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in association with  
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present

# 眾族同聲 VOICES IN THE CLOUDS



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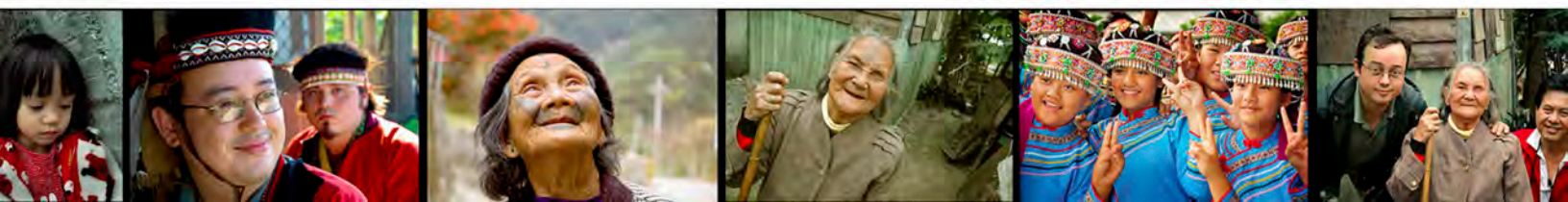
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- THE TAIPEI TIMES





# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS

## Director's Statement

Someone once shared with me that, *"Sometimes it's better if things are unpredictable. Not knowing what's next is hardly a bad thing. Makes life more exciting that way."* That someone was Tony Coolidge, the main subject of my film, Voices in the Clouds. Tony's statement rings true, not only in life, but also in documentary film.

When taking on documenting years of someone's life, you are literally stepping into the realm of the unknown. All you have from the onset are story outlines with intended outcomes for your film. It's as though you're treading on thin ice, with failure only one misstep away. But if you come out of it with a film that you are proud of, then indeed, unpredictability was your best friend.

By conventional standards, Tony Coolidge is an ordinary man. But I find his journey to be quite extraordinary. Being from a mixed ethnic background, he was always unsure of his cultural identity. Yet he was able to grow into a man who was willing to transform his whole life, so that he could be a voice for his people.

Having been raised in a diverse, multicultural environment myself, I immediately connected to Tony's desire to preserve the culture he so deeply fell in love with. Being close to my own mother, I value that Tony returned to Taiwan as a way to honor his late mother's memory. Little did Tony know that honoring his mother was only the beginning of his journey.

By making this film, I hope it will help shed light on a disappearing culture that may otherwise not reach the eyes of the Western world. I also want to show the meaning of "family" from more than one perspective. Your family is your mother, father, wife, husband, children and siblings. But it can also be something greater: your "tribal" family.

I am grateful to have taken this journey with Tony and his family. I have learned much and have grown as a person. Like Tony, who aims to keep his indigenous culture alive for future generations, I too hope to inspire viewers to look deeper into their own familial roots.

-Aaron José



# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS

## Synopsis

Captivated by the cultural discoveries around him, an Asian-American man journeys back to his homeland of Taiwan. Inspired by the vast landscapes he explores, and the gentle souls of the people he encounters, his life is changed forever.

“Voices in the Clouds” is an intimate exploration of one man’s quest to understand his heritage. At the heart of the film lies the celebration of family and cultural preservation. Through his amazing journey, the film hopes to encourage viewers to carve their own path toward self-discovery.

Tony Coolidge is a kind, inquisitive man, born to a Taiwanese mother and an American father he has yet to meet. Living in America, his mother always dreamed of taking her family back to Taiwan to meet their relatives. However, she loses her life prematurely to cancer.

With his mother gone, Tony reunites with his relatives in Taiwan, only to discover that he and his family are descendants of a unique, indigenous tribal culture named Atayal. The Atayal – and other tribal cultures on the island – are in danger of disappearing forever.

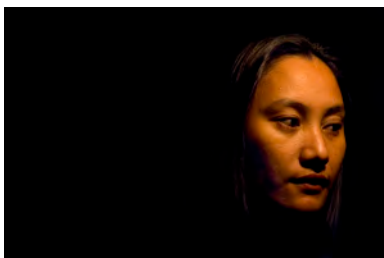
In the process of delving deeper into the history of the Atayal, Tony gradually transforms into a passionate advocate for his people. To celebrate tribal unity and peace, he organizes an international cultural and heritage festival in the United States. Tony’s dedication to his culture inspires one of the festival’s participants to invite Tony back to Taiwan, to develop deeper connections to his roots. Tony accepts the invitation to return, and brings along his brother Steve and wife Shu-min.

Encountering new people in Taiwan brings greater purpose to Tony’s journey. Each discovery for him, his stoic brother, and caring wife, opens a new window into the history, struggle, and unique beauty of Taiwan's indigenous people. They witness the remnants of an abandoned, war-torn village frozen in time. They are enthralled by the wisdom of a 100 year-old tattooed woman, and devastated by the loss of a loved one. Yet, in the end, new bonds are formed, old wounds are healed, and a new voice is given to their ancestors.



# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS

## Press Images



*Images also available in full resolution for publication purposes at  
[www.voicesintheclouds.com](http://www.voicesintheclouds.com)*



# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS

## Subject Bios



### TONY

Tony Coolidge was born in Taipei, Taiwan, to an American soldier and a Taiwanese mother. At the age of 27, Tony travels back to Taiwan to reunite with his relatives after losing his mother to cancer. While in his home village of Wulai, Tony discovers he is a descendant of an indigenous tribe called the Atayal – one of many indigenous Taiwanese cultures in danger of vanishing.

As part of his “new mission” to preserve the indigenous cultures of Taiwan, Tony creates an indigenous heritage festival featuring tribes from Southeast Asia, Africa, and the United States. As a result of his inspirational efforts with the festival, Tony was invited to “return home to gain a deeper connection” to his roots.

During his awe-inspiring encounters with various tribal groups throughout Taiwan, Tony discovers more unique aspects of his own tribe. He also gains a broader understanding of some of the other tribes that make up the beautiful culture he comes to know as “his family.”



### SHU-MIN

Shu-min Hsu Coolidge was born and raised in Tainan, Taiwan, in a predominantly Han Chinese society. Growing up, Shu-min was never encouraged to bond with indigenous Taiwanese people. She represents the Han majority of Taiwan, and her loving marriage with Tony is an example of the healing of differences between the indigenous cultures of Taiwan and the Han culture.

Having to take care of her ailing father, Shu-min is forced to leave her family behind in the United States and return to Taiwan. Four months later, she would welcome her husband Tony, and aid him on his journey.

Throughout the film, Shu-min faces adversity. Despite her personal hardships, Shu-min has to summon the courage to help Tony make his way through the diverse landscapes of her native land. Maybe even learning something for herself along the way.



# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS



## STEVE

Steven Coolidge is the brother of Tony Coolidge, and the youngest of four children. Like Tony, Steve shared a close relationship with his mother and was devastated by the circumstances of her death.

Knowing that Steve had previously expressed interest in learning about their mother's indigenous heritage, Tony offers to bring him along to Taiwan.

Steve reluctantly accepts, knowing his

expectations in going differ greatly from Tony's.

Steve's interesting anecdotes and analyses throughout the film provide their own distinct point of view into the culture he discovers alongside his brother.



## ALICE

Alice Takewatan is a well-respected teacher and activist. She is a member of the Bunun, one of many tribes that make up Taiwan's indigenous population. Alice travels the world, sharing the indigenous cultures of Taiwan through music, dance and art – which are among the few components of traditional tribal life that remain largely untainted by modernization.

Through fate, Alice meets Tony at his cultural festival in the United States. Inspired by Tony's dedication to his culture, she invites Tony to revisit Taiwan, and uses her connections to provide him with a more authentic experience of Taiwanese tribal life.

# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS



## SU-CHEN & YA-KI

In the mountainous village of Wufeng, Taiwan, Su-Chen Wang earns a humble living as a designer of indigenous clothing. Incorporating authentic weaving patterns from the Atayal tribe, Su-Chen's designs have earned her a reputation as a conservator of indigenous culture.

Atayal. Over a hundred years old and bearing the intricate facial tattoos native to her culture, Ya-ki represents Tony's first encounter with a living relic of his tribe. Ya-ki's stories open a new window into the history and beauty of the indigenous people of Taiwan.

Su-Chen brings Tony face-to-face with Ya-ki, one of the oldest elders of the



## TIEN

Tien Guei-Shih is a photographer who devotes his life to his tribe. His photographs document the facial tattoo culture that was once an essential part of life for the Atayal. Once considered fierce headhunters, the Atayal used facial tattoos as a way to distinguish themselves from other tribes in Taiwan. Tien's photography has been appreciated and recognized worldwide.

Pleased to learn of the cultural preservation efforts his younger "tribal brother," Tien is moved to introduce Tony to the last remaining tattooed elders residing in the coastal Taiwanese region of Hualien.



# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS



## THE TRUKU ELDERS

Sakai I-wan, I-pai Lodan, and Sigi Uming have survived four distinct cultural changes and generations of struggle. Originating from the Truku tribe, and having lived through most of the 20th century, these “great-grandmothers” share their memories with the inquisitive American—some funny and inspirational, while others deeply saddening. Their reflections provide some of the most eye-opening and heart-warming moments of Tony’s journey.

# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS

## Filmmaker Bios



### **Aaron Hosé**

#### **Producer/Director/DP/Editor**

Aaron Hosé is an Emmy Award-winning producer whose work has been recognized both nationally and internationally. Born in Texas and raised in Aruba, he developed a passion for culture and creativity from a very young age. He is a graduate of the Valencia College Film Technology Program, and earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Liberal Studies & Cinema Studies from the

University of Central Florida.

