Ueunten sang “tinsagu nu hana” with sanshin.>

歌：「ていんざくぬ花」

Tinsagu nu hana

1. ていんざくぬ花や
   爪先（ちみさち）に染（す）みてい
   親（うや）ぬゆし事（ぐとう）や
   肝（ちむ）に染（す）みり
   1. Tinsagu nu hana ya chimi sachi ni sumiti
      Uyanu yushi gutu ya chimu ni sumiri

2. 天（ていん）ぬ群星（むりぶし）や
   読（ゆ）みば読（ゆ）まりゆい
   親（うや）ぬゆし言（ぐとう）や
   読（ゆ）みやならん
   2. Tinu muri bushi ya yumiba yumarishiga
      Uyanu yushi gutu ya yumiya naran

3. 夜（ゆる）走（は）らず舟（ふに）や
   子（に）ぬ方星（ふあぶし）見当（みあ）てい
3. Yuru harasu funi ya ninufa bushi miati
Wan na cheru uyaya wandu miati

Ueunten: 先ほどの質問は、とてもいい質問だと思いま。ルーツを探すためにもっと小さい道を選ぶといいと思う。しかし、私もルーツは探しいますが、まだ見つかっていません。

Ueunten: That (what do the tattoos represent in the Okinawan history and culture?) was a good question. I think we should find smaller ways to trace back our roots. I’m still looking for my roots, but I haven’t found it yet.

Okinawa Base Issues in Hawai’i

Audience 5: 反基地の問題に関して、「ハワイでは反基地、反米的な発言をすると問題がある」、「気を付けた方が良い」というのは確かにその通りだと思う。それの補足になるが、戦後の米軍による沖縄統治政策にハワイのオキナワンの人たちが加担をさせられたという経緯がある。

Audience 5: I agree that it might become problematic when Okinawans in Hawai’i express the anti-base, anti-US feelings, and they need to be careful about their words. I would like to add a few things to that. There is history where Okinawans in Hawai’i were made to play some role in the Okinawa occupation policy by the US military after the war.

鳥ぐるみ闘争の頃、沖縄の中で反米、反基地運動が高まっていくなかで、米軍としては、沖縄の人たちを日本から切り離しつつ、言い方は悪いが、ある意味、飼いならすことが必要だった。その時に、ハワイのオキナワンを使って、統治政策の米流間の対立的な存在として位置付け、彼らを通じてコントロールしようとしたという経緯がある。そのために莫大なお金を投じて「ハワイ沖縄ブラザーフッドプログラム」を1959年から72年まで運営した。これはエクスチェンジ・プログラムで、沖縄から千人以上の留学生や研修生がハワイに来て、イースト・ウェスト・センター、ハワイ大学、沖縄系の農場などで色んな研修をした。それと逆に、ハワイからもハワイの沖縄連合会の幹部たちが沖縄に行くというプログラムだった。

In the height of shimagurumi toso or all-island struggle of 1956, as the anti-US military base and anti-US sentiment was growing, the US military wanted to isolate Okinawans from Japan, or even "tame" Okinawans. During that time, the US military gave Okinawans in Hawai‘i a role of bridging the US and Okinawa and tried to control Okinawans through them. For this purpose, the US invested a lot of money and administrated “Hawai‘i-Okinawa Brotherhood Program” from 1959 to 1972. This program was an exchange program and more than a thousand of students and trainees from Okinawa visited Hawai‘i and had various trainings at East-West Center, University of Hawai‘i, and farms run by Okinawans. Conversely, there was also a program in which the administrators of the Hawai‘i United Okinawa Association (HOA) visited Okinawa.

その時は、彼らは軍人の中将待遇で沖縄に行き、一般の兵士が彼らに敬礼した。それは沖縄の人達にとって驚くことだった。つまり、「自分達が米兵に足蹴にされている一方、同じ血を持ったハワイのウチナーンチュが米兵に敬礼をされている」ということ。彼らを一つのモデルとして、「アメリカが沖縄統治をすると、このような素晴らしい扱いをされる」という印象を与え、またハワイのオキナワンをアメリカの中で最も成功したモデルとして見せ、彼らをプロパガンダとして利用した。さらに、彼らハワイのオキナワンを通して、沖縄において親米派の政治家を当選させた。ハワイの沖縄連合会は、それに積極的に関与した。しかし、彼らは米国の意図はあまり知らずに、ただただ沖縄復興のためという一途な思いでコミュニティを支えていた。そのような状況が59年から72年まで続いた。

When the administrators visited Okinawa, they received preferential treatment similar to lieutenant colonel so that general servicemen saluted them. For Okinawans, that was very
surprising. While Okinawans were treated unfairly by the US military, Okinawans from Hawai‘i having the same origins were saluted by the US servicemen. The US military tried to give Okinawans an impression that they would be treated well if the US governs Okinawa, and the US used it as propaganda. Also, a pro-US candidate was elected in Okinawa with cooperation from Okinawans in Hawai‘i. The HOA was actively involved in the process, but they weren’t aware of the US government’s hidden agenda. They supported the Okinawan community, simply wishing Okinawa’s restoration. This continued from 1959 to 1972.

 Audience 1: His message reminded me of two things. I remember Akira Sakima, the leader of the Uchinanchu community in Hawai‘i. He told me that before the reversion of [Okinawa to] Japan in 1972, he was one of the leaders of the movement to oppose the reversion, he is like a father for me. I still remember the incident. A lot of people opposed the Japanese government, wanting to take back Okinawa. Do you know, Wakugawa Seiei-san? He is one of the most intelligent people in Hawai‘i’s Uchinanchu community. Sakima went to Wakugawa Seiei-san’s house and asked him what he thought about it. He said “let them decide” — 「沖縄の人に任せなさい」. As [Audience 5] said, the majority of people of Okinawa Rengokai was exactly as Uchinanchu growing up under the influence of US government’s interests. Still, they are dominant. The leaders of HOA…they’re still dominant. For example, I know friends working for the US bases. They are very vocative. They are working at the American bases, like Pearl Harbor. They don’t mention about the anti-base movement.

I would like to say that the leaders of Okinawa and some young people became mature. For example, hajichi. In the cultural tent of the Okinawa festivals, they displayed hajichi. That was the identity of where they were from….that was not shameful…that was a symbol. But, the Japanese government and some other powers made them think it was shameful. It became a negative identity. Still, the leaders are very much pro-American base people. But, as I mentioned, some young people started to ask “What is the real Okinawa?” I even saw a panel of a base. But next year, I couldn’t see it because it was very difficult and there were a lot of complaints. But, it was a good
sign for me. Hawai‘ian Okinawans are leaders of all Uchinanchu overseas. They have a strong influence over overseas Uchinanchu. Hawai‘ian Uchinanchu create some discourses.

_Ueunten:_ Yes, it is one of the main centers. In the past five, ten years, I see Peru and Brazil come up. They’re the centers. But, there’re local flavors in Hawai‘i. For example, Sandaa Murata, the Yonsei Okinawan who is a sanshin player made himself fluent in Okinawan. He learned sanshin as a child in Okinawa and he sings in a Hawai‘ian way.

In Okinawa, dance is called “eisa”, but it is called “Okinawan Bon Dance” in Hawai‘i. When Okinawanas in Hawai‘i sing a song, “Totankani”, they weave the local Hawai‘ian culture into the song, such as struggles they experienced in the plantation period. But, in Peru and Brazil, they sing eisa in a very traditional Okinawan way. The Island-wide Eisa Festival was co-sponsored by the US government. Eisa significantly changed after the war. Eisa I practiced in the 1980s was easy, but eisa practiced now in Hawai‘i had difficult and dynamic movements, such as bouncing and jumping. Eisa costumes have become gorgeous too.

**Being Uchinanchu in Hawai‘i**

_Audience 2:_ 日系移民として“upward mobility”（社会的上昇）のある種、アメリカドリームの流れに入っていく中で、同時にハワイの中で、先住民の運動（indigenous movement）もあったので、それも影響して少し違った物語というものって出来ると思うのがだが、それに関してはどうですか。

_Audience 2:_ While Japanese immigrants experienced “upward mobility,” so-called American dream, there was indigenous movement in Hawai‘i. How did this movement influence Okinawans in Hawai‘i in terms of understanding their immigrant history?

_Ueunten:_ 私達ウチナーンチは、モデルマイノリティのストーリーを内面化しています。一般的な 2 世、3 世の人たちの中には「ハワイの人たちは働きかない」というイメージをまだ強く持っている人たちはいます。モデルマイノリティのアイデンティティがまだ強く、ハワイアンと一緒の考えになっていない人も多い。それはとても残念に思います。刺青のことですが、サモアでももっと女性しか刺青を入れませんでした。それを聞いた時に、サモア文化、ポリネシア文化、沖縄文化が繋がっていると思いました。

_Ueunten:_ Uchinanchu like me embody stories of model minority. Some Nisei and Sansei think that Hawai‘ians do not work. They still hold strong identity of being model minority and they don’t share opinions with Hawai‘ian, which is a sad thing. But, I felt there are connections between Samoa, Polynesian, and Okinawan cultures when I learned that only women used to make tattoos in the Samoan culture.

**Audience 1:** 刺青を見せたりするなど、そのような小さなステップが後でどんどん大きくなっていく。70 年代には自分がウチナーンチュという人はほんの数人でした。それが今では、ほとんどウチナーンチュは“I’m not Japanese. I’m Uchinanchu”と言うようになりました。私の周りの人でもモデルマイノリティのディスコースを内面化している人は多いですが、ハワイ大
Audience 1: Small steps such as showing their tattoos will lead to bigger movement later. In the 1970s, there are few people who claimed themselves as Uchinanchu, but now, most of Okinawans say “I’m not Japanese. I’m Uchinanchu.” There are many people around me who have embodied model minority discourse, but people who received education in Ethnic Studies program at University of Hawai’i claim that they have to cooperate with native Hawai’ian. Those people are still minority, but I believe such a movement will spread.

