

Okinawa Essay Contest 3rd Place

**The Okinawan Amerasian Identity:
A Vanguard for Japanese Multinationals**

Nina Udagawa (George Washington University)

Abstract

An Okinawan Amerasian is an individual who has a U.S. military service member and a local Okinawan as parents. Many Okinawan Amerasians undergo identity crises because on top of their minority status, controversies over U.S. bases have been projected onto the community. This essay explores the steps towards increased social acceptance for Amerasians since the 1960s. Firstly, organizations lobbied for the government's assistance in recognizing the rights of abandoned mothers and Amerasians. This was followed by the actions and discourse surrounding the need to create a safe space for Amerasians through the AmerAsian School in the late 1990s. The third and current stage involves self-affirmation by Japanese multinationals to find their place in society. One commonality of the resolution of issues that Amerasians faced is that there was local support for grassroots activism. The solutions to these issues reverberated nationwide, allowing many Japanese multinationals to live more comfortably over time.

In October 2018, Denny Tamaki was elected governor of Okinawa. This was a monumental moment for Japanese multiethnic communities because Tamaki was the first Amerasian to be elected as a governor.¹ An Amerasian is a person born between a United States military service member in Asia and a local citizen from the area in which the service member is stationed. The term “Amerasian” was coined in the post-World War II era as the United States increased its influence in Asia.² Given the large U.S. military presence in Okinawa and the many opportunities to foster relations between the locals and American military personnel, Okinawa prefecture is home to many Amerasians.³

Less than 50 years before Tamaki’s victory, Okinawan Amerasians were not recognized by the Japanese government, were heavily discriminated against in Okinawa, and many lived under poor financial conditions. The contrast between the standing of Amerasians in Okinawa in the 1950s and in current times reveals that change occurred in both the legal and social spheres regarding the Amerasian identity. This essay examines the factors that led to the increased social acceptance of Amerasians in Okinawa. This change spans from legislation to recognize Japanese citizenship for Amerasians, the work by advocates fighting for Amerasians, all the way to self-affirmation for the community (see figure 1).

Civil society via grassroots activism and organization has been key in garnering support from the wider Okinawan community and solving problems that Amerasians have faced. Furthermore, Okinawa’s collective momentum has reverberated throughout Japan, making

¹ “Jiyūtou Tamaki Denny Shuugiinngiinn 自由党玉城デニー衆議院議員” [Liberal Party—Tamaki Denny—House of Representatives]. Members of Parliament you can Meet: Miwa Channel 会いに行ける国会議員：みわちゃんねる. Web. 22 February, 2017.

² Tsuneyoshi, Ryoko and Ito, Hideki. *The AmerAsian School in Okinawa*. The University of Tokyo, Center for Excellence in School Education, 2015. pp. 2.

³ Takushi, Crissey E. *Okinawa’s GI Brides: Their Lives in America*. Translated by Steve Rabson, University of Hawai’i Press, 2017. pp. 98.

efforts for and by Amerasians in Okinawa a vanguard in shaping Japan's perceptions towards its multiethnic community.

Phases in the Road to Acceptance (Figure 1)		
1	Overcoming Legal Constrictions (--1985)	
	Representation for abandoned mothers and children	Changing legislature regarding eligibility for Japanese citizenship
2	Social Recognition from Communities in Okinawa (1990s and early 2000s)	
	Creation of the AmerAsian school to create a safe space	Reports in media which garnered support and sympathy
3	Self-Affirmations from Amerasians to Amerasians (2000s—today)	
	Online <i>hāfu</i> communities to discuss issues and solutions	Activists evoking discourse on the topic towards the wider community

Context: The Parental Makeup of Amerasians

Although there are cases in which the mother is a U.S. service member and the father is an Okinawan, societal gender roles played a major role in the Amerasian identity narrative. Therefore, this essay focuses on Okinawan Amerasians whose mother is a local Okinawan woman and father is a U.S. service member.