As a Media Coordinator for the University of Central Florida, Aaron currently develops and produces original, High Definition programming for broadcast TV, the web, and video-on-demand. His documentary series for UCF Television, *"The Gallery"*, earned him Suncoast Emmy Awards in 2008 and 2009.

In 2003, Aaron produced and directed *"The Groveland Four,"* an acclaimed short documentary that introduced the riveting story of four African-American boys wrongfully accused and persecuted in Groveland, Florida, in 1949. The film was screened at film festivals across the United States.

From 2003 to 2005, Aaron worked as a segment producer for the Dutch TV program *"Frame"*, for which he created *"Frame Goes U.S.A."* The series documented college experiences of Dutch Caribbean students in the United States, and was broadcast in Aruba and the Netherlands.

As a freelance producer, Aaron manages and coordinates all areas of production, and works directly with production boutiques and ad agencies. Clients include T-Mobile, American Automobile Association, Fletcher Martin, University of Florida, United Way, Prentice Hall, and Florida Hospital. His work as producer, editor and videographer has received several industry awards. Aaron has also served as a panel leader for the National Television Academy, judging Emmy-nominated productions from around the United States.

*"Voices in the Clouds"* is Aaron's first feature-length documentary, which he produced and directed in Taiwan. *"Voices"* tells the inspiring story of an Asian-American man on a journey back to his homeland in search of a connection with his indigenous heritage. Aaron also produced *"Time in a Disappearing World"*, an exhibit of photos he took while in Taiwan filming *"Voices."*

Aaron is currently the cinematographer for the music documentary *"Mumpsy,"* and is developing his next documentary, *"The Seed"*, both due next year.



# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS



**Chris Bremer**  
Producer/DP

Chris Bremer is a freelance producer, editor and post-production supervisor who has worked on a myriad of projects for film, web and television. His clients include: Haxan Films, GMD Studios and Atlas Media Corporation. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Media Production and Film Studies from Florida State University.

As a production coordinator/manager Chris has extensive experience producing for the Discovery Health show, *"Dr. G: Medical Examiner."* Having managed production schedules, budgets and crew for the dramatic reenactments for two consecutive seasons, he developed a large body of work and experience.

Chris also traveled extensively for various documentary films. Most notably, a documentary on legendary golfer Jack Nicklaus, entitled *"The Peninsula,"* for filmmaker Tom Reid. Chris produced, directed and photographed the mountain bike series, *"West Coast Style"* in Vancouver, BC for which he won several cinematography awards.

Chris served as supervising editor for the JWT/GMD Studios viral marketing campaign, *"FORD DRIVE ONE,"* supervising the post-production team in New York, Detroit, Los Angeles and Orlando. He defined best practices and workflow solutions for the editorial team, ad agency, and the production company in the communication pipeline. Chris also served as lead creative editor on four of the commercials.

Working closely with Haxan films on their latest feature films *"Altered"* and *"Seventh Moon,"* Chris helped to develop, create and manage the post-production process. This included working with vendors to create custom software solutions and cutting edge, tapeless workflows.

Chris traveled to Taiwan to produce *"Voices in the Clouds"*, a documentary centered around one man's discovery of Taiwan's indigenous tribes. The trip also yielded a gallery exhibit of photographs titled, *"Time in a Disappearing World."* National Geographic recently licensed Chris' photography for their magazine publication.

Chris continues to expand his company, Element 113, by producing and directing original content and exploring new creative avenues in the arts and entertainment industry. Though Element 113 Chris has produced two independent feature films, *"Tom and Marlo,"* and *"Small Hours."* He is currently directing a documentary on brit pop music sensation *"Mumpsy."*

# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS



**John Schaub**  
Producer/Editor

With nearly ten years of experience in the film and television industry, John Schaub has produced and directed documentary projects for non-profit organizations, such as the American Cancer Society, and the American Diabetes Association. John was also Assistant Editor on *"Call of Story,"* a documentary film project for PBS. John is a graduate of the University of Central Florida School of Film & Digital Media.

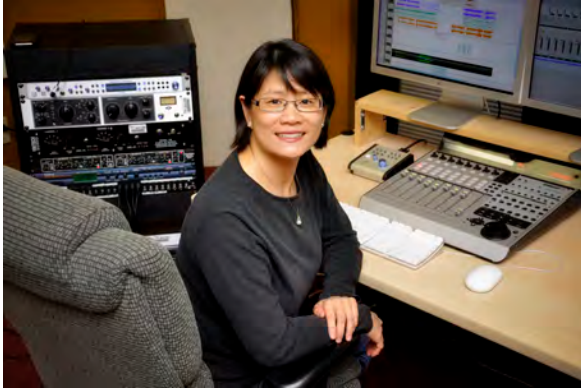
John is currently a freelance editor for Pink Sneakers Productions and Lightship Entertainment, working on reality shows for broadcast on MTV, VH1, TLC, and CMT. Series John has edited include *"Brooke Knows Best," "Luke's Parental Advice," "My Big Redneck Wedding," "Miami Social"* and *"Truth Be Told."*