Ueunten: ありがとうございます。私もたまに悲観的な気持ちになってしまうこともありますが、そのような希望を持っているべきだと思います。先ほど歌った「てぃんさくの花」は希望を表している歌だと思います。

Ueunten: Thank you very much. I sometimes feel pessimistic about the situation, but I think we should have hope. The song “tinsagu nu hana” represents such a hope.

Audience 1: 私は「てぃんさくの花」の4番、5番が嫌いなんですよ。
Audience 1: I do not like the fourth and fifth verses of “tinsagu nu hana.”

Ueunten: それは面白いですね。

Ueunten: That’s interesting.

Audience 1: それまでは、オキナワンの要素を含む歌詞なのですけど、4番以降は「できないなら、お前が頑張れ」とかという歌詞になってしまう。

Audience 1: The first, second, and third verses represent Okinawan culture well, but after the fourth verse, the song changes. Lyrics say “If you can’t do it, you should make more efforts.”

Ueunten: 私もうそう思ってたから、三番までしか歌いませんでした。

Ueunten: That’s why I did not sing after the fourth verse.

Women and History

Audience 6: Ueunten さんは、オルタナティブの歴史を提示し、一つの大きな歴史を、「男性中心の歴史」という言い方をし、おばあさまの歴史を「女性中心の歴史」としてお話された。それは重要なこと。最近は、モダニティは一つではなく、複数のモダニティを語ろうという方向で動いている。今、その後の話を聞いていますと、基地の話、政治の話はみんな「男の話」だということに捉っていられるが、私は女性がどのような状況なのか興味がある。例えば、世界ウチナーンチュ大会において、女性はどのような立場からどのような発言をしていそうか。場合によっては、までの沖縄の歴史は男性中心主義であって、女性の沖縄については、語らせてほしい、という意思を表明しているのか聞いてみたい。

Audience 6: Prof. Ueunten showed us an alternative history today and called the mainstream history “male-centered history” and his grandmother’s history “female-centered history.” This is very important. Nowadays, we regard modernity as not one thing, but multiple things. And we talk about multiple modernities. It seems to me that all the discussions on the anti-US military base and political issues are male-centered. But, I’m interested in women’s roles and actions in the discussions. For example, what kind of standpoint women take and what they talk in the World Uchinanchu Taikai. I wonder if some women criticize that the mainstream history has been talked from a male-centered standpoint and they want to speak about women’s version of history.

Audience 1: 世界ウチナーンチュ大会には女性の社会学者であるジョイス・チネンが必ずでてくるし、私が先ほど言った話は決して「男性中心主義立場」の話ではなく、基地のパネルも女性が作るし、ハジキを見せたのも女性でした。なので、私
Audience 1: Joyce Chinen, a female sociologist always speaks at the World Uchinanchu Taikai and women organize panels about the US military base issues. They showed their hajichi at the taikai too. So, I find a hope there. Women are trying to show the hidden history, and Joyce Chinen is one of those women who are eager to act for it.

Ueunten: 政治面でも、栗尾慶子さんと今年2月末にワシントン DC に通訳として同行しましたが、彼女は大変力強かったです。彼女は男性の政治家三人と行きましたが、アメリカの Department of State と Department of Defense と会談をし、沖縄に民主主義が存在しないことを訴えていました。

Ueunten: On the political side, I went to Washington DC with Ms. Keiko Itokazu (Member of the House of Councilors) this February as a translator. She was very powerful. There were three other male politicians who went with us. We had meetings with Department of State and Department of Defense, and she was arguing that there was no democracy in Okinawa.

Audience 6: 今、フェミニズムを強調するような争い方をする時、“soft resistance”や“soft power”を使います。基地問題を処理する場合にも、補償金を賃いを色々な方法で使っていくという手法を使います。それは“soft resistance”と呼ばれています。従って、栗尾さんのような「男性化した女性」の例というのは少し違うと思います。女性がソフトな手法で違った歴史を主張している様子はあるのですか？

Audience 6: When women emphasize feminism in a dispute, they use “soft resistance” or “soft power.” In the case of the conflict over the US military base, women strategically receive the compensations and use in various ways. So, I guess a person like Ms. Itokazu who acts like a man is an exception. I would like to know the cases where women used their “soft power” to show alternative history of Okinawa.

Ueunten: 心で戦っていると思います。栗尾慶子さんは女性が男性というところではなく、心から沖縄の民主主義を願い、訴えています。「てぃんさくの花」も、静かな心からの抵抗の歌です。静かに抵抗することも必要だし、時には栗尾さんのように激しく抵抗の意を表することも必要だと思います。

Ueunten: They are fighting at heart. Ms. Itokazu didn’t necessarily act like a man, but she earnestly hopes for democracy in Okinawa. “Tinsagu nu hana” is also a song of quiet resistance. I believe quiet resistance and fierce resistance like Ms. Itokazu showed are both necessary.

Audience 7: I know very little about your field, but I came to learn. I think I’ve learned a lot. I enjoyed the presentation and I enjoyed the conversations. Now that we finally come around to gender, I feel like I can participate. After all of this the image that remains in my mind is you and San Francisco being surrounded by bossy older military wives. I’m thinking about how you were saying that your image of Okinawan Uchinanchu was shattered because you didn’t know but you learned that it was devastating. But, it was not just for you. I know a lot of people who are of Italian descent or Irish descent. They go back to the Celts, but they ignore anything after that. I think it’s a normal thing. I do like how you started by talking about androcentrism. I go back to the image of you surrounded by the bossy women…they’re the ones who are telling you “don’t say this…don’t say that”…right?

Ueunten: No, actually those women don’t tell me directly. But in the Okinawan community, for some reason, the women would rather have a male president and vice president. It’s because they want to put up a “better” front, a “better” face to Okinawa-ken. I hear it from senpai…「気をつけなさいよ」(Be careful).
Changes within Okinawa Kenjinkai

Audience 7: You also said that a lot of those women were war brides. I have a good friend who does her work on war brides. You said they were ignored and excluded. But, war brides’ stories were excluded across the board. I think to recover their voices is a very important thing because it’s specific, as you said, that time and space they occupy. I was thinking there’s been so many of them in the kenjinkai. Is it because it’s a safe place for them to be?

Ueunten: They are post-war immigrants who came in the 1960s, 70s, or 80s. It’s safe because before this Okinawa boom, a lot of them had a very marginal existence in the base community. So, other base wives were Japanese and a lot of them would ask 「あなた達、英語話せるの？」 (Can you speak English?) They weren’t treated as Japanese so they felt safe with other Okinawans because it’s more comfortable. It’s like Asian Americans sticking together.

Audience 7: But, it’s also generational, though, because eventually those women will die out.

Ueunten: That’s what I’m facing right now. When I go back, I have to be the president of the kenjinkai because there’s no one taking it from the next generation. I’m the youngest one in line. The next generation is not joining in. Sacramento has another Okinawa kenjinkai, which is 100% women. But, their president is eighty something years old. The woman wants to retire, but no one wants to take it over. So, we wonder what to do. It’s complicated because the younger people would be the children who are bi-racial or bi-cultural, mainly bi-racial. They don’t speak Japanese or Okinawan. So, when those women came in up to the 1980s, there was no Okinawan movement. There was a stigma to be non-white. So, their children tended to be assimilated and not have been interested in Okinawan culture. So, that’s what we’re facing now…the practical reality. So, the sekai Uchinanchu discourse has its limits because it is a success story. But, what if we don’t succeed? It’s a success story that ends with Sansei or Yonsei…and it doesn’t include mixed-race children. So, what are we going to do?

Audience 7: But, if they want to be included, would you include them?

Ueunten: Yeah, that’s what we’re trying to do. But, up to now, the medium has been set in Japanese. I kept pushing for seinenkai 青年会 (youth group) or eigo-bu 英語部 (English-speaking group). But, it never happens. I hope to gear more to allow the second and third generations to come in. In Hawaiʻi, they made a very crucial decision to make the meetings in English in the 1950s.

Audience 1: They are the first kenjinkai that changed the common language from Japanese into English.

Ueunten: Our kenjinkai still uses Japanese, so I’m the lone American-born. I lived in Japan so long. But, I’m always a step behind. It’s really hard when the language is Japanese even though I have studied Japanese for a long time.

Audience 5: ハワイのオキナワンコミュニティの統合組織として、Hawai’i United Okinawan Association (HOA) があって、随分前から女性が会長になってきています。さらに目を見るのは、数年前に non-Uchinanchu が会長になりました。その前までにもそのような動きの予兆があり、80年代くらいからある会長が、沖縄コミュニティというのは“Uchinanchu”と“Uchinanchu at heart”（「精神的なウチナーォンチュ」）から構成されていてるという言い方をしていた。これはウチナーォンチュの配偶者や協力者、文化的な実践をしている人たちのことを指しています。彼らを積極的に
Audience 5: HOA has functioned as a comprehensive organization for Okinawans in Hawai‘i and women have been elected for the president in its history. What’s more, non-Uchinanchu was elected for the president several years ago. There was a change in the 1980s and the president then expressed that the Okinawan community was made up with “Uchinanchu” and “Uchinanchu at heart.” “Uchinanchu at heart” includes Uchinanchu’s spouses, supporters, and those who practice Okinawan culture. The organization was trying to include these people. So, non-Uchinanchu president was elected. Given this, I think the Okinawan community has the most flexible sense of boundaries among all the ethnic groups in Hawai‘i. They welcome people from outside, but their solidarity has kept strong. They rather became more powerful as they take people from outside. Then, one might wonder “what is Uchinanchu?” Because a lot of people in the younger generation are bi-racial, more and more people will choose their ethnic identity depending on the situations in the future. So, there is an issue of boundary when the Okinawan community in Hawai‘i develops in the future. I don’t think the Okinawan community in Hawai‘i would become ninety percent Yamatonchu (Japanese people) like eisa groups in Tokyo, but I’m curious to know how the community will change and what HOA thinks about it.

