



KAKEHASHI Project (United States)

Visiting Japan Program for Japanese American Youths (JACL) Report

1. Program Overview

【Objectives and Overview】

With the aim of further deepening mutual understanding and friendship between the next generation of people in the U.S. and Japan, 74 youths with roots in Japan selected by the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) from around the U.S. were invited to Japan from December 12 to December 18, 2012. The participants visited Tokyo, Kanagawa, Hiroshima, and Okinawa prefectures to explore their roots and deepen their understanding of Japanese society, history, and culture through courtesy calls, homestays, cultural experiences, and school exchanges. They also actively shared what they learned and gained as Japanese Americans on social media and other platforms.

【Participants】 Total: 74 participants (71 Japanese American youths (undergraduate students, graduate students, and working youths) and 3 chaperones)

Group 1: 24 participants / Group 2: 25 participants / Group 3: 25 participants

【Locations】 Group 1: Tokyo, Kanagawa, Okinawa
Groups 2 & 3: Tokyo, Kanagawa, Hiroshima

【Schedule】

■ Online Pre-study Program:

Dec. 6 (Fri) **【Pre-departure Orientation】** Project objective and mission, rundown of the schedule, overseas travel warnings, precautions of infectious disease, etc.

Set Period Prior to Arrival **【Video Viewing】** “Lecture on Japan” (Choose on Web Japan)

■ Invitation Program:

Dec. 12 (Thu) Arrival at Haneda Airport
【Post-arrival Orientation】

Dec. 13 (Fri) ~ Dec. 16 morning (Mon)

Participants were separated into 3 groups: Group 1 visited Okinawa Prefecture, Group 2 visited Hiroshima City and Fukuyama City in Hiroshima Prefecture, and Group 3 visited Hiroshima City and Akiota Town in Hiroshima Prefecture. All groups moved to Tokyo after the local programs on December 16.

Group 1: Okinawa **【School Exchange】** University of the Ryukyus
【Courtesy Call】 Mr. SAKIMA Atsushi, Mayor of Ginowan City
【Meeting with the Host Families/ Homestay / Farewell Party with the Host Families】 Yomitan Village

【Luncheon】 with former Think of Okinawa's Future in the U.S. dispatch program participants

【Lecture and Experience】 Marine Environmental Education and Beach Cleanup

【Observation】 Chibichirigama

Group 2: Hiroshima

【School Exchange】 Fukuyama University

【Meeting with the Host Families/ Homestay / Farewell Party with the Host Families】 Fukuyama City

【Cultural Experience】 Meditation (Shinshoji Temple)

【Observation】 Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

Group 3: Hiroshima

【School Exchange】 Prefectural University of Hiroshima

【Meeting with the Host Families/ Homestay / Farewell Party with the Host Families】 Akiota Town

【Cultural Experience】 Kagura (Hori Kagura Troupe)

【Observation】 Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

Dec. 16 (Mon)

【Observation】 Meiji Shrine, Harajuku (Japanese pop culture)

Dec. 17 (Tue)

【Workshop】 Preparations for the Reporting Session (summarizing program findings, preparation of action plans)

【Observation】 Japanese Overseas Migration Museum

【Courtesy Call】 Mr. NAGASHIMA Akihisa, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister

【Courtesy Call】 Mr. KUMAGAI Naoki, Deputy Director-General, North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Dec. 18 (Wed)

【Reporting Session】 Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plans
Departure from Haneda Airport

2. Program Photos

Online Pre-study Program

	
December 6, 2024 【Pre-departure Orientation】	December 6, 2024 【Pre-departure Orientation】 Self-introductions in individual groups

Invitation Program

Group 1 (Location: Okinawa)

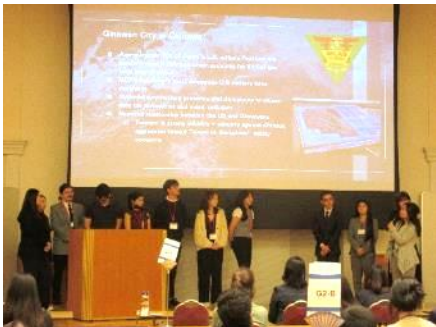
	
December 13, 2024 【School Exchange】 University of the Ryukyus	December 13, 2024 【Courtesy Call】 Mr. SAKIMA Atsushi, Mayor of Ginowan City
	