From 2003 to 2008, John worked as a producer for Digitec Interactive in Metrowest Orlando, where he coordinated all production efforts and contributed to several interactive projects each year. Productions included high-end commercial spots for broadcast television and radio, industrial films, interactive DVD presentations, and high-definition sales videos. His clients included Hilton Grand Vacations, Fleetwood Vacation Club, RCI, AAA, and InCharge Institute. In 2005, John was recognized with a Gold ARDA Award for his production for Starwood Vacation Ownership Aspen Resort.

In 2007, John joined the crew of the feature-length documentary *"Voices in the Clouds"* as producer and editor. Working closely with the film's director, John supervised second unit production and oversaw the entire post-production phase of the film.

John recently produced and edited *"Just About Famous"*, a documentary about celebrity impersonators. The film is currently touring the U.S film festival circuit.

# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS



**Stella Sung**  
Composer

As a national and international award-winning composer, Dr. Stella Sung's compositions are performed throughout the United States and abroad. Dr. Sung is the recipient of the 2007-2010 Phi Kappa Phi National Artist's Award, as well as a 2009-10 "Meet the Composer" award. Additionally,

her composition, *"Rockwell Reflections,"* was excerpted and made into an award-winning, five-minute film, which was selected for the "Cultural Arts" award at the 2009 International MOFILM short film festival.

Other awards have been from the National Endowment for the Arts, the German Ministry of Culture, the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), and the Division of Cultural Affairs of the State of Florida. Commissions have been for artists such as cellist Yo-Yo Ma, saxophonist Claude DeLangle, and guitarist Andrea Vettoreti, and for the Orlando (FL) Philharmonic Orchestra, Jacksonville (FL) Symphony Orchestra, Akron (OH) Symphony Orchestra, and the Virginia Symphony Orchestra.

Dr. Sung's work is published by the Southern Music Company (USA), Theodore Presser Music Publishers (USA), and Editions Henry Lemoine (France), and is currently available on Koch International Recordings, Cambria Master Recordings, Sinfonica (Italy), and Eroica Master Recordings.

Sung holds the Bachelor of Music degree (piano performance) from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor), the Master of Fine Arts degree (Composition) from the University of Florida, and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree (piano performance) from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Sung is director of the Center for Research and Education in Arts, Technology, and Entertainment (CREATE) at the University of Central Florida, and is Professor of Music in UCF's new School of Visual Arts and Design.

Stella Sung was named as the first "Composer-in-Residence" for the Orlando (FL) Philharmonic Orchestra in 2007 and continues to hold that position, as well as "Composer-in-Residence" for Dance Alive National Ballet (Gainesville, FL). Her latest, critically-acclaimed composition, "The Circle Closes," was debuted by the Orlando Philharmonic in 2010.



# VOICES IN THE CLOUDS

**Produced and Directed by**  
Aaron Hosé

**Produced by**  
Chris Bremer  
John Schaub

**Inspired by the article**  
**"Village in the Clouds"**  
**Written by**  
Tony Coolidge

**Adapted by**  
Aaron Hosé

**Photography by**  
Aaron Hosé  
Chris Bremer

**Edited by**  
Aaron Hosé  
John Schaub

**Associate Producer**  
Derek Bedini

**Original Score Composed by**  
Stella Sung

**Production Managers**  
Philip Diller  
Tammy Turner  
Li De-Wei

This film was made possible through grants and contributions from The ATAYAL Organization, the Taiwanese United Fund, Pristine Communications, and the Taiwan Indigenous Cultural Enterprise Development Association (TICEDA).

77 minutes • Color/1.78:1 • English and Mandarin Chinese

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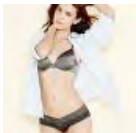
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## Aruba International Film Festival's blog

The second edition of the Aruba International Film Festival ran June 10 to 16, 2011. Legendary leading man and activist Richard Gere opened the inaugural Aruba International Film Festival (AIFF) as its official host when the Festival unspooled last year.

the second edition showcased films from 13 different countries, featuring several international premieres and many U.S.A. premieres. Guest and talents included Jonathan Demme, Milcho Manchevski, Kim Cattrall, Michael Kaplan, Sergio Sanchez, Iech Majewsky. 120 journalists reporting.



The stars will be shining bright at this year's AIFF.

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**Cioccarelli Giuseppe**  
The official Aruba International Film festival's blog

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## AIFF Interview with Aaron Hose



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Aaron Hose at AIFF 2011

Last year one of the films to premier at the inaugural Aruba International Film Festival was Aruba native director Aaron Hose's award-winning documentary film VOICES IN THE CLOUDS (2010). This year Hose acted as director of the Caribbean Spotlight Series (CSS) for the 2nd annual AIFF. When I asked Aaron what that was like he said, 'it was a great learning experience that I hope to repeat next year'.