Ueunten: “Uchinanchu at heart” you mentioned is very interesting. I’m very afraid that it would sound like a talk about fascism when we talk about spiritual matters, but that’s an important thing. To describe what I want to say, let me sing a song “Makutu hituchi nu, uchiyumi”. I learned this song from my sanshin teacher. When this song was made, there were debates over what the Government of Ryukyu Islands should do in the face of Matthew Perry’s arrival and the Opium War. Distressed with the debates, King SHO Tai requested a musician to make a philosophical song. The song asks why people can’t understand each other’s words, though there is only one truth in the world. My sanshin teacher, Kenichi
Nadoyama was from the Afuso school and studied under Shoichi Terukina. Mr. Nadoyama is an Okinawan diaspora who came from Motobucho Izumi to Kawasaki before Okinawa’s reversion to Japan. He taught me this song twenty years ago and he told me to sing in a way which I try to destroy walls between people. All the identities are established through interpretations. I want you to think this song is my interpretation.

<Prof. Ueunten sang Nakafu-bushi. See page 33 for the lyric of the song.>

Nakafu-bushi

Audience 1: It's very classic of Okinawan to play sanshin and sing songs when discourses of Uchinanchu clash each other. It seems symbolic that they look for their answers and/or express their identity by singing with sanshin.

Ueunten: I think we should talk to each other. I feel I am in between the activists and female members of Kenjinkai in the Bay Area. The Kenjinkai members feel that their voices aren’t heard. It is good if they talk to the activists and understand why they are angry. For that reason, I would like to organize “yuntaku meeting” in the World Uchinanchu Taikai in 2016. In the past, there were so many events during the festival that we couldn’t have chance to do yuntaku. Regular drinking parties tend to be a male-centered event, so “Okinawan Tea Party” seems like a better event.

Ueunten: お互いの話を聞いたらどうかと思います。私はベイエリアで活動していましたが、私は活動家と県人会の女性達の間に挟まれている感覚があります。県人会の女性達は自分たちの話を聞いてもらえないと思っています。逆に、県人会の女性達も活動家と対話をし、なぜ彼らが怒っているのかを知ることができればよいのではないでしょうか。そのような理由で、世界ウチナーンチュ大会を壊すのではなく、その大会の勢いを利用して2016年の大会では「ゆんたく会議」をしようかと思っています。これまでの大会ではイベントが多かったため、「ゆんたく」の機会がありませんでした。しかし、飲み会になると男性主義にっ

アリスの浮世さめ のよで言葉のあはぬおきゆが

Audience 1: 「ゆんたくの会」の最大の問題は、言葉が全く通じないことだと思います。

Audience 1: The biggest problem of yuntaku is what language to use.

Ueunten: それに関しては二つ言えると思います。一つは、言葉だけではなくて、心で話すことが大切だと思います。心でコミュニケーションを取ることができます。二つ目に、出稼ぎの子供達などの留学生にリードしてもらって、これまで周縁におかれていた人達に協力を得て、次の世代を担う人達に架け橋になってもらうようにすることです。

Ueunten: お茶会 — “Okinawa Tea Party” をするといいと思います。

Ueunten: I can say two things for that. First, we can communicate with our hearts, not only with our words. Second, we can ask the children of dekasegi workers to help us and get support from those marginalized people. They could be mediators.

Audience 1: サンフランシスコの県人会の会長になるのですかね。ぜひそのようなことを提案してはどうでしょうか。

Audience 1: Because you will soon become the president of San Francisco (Okinawa) Kenjinkai, why don't you suggest such plans?

Tsukuda: そろそろ時点なので、一度閉会したいと思います。私もサンフランシスコ州立大学のエステック・スタディーズの出身ですが、こともとこの分野は、コミュニティの運動から始まったところ、彼が今でも活動家としてコミュニティと
Unfortunately, it’s time to conclude the discussion. I studied at College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University too and this academic field started from social movements in the communities. Prof. Ueunten is involved in academia, but at the same time he is involved in the community as an activist. He is always thinking about his positionality in the both sides, which I believe the very traditional attitude of the people from this academic field. As I’m also from the field, his lecture made me think about many things. I feel grateful that we were able to invite Prof. Ueunten to Seijo University.
2. PowerPoint Slides

Center for Glocal Studies Lecture Series
Seijo University
November 14, 2014
Wesley Ueunten

Critically Examining “World Uchinanchu” Discourse
「世界のウチナーンチュ」言説の批判的検証

Different “Okinawas”

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crh7lwIAqi0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crh7lwIAqi0)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CML49D1LGts](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CML49D1LGts)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp5FDWSiXLI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp5FDWSiXLI)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ko0X7Gk_QR](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ko0X7Gk_QR)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpJn9vvEAKE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpJn9vvEAKE)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fy296RaZEAo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fy296RaZEAo)
Some themes of the Taikai

- Internationalism: Okinawa as a focal point in Japan’s internationalism: “Bankoku no shinryo” (A Bridge to All Nations)
- The “immigrant story”:
  - Adventurous young men who go to Hawaii and South America before WWII
  - Followed and supported by women
  - Upward mobility and success in strange lands

What’s Missing?

- Class, gender analysis
  - Stories of Okinawan immigrant women
  - Post-World War II immigrants
    - War brides/GI brides
    - Okinawans who went to South America during U.S. occupation of Okinawa
  - South American Okinawan dekasegi in Japan
  - The U.S. military bases
Descendants of the Ryukyu Kingdom: Okinawan Diasporic Identity Matters

- Sociological question: Why do 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, and 4\textsuperscript{th} generation overseas Okinawans have a strong sense of Okinawan identity?
  - Historical and sociological contextualization of the Okinawan diaspora: Okinawan Diasporic Identity Matters (using the word “matter” as a noun)
- Asian American Studies question: Why does 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, and 4\textsuperscript{th} generation Okinawan identity matter?
  - Political contextualization of the Okinawan diaspora: Okinawan diasporic identity matters (using “matter” as a verb)

Okinawan Identity Matters: When “matters” is a noun
**世: **\textit{yu} = age/world (combination of time & space)

- \textit{Tō no yu} (唐ぬ世): “the Chinese age/world”
- \textit{Yamatu nu yu} (大和ぬ世): “the Japanese age/world”
- \textit{Makutu hituchi nu, uchiyu sami} (誠一つの浮世さめ): Is this not a Floating World of one sincerity?
- \textit{Ikusa yu} (戦世): “The time of war”
- \textit{Amerika nu yu} (アメリカぬ世): “the American age/world”

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**Tō no yu (唐ぬ世): “the Chinese era/world”**

Ryūkyū kingdom is a superior land in the South Seas
Gathering the cream of the three Korean states,
Maintaining close relations with China and Japan.
She is the Land of the Immortals,
Gushing forth between these two states.
Ships are means of communication with all nations.
The Kingdom is full of rare products and precious treasures.
**Yamatu nu yu (大和ぬ世): “the Japanese era/world”**

- Ryukyu annexed by Japan and becomes Okinawa Prefecture.
- Large scale overseas emigration from 1899.
- Ryukyuan exiles in China.

**Ikusa yu (戦世): “The time of war”**

- Sago Palm Hell: 1910s and 20s.
Amerika nu yu (アメリカぬ世): “the American age/world”

Okinawan diasporic identity matters (using “matter” as a verb)

- Nisei, sansei, yonsei... 二世、三世、四世... (2nd, 3rd, 4th generation and beyond)
- 世 (shi) = generation
- Gene-/gen-: Gender, genealogy, etc. → words that are related to race, category, creation, etc. (more discussion necessary)
Crossroads of Okinawan diasporic identity

- Great revival of Okinawan identity through “Worldwide Uchinaanchu” movement
- However, “Worldwide Uchinaanchu” movement is tolerated and even encouraged by Japanese government.
- Okinawan diasporic identity has developed with little reference to past and present political realities of the homeland → Increasingly ahistorical and apolitical
- We are at risk of becoming increasingly irreverent of past struggles of our ancestors and irrelevant of present political realities
Red areas are U.S. military facilities
Questions

- New questions:
  - How do we write and tell our history?
  - What do we leave to the next generation?
  - In what language? In what voice?
  - Whose voice will it be?
- Old questions:
  
  Is this not a Floating World
  Of one sincerity?

  Why is it then, that what we say
  Does not come together?

