

Emigrant's Expanded Network (The Hawaii's experience)

China is famous for their "Overseas Chinese" and India for their "Overseas Indians". Both groups have a worldwide population base of over one billion. About 2% of the Indians live outside their ancestral country and 4.4% of the Chinese. The Jews with their smaller population base of 13 million have more people (60%) living outside of Israel. These Diasporas are some of the outstanding Emigrant's Networks.

By contrast, the worldwide Uchinanchu population is less than 2 million. Of this two million 670,000 live outside Okinawa. 32% of the Uchinanchu population does not live in Okinawa.

Can such a small group have an effective network?
(The term "Uchinanchu" is used to describe people with Okinawan heritage worldwide)

Uchinanchu worldwide networking on an informal basis started with the government approved emigration from Okinawa to Hawaii in 1900 and then to South America. In the beginning the networking was limited to their family, relatives and their "home town".

Money was sent "home" to their families in Okinawa. In 1910, 82% of the remittance came from Hawaii. Their culture of music, songs and dance was maintained. After working in the plantations, many started their small business through mutual support loan groups called Moai or Tanamoshi and sent their children to colleges and universities.

After the War, Okinawa was devastated by the "Battle of Okinawa". The Hawaii Uchinanchu community, united to provide help by sending clothes, food, toys, medical and school supplies. Hawaii also sent live pigs and goats to restock their livestock. This joint project of assistance, was a major factor in establishing the Hawaii United Okinawa Association (HUOA).

In the 80's Okinawa, after Okinawa's economy normalized, Okinawa invited some young Uchinanchu leaders in Hawaii for a study tour to Okinawa to rediscover their roots. This helped to strengthen the networking between Okinawa and the Overseas Uchinanchu. Annual study tours to Okinawa continue even today, to strengthen this networking.

In 1990 the Hawaii Okinawa (Cultural) Center was built by strong support from Okinawa, who remembered the assistance from Hawaii after the war. In 1990, the Okinawa government held the 1st "Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival" and again in 1995 the 2nd, in 2001 the 3rd and this year 2006 the 4th. In 2003, Hawaii held the 1st Worldwide Uchinanchu Conference. This first gathering of Uchinanchu outside Okinawa in 2003 was sponsored by WUB and HUOA.

HUB (Hawaii Uchinanchu Business Network), which started in 1993, became WUB (Worldwide Uchinanchu Business association) in 1997. WUB now has 21 chapters worldwide, representing 15 countries. WUB hold conferences each year rotating location among the chapters, creating a Worldwide Uchinanchu Network (WUN). The 1st was held in Hawaii 1997, 2nd Brazil, 3rd Los Angeles, 4th Okinawa, 5th Tokyo, 6th Argentina, 7th Hawaii, 8th Bolivia, 9th Osaka and the 10th in Peru in 2006. Since the 1st Worldwide Uchinanchu Conference in Hawaii, WUB have added more non-business themes to the meetings.

The Chinese, Indians and Jews have a long history of their successful networks. They have had thousands of years to develop their network. The Worldwide Uchinanchu network and has just began.