The integration of American bases in Okinawa during the U.S. occupation (1945-1972) led to major social changes. The existence of these bases has proven controversial in the region, with some accepting U.S. personnel into their lives and communities, and others contesting this presence due to incidents that have harmed local Okinawans. Negative perceptions on the occupation bases have been reflected on Amerasian children or mothers who pursue(d) relationships with U.S. base personnel, leading to frequent judgement or criticism. However, at times, romantic interest or compatibility transcended this controversy, leading to the creation of families between the two parties.⁴ In either case, it is necessary to understand the roots of

⁴ Ames, Christopher and Jennifer E. Robertson. *Mired in History: Victimhood, Memory, and Ambivalence in Okinawa Prefecture, Japan*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1 Jan. 2007. pp. 314-319.

difficulty in social assimilation starting from the controversies which surround the parental relationship.

The first reported marriage between a U.S. base personnel member and a local Okinawan was in August of 1947. Following this, a “special order” was issued under a U.S. command stating that stationed individuals were not allowed to marry local civilians in U.S. occupation zones. However, this ban was short-lived. It was revoked less than half a year following its implementation because relationships between local women and American soldiers were prevalent, and there was an overwhelming demand to permit marriage. In 1947 alone, two years after the implementation of the bases, 63 marriages between base personnel and locals were conducted.⁵ This increased as U.S. personnel were integrated into Okinawan society and contributed to the economy of the prefecture. Initially, U.S. forces cared for Okinawan civilians who had lost their homes in the Battle of Okinawa by setting up refugee camps. This service by the U.S. helped many locals rebuild and recover after the travesty of the battle. By 1959, among all of the Okinawa residents who were employed, 41% of them worked on U.S. military bases, indicating the heavy presence that U.S. military personnel had in Okinawan societies.⁶ Furthermore, it stands to reason that many in Okinawa relied economically on the presence of the U.S. bases for their customer base, and accepted military personnel as members of their society.

One major reason that romantic relationships formed was the cultural interest that Japanese women had in American men. Hollywood played a big role in the formation of the stereotype that American men were “feminists.” In Japan, this meant men who respect women. Takara Nana, an Okinawan woman who married an American service member, recalled that her mother recommended that Nana pursue relations with an American male to experience the

⁵ Takushi, pp.33-37.

⁶ Takushi, pp.17-25.

“American men’s ‘ladies first’ chivalric tradition.”⁷ Furthermore, such stereotypes idealized relationships with American men. American men were also seen to be attractive due to their assertiveness in showing interest towards women. Masayo Hirata, a social worker in Okinawa who married an American service member in 1966, said she was “excited” when first approached by an American male because, typically, men from Okinawa or mainland Japan did not approach women with high levels of confidence.⁸ As a result, many couples either pursued marriages and had children, or had sexual relations leading to children, resulting in the birth of many Amerasians following World War II.

Although U.S. bases brought positive changes to Okinawa, many issues persisted, making consensual relationships between local women and American soldiers controversial. A study by Ames and Robertson analyzing victimhood in Okinawa claimed that women who dated American soldiers became “double outsiders” because they were typically not accepted by the people on the bases or their local communities. In Okinawa, such women were often labelled *Amejyo* (translating to “American girl”) and were viewed as “collaborationist traitors” for their affiliations with U.S. forces.⁹ This was in part the result of various incidents that threatened the safety of locals, such as the storage of Sarin gas on the bases for U.S. military operations in Southeast Asia in the 1960s. Further, the U.S.-Okinawa relationship was strained by the seizure of local private property in the 1950s and 1960s to expand U.S. bases.¹⁰ Each layer of resentment added new challenges for local women in such relationships to find a supportive and inclusive community.

⁷ Ames and Robertson, pp. 337-339.

⁸ Hirata, Masayo. “Masayo Hirata.” *Women of Okinawa: Nine Voices from a Garrison Island*. Edited by Ruth Ann Keyso. Cornell University Press, 2000, pp. 70-77.

