



THE OKINAWA MEMORIES INITIATIVE

An Okinawan-American Dialogue



UC SANTA CRUZ



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A collection of rare photos is reviving memories and opening the door to a comprehensive understanding of postwar Okinawa.

OKINAWA: THE SHARED HISTORY OF A TINY ISLAND AND A GLOBAL SUPERPOWER

For 70 years, the people of the island of Okinawa, Japan have lived amid a dense concentration of U.S. military personnel who rarely speak the local language. An enduring reminder of the traumatic final battle of WWII, the United States' military bases cover a quarter of the 65-mile long island and house over 20,000 people.

Now a 70-year-old trove of photographs is catalyzing the collection of the histories of the locals living with the occupation, the military personnel, and their families. In collaboration with faculty, undergraduate students host exhibitions of the photographs on the island, seeking attendees who know the people and places imaged.

They are working toward an online and physical collection of oral history, archival research, and



crowdsourced narratives. Student participants are developing critical career skills while creating a resource of immeasurable value.

Many university alumni look back on study abroad as the highlight of their college years—this deep dive into a history that shaped present-day Okinawa is truly life changing.



DR. ALAN CHRISTY

Alan is an associate professor of history at UC Santa Cruz, the faculty director of the Okinawa Memories Initiative. Alan received his Ph.D. in Japanese history from the University of Chicago and began teaching at UC Santa Cruz in 1995. He is currently researching transnational memories of World War II in the Pacific from 1945 to the present.

THE GAIL PROJECT AND THE OKINAWAN MEMORIES INITIATIVE

Our project launched with a set of nearly 160 photographs—landscapes, portraits, and daily life scenes—taken in Okinawa in the mid-1950s by U.S. Army Captain Charles Eugene Gail. The Gail photographs give us a window into the early stages of the United States’ post-war relationship with the island.



Photo courtesy Geri Gail

When we held an exhibition in Okinawa, thousands showed up: viewers identified the people and places portrayed, and their memories of the island in that period led to much broader conversations. The project has since taken on new dimensions: pop-up exhibitions, oral history gathering, and an innovative design tool enabling Okinawans all over the world to view photographs and record memories associated with those images. OMI follows a unique model:

Undergraduate students work on the initiative throughout the academic year and then travel with a team led by project director Dr. Alan Christy to Okinawa to engage in hands-on research and experiential learning.

Undergraduates work closely with graduate students conducting their own research, and alongside professional photographers, filmmakers, oral historians, and curators gaining deep knowledge of Okinawan and American history while developing useful professional skills. This model is proving to be an extraordinary experience for all involved, especially for the students who are seeing Okinawa (or perhaps another country) for the first time.



THE HUMANITIES INSTITUTE AT UC SANTA CRUZ

The Okinawa Memories Initiative is supported by The Humanities Institute at UC Santa Cruz, a hub for exploration of today’s most vexing issues through the humanities and collaborations with scientists, artists, and engineers. The institute is committed to engaging with the broadest community possible—from first-generation undergraduate students, to local residents, to anyone interested in compelling ideas and making sense of an increasingly complex world.

The Humanities Institute
UC SANTA CRUZ

“If America has a mission to fulfill for Okinawa today, it is to help build the archive of Okinawa in those years... please continue your work.”

— PROF. MASAO GABE
PROFESSOR EMERITUS,
YAMANASHI GAKUIN UNIVERSITY

Headline reads:
“That girl, she’s me”
American college students meet with girl in Gail’s photo

FUNDS RAISED NOW DETERMINE WHAT IS POSSIBLE FOR OMI

Gifts to the Okinawan Memories Initiative mean students and faculty have the support they need to participate in this exciting interdisciplinary work and advance the ambitious goal of sharing with the world a richly told comprehensive understanding a post-war Okinawa. Opportunities to accelerate the Initiative include:

UNRESTRICTED GENERAL SUPPORT

A general gift of support will give the faculty director the ability and flexibility to expand the Initiative strategically and provide funding where it's needed most. This fund will support the travelling exhibition, website and mobile app, oral history production and professional fees, publications, and could also include direct student support.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Gifts to the following fellowships provide undergraduate and graduate students with much needed time and funds to pursue their research and exercise leadership in the Initiative, both within the university and in the public sphere. Without this support, students seek other employment opportunities which often become obstacles to them being able to fully commit to the Initiative.

STUDENT SUMMER TRAVEL FELLOWSHIP

\$3,500

Sponsor a student's travel to Okinawa to conduct hands-on research and expand their professional development. With this travel fellowship, you will cover the full cost of their travel, lodging, and daily expenses.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT

\$4,500

OMI undergraduates are motivated and passionate about their work and research. This gift provides support for an undergraduate research assistant to work ten hours per week during the Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters (\$1,500 per quarter).

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

\$45,000

This fellowship will provide one graduate student engaged with the Okinawan Memories Initiative full funding for one academic year. The Assistant Director would provide much needed organizational and administrative support for the faculty director and the Initiative, managing student research, the project teams, student travel, and upcoming exhibitions.

Your gift has far-reaching impact. Already, many Okinawans have contributed to and benefitted from this collective historical project. Future traveling exhibitions will reach thousands more Okinawans on the island and around the world.

At the same time, OMI will connect with countless Americans—personnel stationed on the island, as well as members of their families whose lives have been indirectly impacted by the powerful effects of postwar memories.

Perhaps the greatest impact returns home, as well, to UC Santa Cruz and to the students whose lives are forever changed by experiencing a challenging and exciting research project. UCSC undergraduate and graduate students working on OMI teams benefit from a uniquely strong sense of belonging during their time at university and gain valuable professional skills that prepare them for meaningful work and careers.

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