

My Heritage Project



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About Me

- I was born and raised on the island of O'ahu, Hawai'i on the Leeward coast of the island
- My ethnicity is 50% Filipino/25% Japanese/25% Okinawan
- I am a monolingual English speaker
- I mainly identify with local Hawai'i culture
- This project is focusing on my Japanese/Okinawan heritage which comes from my father's side. Insight comes from my father and grandmother through multiple interviews



My Japanese/Okinawan Heritage

- My paternal grandmother was born in Honolulu, Hawai'i
- English was her first language
- She attended Japanese school for 5 years in elementary school, and enrolled in conversational Japanese in college but did not apply the language in daily life
- Her parents, my great-grandparents were also born in Honolulu, Hawai'i. They opened a diner and learned how to invest in property while they were alive

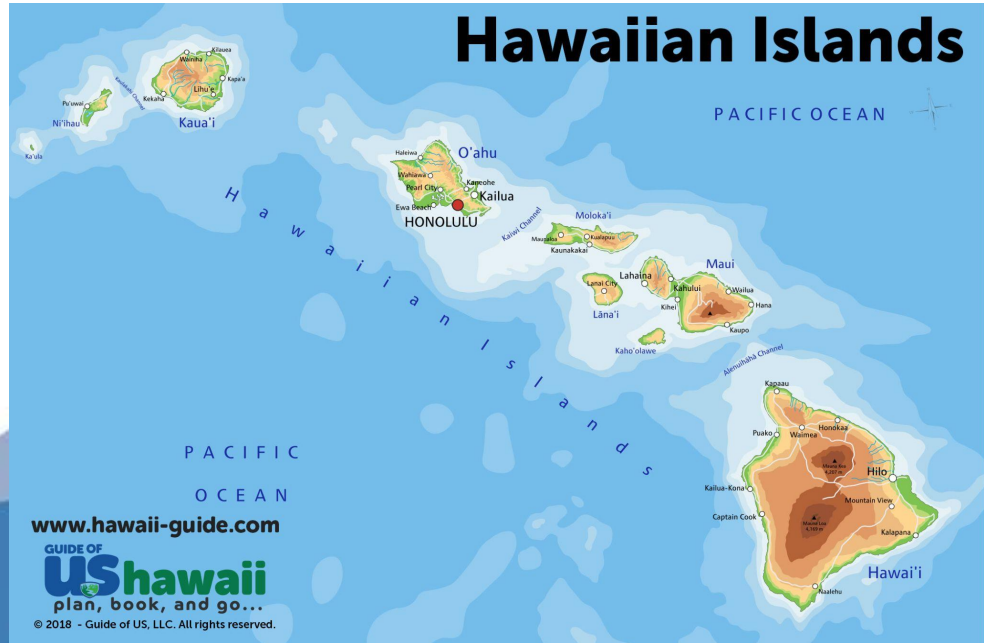


- Her grandparents, my great-great-grandparents were born in Okinawa and moved to Hawai'i for more opportunities and financial stability. Worked on the sugarcane fields
- My grandmother moved to Los Angeles, California in the 8th grade with her family
- After getting married, she and her husband moved to the Big Island, Hawai'i to care for a sick family member
- They eventually moved to O'ahu, Hawai'i in 1974 which is where they both currently reside
- Though my grandmother is of Okinawan descent, she learned the traditional Japanese language and associates herself with Japanese local Hawai'i culture rather than exclusively Okinawan or Japanese



Why Hawai'i?

- The first Japanese immigrants arrived in Hawaii at 1885
- The first Okinawan immigrants arrived in Hawaii in 1900 after Japan reversed the prohibition of emigration from Okinawan Prefecture
- Looking for greater financial opportunity, they found work in Hawaii sugar cane plantation
- On the field, they performed laborious weeding and cutting sugar cane
- 1990 was when the first group of Okinawan laborers were established



- Hawaii business owners actively recruited Japanese immigrants, often sending agents to Japan to sign long-term contracts with young men
- In 1920, Japanese organizers joined with Filipino, Chinese, Spanish, and Portuguese laborers, and afterwards formed the Hawaii Laborers' Association, the islands' first multiethnic labor union, and a harbinger of interethnic solidarity to come.