⁹ Ames and Robertson, pp. 326-337.

¹⁰ Takushi, pp. 21-25.

Relationships between American personnel and Okinawan women were also controversial because of the negative stigmas regarding sexual assault by Americans on local citizens. During the U.S. occupation of Okinawa, there were cases of sexual assault by U.S. troops against local women. Although the specific number of cases of sexual violence is open to debate, there are copious articles and narratives elucidating the concerns that the people of Okinawa had for the safety of local women. Families reportedly looked on in fear as soldiers violated women regardless of age or pregnancy. The women seemed to have no escape, as exemplified by the number of cases in which soldiers were said to have raided local houses and raped women in front of their families. Takushi, the author of “Okinawa’s GI Brides”, describes many U.S. troops as perceiving Okinawa as a “lawless territory,” where military leadership failed to hold subordinates accountable for such actions.¹¹ As a result of the sexual violence, some local women gave birth to Amerasian children, but immediately killed them because they were the product of shame. In other instances, midwives aborted such children, contributing to the lack of accountability and data available to prosecute perpetrators for assault.¹² Such accounts of sexual violence in post-war Okinawa indicates the paranoia that local women and their families were subjected to. Many in Okinawa were uncomfortable with the idea of a relationship, let alone a child, between local women and American soldiers because of the violence and negative power balance associated with it.

¹¹ Takushi, pp.29-31.

¹² Sims, Calvin. “3 Dead Marines and a Secret of Wartime Okinawa.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, New York Times Company, 1 June 2000, pp. A12.

Turning Points in the Road to Acceptance—Issues and Solutions

Phase 1: The Legal Recognition of Amerasians

The history of the Amerasian identity is deeply integrated with the legal constrictions that were in place prior to 1985. Relationships between American soldiers and locals often ended when the soldier's duty in Okinawa was completed. Depending on the relationship, this was done with or without warning, leading to the abandonment of many mothers and Amerasian children. In fact, a survey conducted by International Social Assistance Okinawa (ISAO) in 1970 revealed that of the 3000 estimated Amerasian children, around 80% were being raised by a guardian who was not a parent.¹³ This abandonment was partly due to the fact that neither Japan nor the U.S. government had systems in place for abandoned mothers to seek help regarding child support in this specific situation. Hiring lawyers to take on these individualized, complex custodial cases was burdensome. Since a majority of the abandoned Okinawan women were single mothers with scarce time and funds, many were unable to obtain the help they needed. Professor Naomi Noiri from the University of the Ryukyus affirms that such women “fell between the cracks in our society because there were no legal or social mechanisms in Japan or the United States to provide for them.”¹⁴ Before institutions to help Amerasian families emerged in the late 1960s, many mothers of Amerasian children struggled immensely to make ends meet.

Grassroots organizations played a key role in bridging the gap between abandoned mothers and the Okinawan government to enact policies for family support. ISAO was formed in 1968 with the aim of acting as a center for the adoption of many Amerasians in Okinawa. As the

¹³ Noiri, Naomi. “Schooling and Identity in Okinawa: Okinawans and Amerasians in Okinawa.” *Minorities and Education in Multicultural Japan: An Interactive Perspective*. Edited by Ryoko Tsuneyoshi, Kaori H. Okano, and Sarane Boocock. Taylor & Francis, 2010. pp. 88.

¹⁴ Sims, Calvin. “A Hard Life for Amerasian Children.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, New York Times Company, 23 July 2000, pp. 10.