First Opium War
1839-1842

U.S. Naval Commodore Matthew C. Perry Visits Japan with warships 1854

Last Ryukyuan King: Sho Tai
Makutu hituchi nu, uchiyu sami
Nuyudi ikutuba nu, awa n uchuga

Is this not a Floating World
Of one sincerity?
Why is it then, that what we say
Does not come together?
3. Reflections on My Presentation at Seijo University

Wesley Ueunten
(San Francisco State University)

On November 14, 2014, I gave a talk at Seijo University. I am so grateful that I was given the chance to speak and to engage in stimulating dialogue with those in the audience. I especially thank Prof. Yoko Tsukuda, who organized the event and also sent me transcripts of my presentation and the discussion that followed. In my presentation and comments, which was entitled “Critically Examining ‘World Uchinanchu’ Discourse,” I raised concerns over the way that the “World Uchinanchu” discourse has become hegemonic in the Okinawan diaspora and diverts attention away from the problematic U.S. military presence in Okinawa while reinforcing an androcentric narrative of the Okinawan immigrant experience as being one of upward mobility through hard work, sacrifice, and cultural superiority over immigrants of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. In effect, the “World Uchinanchu” discourse fosters the formation of an apolitical and ahistorical Okinawan diasporic identity that is irrelevant to present political realities in both Okinawa and in the diaspora and is irreverent to the historical struggles of Okinawans against oppression and exploitation. Since the transcripts would provide the reader with a detailed representation of the key points of my presentation, what I would like to do here in this essay is to provide a reflective epilogue almost a year later.

“A Floating World”

During my presentation at Seijo University, I did a rendition of a classical Okinawan song called Nakafū Bushi:

Makutu hituchi nu, uchiyu sami
Nuyudi ikutuba nu, awa n uchuga

Is this not a Floating World
Of one sincerity?
Why is it then, that what we say
Does not come together?

Whether it is true or not I do not know, but the story I heard about Nakafū Bushi was that a court musician at the request of the last Ryukyuan king, Sho Tai, composed the above words. Sho Tai had a heavy heart as his ministers passionately argued over how their small kingdom should respond to the many changes that were happening at the time such as the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and the rapid rise of Japan as an economic, political, and military power soon after. He wanted a song that was more philosophical than the love songs that characterized much of the classical court music of the time. Nakafū Bushi sets the tone for this essay as I write with a combination of both fear and hope for what the dramatic global changes will mean for the Okinawan diaspora.

I write from within the Okinawan diaspora as a sansei Okinawan born and raised in Hawaii who as also spent nearly 10 years in Okinawa and Japan as a student, researcher, translator, and English teacher. At present, I teach Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University after having received a doctorate in Ethnic Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. I am also the current president of the San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai and a founding member of an Okinawan sanshin music group called Genyukai Berkeley.
Thus, I write from a complicated position of one who has ancestral roots in Okinawa, a part of Japan that was forcibly annexed in 1879, and raised in a part of the U.S. that was forcibly annexed in 1898. This position was made even more complicated by my actually being in Okinawa and Japan for nearly ten years as one who phenotypically passes as both Okinawan and Japanese, but not quite culturally and linguistically. Further, my location within the fields of Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies have generally shaped my academic and ideological outlook. However, my worldview has been shaped further by my actual physical location in the San Francisco Bay Area, which is simultaneously a staging ground for U.S. military and economic expansion into Asia and the Pacific, including the development of nuclear technology and the internet, and a hotbed for movements that have challenged American imperialism, militarism, and racism.

Going back to *Nakafū Bushi*, I became acutely aware of how I had been living in “A Floating World” or *uchiyu* in Okinawa and *ukiyo* in Japanese when I went to a presentation by a delegation of Okinawan women in Berkeley in 1996. They had come as part of a delegation to talk about the effects of the U.S. military presence in Okinawa especially on women and children in the wake of the 1995 rape of a 12-year-old Okinawan girl by three U.S. servicemen. It was to be expected that they would speak in Berkeley given the fact that it has been a center of protests against all forms of discrimination.

One such protest movement against the racist nature of higher education in the late 1960s led to the formation of the Department of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley. At the time that the Okinawan women activists came to Berkeley in 1996, I had recently entered the Ethnic Studies PhD program at UC Berkeley with the intent of studying Okinawan identity in the Okinawan diaspora. My study at the time was to look at the persistence of Okinawan identity as a function of ethnic pride that was in resistance to the forced annexation of the Ryukyu kingdom by Japan in 1879. My “Floating World” was based on an imagined pristine pre-annexation Ryukyu that was unsullied by the modern world and undefiled by Japanese dominance. This imagined Ryukyu also deemphasized the history of Okinawa from the Battle of Okinawa to the present. Perhaps this selective historical view of Okinawa was necessary for a *sansei* Okinawan like me because it enabled the creation of an Okinawan identity that did not confront the messiness of knowing that Okinawa has been subordinated, exploited, and oppressed by Japan and the U.S. I wanted a neat and simple history on which I could construct a “Floating World” in which I did not have to deal with imperialism, militarism, racism, sexism, and other “isms.” This is because, in dealing with these “isms,” in relation to one’s identity, one eventually has to confront his or her connection to them.

The women from Okinawa presented countless stories of rapes, murders, and other crimes against women and children committed by U.S. military personnel that have been taking place since the end of World War II. At the time, I was confronted with a view of Okinawan history that I could not deny or run away from. When listening to the stories, I had come face to face with the fact that Okinawa was still colonized by the U.S., the country of my birth, education, and citizenship. There was no escaping the fact that as an American, I am complicit in the colonization of Okinawa. Simultaneously, I realized that I had excluded the perspective of Okinawan women in my construction of Okinawan identity. Confronting the undeniable, I felt my “Floating World,” on which my Okinawan identity was based, collapse around me.

U.S. imperialism and militarism and perhaps the particular class, gender, and racial dynamics of both the U.S. and Okinawa ironically brought hundreds of Okinawan women to the Bay Area as
wives of military personnel who had been stationed in Okinawa. Many came to the Bay Area because of their husbands’ relocation to nearby U.S. military bases, but another explanation for the large number of them settling here is because the Bay Area has long been a haven for non-white and, particularly, Asian immigrant communities. Uncomfortable with their often unwelcomed stranger status as Asian women, many of the Okinawan women, their husbands, and mixed-race children gravitated to the Bay Area, which has been the entry point to Asian immigration at least since the Chinese first arrived during the Gold Rush in the 1850s.

It is in this context that I became president of the San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai. As a sansei Okinawan who had been inspired by the racial and ethnic pride movements that had been made possible by the aforementioned movements that challenged American imperialism, militarism, and racism, I embarked on a long journey to recreate my Okinawan identity. This led me to Okinawa and Japan to study and work for much of my adult life. I immersed myself in learning Japanese and Okinawa language and culture and the main vehicle for my journey to reconstruct my identity was the Okinawan sanshin. I spent roughly ten years in Okinawa and Japan studying the Okinawan sanshin and, while by no means proficient, my musical pursuit has put me in contact with many other Okinawans in the diaspora. My path led me to the PhD program in Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley and my eventual contact with the Okinawan community in the Bay Area. In the Bay Area, I also began performing and teaching sanshin through my involvement with Genyukai Berkeley. My long involvement with the local Okinawan community and with sanshin eventually led to my becoming president of the San Francisco Okinawan Kenjin Kai this past year.

My involvement with the movement to protest the militarization of Okinawa has been concurrent with my involvement in the kenjinkai. At kenjinkai meetings and events, there is no discussion of the large U.S. military base presence in Okinawa or any other political issue that involves U.S.-Japan relations. The prevailing discourse in the kenjinkai, and I suspect in most other Okinawan kenjinkai in the U.S., is one of keeping peace and harmony between the U.S. and Japan. Consequently, whenever the U.S. military presence in Okinawa is mentioned, there is general avoidance of the issue. There have been times when I have been warned about “someone (dareka),” “some people (nanninka),” or “everyone (minna)” being concerned about my bringing up or being associated with opposition to the U.S. military presence in Okinawa.

It is understandable that the Okinawans in our kenjinkai do not – at least publicly – support a stance against the U.S. military in Okinawa. Most grew up in Okinawa where forced assimilationist policies created feelings of ambivalence toward Okinawan identity and culture. To survive and escape being marked as “different” and “unusual,” which can be taken as veiled euphemisms for “inferior,” Okinawan women adopted a strategy of trying to fit in without making waves. Moreover, most of our kenjinkai members are women married to men who are part of the U.S. military and do not want to offend their husbands and their adopted country.

This is the same strategy that my family and I as well as most Okinawan and other Asian Americans have employed in the face of historical and contemporary racism. I know well the feeling of wanting to fit in and minimize the attention to the differences that my phenotype, last name, and even Hawaiian pidgin accent represent. Consequently, while Okinawans in the Bay Area do not necessarily share a common political stance, we do share a common desire to fit in to our social surroundings. We are not so different after all. We are also not so different from other groups that share histories of
oppression and discrimination.

On that note, I would like to revisit the questions of Nakafū Bushi: Is this not a Floating World of one sincerity? Why is it then, that what we say does not come together? In doing so, I would like to start off with the work “makutu.” I have translated makutu to mean sincerity, but it seems to be a word with much wider and deeper meaning. Makutu is represented by the Chinese character 誠 (chéng in modern Mandarin) and corresponds closely with the Japanese word “makoto” also represented by the same character 誠．While I am not qualified to make an informed assessment of 誠, I venture to say that the Chinese version connotes among other things sincerity, truth, honesty, and frankness. Makoto in Japanese is similar, but seems to also have a connotation of devotion, faithfulness, and fidelity. Given Okinawa’s long relationship with both China and Japan, the Okinawa meaning of makutu at the time of Sho Tai had no doubt formed in contact with both Chinese and Japanese versions of 誠．For aesthetic reasons, I used “sincerity” in my translation of makutu, but perhaps it is more useful to conditionally translate it here as “sincerity”/“truth.”