December 14, 2024 【Homestay】	December 15, 2024 【Lecture and Experience】 Marine Environmental Education and Beach Cleanup

Group 2 (Location: Hiroshima)

	
December 13, 2024 【School Exchange】 Fukuyama University	December 14, 2024 【Homestay】
	
December 15, 2024 【Cultural Experience】 Meditation (Shinshoji Temple)	December 15, 2024 【Observation】 Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

Group 3 (Location: Hiroshima)

	
December 13, 2024 【School Exchange】 Prefectural University of Hiroshima	December 14, 2024 【Homestay】
	
December 15, 2024 【Farewell Party with the Host Families】	December 15, 2024 【Cultural Experience】 Kagura
Joint Programs for all Groups (Tokyo)	
	
December 16, 2024 【Observation】 Meiji Shrine	December 17, 2024 【Observation】 Japanese Overseas Migration Museum
	
December 17, 2024 【Courtesy Call】 Mr. NAGASHIMA Akihisa, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister	December 17, 2024 【Courtesy Call】 Mr. KUMAGAI Naoki, Deputy Director-General, North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

	
December 18, 2024 【Reporting Session】	December 18, 2024 【Reporting Session】 Group photo

3. Voices from the Participants (excerpt)

◆ Graduate Student (Group 1)

The most impressive parts were the University of Ryukyus exchange with students, visiting and learning about Chibichirigama, and the homestay in Okinawa. It was meaningful to talk to students and learn about their identity and culture as Okinawa and mixed Okinawan/Japanese individuals and teach them about Japanese American identity and culture in relation to history. Visiting and hearing about the significance of the Chibichirigama caves was heartbreaking but important to learn.

◆ Undergraduate Student (Group 1)

The most impressive part of my cultural exchange was the home stay experience. I had so much fun getting to experience the day-to-day life in Okinawa, and was overwhelmed by the hospitality of my host family. My absolute favorite part of the host experience was having in-depth conversations with our host mother, who taught us a lot about the relationship between Okinawa and the US.

◆ Undergraduate Student (Group 2)

I think that that the Hiroshima Peace Park and Museum was most impressive to me just because of the deep history it holds in Japan and their desire to inform people of the damage it can cause and all of the aftereffects of nuclear weaponry.

◆ Working Youth (Group 2)

The most impressive part of this exchange program was the diversity we got to experience. We got to experience more traditional Japanese lifestyle from our home stay and then more modern life from the hustle and bustle of the city. It has been an amazing experience getting to learn and immerse myself in my culture and to get to experience these things for the first time with other Japanese-American friends.

◆ Working Youth (Group 3)

A very unique experience that this program and ones of its nature is the homestay because this gives us an experiential way of understanding what is happening in daily life in Japan as well as potential problems seen in communities. For example, in Akiota our host dad told us about how the town is mostly elderly and there are only 70 total students in the school and many leave after graduation.

Because of this, many fields that were previously farmed are now covered and inactive which scares him for the future of Akiota. Also being with students similar in age gives us the ability to make connections to other Japanese Americans that we otherwise may never have met, and we now have lifelong friends.

◆ **Working Youth (Group 3)**

School exchange: I enjoyed discussing the similarities and differences between Japanese-American and Japanese culture. I enjoyed learning about the specific omiyage (souvenirs) for the Hiroshima region.

4. Voices from the Receiving Parties (excerpt)

◆ **Exchange School Faculty**

During their visit, the Japanese Americans were very interested in our university's fish and shellfish breeding facilities and our affiliated aquarium. It was also a valuable and meaningful opportunity for Japanese students to learn about the hardships experienced by Japanese Americans in the U.S.

◆ **Exchange School Faculty**

We at our university believe that we need to promote international exchange within the university, and we noticed that this project has contributed greatly to that. We feel that our students have few opportunities to speak English, and this project provided us with an opportunity to address this issue. Some students were concerned about their language skills because they were not accustomed to speaking English with native English speakers, but in the end, we saw them actively interacting with each other. This international exchange among peers was truly beneficial for the students.