Amerasians became further integrated into society, the organization's functions expanded to include various counseling and administrative services relevant to Amerasians, such as education and financial support.¹⁵ The process of growing the ISAO required prefectural funding, which was challenging to obtain. To prove its credibility, members of ISAO had to demonstrate their knowledge of Japanese and American systems; and they had to show their ability to select suitable courses of action for clients. Advocates like Masayo Hirata, an Okinawan mother of an Amerasian, played a key role. Hirata studied English at a top university in Tokyo and social work in the United States, making her credible in both Japan and the U.S. Members like Hirata were able to relate personally to the women who came for help, while lobbying to increase funding for the ISAO.¹⁶ The fact that the Okinawa Prefectural government recognized the ISAO's efforts shows that the wider community was drawn to this grassroots organization and wanted to support the expansion of its services.

Amerasian children not only faced social difficulties due to their outsider status in an ethnically homogenous society, but were also "stateless children" who lacked political rights since prior to 1985, legislation in Japan only allowed Japanese citizenship for children whose fathers were nationals. In addition, until 1986, U.S. citizenship was only granted to people who were born in the U.S. or had a parent who was a citizen residing in the United States for over ten years, with five of them being after the age of fourteen.¹⁷ Due to these restrictions, a majority of Amerasians did not qualify for citizenship of either country until the laws of both nations were revised after 1986. Furthermore, most Amerasians were born and continued to reside in Japan, where their lack of citizenship prevented them from obtaining welfare benefits and made it

¹⁵ Hirata, pp. 69-70.

¹⁶ Hirata, pp. 83.

¹⁷ Takushi, pp.40.

difficult for them to receive education and healthcare.¹⁸ The argument could be made that such families could have advocated for military dependent benefits from the American fathers of the Amerasian children. However, the harsh reality was that an overwhelming majority of Amerasians only identified with their Japanese roots and lived independently from their fathers, meaning that many would not have been aware that such options existed.

In 1985, the Nationality Law in Japan was passed, which allowed people with at least one Japanese parent, whether it be the mother or the father, to gain Japanese citizenship at birth. This was thanks to the work of ISAO in collaboration with the Okinawa Prefectural Department of Education, which were key in passing this legislation due to the support that they garnered from different groups and individuals in Okinawa. They continued to advocate for Okinawan Amerasians by making the case that such children were considered to be “stateless.” ISAO also conducted research, such as a questionnaire in 1970 which collected data on the lifestyle of Amerasians to present to the Japanese government. In a journal examining education and identity in Okinawa, Noiri claimed that this support by Okinawan locals and governmental departments, despite not knowing any Amerasians personally, may have been a result of sympathy with the feeling of marginalization. This was because Okinawa had never been treated equally by the mainland Japanese or Americans. Although Okinawa was a relatively new prefecture, its convincing arguments for the necessity to revise the nationality law eventually led to a change at the national level.¹⁹ ISAO’s leading role in 1985 to change the conditions to gain Japanese nationality reveals the essential role that organizations and the government of Okinawa have played in recognizing multicultural Japanese people.

¹⁸ Noiri, pp. 88.

¹⁹ Noiri, pp. 87-91.

Phase 2: The Creation of Safe Spaces

Many Okinawan Amerasians have experienced bullying and marginalization in Okinawan society, particularly in the Japanese public school system. This was widespread in 1950s and 60s when the concept of Amerasians had not yet been absorbed by the people of Okinawa. Akiko, a mother of an Amerasian who was born in 1949, said that her daughter was called slurs like “Yankee” and subjected to physical abuse as evidenced by her torn school uniform. The abuses did not end at school; adults also pointed out her different appearance whenever they saw her in public. Due to negative experiences similar to that of Akiko’s daughter, families utilized organizations like ISAO so that their children could be adopted by American families and live less stressful lives.²⁰ Many were also bullied due to existing stereotypes surrounding the Amerasian identity in relation to abandonment. Some local school children referred to Amerasian children who had zero ties to the United States as their fathers had left Japan as *shima hāfu* (translates to “island half”). This term encapsulates abandonment and implies that the individual does “not possess the positive aspects of being Amerasian,” such as English language ability and U.S. base connections.²¹

In the late 1990s, five mothers of Amerasians advocated creating a safe space in Okinawan society for Amerasian children and established the AmerAsian School in Okinawa. The use of the two capital A’s in “AmerAsian” represent the school’s purpose to provide students with a bilingual curriculum which emphasizes learning about both Japanese and American culture. The AmerAsian School has provided many children who were once bullied in Japanese public schools the ability to live comfortably while exploring both sides of their identity, something that they might not have been able to experience at home if they were living

²⁰ Takushi, pp. 39-40.

²¹ Noiri, pp. 94.

with only their mothers. The AmerAsian School also teaches the history of the two nations and their relations, providing perspectives from both the Japanese and American sides.²² Students who have transferred to the AmerAsian school have remarked that they were able to find peers who felt the same way as them, and have shown significant improvement both academically and socially. The school is an essential platform for AmerAsians to feel empowered by their identity and study in a safe place without torment or discrimination.²³

Though some have argued that the AmerAsian school's benefits are concentrated only on those who are financially fortunate enough to afford the tuition, its efforts have been widespread. This was due to the media coverage of the school's efforts in the 1990's which engendered public discourse on the issues surrounding the reactions towards Amerasians in Okinawan society. One example is an *Okinawa Times* article that reviewed the school's progress after it had been operating for six months in December 1998. The article covered the lengths that the small group of administrators had gone to with regards to collecting donations, school supplies, and books to keep the school running. Similarly, the article covered the contributions that resulted in the grassroots advocacy of the school administration, such as parents who took part in supervision for after-school care, as many children had no supervision during the day.²⁴ On a social level, such detailed reports of the sacrifices that some parents made to give their children a comfortable education led to the recognized necessity of this school by the wider Okinawan community. This was expressed through monetary support in the form of donations which allowed the school to start operating on a larger scale.²⁵ In addition, this could have caused many

²² Tsuneyoshi and Ito, pp. 3.

²³ Sims, "A Hard Life for Amerasian Children," pp. 10.

²⁴ "Daburu no kyouiku wo motomete Amerasian Gakkou wa ima (jyou)" ダブルの教育を求めて・アメラジアン学校は今(上) [Education for doubles: Updates on the AmerAsian School (part 1)] *Okinawa Times* 沖縄タイムズ 27-29 December 1998: Morning Paper pp. 21-23.

²⁵ Tsuneyoshi and Ito, pp. 6-8.

Okinawans to change their behavior towards Amerasians in Okinawa, and accept them as members of society. This support, sparked through publicized grassroots advocacy, was one key reason that social conditions for Amerasians have improved over time in Okinawa.

At the same time, the obstacles that the AmerAsian School has faced in regard to gaining an education license were also presented in the media. The support following this issue ultimately led to the increased acceptance of international curricula in Japan. An article in the *Okinawa Times* in 1998 highlighted the AmerAsian School's efforts to obtain an education recognition license. The purpose of this license is to ensure that the student's attendance at the AmerAsian School would count towards their years of general education. The article criticized the school system in Japan for being tailored to students who only planned to study in Japanese. The article also covered how Okinawa was spearheading the legal acceptance of international education of Japanese through the establishment of an international education taskforce to find the best solutions in August 1998.²⁶ The media coverage of the obstacles in the process of stabilizing the school in the late 1990s helped to build support among the public, and by extension the government, to recognize the AmerAsian School as a legitimate education replacement. This collective movement caused national changes in the acceptance of international education, which is one of the reasons that many multicultural Japanese students can attend international schools today.

²⁶ Okinawa Times 沖縄タイムズ 29 December 1998: Morning Paper pp. 23.

