



Ukwanshin News

"Homecoming" Ukwanshin Gakumun Tour 2011

Experiences of connection, emotion, understanding (photos by Lawson Kita)



Ukwanshin's 5th Gakumun (Study) Tour left on May 30, with anticipation and excitement to the events ahead. Everyone was unaware of the experiences they would face on this "homecoming", that would touch their hearts, and affect their lives.

The tour began as usual with our paying respects at Shuri's Tamaudun Royal Tombs, and continued with days in North, South, and Central Okinawa. Unlike regular tours, there was no tour bus, as we drove ourselves to get to places that tourists cannot access, and to get the real connection to the real Okinawa.



Highlights to the tour included katachiki(bingata) workshop, Haeburu Culture Day and symposium exchange at the Haeburu Cultural Center, Itoman Haree boat races and festival, visit to Sonda and Aza Gushikawa traditional eisa practice, Ishigaki and Taketomi Islands in Yaeyama, and of course, the personal contacts and exchange with such awesome and humble people like the Iha Four Sisters, Taira Toshiko, Chifang Chao, Haeburu High School students, Taketomi elders, and many more who made this trip unforgettable. Being able to share, connect, listen to stories and experience (cont'd on back)

Ukwanshin Kabudan

Ukwanshin Kabudan is a not for profit, federally recognized 501c3 organization that provides education, productions, workshops and research with the assistance of private and public donations.

Our workshops are held at Jikoen Hongwanji Temple in Kalihi.

- Monthly Gakumin Kai, Okinawa History/Cultural Lecture Series, (1st Sunday of each month 12pm)

- Shimakutuba (Okinawan Language) Study Club, (2nd/4th Mondays each month 7pm)

- Kimono Making (3rd Monday each month 7pm.)

- Sanshin Group (Every Wednesday evening)



"UYAFWAFUJI" TO RETURN NEXT MONTH FOR KYU-BON

The heat and humidity turns up, winds begin to die down, the moon begins to shine round and bright, and the smell of food, incense and traditional Okinawan music signals the once a year return of our ancestors to their homes. This year, lunar obon will fall on August 12-14.



Central part of Obon...toute.

Our Okinawan community will also be celebrating our Okinawan obon on July 22 (Friday) at Jikoen's Okinawa bon dance night, capped off with acchame(kachashii) contest. Saturday will host both Japanese and Okinawan. Ukwanshin will be selling Kandaba Juushi, yakitori, and other gwacchi.



UKWANSHIN GAKUMUN TOUR CONT'D

personal stories helped to bring more understanding to our identity, culture and history.

One of the more emotional points was our visit to the exhibit of a tragic accident at Miyamori Elementary in Ishikawa, where a U.S. military plane crashed into Miyamori Elementary School in 1959, killing 17 students and teachers and injuring over 200 at the school. We presented a donation at the current memorial at the school, to assist the building of a memorial hall for this tragic event in Okinawa's history.



suffering, we who have experienced things like this can finally come out and talk about what happened...our experiences, and healing can finally begin. We cannot forget our suffering so that these things never happen again. Okinawa wants peace, not only for ourself, but for the world."

The experiences on the tour showed the two sides of Okinawa. The real lives of the people that celebrate their culture, but who have also suffered much and continue to suffer with loss of identity, traditions and the almost extinction of the native languages. With the Worldwide Uchinaanchu Taikai coming up in October, both Okinawa and its worldwide shimanchu need to reflect on the dilemmas facing modern day Okinawa and begin it's action to revitalization while celebrating identity.

It is here that we again heard "The Battle of Okinawa has not ended". Our visit did seem to impact the community and individuals. Kumiko Iha of the Four Sisters said, "Thanks to Hawaii's concern and interest in not only Okinawa's celebrations, but also the



UKWANSHIN TO BE REPRESENTED AT THE UCHINAANCHU TAIKAI

National Theater in Naha. The show will feature foreign and local Okinawan music and dance artists in traditional performances on October 15th and 16th.

On Thursday, October 20th, Jamie Oshiro will join the trio in two Ukwanshin concerts at Tembusukan in Naha. The show will feature Hawaii's music and dances and how it connects to the revitalization of Okinawa's true culture, arts, history and language.

This visit was unexpected, especially after just coming back in

June. Requests were made for Ukwanshin to return for the Taikai, because of our projects to focus on identity loss and revitalization. A symposium is also being planned.

Ukwanshin will hold fundraising to help cover expenses. If you would like to help or contribute, please contact us.



"LOOCHOO NU KWA" T-SHIRTS BY UKWANSHIN ON SALE!

The popular "LooChoo nu Kwa" T-shirts that have been selling out, will be printed with new design and color. The "Born Okinawan, always Okinawan" saying will be redirected to the back in larger print. Sales will help to sustain projects and costs for Ukwanshin. Pre-orders being taken. Shirts are \$15 each for sizes S-XL, \$19 for larger sizes. Email us with orders, and payment can be made through mailing check, or charge through our website.