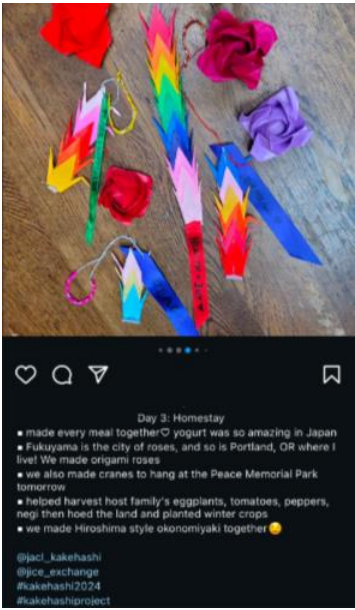
◆ **Host Family**

All four of the participants that we hosted got along very well, but they had apparently only just met each other. Their communication skills made it feel as if they had known each other for years. We had a great time with them too.

◆ **Host Family**

Since this was the first time for us to host a group with dietary restrictions such as being vegan and gluten-free, our biggest concern was whether we would be able to prepare a tasty meal. However, from the very first dinner on the first day, everyone was saying, "Oishii, Oishii" (delicious, delicious), and they ate up the entire meal. This taught me that with a little ingenuity, we could accept guests with no problems at all. I am now determined to learn more about vegan and gluten-free diets for my own sake.

5. Disseminations by the Participants (excerpt), Articles, etc.

	
December 13, 2024 (Instagram) Day 2 Tokyo→Hiroshima Met with Japanese college students of the Prefectural University of Hiroshima. Learned how Japanese college life is like - how there is a great interest in American culture studies. It was interesting to learn about the Shimanami Kaido bridge connecting Onomichi city to Imabari. Made pressed sushi for the first time with homestay family in Akiota-cho!	December 14, 2024 (Instagram) Made every meal together! Yogurt is so amazing in Japan. Fukuyama is the city of roses, and so is Portland, OR where I live! We made origami roses. We also made cranes to hang at the Peace Memorial Park tomorrow. Helped harvest host family's eggplants, tomatoes, etc. ...

Amazing start to the Kakehashi Program! Japanese American youth are experiencing their heritage through university visits and homestays in the countryside. JICE's International Exchange Programs. Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) St Louis JACL.

翻訳を見る



December 14, 2024 (Facebook)

Amazing start to the Kakehashi Program! Japanese American youth are experiencing their heritage through university visits and homestays in the countryside.



The question I've been asked most in my life, even more than my name, is "Where are you really from?"

This past week, I had the opportunity to find out the answer for myself.

I thought I knew and I admittedly change my answer frequently depending on who is asking to make them more comfortable, but when the person who is questioning your identity is yourself it's far more complicated. Layer that with being surrounded by 75+ other Japanese Americans for the first time and you begin to realize that...

When you can't find the ground you belong on, maybe it's because you are part of the bridge.

In Okinawa, I was reminded that stone bridges are held together by a keystone at the center of the arch that all of the other stones lean on. As strong and indestructible as a bridge looks, if you remove the keystone then the bridge will easily collapse.

I view myself, my tomodachis that I had the honor of sharing this experience with, and all Japanese Americans as being the special keystone in the bridge between Japan and the United States.

December 19, 2024 (Instagram)

The question I've been asked most in my life, even more than my name, is "Where are you really from?"

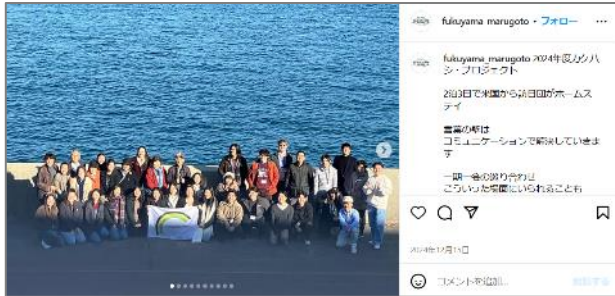
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I view myself, my tomodachis that I had the honor of sharing this experience with, and all Japanese Americans as being the special keystone in the bridge between Japan and the United States. Evidenced by the fact it was tragically and carefully reconstructed by the hands of atomic bomb survivors, concentration camp survivors, and the memories of people who never saw peace. What a beautiful and important place that is to represent with diversity, strength, and empathy



December 16, 2024 (Fukuyama Marugoto Taiken Promotion Council's Instagram)

FY2024 KAKEHASHI Project

A delegation from the U.S. participated in a 3D/2N homestay.

We overcame the language barrier through continuous communication.

Being part of once in a lifetime encounter like this is an honor for our organization.