Aaron's film VOICES IN THE CLOUDS is a poignant look at Taiwanese diaspora who have lost all connection to their roots and feel a great sense of psychological incompleteness because of it. Two American Taiwanese brothers go on a journey back to their homeland to pick up the pieces of their broken family and to delve into the vital secrets of a nearly forgotten past. It is a universal story of crucial poignancy reminding us that while civilization forces us to move ever forward we should never forget where we came from.

READ BELOW MY INTERVIEW WITH ARUBAN DIRECTOR AARON HOSE.

ME: Can you tell us what 'Voices in the Clouds' means and why you chose that title? Also, how did you meet Tony Coolidge and when did you first learn about his story?

AARON: "Voices in the Clouds" is actually inspired by a magazine article that was written years ago by Tony Coolidge (our main subject), titled "Village in the Clouds". In his article, Tony details the first time he is reunited with his family in Taiwan after prematurely losing his mother to cancer. The 'village' in question here is the mountainous town of Wulai (northern Taiwan), which, as Tony discovers, is a very popular destination for anyone wanting to learn about Taiwan's aboriginal cultures. It was during this first trip to Wulai that Tony also discovered that he and his family weren't "native Taiwanese" (descendants from the Han culture of neighboring "mainland" China), but that they were actually part of the Atayal tribe of Taiwan--an important part of Tony's family history that was purposely hidden from him by his mother. So the documentary chronicles Tony's search for answers and a sense of identity and belonging, as he journeys to connect with his indigenous heritage and appreciate the history and struggle of his ancestors. Over time, we changed the film's title from from "village" to "voices". Considering we were encountering all these interesting indigenous people while filming Tony in Taiwan, it just felt like the right thing to do. Yes, the film is primarily about Tony's journey, but it's also about the many people he meets along the way--each person having their own interesting take on the past, present and future of Taiwan's indigenous cultural landscape.

ME: You are a director from Aruba right? What made you decide to make a film about a man from Taiwan?

AARON: Though I was raised in Aruba, I have been living and working in the U.S. since 1994. I still consider myself a full-fledged "Arubano" (as they say in Papiamentu), and I do travel back home at least once a year. I had actually met Tony through a friend of mine ('Voices' associate producer, Derek Bedini) who attended film school with me at Valencia College. He had read Tony's magazine article and was convinced that his story would make a great documentary. However, considering Tony had already "experienced" his first return back to Taiwan, it was hard to get funding for the film. But after years of hard work and fundraising, we finally made it happen. Derek was right... it does tell a very touching story, and it's a film we're all very proud of.

ME: Do you think there are universal themes in your films that can speak to your own family and heritage and also to all other dying indigenous people in the world?

AARON: The theme of "search for identity" is one that resonates with me, mainly because of my own ethnic background. Sure, I may have been born in the U.S., but I was raised primarily in Aruba, which allowed me to receive a Dutch elementary and secondary education. But then I returned to the U.S. for an American college education, and now I work here. So often

Aruba - AIFF wrap up  
comments from  
Festival Producer  
Giuseppe Cioccarelli

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- Michael Kaplan 'Conversations With' at AIFF 2011
- Interview with Michael Kaplan!
- Red Carpet Interview with Barbara Mori at AIFF 2011
- Interview with CURTIS '50 CENT' JACKSON in Aruba!
- Sergio Sanchez Suarez, interview on Tequila
- Daniela Schmidt on TEQUILA MOTHERS, Aruba review!
- Red carpet Tolerance day
- Giuseppe Cioccarelli on the Tolerance Day project which



times, I stop and wonder, "what am I exactly? Am I Aruban? American? Dutch?" Considering my Father has roots in Curaçao and Venezuela and my Mother in Puerto Rico, does that now make me Hispanic? This can be quite confusing sometimes, since I have not lived as part of one culture more than the other. I guess I (and most of my family) am somewhat of a walking melting pot. One thing's for sure... I am definitely Aruban at heart. Always....

...Furthermore, the theme of "cultural preservation" is very near and dear to my heart as well, especially considering how small of a country Aruba is. As I drive around the island and see how much has changed, I wonder if it is changing for the better. Sure, Aruba is becoming more modern... but is it losing its "essence"? There seems to be a notion in Aruba that, "the more we cater toward foreign tastes, the more foreigners will like us and want to visit us." This is evidenced by the flurry of "Americanized" shopping districts that are built every few years. I was also fielding complaints from tourists, claiming that Aruba is "not as beautiful culturally as it once was". Not to mention, I was hearing more and more teenagers speaking English. Not that's there's something wrong with that per se. I was just questioning why they chose not to speak (our native language) Papiamentu instead. I will say this though... I am glad to see Papiamentu now being offered as a course in Aruban high schools. That is one major improvement from when I lived there 17 years ago....