My own translation of makutu into English is an interpretation from my particular subjectivity as a descendant of Okinawan immigrants in Hawaii with the privileged experience of studying and living in Okinawa and Japan. This subjectivity has also been in communication with viewpoints of various oppositional movements through my being in the physical location of the Bay Area and in the academic fields of Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies. Consequently, my use of Nakafū Bushi paradoxically represents my interpretation of the “sincerity”/“truth” of a song that is itself about the interpretation of “sincerity”/“truth”; it is an attempt to ground an analysis of the Floating World from this present Floating World.

However, the gift of Nakafū Bushi is that it does not provide any answers or assertions and is instead a question followed by another question: Is this not a Floating World of one sincerity? Why is it then, that what we say does not come together? It provides a prescient 19th century Ryukyuan critique of “sincerity/truth” that can be informative of our ideas of concepts that influenced Okinawans in the Floating Worlds that followed, such as “nation,” “race,” “identity,” “citizenship,” and “loyalty.”

To use a later “Western” concept, “nation,” “race,” “identity,” “citizenship,” and “loyalty” are “floating signifiers” that have been able to gain immense hold and power over us precisely because they are not rooted in anything concrete or fixed. The Japanese emperor or the notion of a homogeneous Japanese heritage and culture may serve as an anchor to the concept of “Japan,” but this whole system of thought floats on a myth that ignores a much longer history of “Japan” being a checkerboard of different languages, cultures, identities, and loyalties. It also conveniently ignores the force and violence used to erase differences. This force and violence is all too familiar to Koreans, Taiwanese, Ainu, and Okinawans as well as to other people in the realm of the Japanese emperor who did not necessarily fit in the mold of the concept of a “nation-state” of one flag, one culture, one language, and one emperor, which ironically is a “Western” construct.

The creation of a fixed notion of “Japan” largely mirrors and coincides with the development of “race” in the U.S. The notion of “race” biologically determining the superiority of whites over other groups has been long disproved. In the lack of any credible evidence of “race” being rooted in something biological “given,” racism finds a home in social discourse that persistently retains and perpetuates racially charged meanings. For example, as shown by recent events surrounding the “Black Lives Matter” movement, African Americans are generally assumed to be, among other things, unintellectual, criminal,
irrational, and violent. A Google image search using the key word “Asian” will result in a disproportional amount of online photos of sexualized women with Japanese, Chinese, and Korean features.

Okinawans have performed as “Japanese” as a way to survive the withering gaze of the Japanese nation-state into which they were forcibly embraced not long after Nakafū Bushi was composed. Okinawans in the diaspora have danced on the edge of the knife by protecting our fragile status in overseas Japanese immigrant societies by performing as “Japanese” while performing as loyal residents or citizens of the country we happen to be in. There seems to be an awareness that we were performing in “Floating Worlds” and that our survival depended on our performance. We were also critical of such fixed terms as “Japan,” “Japanese,” “America,” and “American” because we had enough collective experiences and memories of exclusion, oppression, and discrimination to remind us that they were floating signifiers not rooted in any fixed reality.

What I propose in closing, is not the crushing or dismantling of “World Uchinanchu” discourse, but rather to inject into it a remembrance of our existence in Floating Worlds. I believe that this is an appealing proposal: While creating a fixed identity involves the impossible task of grasping onto the concept of “Uchinanchu” that itself drifts in a sea amid other impermanent constructions of “Japan,” “America,” “Brazil,” “Peru,” “Hawai’i,” etc., it might take less effort to embrace and appreciate our existence.

There is no doubt that our existence as “floating” people is filled with pain and suffering, but it has also put us in contact with other “floating” peoples. For example, the African and Okinawa diasporas meet in the Americas. They also meet in Okinawa itself as so many African American soldiers have been stationed at military bases there. I would like to finally end this essay by a conscious linking with that African diaspora.¹ In his seminal work, The Souls of Black Folk (1903) W.E.B. Du Bois talks about a “double-consciousness,” which was a “peculiar sensation” that was a:

- sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world what looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.²

My criticism of the “World Uchinanchu” discourse has been of how it has been steered toward a sanitized and unproblematized version of Okinawan diasporic history. In the process, it has been largely separated from the most important struggle: the struggle over freedom to determine our own consciousness. Du Bois adds:

- The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. The struggle over consciousness, that the unknown composer of Nakafū Bushi may have unwittingly foreseen, continues. In this Floating World, how do we merge our multiple selves into a better self and what is our message to the world?

¹ I would like to acknowledge that the initial idea to link our diasporas came from an old friend and colleague Eriko Ikehara. Mitzi Uehara Carter has also added much to this conversation during the years.
Part 2

Appendix 1

1. The Website of San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai
2. サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会のウェブサイト

Appendix 2

1. The Newsletter of San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai: 
   Tayui January 2016
San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai
サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会

Announcements From SFOKK

• SFOKK Application

Joining SFOKK
We are now looking for new members who want to join SFOKK. If you are interested in Okinawan culture, history, and traditional arts, please submit the application form to us. You can download the application form from the following button. We are excited to have you join our exciting SFOKK!

SFOKK Application

Event Calendar
SFOKK schedules a variety of events throughout the year. Please plan to attend them with your family and friends. Stay current on our line-up of activities, performances and what's to come.

Access to Event Calendar

Upcoming Events
SFOKK Shinnen-kai (New Year Celebration – Year of the Monkey)
February 14, 2016 (Sunday)
Time: 12-4 pm
Location: Fairfield Community Center, 1000 Kentucky Street, Fairfield, CA 94533

6th Worldwide Uchinanchu Worldwide Festival in Okinawa
October 26–30, 2016
The 6th Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival will be held at various locations in Okinawa from October 26–30, 2016.
About San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai

What is the San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai?

To begin answering that, we need to begin with Okinawa. Okinawa, once known as the Ryukyu Kingdom, is located within sailing range of Taiwan, Japan, China, Korea, the Southeast Asia, and islands in the South Pacific. As a consequence, Ryukyuan culture absorbed influences from a wide range of places. You can see it in our dance, music, martial arts, food, language, and customs. Tragically, however, Okinawa’s location at the crossroads of Asia made it a militarily strategic site. In the Battle of Okinawa during World War II, Okinawa was virtually flattened by a “typhoon of steel” and an estimated one fourth to one third of Okinawa’s population was killed. Miraculously, Okinawans picked up and moved forward from that catastrophe.

Ryukyuans have been traveling to other places as traders, explorers, travelers, diplomats, fishermen, students, and migrants since prehistoric times. Large-scale overseas Okinawan emigration began in 1899, 20 years after the Ryukyuan Kingdom was annexed by Japan in 1879. Since then, Okinawans have emigrated to all corners of the world, taking with them their strong sense of identity and unique culture.

San Francisco, Sacramento, San Jose, Fairfield, Fresno, and other parts of Northern California have been a destination of Okinawan emigrants for well over 100 years and the first Okinawan kenjinkai (prefectural association) began in San Francisco in the early 1900s. Our Okinawan community in Northern California got a boost after World War II when hundreds of Okinawan women married to American GIs stationed in Okinawa, relocated here. Other Okinawans, such as myself came to this vibrant place to study and work. Just as Okinawa is located at the crossroads of Asia, Northern California is located at the forefront of cultural, technological, political, social, economic, and academic movements.

SFOKK aspires to follow the themes of movement and motion as we feel the heartbeat of our members who have traveled from the faraway homeland of Okinawa. We also endeavor to move with the changes in this dynamic adopted home by bringing together the collective wisdom of our elders and dazzling energy of our youth.

Most importantly, we carry in our hearts the empathy and compassion of our ancestors. Okinawans have seen their homeland invaded, conquered, and devastated and their identity and culture threatened. We hope not to forget that our adopted home is the homeland of other peoples who have survived worse experiences. As such, we open our hearts to embrace other travelers in our journey through time and space in SFOKK. We strive to move other people’s hearts with our culture as we are moved by other’s cultures.

Wesley Ueunten
President
SFOKK
On February 15, 2015, we had our Shinnenkai (New Year’s Celebration) at the Fairfield Community Center in Fairfield. Since the facility seats over 300, I estimated that there were about 350-400 present because there were people standing, many performers were on stage, and healthy children were running around in the park outside. Incoming Vice Presidents Matt Matayoshi and Yasutomi Makishi, Geinobucho Kinuko Mototake, Treasurer Juli Kodani, and Secretary Julie Beal were busy with many tasks to keep the big event running smoothly. In all the excitement, I looked out into the crowd at people greeting each other and enjoying each other’s company – chimu stringing past, present, and future together like a Hawaiian flower lei or an Okinawan nuchibana. I saw the performances on stage and saw chimu emanating from the performers. It was like sunlight in the early morning!

As I recall the scene, I realized that being President of our Knenjin Kai is an honor and pleasure and that the energy and warmth of chimu is our greatest treasure. I am so appreciative of everyone who gave up time and traveled great distances to help and participate. I am touched that people worked hard to cooperate and collaborate with each other. I myself will strive harder to do the same.

As the sun rises every morning, so do I hope that we constantly refresh our chimu. Let us always remember to cherish our time together and be brilliant in our performances as we did at the New Years Party. Let us put aside our differences and disagreements long enough to enjoy ourselves and each other.

Wesley Ueunten
President
SFOKK

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Wesley Ueunten  
**President**

I am sansei (third generation) Okinawan from the island of Kaua'i in Hawai'i. Because of the discrimination against Okinawans, my mother talked about being ashamed of her heritage. This changed later in her life and she became proud to be Okinawan. When she was pregnant with me, she learned Okinawan dance and that is the reason why the sound of Okinawan music always stirs something deep inside my heart. Following my desire to understand that stirring, I have studied in Okinawa and Japan for many years. I am still studying and hope to learn from all of you.

