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Contact: [info@KAHawaii.org](mailto:info@KAHawaii.org)

**HAWAI'I KOREAN ADOPTEES REVISIT BIRTH COUNTRY AND JOURNEY BEYOND**  
KAHI Members Experience North and South Korea

Four members of local organization Korean Adoptees of Hawai'i (KAHI) have recently returned home from a landmark journey to their birth country. KAHI's officers attended the International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA) Gathering from July 31 to Aug. 5 in Seoul, representing Hawai'i at the conference among some 600 adult adoptees from all over the United States and 14 other countries.

Following the IKAA Gathering, KAHI Secretary Lisa "Charlie" Ritts and Treasurer Peter Savasta, both of Honolulu, joined a travel group for a 3-day tour of Mount Keumgang and surrounding areas in North Korea.

KAHI President Katie Putes made her summer residence in Seoul, also visiting Busan during her 10-week stay, while KAHI Vice President Ji In Lugtu divided her time during her monthlong stay among Incheon, Seoul, Jeonju, Gyeongju, Busan and Jeju Island.

It was Ritts' first return visit since her adoption. Savasta, Putes and Lugtu returned to Korea as veteran travelers. Putes and Lugtu both spent time with birth family members during their stay.

The IKAA Gathering in Seoul was the fourth international assembly of Korean adoptees since the first milestone gathering took place in Washington, D.C., in 1999. Adoptees gathered again in Oslo, Norway, in 2001, and in Seoul in 2004. This year's Gathering attracted the largest attendance yet, and was the first of the international conferences to be organized exclusively by Korean adoptee member organizations.

IKAA Gathering registrants participated in conference workshops, an art exhibition, the first research symposium featuring scholars and academic professionals presenting research on international adoption, a soccer tournament, poker championship and socials. Among the resident countries represented by Gathering attendees were Korea, the United States, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Australia, Canada and Great Britain.

Since its formation in March 2006, KAHI has been an up-and-coming presence in the global Korean adoptee community as the first group of its kind in Hawai'i. The group is currently looking ahead to October 2008, when KAHI will welcome an anticipated 100+ visitors for the first time to Honolulu, for a gathering of adult Asian adoptees and the first-ever film festival featuring documentary and feature films by adoptee filmmakers.

KAHI members are also considering planning a group trip to Korea in summer 2009, for adult Korean-born adoptees interested in traveling to their birth country.

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