Phase 3: Self-Affirmation and Finding a Place in Society

Okinawan society since 1995 has been characterized by protests and heated discourse regarding the presence of U.S. bases in Okinawa. This inevitably places many Amerasians in an awkward position as they are associated with both sides of the discussion. In the fall of 1995, there was an incident in which three U.S. service members raped a 12-year-old Okinawan girl. This led to increased resistance towards U.S. bases in Okinawa and incited protests to move the bases out of Okinawa as they had become a human rights concern.²⁷ Though feelings of hostility towards the U.S. bases have always been present in Okinawa to an extent, the 1995 rape incident gave voice to this hostility and created confusion for many Amerasians due to their affiliation with both sides of the discourse.²⁸ Additionally, mothers of Amerasians were further marginalized by the incident. Women affiliated with American military personnel were/are often blamed for any misfortune or violations they experience for mingling with U.S. service members in the first place.²⁹ Furthermore, the political atmosphere in Okinawa gives rise to confusion about the Amerasian identity, making self-affirmation and confidence in the Amerasian community essential.

The internet has expanded the reach of grassroots activism by allowing many to share their personal thoughts and experiences in shared communities. The term *hāfu* (a term used in Japan that comes from the English word “half” and refers to a person who has one Japanese parent) often has positive connotations when used in some Japanese social contexts, but its literal meaning, “half,” indicates that the person only possesses half of the Japanese identity. An online community titled “Don’t Say It’s Nice to be *Hāfu!*” published a list of stereotypes *hāfus*

²⁷ Takushi, pp. 27.

²⁸ Noiri, pp. 91.

²⁹ Ames and Robertson, pp. 337.

commonly hear from Japanese. The following expressions exemplify the glorified image many in Japan have about *hāfus*: “I wish I was born as a *hāfu*,” “You should be a model!” and “I feel good just being next to a *hāfu*.”³⁰ These phrases show that many *hāfus* feel accepted, or praised. However, such comments could also make many multicultural Japanese feel alienated. This is in addition to the fact that Japan is an ethnically homogenous country whereby those who look different stand out in the daily scene. Similarly, in 2005, members of the online community remarked that *hāfus* are common in fields such as entertainment, but not in fields such as political representation, which are “reserved for the ‘truly’ Japanese.”³¹ The emergence of online communities with the internet helped to increase discourse on the *hāfu* identity on a more personal level as members were able to do so behind a screen. Similarly, since many of their difficulties stemmed from criticism of Japanese society and the treatment of *hāfus*, the online communities created a safer platform for individuals to speak out and find people who sympathized with them.

Okinawa’s supportive treatment towards the Amerasian identity played a vital role in bolstering the grass root internet communities through publicizing them on credible platforms. A significant example is the “My Position” column in the Okinawa regional paper *Ryukyu Shimpo*, which has also been uploaded online and published as a book. This column started in 2014 and consists of short essays by Amerasians in Okinawa on their experiences with identity. One notable example is Melissa Tomlinson’s piece in which she shares the story of her journey toward accepting her identity and shifting from her confusion to creating the will to study the Amerasian identity in graduate school. She emphasizes that there should be more literature and

³⁰ Evanoff, Elia. “Popular Images of Hafu and How They Are.” *Online Hafu Japanese Communities: The Uses of Social Networking Services and Their Impact on Identity Formation*. London School of Economics and Political Science, 2010, pp. 76-77.

³¹ Evanoff, pp. 75.

media coverage pertaining to the *hāfu* community in Japan and specifically Okinawa to help Amerasians accept their identity and find a place in Okinawan society.³²

With the victory of Denny Tamaki as governor of Okinawa in 2018, discourse regarding the *hāfu* identity, and the Okinawan Amerasian identity increased. One article written by Kota Hatachi of BuzzFeed Japan in October of 2018 responded to the way the media portrayed Tamaki's identity. In it, Hatachi quotes Amerasians who felt that they did not want to be labeled as "*hāfu*," "double," or "Amerasian." This was because they felt that no words could accurately encapsulate one's identity, and there were too many stereotypes associated with such terms.³³ These articles highlight that many Amerasians still feel unaccepted, marginalized, and mislabeled in Japanese society. Though most of the Japanese population do not experience what Okinawan Amerasians face, the sharing of narratives on a nationwide scale is a great step in widening the discourse and working towards self-affirmation.