Matt Matayoshi  
**Co-Vice President**

I was born in Naha and in 1974 moved to Minnesota where my sister was living. I have been a Farmers Insurance representative for 20 years. I was also president of SFOKK from 2002-2008. Until I became involved with the Kenjinkai, I had little knowledge of Okinawa, but was moved by its members’ passion, so decided to work hard as an officer.

Yasutomi Makishi  
**Co-Vice President**

I was born and raised in Koza City, Okinawa. After graduating from Koza High School, I moved to Tokyo, where I studied photography. Then I moved to the US and became a Japanese cuisine chef, opening a restaurant in New Jersey. To seek new opportunities, I moved to the Bay Area to become an executive sous chef with Kikka Sushi, a sushi vendor company for natural foods stores like Whole Foods Market.

Kinuko Mototake  
**Director of Culture and Arts**

I was born in the western part of Okinawa called the Yonaguni Island. Instructed by my mother, I grew up learning Okinawan dances and theatrical arts. I immigrated to the U.S. in 1981, and became involved with Okinawa Kenjinkai. For the past 20 years, I have been devoting myself to preserve our cultural traditions by reviving traditional Okinawan Folkdance which almost became extinct. I owe my gratitude towards Master Kazuko Kudeken of the Azama Honryu Seifu Ichisenn Kai who has given me invaluable instructions and guidance. To preserve this culture, I have been providing dance and Eisa instructions mainly in the San Francisco Bay Area.

It is my wish to help build SFOKK together in the spirit of “icharaba Chode,” (When we meet, we are bothers.), by holding hands in the spirit of “Chimu Churasa” (Beautiful heart), while continuing to expand the circle of “Chimu Gukuru” (Sincerity).

Julie Keiko Beal  
**Secretary**

I was born in Indiana to an Okinawan mother and an American father. My mother and her family are from Oroku in Okinawa and my father’s side is from Kentucky. I grew-up in Japan and spent all my childhood summers in Okinawa. For the past 8 years, I have worked as the Liaison Officer for the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science in Berkeley. I hope to utilize the administrative skills I have gained through work to enhance my duties as SFOKK secretary. I will do my best to support the activities and functions of our Kenjinkai and help promote the Okinawan spirit.

Juli Kodani  
**Treasurer**  
**Newsletter Content Editor**

My Okinawa connection began when I arrived in 1959 as a military dependent. I graduated from Kubasaki High School, attended Sophia University in Tokyo and returned to Okinawa working as a Department of the Army civilian. Soon after I came to the Bay Area in 1977, I met Kinuko Mototake who introduced me to the organization. I have been a past secretary, membership chair and Tayui editor.
San Francisco Okinawa Kenjin Kai
サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会

Event Calendar

SFOKK schedules a variety of events throughout the year. Please plan to attend them with your family and friends. Stay current on our line-up of activities, performances and what’s to come.

February 14, 2016 (Sunday)
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October 26–30, 2016
6th Worldwide Uchinanchu Worldwide Festival in Okinawa
The 6th Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival will be held at various locations in Okinawa from October 26-30, 2016.

See the flyer or Okinawa Prefecture website for further information.
We want to compile the demographics of our membership so we can better serve the needs of our ever-changing family makeup. Please help us by completing this form and identifying your core or extended family, if you feel that they can benefit from any of our future activities. Additionally, please help us by volunteering your services.

Please fill and send this form to the address stated on this form for requesting new membership.
2015 October
- Battle of Okianwa 70 Year Anniversary
- President's Message
- New SFOKK Board Members
- Potluck Yuntaku "Talk Story" Mixer on October 17, RSVP
- Flyer on Keiro-kai Event - November 8, RSVP
- 2015 High School Scholarship Winner
- Sayonara to Ryuji
- Spotlight on Advertiser
- Spotlight on Keiro Member

2015 June
- Battle of Okianwa 70 Year Anniversary
- Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival
- President's Message
- In Memory of Nancy Horne
- Calendar of Events
- Other Announcements

2015 April
- President's Message
- Financial Report (as of 3/19/15)
- Event Calendar
- New Members
- General Meeting
- Shinnen-kai Donations Recap

2015 February
- President's New Year Resolution
- Notice of 2015 New Year Party
- 2015 Event Calendar
- Introducing New Directors

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県人会からのお知らせ

・SFOKK入会申し込みはこちらから

入会希望の方へ

サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会では年間を通し様々なイベントを企画運営することにより、ベイエリア地域における県人同士の親睦を深め、沖縄伝統文化、芸能の普及に努めています。

我々と一緒に県人会を盛り上げてくれる方を募集中です。会の運営にご興味がある方、沖縄伝統芸能に興味がある方、下記ボタンから申込書をダウンロード出来ます。あなたのご参加をお待ちしております。

イベントカレンダー

サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会では年間を通し様々なイベントを企画運営することにより、地域社会へ沖縄伝統文化、及び芸能を広めようとしています。

最新のイベント情報、及びスケジュールは下記ボタンをクリックしてください。

イベントカレンダー

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近いうちに

SFOKK新年会
２０１５年２月１４日（日曜日）
時間：１２～４PM
場所：Fairfield Community Center, 1000 Kentucky Street,
Fairfield, CA 94533

第6回世界のウチナーンチュ大会
２０１６年１０月２６～３０日
サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会について

サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会(SFOKK)とは？

その質問に答えるには、沖縄について読ることから始める必要があります。かつて琉球王国として知られた沖縄は、台湾、日本、中国、韓国、東南アジア、南太平洋の諸島から航海範囲内に位置しています。その結果、琉球文化は広い範囲の土地から影響を受け、それは舞踊、音楽、武術、食べ物、言語、習慣などに見られます。しかし悲劇的なことに、アジアの交差点ともいえる沖縄の地理的特徴は軍事的戦略の場所となったのです。第二次世界大戦中の沖縄戦は「鉄の幕風」という事実上、破野原と化し、人口の四分の一から三分之一の人が命を落とす事になったのです。奇跡的に沖縄の人々はその大惨事から立ち上がり前進したのです。

琉球民族は有史以前から、貿易商、探検家、旅行者、外交官、漁師、学生、移民として諸国を旅してきました。大規模な沖縄県民の外国への移住は、琉球王国が1879年に日本に併合された20年後の1899年に始まりました。それ以来、沖縄県民はその強いアイデンティティ意識と独自の文化と共に、世界中のあらゆる場所へと移住していきました。

サンフランシスコ、サクラメント、サンノゼ、フェアフィールド、その他、北カリフォルニアは、実に100年以上もの間、沖縄系移民の目的地となっており、最初の沖縄県人会は1900年初頭にサンフランシスコにて発足しました。北カリフォルニアにおける沖縄コミュニティは第二次世界大戦後、何百人も沖縄県人女性が沖縄に駐留していた米兵と結婚してここへ移動してきたことをきっかけに増加しました。その他、私のような沖縄系移民は勤務や仕事のためにこの地に落ち着いた土地へとやってきました。沖縄がアジアの交差点に位置しているように、北カリフォルニアは文化的、技術的、政治的、社会的、経済的、また学術的活動の最前線に位置しています。

サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会は故郷沖縄から遠く離れ旅してきたメンバーたちの鼓動を感じ、その活動テーマを引き継いでいくことを望みます。また、私たちは、先輩方の英知と躍動する若きエネルギーをひとつにし、我々の故郷における様々な変化に対応するよう努めます。

最後に、最も重要なことは祖先に共感し、想いをひとつにすることです。沖縄人はかつて故郷を侵略され、征服され、破壊され、そのアイデンティティと文化を脅かされましたが、私たちの故郷は辛い体験を切り抜けてきた人々のホームランドであることを忘れない事願います。このように、私たちはサンフランシスコ沖縄県人会での場所と時間を通じて、他の旅行者を私達の旅へと迎え入れるように心を開きます。他者の文化に感動させられたように、私たちもまた自らの文化で他の人々の心を動かすように努めます。

SFOKK
会長
Wesley Ueunten

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サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会
会長ウェスリー上運天からの挨拶

2015年2月15日、フェアフィールドにあるフェアフィールド・コミュニティセンターにおいて新年会が行われました。会場には300以上の座席がありましたが、立っていた方々やステージ上の演者の方々、外の公園で元気に走り回る子供たちを含めると350〜400人くらいの方々に参加頂けたと思います。この大きなイベントを滞りなく進行させるべく、新例会長であるマット・マクヨン氏とマキ・ヤストミ氏、芸能部長の本竹恒子氏、会計係のジュリー・コマナ氏、また秘書のジュリー・ピール氏には多大なる御労苦をいただきました。そんな楽しいひと時を過ごす中、私は集まった方々が互いに挨拶をし合って、それぞれの仲間たちと楽しんでいる姿を見て、肝(チム=こころ)がまるでハワイのレイや沖縄の菊花のように過去と現在と未来を繋いでいるかの様に感じられました。また、舞台に登り上げて頂いた演者の方々から肝が湧きあがる様子は、それはまるで早朝に輝く朝日の光のようにでした。

その場面を振り返り、私は県人会の会長であることを名誉で光栄に思い、また腹の持つエネルギーと温かさは我々の偉大な宝であると気付かされました。今回、新年会に参加するために時間を割き合い方からわざわざお越しいただき、お手伝いしてくださったすべての方々に心より御礼申し上げます。皆様が互いに協力し合い、一生涯懸命に努力の姿に感動しました。私も同様に、これからも一層の努力に努めたいと思い