カケハシ・プロジェクト参加者の皆さんが来学されました

印刷用ページを表示する 2024年12月16日更新

シェアする

Post

LINEで送る

2024年12月13日、外務省が行うカケハシ・プロジェクトで来日した日系アメリカ人の青年訪問団と本学学生が交流しました。

訪問団24名のうち、2名の方からファミリールーツについて発表いただいた後、本学の学生から本学の概要と広島県の紹介をそれぞれ発表しました。広島県の紹介発表では、本学学生8名がそれぞれ1テーマを担当し英語で発表したところ、訪問団員から歓声があるなど、大変盛り上がったプレゼンテーションとなりました。

ディスカッションの場では現在勉強している専攻を選んだ理由やホリデーの過ごし方、若者が使う英単語など多岐にわたるトピックで意見交換することができました。

本学学生にとって海外の同世代の方々と英語で交流する貴重な機会となりました。



December 16, 2024 (Prefectural University of Hiroshima's website)

【KAKEHASHI Project Participants Visited our University】 On December 13, 2024, a group of Japanese American youths from the KAKEHASHI Project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan had an exchange with students from our university. Two of the 24 members of the delegation gave a presentation on their family roots, and students from our university gave an overview of the university and an introduction of Hiroshima Prefecture. Eight students were in charge of one topic each and gave presentations on Hiroshima Prefecture in English, which the delegation enjoyed and passionately cheered on.

During the discussions, the students and participants were able to exchange opinions on a wide range of topics, such as why they chose their majors, how they spend their holidays, and English terms used by the younger generation.

It was a valuable opportunity for our students to interact with people around the same age from overseas in English.



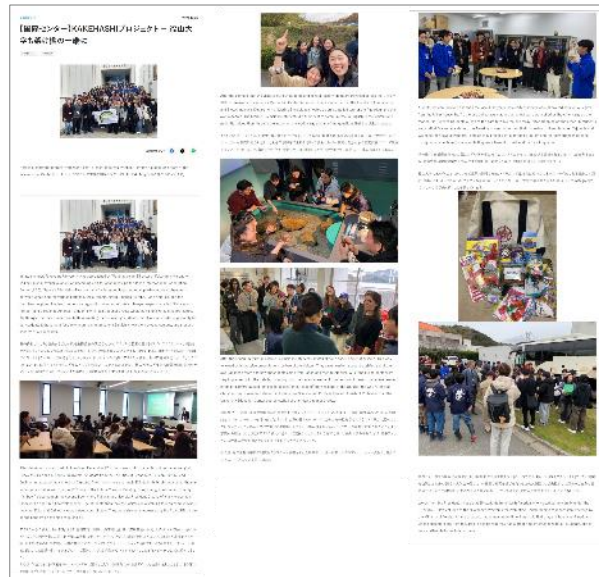
December 20, 2024 (Ginowan City's Facebook)

【Japan's Friendship Ties Program "KAKEHASHI Project" Participants of the Visiting Japan Program for Japanese American Youths visited Ginowan City】A Kakehashi (bridge) of Friendship between the U.S. and Japan!

On Friday, December 13th, a group of Japanese American youths who are visiting Okinawa under the Japan's Friendship Ties Programs, "KAKEHASHI Project," visited Ginowan City Hall. The KAKEHASHI Project is an exchange project promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan to deepen participants' understanding of Japanese culture and society through exchanges and visits, and this group of young Japanese Americans was selected from all over the U.S. to visit Okinawa and Hiroshima.

In Ginowan City Hall, the participants observed the Air Station Futenma from the rooftop of the City Hall, and then paid a courtesy call to the Mayor and exchanged opinions in the multipurpose conference room.

The participants expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to learn about Okinawan culture and history, and said that they would like to learn as much as possible and tell their families about it when they return home.



December 23, 2024 (Fukuyama University's website)

“【International Center】KAKEHASHI Project – Fukuyama University to be part of the Kakehashi”

“Japan's Friendship Ties programs” is intended to promote people-to-people exchanges between Japan and the various nations of Asia-Pacific, North America, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean regions. The North American regional component of this exchange program is called “Kakehashi Project” and through it, American students with local Japanese roots would be visiting Hiroshima prefecture. We thought that this project was both interesting for the visiting students, but also a wonderful opportunity for our students to host them for a few hours, communicate in English, show them around campus, and present aspects of our research.