Conclusion

In Okinawa, various grassroots communities have driven change through gathering resources and sympathy from wider communities. This led the government and society alike to implement changes for Amerasians and multiethnic individuals in Japan. The first steps consisted of the legal platforms for recognition in the 1980s. In the 1990s, this was followed by the creation of safe spaces to protect Amerasians, which was supported by Okinawa's understanding of the feeling of marginalization. This allowed alternative forms of education to be accepted in Japan. The third, and current stage consists of the self-affirmation of the identity

³² Agarie, Akiko 東江亜季子. "Tomlinson, Melissa (Yomitan Village) (Part 3)." タムリンソンマリサさん(読谷村)(下). Ryukyu Shimpo Style. 琉球新報 Style 15 August 2016.

³³ Hatachi, Kota. 旗智広太. "Hāfu demo daburu demonai. Watashi wa watashi." 『ハーフでも、ダブルでもない。私はわたし』 [I am neither a *hāfu* nor a double. I am me.] BuzzFeed News 10 October 2018.

in Okinawa and Japan as a whole. Grassroots advocacy has been a crucial element in all three phases as the wider population in Okinawa has responded with support, even though the changes only affected a small minority, Amerasians. On top of solving the problems that Amerasians have faced, the effects have led to changes nationwide, allowing many current day Japanese multinationals to live a more comfortable life.

Although Governor Tamaki discusses his Amerasian identity publicly, he does so demurely. In an interview on Miwa Channel, a Japanese TV show in which Miwa Sano interviews Diet members about topics ranging from politics to personal life, Tamaki professionally dismissed comments regarding his “luck” in being an Amerasian, unlike the articles and communities criticizing stereotypes imposed on Amerasians by Japanese society.³⁴ This differs from the general tone and content of a presentation on his experiences as an Amerasian in Okinawa that he gave to children at the AmerAsian school in 2014 when he was a Diet member. In the presentation, Tamaki revealed that he was raised by his mother’s friend because his father abandoned his family and was bullied by upperclassmen for looking different.³⁵ The difference between the information he provides in different contexts shows how even someone of Tamaki’s stature has difficulty transcending the disconnect between the difficulties that Amerasians (and *hāfu* more generally) face and their glamorization in the mainstream media. The *hāfu*, specifically Amerasian, experience is not discussed at the fully public level as it often involves criticism of Japanese society, which the Japanese media is reluctant to engage in. Discourse and affirmation are still, for the most part, limited to the *hāfu* community.

³⁴ Members of Parliament you can Meet: Miwa Channel, 2017.

³⁵ Tsuneyoshi and Ito, pp. 15.

In terms of legislation and the Amerasian identity, a contemporary question that arises is whether dual citizenship should be permitted in Japan. This notion spans beyond Amerasians in Okinawa, as it involves other multicultural individuals with Japanese nationality. The current nationality law, as of January 2019, states that Japanese multinationals have to select another nationality or keep only their Japanese citizenship at age 22. However, the Japanese government does not track the number of multinationals, nor has it ever prosecuted or issued warnings regarding the violation of this law. Furthermore, a reported 76.8% of Japanese multinationals keep their Japanese and other passports past the age of 22. Despite the lack of consequences arising from the violation of this law, the fact that it exists shows that Japan does not allow its citizens to exercise more than one national identity. This gives the impression that multinational individuals either have to choose to be either only Japanese or not Japanese at all, making many wonder whether or not they are “Japanese enough.”³⁶ Globalization is causing Japan to become increasingly multicultural, meaning that many have and will face this conundrum. Furthermore, movements similar to those which surrounded the empowerment of Okinawan Amerasians over time may spearhead discourse on the question of what it means to be Japanese.

³⁶ Murakami, Sakura and Cory Baird. “Dual Citizenship in Japan: A ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ Policy leaves many in the dark.” *The Japan Times Features*.

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