...The same goes for indigenous cultures around the world. As indigenous cultures are becoming more modernized, certain elements will vanish into history books. That part is inevitable. Other elements however, such as language, can still be saved. Something as simple as teaching our young ones how to speak these languages, now that can go a long way.

ME: When did you decide to make a film about Tony's search and how difficult (or easy) was the experience to make this documentary?

AARON: As we started fundraising for 'Voices', the initial idea was to do the film as a docu-drama... part documentary, part re-enactment. This was because Tony's first reunion with his family had already occurred before we had even met Tony. But our creative approach was being frowned upon by many of the grant-making organizations that we applied to. So we were actually considering shelving the project permanently. That is, until Tony decided to launch a non-profit organization to help raise international awareness of the tribes of Taiwan. One of his organization's initiatives was to organize an "indigenous heritage festival," which had performers coming to Orlando from all corners of the globe. As a result of the festival, Tony received an invitation to return to Taiwan to learn more about his people. The invitation was extended by Alice Takewatan, one of the Taiwanese participants in Tony's festival, and subsequently, one of the most important people in our film as well. So... the documentary happened after all, just not the way we had planned it. But ultimately this resulted in a much better film than what we originally envisioned...

...The main challenge of making the film in Taiwan was breaking through the many language barriers we hit. We had multi-lingual translators with us at all times as we traveled across the island, so we could communicate from Chinese to English, or in some cases, from Atayal to Chinese, then to English. This made for some nightmarish scenarios, as we would go for days not knowing exactly what was in the can. All we could do was hope for the best. Upon our return to the U.S. we had to enlist Chinese speakers to help transcribe our non-English material into something manageable. It would take us a few years before we could fully hone in on the best possible story for the film. But we eventually got there.

ME: How has the reception of your film been by audiences since the film's premier in Aruba 2010?

AARON: For a niche film such as ours, I think we have had a successful film festival run, screening not only in Aruba but also at festivals in the U.K., Canada and the United States. The film has also won some nice awards along the way. Considering the international documentary field is so incredibly competitive, it has been very difficult to gain entry into the upper tier festivals such as IDFA, Thessaloniki, One World, Ambulante, Sundance, Hot Docs, Full Frame, Silverdocs, or Margaret Mead. But I'm happy to say that we have still been able to amass a solid following among Asian Americans, Eurasians and Taiwanese. Most recently, we premiered the film in Taipei, Taiwan as the Closing Night Film of the 10th Annual Urban Nomad Film Festival. This was Tony Coolidge's first time attending a film festival, so it was great to have him there representing the film and doing Q&A with the sold-out audience of nearly 200....

...Since the premiere, Tony has been taking the film around Taiwan as part of Urban Nomad's touring component. Considering the film is most important for people "in" Taiwan, we could not be happier. We still have a few film festival submissions pending, but in the meantime, the DVD is for sale on our website at <http://voicesintheclouds.com>

ME: What do you hope that people will take away from your film? It is a beautiful film and very moving. Has it been hard to find an audience?

AARON: Sure, it has been hard to find an audience. But we have received a great deal of support. Now that we've finally shown the film in Taiwan, our support continues to grow. We are grateful for this. What I have learned in the past year is, most films with this kind of "niche" topic will face marketing challenges. It is up to you as the filmmaker to "acknowledge" that these challenges exist "before" taking on the project. We understand that 'Voices' is not a celebrity biopic, or a documentary about the war in Afghanistan, the Holocaust, the world economy, the American education system, or the AIDS epidemic in Africa. These are all topics that will forever dominate the film festival circuit. And for good reason--these films sell. With this in mind, we knew what we were up against. But all things considered, we've still done well with 'Voices'. More importantly, the film has been opening doors for Tony in Taiwan, to connect with more indigenous groups to the point where he can really start to "affect change" in his country. Now that, to us, is priceless.

Aruba Day project when screened Ensemble (arabs save jews) and more themed films in Aruba...

[More blog entries](#)

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Website

ME: How hard is it to be a filmmaker from Aruba living in America? Do you feel displaced like Tony?

AARON: Perhaps a bit displaced, yes. See, when I left Aruba to go to college in Florida (in 1994), I was not allowed to take out a student loan to study anything arts-related. I hope this is no longer the case, and that students are being offered funding for arts education. I say this with a little bit of shame... but one of the main reasons why I am in America is because I have U.S. citizenship (I was born in Texas). But even if I wanted to return to Aruba, unfortunately, there really is no filmmaking industry in Aruba.... yet. Aruba does have some quality television and video producers and motion graphic designers, but I haven't seen any feature films produced in Aruba lately.

ME: Now that there is an International film festival in Aruba do you hope this is the beginning of a real Aruba film making future?