... After the aquarium tour the Marine Bio-Science students hosted all for a snack and chat session. This was followed by impressive presentations by two of the visitors. They gave heartfelt speeches talking about their own Japanese roots and how those roots came from Japan and then to America. All of the FU students were very impressed with the details, including how the forced internment of

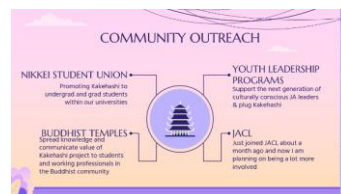
Mayor SAKIMA Atsushi said, "Through this opportunity, I hope that the U.S. and Japan will further build friendly relations, and when you visit Okinawa again, I hope to show you that the Air Station Futenma has been returned, and the people of Okinawa are building a city full of dreams and hopes."	American citizens of Japanese descent in the late 1940s caused families to be split or settle in different regions of the US after the war. ...
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6. Presentations of Program Findings and Action Plan at the Reporting Session (excerpt)

Group 1 (Locations: Tokyo, Kanagawa, Okinawa) Presentations by a total of 2 groups

  	【Results of the Program】 ◆ Learnings from the program: We learned that some survivors of the war don't want to talk about their experience, which makes it difficult to pass down the memories. Also, Okinawa is an international place, but it has a unique culture in food and language. Also, we learned men and women have different ways of dancing and words in Okinawa. ◆ Making use of your experience in your future lives I currently pursue my PhD in linguistic anthropology and learn the different language of how to say certain things in Okinawan was really impactful, so I would like to continue studying on this matter. 【Action Plan】 • This program gave me an opportunity to think about Okinawa and the relation of Okinawa and the US, so I would like to hold a seminar to tell my students about them. • I am an artist, so I will use what I've learned to create future art, exhibitions to show people the experience and how great this program is.
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Group 2 (Locations: Tokyo, Kanagawa, Hiroshima) Presentations by a total of 2 groups

  	【Results of the Program】 ◆ Learnings from the program: Not only were we able to experience the unique lifestyle and food of a town by the sea, we were also able to learn about the importance of peace through the paintings of the host father, who is also an artist, which conveyed the tragedy of war.
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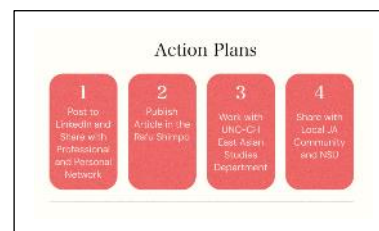
◆ Making use of your experience in your future lives:

Some of us would like to study at a university in Japan in order to work in Japan in the future, and by following the example of the Fukuyama Castle reconstruction, we would like to restore the “Japantown” in Salt Lake City to its original appearance.

【Action Plan】

We will help NAPA (International Network of Asian Public Administrators) to train leaders, provide excellent human resources, and strengthen activities. We will also work with the JACL, the Japanese American Student League, and Buddhist temples to provide information about the Kakehashi Project and Japan.

Group 3 (Locations: Tokyo, Kanagawa, Hiroshima) Presentations by a total of 2 groups



【Results of the Program】

◆ Learnings from the program:

We felt the differences between the big cities and the countryside within Japan, as well as between the lifestyle in the U.S. and Japan. During our time in Akiota Town, we participated in a kagura workshop and learned about kagura dance. We also experienced making local dishes such as mochi, gyoza, okonomiyaki, oden, and kakuzushi using locally harvested products, fully enjoying our first-hand experience with Japanese food culture.

◆ Making use of your experience in your future lives:

Our goal is to enhance our cultural understanding through the exploration of diverse perspectives and meaningful experiences. We hope to use the resulting insights to enrich our future activities, whether it be in our careers, academics, or personal lives.

【Action Plan】

We will use the following four methods to share what we learned from the KAKEHASHI Project.

1. Post to LinkedIn and share with professional and personal networks.
2. Publish an article in the Rafu Shimpo, the most well-known newspaper targeting Japanese Americans in Southern California.
3. Work with UNC-CH East Asian studies Department to provide information on Japanese Culture to the University of North Carolina.
4. Share with local Japanese American communities and NSU (Nikkei Student Union) to promote debate on multiculturalism and support members in reconnecting with their roots.

Implementation Agency: Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE)