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Cultural Adaptation in a Divergent Environment -GARIOA scholarship program stories-

Panel: Aspects of History

After the Battle of Okinawa, from 1949 to 1970, many Okinawan young people went to study abroad in the United States, supported by the funds of GARIOA (Government and Relief in Occupied Areas). The GARIOA fund contributed not only to the economic recovery of Okinawa, which struggled for survival in the confusion of a vanquished land following the war, but it also fostered the development of future Okinawan leaders.

These leaders returned to Okinawa that was trying to determine if the Archipelago should become independent, revert to Japan or remain under American control.

This study looks at the decisions GARIOA students made to study in the United States, their adaptation to a divergent environment in a foreign land, and how their study abroad experience contributed to Okinawa's future when they returned. It is through these narrative stories that we understand how meaningful their contributions were to a growing Okinawan society.