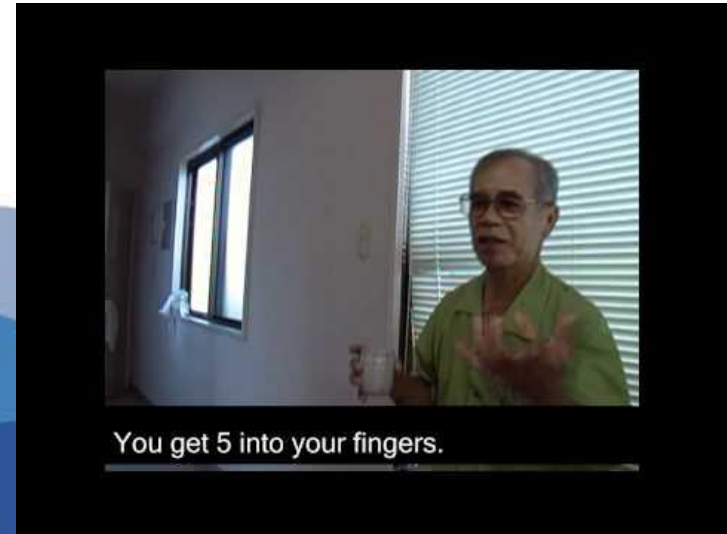
Japanese vs. Okinawan Culture

- Okinawans in Hawaii faced discrimination by the local Japanese community, who saw them as backwards due to cultural and linguistic differences
- Most people in Okinawa speak Okinawan Japanese, a variety of Japanese influenced by Okinawan and Kunigami, a Ryukyuan language spoken in the Kunigami District of northern Okinawa. There are also some words borrowed from English, although fewer than in other varieties of Japanese.



Language Variations

- Though my grandmother did not learn the Okinawan Language, she acknowledges the distinct dialect differences
- These videos are examples of conversations in Japanese and Okinawan



About my Father

- He was born in Los Angeles, California
- He moved from the Big Island to O'ahu with my grandmother and their family
- My father currently lives in Honolulu, Hawai'i
- He is a monolingual English speaker
- He incorporates Hawaiian Pidgin as a part of his language and associates with local Hawai'i culture



What is Hawaiian Pidgin?

Howtoliveinhawaii.com ©



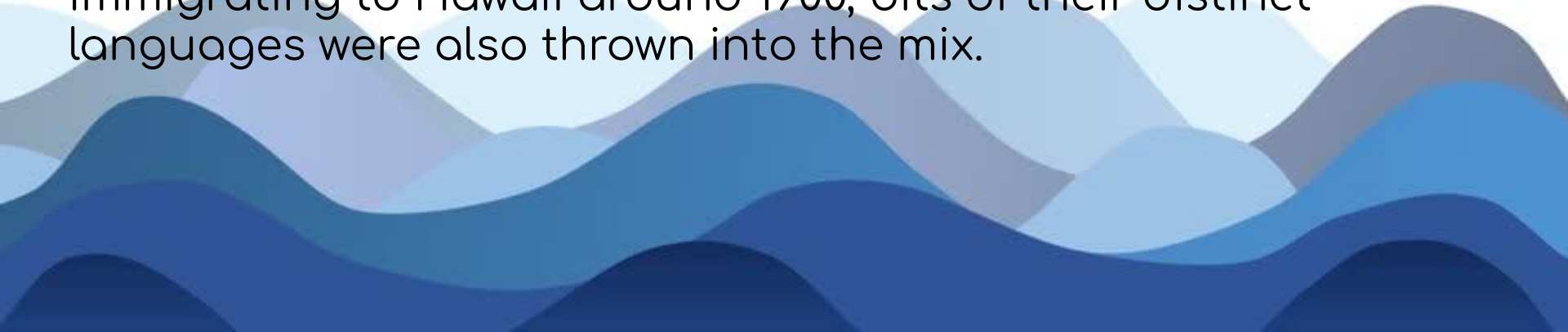
- My paternal relatives do not speak Japanese or Okinawan, but instead, associate more with English and Hawaiian Pidgin
- I also understand Hawaiian Pidgin and use this language when I am around family, local Hawai'i residents, and people who are familiar with this creole language.

Hawaiian vs. Hawaiian Pidgin

- Hawaiian is an official language of Hawai'i that consists of thirteen letters and eight consonants, including the 'okina
- Hawaiian pidgin is a creole based English language which is spoken by many Hawai'i residents
- As Hawai'i residents, we are not all fluent in the Hawaiian language, but respect the people, their land, and their culture
- The audio below is an example of the Hawaiian language



- Hawaiian Pidgin has evolved from the old plantation days, when immigrants came from different countries to work in Hawaii's sugar cane fields. First came the Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese in the mid-1800s. In order to be able to communicate with each other and the English-speaking plantation owners, a common language developed that borrowed words, phrases, intonations, and grammatical structures from these 4 different languages. When the Okinawans, Puerto Ricans, Koreans, and Filipinos started immigrating to Hawaii around 1900, bits of their distinct languages were also thrown into the mix.



Examples of Hawaiian Pidgin

Choke: A lot of something, anything.

- Get choke peepo at da concert. (There are lots of people at the concert.)

Foa or Fo': For, replaces the word "to".

- Moa easy foa buy um' made, cause hahda fo' make um. (It's easier to buy it already made, because it is harder to make it.)

Howzit: How are you?

- Howzit, sista, how da ohana? (How are you, girlfriend? How is your family?)

Kay den: Alrighty then or all right.

- Kay den fine go be li'dat! (Alrighty then, be that way!)

Pau (pau): Finished or done.

- I pau cook da rice! (I am done cooking the rice!)

Shootz: Goodbye, see you later.



Japanese Influence on Hawaii Language

- Hawai'i has transformed Japanese culture in the context of Hawai'i residents. They have incorporated Japanese words into Hawai'i slang. Some examples are listed below

Miscellaneous [\[edit \]](#)

- Bocha: Take a [bath](#). Originally from *bocha-bocha* Japanese onomatopoeia for splashing noises.
- Bon dance ([ja:盆踊り](#)): From the Japanese [Bon Festival](#). An annual summer dance held outside at [Buddhist temples](#) to greet the returning souls of the deceased. They dance in a circle around a tower where people sing and beat taiko drums. The most famous bon dance song is "Tanko-bushi" (炭坑節).
- Buddhahead: Hawaii person of Japanese descent. "Buddha" is likely a corruption of Japanese "豚 (buta)", meaning "pig". In contrast, the term "Katonk" means a Japanese-American from the US mainland.
- Habut/Habuteru: To feel grumpy or resentful, especially after you feel offended by something. Not standard Japanese but from Hiroshima dialect.
- Jan ken po: The children's game of rock (fist), paper (open hand), and scissors (peace sign). In Japanese, either [jan ken](#) or [jan ken pon](#). The Japanese also do not say the prelude as used in Hawai'i ("janken na manken an saka saka po ...") before they show their hands. This jan-ken-po prelude can also differ depending on the island and is mainly used by children.
- [Shibai](#): A false act. Often refers to politicians or other influential persons who put on a false face. From the Japanese word *shibai*, meaning "a (theatre) play."

Japanese/Okinawan Influence on Hawai'i Communities

- Japanese established Buddhist temples in Hawai'i
- Obon, or Bon Dan festivals are celebrated in Hawai'i in June and August to honor ancestors
- I do not speak any languages other than English, but my culture is still represented through the food, shopping, and tourism in Hawai'i



What Does All This Mean to Me?

- Hawai'i has always felt like home to be because of the Japanese and Okinawan influences on the Hawai'i culture
- Hawai'i's economy depends on Japanese tourism, businesses and investments. Tourism is the state's number one industry.
- Because of this, I was always surrounded by people of the same ethnicity as myself. However, I struggled with my identity since I did not feel strongly connected to my Filipino or Japanese/Okinawan culture
- From this experience, I have learned how many generations were born in Hawai'i which explains my immediate family's cultural ties to the local culture.

How Do I See Myself Now?

- Through interviewing my family history and learning about our heritage, my connections to the Hawai'i resident culture has been solidified.
- My ethnicity is Filipino/Japanese/Okinawan, but I associate with the local Hawai'i culture
- Hawai'i culture is a blend of many other cultures which is what makes it so special and unique



How Do I See Myself Now?

- I used to be ashamed that I did not know the language of my ethnicities, but I have learned that I am a product of my ancestors and their cultural values. I understand the mixture of Japanese slang such as “bocha” and “bobora” along with Hawaiian Pidgin because that is the language they used. These words and phrases are used in my family’s daily life, and after moving away from Hawai’i, I have grown a greater appreciation for the languages and communities I was raised in and hope to pass these values down to my children.



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Okinawa map <https://c8.alamy.com/comp/M61MAK/detailed-vector-road-map-of-japanese-island-okinawa-japan-M61MAK.jpg>

Hawaii map <https://www.hawaii-guide.com/images/blocks/hawaiian-islands-map.jpg>

Sugarcane

https://media.nationalgeographic.org/assets/photos/297/657/dfeeca5c-d524-48d8-9ac7-32937629da8d_r646x318.jpg?2aae8e51917673f0635f347d3f74c6fd7bf27ee0

Japanese laborers <https://www.hawaiimagazine.com/content/uploads/2020/12/Japanese-PP-46-4-012-00001.jpg>

Pidgin <https://howtoliveinhawaii.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Hawaiian-slang.jpg>

Obon festival <https://wpcdn.us-east-1.vip.tn-cloud.net/www.hawaiimagazine.com/content/uploads/2020/12/2010-07-10-Koboji-1024x683.jpg>

Byodo in temple <https://wpcdn.us-east-1.vip.tn-cloud.net/www.hawaiimagazine.com/content/uploads/2020/12/byodoin-opener.jpg>

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Okinawa map http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/46723000/gif/_46723310_japan_okinawa226.gif

Marukame Udon <https://www.eatingwithkirby.com/2015/11/marukame-udon-hawaii-so-cheap-so-yum-so-good.html>

Japanese Words https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_loanwords_in_Hawaii

Pidgin Cartoon <https://bigislandnow.com/2016/03/11/hawaiian-pidgin-english-wea-come-from/>

Okinawa and Japan Map https://i.ndtvimg.com/i/2015-10/okinawa_650x400_51444719705.png

Ewa Beach https://about.hawaiiilife.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/IMG_0533-e1541193988947.jpg