AARON: Absolutely. We're hoping that after the recent success of the 2nd Annual Aruba International Film Festival, cultural organizations in Aruba will start to realize the importance of not only making funding available to Aruban filmmakers, but to also have educational initiatives in place that will motivate locals to pursue filmmaking as a career. The two Aruban productions that were screened in the Caribbean Spotlight Series section of the festival, "10 Ave Maria" and "Muhe Frida", received a lot of media attention, so we're hoping this will be the beginning of something special on the island. As a direct result of the buzz, the Aruba Minister of Culture, Economic and Social Affairs, Michelle Hooyboer-Winklaar, organized a special screening of the two Aruban films for the entire Aruban parliament. If that doesn't say something positive about the filmmaking future of the island, nothing else will.

ME: What are your next projects and future goals as a director?

AARON: I am currently working on a few projects. One is a (untitled) behind-the-scenes documentary on the creation of an LGBTQ stage production. I am also assisting my two 'Voices' producers, Chris Bremer and John Schaub, as cinematographers on their current feature documentaries (I love shooting as well), both due next year. Lastly, there's a fictional narrative that has been brewing in my head for the past year. I am just now starting to write it. I like to think of it as a cross between Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" and Tomas Alfredson's "Let The Right One In," with a twist of Guillermo Del Toro's "Pan's Labyrinth". And did I mention that I may want to shoot it in Aruba? ;-)

ME: Wow, Aaron, your energy and vision are contagious. Your film and others featured at the AIFF are really what filmmaking is all about, proving that cinema still is the most powerful international language with the ability to change the world. You're an inspiration. Thank you!

AARON: Vanessa, thank you for this!! ☺

Interview conducted by Vanessa McMahon on June 28, 2011

AARON CONT.: All of film photos were taken by me or Chris Bremer, my co-cinematographer on the film. Most of these photos are part of an exhibit we produced "Time in Disappearing World," to raise money for the tattooed elders in Taiwan as well as for post-production and marketing of the film. ;-)

Since premiering at AIFF 2010, 'Voices' has screened at fests in the U.S., Canada, Europe and most recently (this past May) as Closing Night Film at Urban Nomad Film Festival in Taipei, Taiwan. We've also won some awards at fests here in the U.S. All the fest info is detailed on the Vimeo page. The DVD is currently being self-distributed.



still from VOICES IN THE CLOUDS (2010) AIFF

"Voices in the Clouds" is an intimate look at one man's search for the spirit of his late mother through the discovery and exploration of his indigenous roots. Through his journey the audience will become well-acquainted with and emotionally connected to the indigenous people and cultures of Taiwan. 'Voices' celebrates the importance of family, and illustrates the personal richness and fulfillment that is born from being intimately connected to one's ethnic heritage and culture.

OFFICIAL SELECTIONS:• Aruba International Film Festival - World Premiere (June 2010)• Native Spirit Festival (London, Oct. 2010)• San Diego Asian Film Festival - North American Premiere (Oct. 2010) • Alexandria Film Festival (Nov. 2010)• Gasparilla International Film Festival (Mar. 2011) • Riverside International Film Festival (Apr. 2011) • DisOrient Asian American Film Festival (Apr. 2011)• CLOSING NIGHT FILM - Urban Nomad Film Festival (Taiwan, May 2011)• Dreamspeakers Film Festival (Canada, June 2011)

AWARDS:• Best of Category Award for "Indigenous & Native Peoples Film" - Montana CINE International Film Festival (Oct. 2010)• Spirit of Place Award for "Best Use of Traditional Music" - Orlando Latin-American Film & Heritage Festival (Feb. 2011)• Spirit of Place Award for "Best Cultural Awareness Message" - Orlando Latin-American Film & Heritage Festival (Feb. 2011)• Spirit of Place Award for "Best Human Rights Message" - Orlando Latin-American Film & Heritage Festival (Feb. 2011)

Website: [voicesintheclouds.com](http://voicesintheclouds.com)

Facebook page: [facebook.com/ voicesintheclouds](https://facebook.com/voicesintheclouds)



from Aaron Hose's photos



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## AROUND TOWN

FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2011

13

**W**hile growing up in the US, Tony Coolidge (陳華友) was told very little about his Taiwanese mother's background.

"She went through great pains to bring us up American, to keep us speaking English so we could succeed, so we could adapt and fit in," he says.

After his mother's death from cancer in 1994, Coolidge visited Taiwan to reconnect with her relatives — and made a life-changing discovery. On a trip to his mom's hometown of Wulai (烏來) in New Taipei City, Coolidge found out that she was a member of the Atayal tribe. Up to that point, he had never even heard of Taiwanese Aborigines.