朝日が毎朝昇るように、我々も毎日肝(こころ)新たにしたいと願います。これからも共に過ごす時間に大事にし、新年会の時に応えるべき活動をしていきましょう。お互いの違いや意見の不一致はしばらくの遊びにして置いて、自分自身文気でお互いに楽しい時間を過ごしましょう。

サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会
会長
ウェスリー上運天
役員紹介

Wesley Ueunten
- サンフランシスコ沖縄親会会長

私はパワイのカウアイ島出身の沖縄三世です。かつて私の母は沖縄民を対象に百戦の勇者であり、その後私の出世にあることを賛美しようとしていました。母が私を育んでもいる時には、地域経済を売っていたので、私も沖縄音楽を聞くことに急がれました。私の「好きな」のが沖縄と日本の事について研究しています。これから会員皆様から色々な事を楽しみにしています。

Matt Matayoshi
- 共同副会長

藤原市出身で、1974年秋出身の男手で、ネッサンタ州に育った。Farmers Insuranceの代理店として25年間務め、その後に個人で会員を仲間化を10年間務めました。自社営業会に関わるまで、会員の喜びに対応して感謝 Fistと今後役員の一員として共に努力することが目的です。

Julie Keiko Beal
- 真喜志理男

私の生まれ育ちは、沖縄県那覇市です。コヤ高卒後、東京に進学し、司法官をしめました。アメリカに滞在した日に日本に帰国し、シーザー川に住んでいます。新たな機会を求めるために、私は農業を始めるとともに、マーケティング・マネージメントなどの名手業者の方々に会社を経営することになったためにベイエリアに移住しました。

Julii Kodani
- 会計

私の沖縄との縁は1956年に米軍家族として沖縄にやってきたか始まりました。イースター・ハイツ・サウス・ビンが生まれ、上位に進学し、その後沖縄に居る米軍親属のブランチとして活動しました。1977年にベイエリアに移住し、ウォーリングクラブの輸送会で本村村村長に出会い、君主像の事を紹介されました。会員や親族、家族を皆で思い描いていた通りに、会員と君主様は共にSFOKKに携わっていきたいと思います。

Ryuji Ganaha
- 会計

私は18歳で学生としてアメリカに来るとと沖縄の糸満市で育ちました。サンフランシスコのコミュニティ・リーダーシップで学んだ経験を活かし、2012年2月にサンフランシスコ州立大学に入学しました。2016年4月に卒業。現在ではエイサー・グループで「沖縄県相島」で三親族として活動しています。また農家を経て、日本に居る平者です。娘をを通して皆様に喜ぶことができる事を心から楽しみにしています。

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イベントカレンダー

サンフランシスコ沖縄県人会では年間を通じて色々なイベントを運営しています。2015年の年間イベントスケジュールは下記を予定しています。

2016年2月14日（日曜日）
SFOKK新会
時間：12－4PM
場所：Fairfield Community Center, 1000 Kentucky Street, Fairfield, CA 94533

2016年10月26～30日
第6回世界のウチナーンチュ大会
情報
フライヤー

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We want to compile the demographics of our membership so we can better serve the needs of our ever-changing family makeup. Please help us by completing this form and identifying your core or extended family, if you feel that they can benefit from any of our future activities. Additionally, please help us by volunteering your services.

Please fill and send this form to the address stated on this form for requesting new membership.
2015 October
• Battle of Okianwa 70 Year Anniversary
• President's Message
• New SFOKK Board Members
• Potluck Yuntaku "Talk Story" Mixer on October 17, RSVP
• Flyer on Keiro-kai Event - November 8, RSVP
• 2015 High School Scholarship Winner
• Sayonara to Ryuji
• Spotlight on Advertiser
• Spotlight on Keiro Member

2015 June
• Battle of Okianwa 70 Year Anniversary
• Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival
• President's Message
• In Memory of Nancy Horne
• Calendar of Events
• Other Announcements

2015 April
• President's Message
• Financial Report (as of 3/19/15)
• Event Calendar
• New Members
• General Meeting
• Shinnen-kai Donations Recap

2015 February
• President's New Year Resolution
• Notice of 2015 New Year Party
• 2015 Event Calendar
• Introducing New Directors

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Comments

Name
Email
Subject
Message

Send
Important Announcements

2016 New Year’s Party on February 14 in Fairfield (see enclosed flyer)*

Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival in Okinawa October 26-30, 2016

*President’s note: We traditionally have our New Year’s Celebration on the Sunday before the President’s Day Holiday, which is on the 3rd Monday of every February. This year, The 3rd Monday of February falls on February 15 and so our New Year’s Celebration comes earlier than usual. Forgive me for not reminding you all about this earlier in the year.
President’s Message

The first song and dance performed at all our Shinnenkai is Kajadefi. Each of the dance schools in SFOKK takes turns every year to perform it. Kajadefi is borne out of the tenacity of Ryukyuan identity. It comes to us from a time when the Ryukyu Kingdom existed precariously between the powers of Japan and China. Despite the abolition of the Ryukyu Kingdom and the drastic political and social changes that have taken place since then, Kajadefi still survives and thrives even here in Northern California!

At the start of the New Year, I also look to Kajadefi as the inspiration for my theme for the New Year. That theme is to take joy seriously. As a young sansei Okinawa growing up in Hawaii, whenever Kajadefi was performed, I sometimes wanted to run and hide because it was slow and somber. It was not until later in life that I learned that it is a song of inspiration for my theme for the New Year. That theme is to take joy seriously.

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Kajadefi was born out of the fragility of life: it is from a place where people have struggled to survive typhoons, droughts, famine, sickness and war. In such conditions, taking happiness seriously would be the ultimate form of respect to the parents, ancestors, and gods who gave us life. To not take each moment of joy seriously, would be to waste that precious life. In the present, we have the power of modern science to keep us safe from the elements and sickness, but life still remains precious and so does the wisdom of taking happiness seriously.

My fellow members of SFOKK who have taken joy so seriously have constantly inspired me. I appreciate how many of you travel great distances to participate in our events and to enjoy each other's company. I am grateful for those who take time out of their busy schedule to joyfully help out. I value all of those who put so much joy into learning, teaching, preserving, and performing Okinawan traditions. Like a just budding flower graced by a dewdrop in the brilliant morning sun, let us spread and share our joy!

*Translation by Robin Thompson
Nurturing Our Young Membership

Our Uchinanchu Festival Odyssey in October 2006
(reprinted from April 2007 issue of Tayui)

Tired from the long trip from San Francisco via Osaka, we were picked up by Chiyo’s sister, Sumiko, at Naha Airport on October 8, 2006 and driven to her home at Ishikawa. By noon the next day, relatives from all over Okinawa began trickling in – the start of a typical Nakamatsu Welcome Home Party: lots of food, drink, song and dance and presents for all. What a wonderful way to be welcomed by our families on our 14th visit since 1976! (Ben first went there in 1947 while assigned to GHQ in Tokyo and later from 1963 to 1975 with the CISO office in Machinato.)

After a day's rest, we moved to a hotel in Naha to be near the Festival events. On the 11th, the Grand Parade commenced from Makishi down flag-bedecked Kokusai-dori. Thousands of people, young and old, lined the route, clapping as we passed. Ben greeted elders seated in front of the crowd with: “Yoku ai ni kite kuremashita. Domo arigato gozaimasu. O-genki de ne.” You should have seen their smiles! After the parade we had an Orion beer and tempura, watched the stage shows on the Ryubo department store roof and rode the monorail back.

The 12th saw us at Shuri Castle for a superbly rendered “Dances of the Ryukyu Kingdom.” We then rushed to the Okinawa Convention Center for the opening ceremony. Several hundred stage performers and musicians danced and sang for the standing room only crowd. Nearly 5,000 ex-patriots from 40 countries came. After welcoming speeches, messages from overseas Kenjinkai, presentation of flags and more performances, the Festival was declared officially open. On leaving the Hall, we were given lovely Bingata shopping bags and other gifts. We walked to nearby Ginowan Seaside Park where we ate BBQ and squid and bought souvenirs at the World Bazaar. Ongoing performances at the outdoor “Champuru” kept us entertained.

Next morning, we walked Kokusai-dori and Heiwa-dori where Ben got his “giranbaya kamoboko fix” and Chiyo bought gifts. We were invited to Naha Mayor Onaga’s welcome party that evening. Short speech, stage shows, music and a huge buffet after which we received Bingata table mats as parting gifts.

SFOKK wants to take an active interest in assisting applicants vying for Okinawan prefectural scholarships like the summer Junior Study Tour and the year-long Kempi Scholarship. It is a very competitive field with preparation a year in advance sometimes the norm. We want to educate the SFOKK membership about the requirements and the selection process to help the student applicant.

The Junior Study Tour goal is to develop various Kenjinkai communities around the world and foster the next generation of youth to lead the Uchinanchu Network. It was initially featured as a pre-event at the 3rd Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival in 2001. Due to the strong demand for it from various Kenjinkai and associations overseas, it continued as a voluntary program of the Okinawa Prefectural Government since 2002.

In 2010, SFOKK had one candidate, Ms. Hisa Tome (daughter of Yoshimori Tome), who applied for the Junior Study Tour. We were thrilled to hear that she was one of 6 youths selected from the entire United States and one of a total of 21 youths from throughout the world! Her experience not only benefited her future endeavors, but also helped her realize her Okinawan roots.

