

"New Ryukyu Style"~Toward a society where everyone can talk about their dreams~

1.

Don't you all think there's something wrong with a society where you have to give up on your dreams?

Haisai gusūyō chūganabira. (A traditional Okinawan greeting for "Hello, everyone.") I am Oga Hirado from Okinawa Prefectural Hokuzan High School.

"Hey, man... I'm giving up on going to college." I still remember the day a classmate of mine muttered those words. Not being able to go on the school trip. Not being able to attend cram school. In Okinawa, the reality is that the very act of trying hard is considered a "luxury," and even talking about your dreams is seen as selfish.

I feel a strong sense of wrongness and indignation about this atmosphere.

2.

The image many people have of Okinawa might be that of a tropical paradise. However, the current reality is that Okinawa Prefecture's average annual income is in the 2 million yen range, and its rates of non-regular employment and child relative poverty are the highest in the nation. One of the main causes is an economic structure that depends on the tourism industry. About 30% of the prefecture's gross product comes from tourism, but the profits flow to capital from outside the prefecture, meaning it does not sufficiently translate into income for the residents.

This structure cannot nurture the power to support dreams.

3

Therefore, I believe we need an industrial model that not only targets inbound tourism but also aims for outbound exports, all while giving back to the local community.

So, what does Okinawa have right now that we can be proud of, that has the potential to compete globally, and that can keep profits within the region? One of the answers is "traditional crafts."

4

My hometown of Miyako Island in Okinawa has numerous traditional crafts. In the "clothing" aspect of life, there are textiles and dyed goods like *Miyako Jōfu* and *Bingata*, which possess high skill and unique beauty. However, due to competition with cheap imitations and limited sales channels, their value is not properly recognized. I have heard artisans say, "We have our pride, but we can't make a living." In addition, there are problems such as a shortage of successors.

On the other hand, when I was studying abroad in Shanghai, China, and gave a presentation introducing Okinawan crafts, a woman said:

“Méi xiǎngdào Chōngshéng hái yǒu zhème bàng de gōngyìpǐn, zhēn xiǎng qīnzì dài shàng shì shì.” (I never knew Okinawa had such wonderful crafts. I'd love to try wearing them myself.)

I became convinced. It wasn't that they "couldn't be sold," it was just that they "hadn't reached" the right people.

And I felt a strong desire not just to "protect" Okinawan crafts, but to turn them into crafts that "utilize their potential to create the future."

5.

That is why I am launching a luxury brand called "MADE IN RYUKYU." It is a system that will redefine and promote Okinawan crafts to domestic and international audiences based on their "scarcity, story, and beauty."

This brand has three lines:

1. 琉 (Ryū - "Authentic Ryukyu") Delivering "Ryukyu itself." We will create a system to bring existing Okinawan crafts, meticulously finished by artisans, to more people, with a focus on fair trade.

2. 新 (Shin - "New") "Expressing Ryukyu in a new form." This is a fashion line that I will plan and co-create with Okinawan artisans and designers.

- In the high-price range, we will sell fashion products that are in harmony with modern times, using authentic materials and created by artisans, like the one I am wearing now.
- In the mid-price range, we will use alternative materials and streamline parts of the production process to sell products that allow more people to wear the "value of Okinawa."

3. (方) 式 (Hō-shiki - "Method/System") The system to spread that value to the world. Using social media and e-commerce, we will promote and sell to affluent customers around the world, starting with China. This is not just about sales; it is a system to communicate and enhance the "intrinsic added value" of Okinawan crafts to the world.

(Like an iPhone announcement—) "Traditional Crafts," "New Generation Fashion," and "Online Sales." These are not three separate activities, but one brand and one system. 新 (Shin) 琉 (Ryū) (方) 式 (Shiki)... **"Shin-Ryū-Shiki"**

It is a fashion brand that connects Okinawan tradition to the future and changes society.

6.

The financial outlook is as shown in the table. The core of this business is "setting a high profit margin for the artisans."

In 10 years, the revenue from this brand alone will reach approximately 4 billion yen, which is the current annual revenue of the entire Okinawan craft industry, effectively doubling it. I will create a society where Okinawan crafts are used in everyday fashion.

Furthermore, a portion of the profits will be reinvested into training young artisans and supporting workshops, building a regional economy based on the principles of CSV (Creating Shared Value). In fact, I have received encouraging words from the mayor and city council members of Miyako Island, who said: "If you are chosen as the grand prize winner of the Dream Award, we will cooperate with support, including subsidies for *Miyako Jōfu*, collaboration with small and medium enterprise support systems, and personnel assistance for product creation." It is precisely because of this kind of regional support that I can genuinely embark on this challenge.

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Furthermore, this system is a model that can be applied to other local industries nationwide.

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My dream is to use this business as an opportunity to end the "society where you can't talk about dreams." I want to end the present where being born in Okinawa means you can't envision a future.

Starting from Miyako Island, and from Okinawa, I will earnestly begin the challenge of changing society through this system.

Toward a society where everyone can talk about their dreams! Your support would be greatly appreciated.