These Okinawan Prefectural scholarships are available for anyone between the ages of 13 and 18 for the Junior Study Tour and those of college-age for the Kempi Scholarship. If a child/grandchild of a SFOKK member in good standing is willing to accept the challenge and opportunity to study in Okinawa, please let us know in advance. SFOKK would like to help them jumpstart this process and fulfill this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Farewell to our Secretary

Julie Keiko Beal is leaving her post as SFOKK secretary due to entering a highly demanding full-time graduate program. She is pursuing a Master’s Degree in Social Work at San Jose State University. She currently interns at a hospice and hopes to become a licensed social worker specializing in palliative care. She is excited to begin this next chapter in her life and thanks the SFOKK board for the wonderful experience of volunteering with them and the SFOKK members for allowing her to serve in the community.

Good luck Julie!!
On the 14th, we ate at the Bazaar, then on to the Convention Center for a 3-hour seminar on perpetuating the use of “Uchinanchu Guchi,” the original language of the Ryukyus. Later, we saw a superb musical performance of “Pigs from the Sea,” a story of the Okinawans in Hawaii who raised $48,000 to buy and ship 550 pigs to Okinawa via the USS Owens in 1948.

That evening we were invited to the Ginowan Mayor’s welcome party for hometown ex-patriots. Again, welcome speeches, stage shows, music, awamori tasting, huge buffet, and more parting gifts. There were a number of events in addition to the above which we did not attend: symphony concert, peace works, business fair/symposium, singing contest, soccer, karate, and gateball tournaments. There was indeed something for all!

The Festival’s closing day ceremony on the 15th at the Center was fantastic. Musicians and 400 dancers gave a beautiful rendition. After the finale, we remained in our chairs to savor the welcome given us, amply expressed by the Festival theme song, “The Wind to Nirai.” For an all too short time, we experienced a feeling of peace and happiness that both of us, who have known the horrors of war, can fully appreciate. Even Mother Nature was at peace, as she held off the rain until the day after the Festival closed.

The balance of our Odyssey was with family and friends – more food, drinks, song and dance. Party time! We attended a nephew’s huge wedding, toured Okinawa World’s Eisa show, Bingata dyeing, paper making and glass blowing. We managed to squeeze in Ryukyu-mura, Tonan Shikubutsu-en, Bios Park, Ocean Expo Aquarium, and other must-see places.

When our month-long stay was over, 30+ family members held an impromptu sayonara party for us at Naha Airport. We are deeply grateful to them and the people of Okinawa for showing us such a heartfelt welcome.

We encourage all members of our Kenjinkai to make a trip back for the 6th Uchinanchu Festival in 2016, to see family, friends and the people and culture of Okinawa. Don’t wait until it’s too late! The next one won’t be until 2021!

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World Uchinanchu Festival!

As many of you know, every five years Okinawa Prefecture hosts the Sekai no Uchinaanchu Taikai (World Uchinanchu Festival). This year will be the 6th such event and it will be held from October 26 to 30. We will be presenting information on the Taikai and about travel and accommodation packages upcoming and at our Shinnenkai on Feb. 14. We also invite people to participate in the planning and organization of the SFOKK delegation to the Taikai. For example, there is always a parade the day before the official ceremony. In 2011, we looked sharp in our matching t-shirts and good-looking people, but this time we want to do something where we can show how special we are! Please share your ideas.
**Successful Yuntaku Kai!**

On October 17, 2015 from 2 to 5 pm, about 30 people, including SFOKK members and friends, gathered for a "Yuntaku Kai" in San Pablo. The purpose of the gathering was for people to socialize freely without any agenda through what Okinawans call "yuntaku" and what people in Hawai‘i call "talk story." Of course, no Okinawan event is complete without good food and music! With participants bringing snacks, we ended up having an amazing array of food. We also had impromptu guitar and sanshin performances.

By all accounts, the event was a success as we had a good mix of women and men from different backgrounds (Okinawan, Japanese, American, Filipino, Tibetan, etc.) ages (20s to 90s). I think we all learned much from each other and created lasting ties with each other in the mode of "ichariba choodee (Once we meet, we are family)." We would like to have more of such events in the future in different parts of Northern California and if you are interested in hosting one, feel free to contact Wesley. A special thanks to Ken Murra, who hosted the event at his house.

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**2016 SFOKK HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP**

Deadline for submission is May 31, 2016.

It is open to all 2016 High School Graduates whose family are members of SFOKK. A 200 to 300-word autobiographical essay must be submitted with the application. The essay should cover significant experiences, community involvement, and the qualities of character important to achieving your personal goals. Be sure to comment on your aspirations in terms of your educational and career goals. The application form is available from Jul Kodani, phone 415-479-4214 and on the website: sfokk.org. Send completed application and essay to: SFOKK, 1344 Scott Street, El Cerrito, CA 94530. Winner must fulfill an obligation to volunteer and assist SFOKK when called upon.

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**Azama Honryu Seifu Ichisen Kai U.S.A.**

**Kinuko Mototate Okinawan Dance Academy**

**Est. 1996**

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Dance: Saturday 7-9 p.m.
Sunday 4-6 p.m.
Eisa: Sunday 2-4 p.m.

Master Kinuko Mototate
Director
510 708 6672
kinuko4@gmail.com

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We are accepting donations of merchandise, gift certificates and services for our RAFFLE. The money will be used for our scholarship fund and other SFOKK events throughout the year. Please bring them with you to the Shinnen-kai. Thank you for your support.

We are having a BOOK SALE too. If you have any old books, DVDs and CDs you want to donate, please bring them with you to the Shinnen-kai. EVERYTHING will be priced at $3 or less, with a 3-2-1 scale: $3 for hard cover books; $2 for paperback books; $1 for DVDs, CDs, books on tape, vinyl and other forms of media. Any items remaining after 3pm will go for $1 each.

**Donations to SFOKK:**
Mrs. Toyoko Araki  
Mr. & Mrs. James Austin  
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Kanevari  
Mr. & Mrs. Ted Canty  
Mrs. Fujiyo Dandoy  
Mrs. Shizue Hori  
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Journey  
Mrs. Mitsuko Kinman  
Mr. & Mrs. Lewis Slagle  
Mr. & Mrs. Tsutomu Tomita  
Ms. Jeanette Yamashiro  
Kikka Sushi (Mr. Yasutomi Makishi)
Have you ever considered volunteering for SFOKK? Don’t avoid volunteering just because you can’t be bothered. All groups need volunteers who are competent, enthusiastic, available and willing. There’s an enormous trade-off in volunteering that you will understand only when you do it. You’ll be gaining confidence, satisfaction in doing a good deed, personal growth, nurturing, and perhaps training and other skills that you wouldn’t necessarily get by doing it alone.

When volunteering, all personality types come together. You’ll meet people from all walks of life with different approaches to doing things. Sometimes to deal with this, you need patience and compromising skills. Volunteers that succeed are those who stick around for the long haul, who know the background and who treat each other with respect.

If you want to volunteer, but don’t want or can’t make a long term commitment, remember that an occasional or one-time or short-term commitment can help us too. We always need help at events like the Shinnen-kai (New Year’s Celebration) and Keiro-kai (Seniors’ Appreciation Day). If you have a talent for graphics or writing, we can certainly use your help on our quarterly newsletter Tayui or on our website sfokk.org. Let us know if you would like to contribute to our Kenjin Kai and thank you ahead of time!

Remember, nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something.

(Author unknown)
Appeal from SFOKK President

Haisai!
Now that I have served as president of SFOKK for a year, I am even more appreciative of my fellow officers and members. Thanks to everyone, our organization has thrived for over 30 years despite many challenges. Among those challenges have been the physical distances between our members who are scattered throughout Northern California. Thanks to the work and leadership of our officers and to the commitment of all our members, those distances have been overcome. As our membership ages, however, it is becoming increasingly difficult to overcome the long distances. I feel sad when I hear that members cannot come to our events because they do not drive anymore or could not find anyone to bring them. We also have the challenge of bringing nisei, sansei, and other younger people into our organization. Younger people are usually very busy with school, work, and raising families and finding time to participate and volunteer is difficult. The issue is compounded by the linguistic and cultural gap between the older Okinawan-born and younger American-born generations.

The work of running SFOKK falls increasingly on a shrinking pool of people. You all make heroic efforts to fit your work into your busy schedules and for that I am very grateful. Together we have done a great job, but I hope that we can do even more to keep our organization thriving.

As many of you know, our dancers, musicians, cooks, scholars, martial artists, and other people with skills and talents are highly sought out in the greater community. We have a lot to offer each other as a community and our community has a lot to offer the world.

As my poor officers know – especially our overworked Juli Kodani – I put out more ideas than I follow up on! That is why I make this heartfelt appeal for people to share in the joy of working with such a beautiful community. We of course always need volunteers for our New Year’s party, Keiro Kai, and other events, but we could surely use people to help with Tayui; membership; secretarial duties; coordinating events; website maintenance, and list goes on. Much of the work can be done at home if you cannot attend meetings because of time constraints.

There are also opportunities to share in other happy work. Please see articles inside about the World Uchinanchu Taikai and “Yuntaku Kai. I hope to also have study groups, cooking workshops, and other events. Further, I would like to create a pool of drivers who can give rides to some our members who cannot drive to events. (You would be surprised how much you can learn from people when you drive them around!) If our members cannot come to us, then we can go to them. I hope that we can take our joy seriously. We can only do that if we all share in the joy: Aoka nu junai, minji nu samu ni (大笑う無愛, 少数に) – More people, more fun!

Wesley Ueunten
Critically Examining “World Uchinanchu” Discourse:
Identity Consciousness among Overseas Okinawan Immigrants and Their Descendants

Wesley Ueunten

Transcribed and Compiled by
Yoko Tsukuda