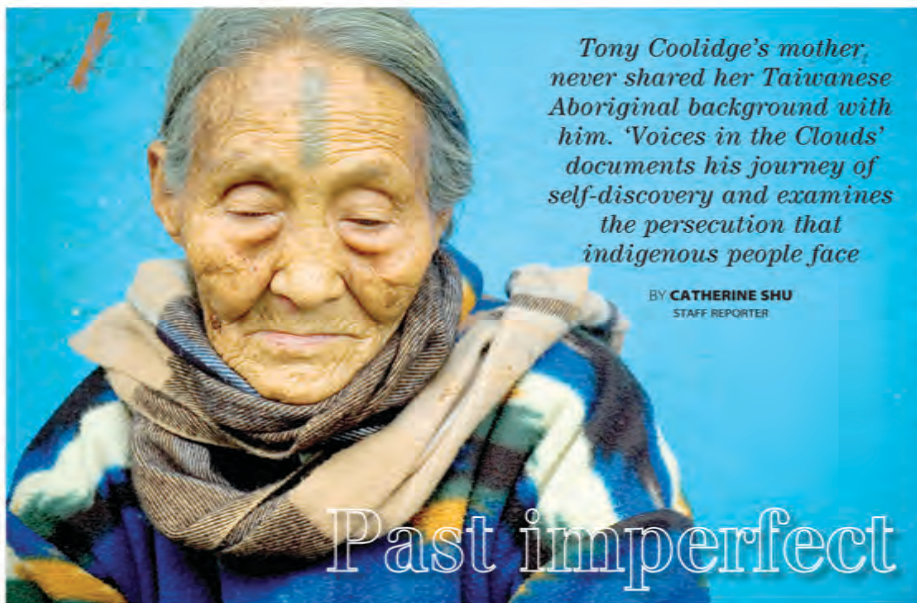
Coolidge's quest to find out more about his family's Aboriginal background — and why it had been hidden from him — is the subject of *Voices in the Clouds* (家族同聲), a documentary by director Aaron Hose. Released last year, the film will be shown with Chinese subtitles for the first time at the Urban Nomad Festival's closing night on Sunday, followed by a question-and-answer session with Coolidge.

Coolidge recalls that on his trip, the topic of his family's background did not come up until he questioned his aunt about the Aboriginal art he saw on the streets of Wulai.

"I thought, 'What were Native Americans doing here?' That's what it looked like to me," Coolidge told the *Taipei Times* on Tuesday. "And then she told me, 'No, that's our tribe.' I thought, 'Our tribe? Atayal?' I was surprised, shocked."

Back home, Coolidge started researching the tribal group's history. A magazine article he wrote about his trip caught the attention of filmmaker Aaron Hose.

"The fact that while he was visiting Wulai, he discovered that his entire family are descendants of the Atayal



*Tony Coolidge's mother, never shared her Taiwanese Aboriginal background with him. 'Voices in the Clouds' documents his journey of self-discovery and examines the persecution that indigenous people face*

BY CATHERINE SHU  
STAFF REPORTER

## Past imperfect

tribe, this blew me away," Hose wrote in an e-mail. "Like Tony, I, too, was surprised that he hadn't ever heard about it from his mother."

In late 2005, Hose and his filmmaking team followed Coolidge and his brother Steven on a return trip to Taiwan. *Voices* is a moving account of Coolidge's journey to learn more about his ethnic identity. At the same time, it casts a light on the persecution suffered by Taiwanese Aboriginal tribes.

As he found out more about the challenges faced by Aborigines, Coolidge began to understand why his mother never talked about her background. In the film,



*Voices in the Clouds* follows Taiwanese American Tony Coolidge's search for his roots in the Atayal Aboriginal tribe.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VOICES IN THE CLOUDS

one Aboriginal elder recalls having to take on different identities in succession: tribal, Japanese, Chinese and Taiwanese. A father describes how classmates labeled his young son a "barbarian."

"When I first went, it was very evident that there was not a lot of pride about the culture," Coolidge says. "To me, it was a total avoidance of that culture, in my own family and my relatives. Throughout Taiwan, I got the sense that there wasn't a positive attitude toward indigenous cultures or people."

The son of an American GI who left his mother before his birth, Coolidge was born in Taiwan but immigrated to the US when he was a small boy. He grew up on military bases around the world with his mother, stepfather and three younger siblings.

Though she kept her ethnicity hidden from him, Coolidge knew his mother missed Taiwan and dreamed of returning before she was diagnosed with cancer. In a poignant scene, Coolidge recalls a time when he tried to ease his ailing mother's homesickness by taking her to a Florida amusement park called Splendid China.

Two years later, after she passed away, Coolidge made his first trip to Taiwan as an adult. "After she died, my quest was not about discovering her culture, but about going and reconnecting with her

family and bringing back her spirit in a way," Coolidge says. "Only I discovered something totally unexpected."

Coolidge says he can relate to the bigotry faced by his Atayal relatives because of the discrimination he experienced as an Asian American. In the American south, his mother and stepfather were viewed negatively for being a mixed-race couple; at school, his classmates taunted him with fake kung fu moves and "ching chong" noises.

"I can't say I fully understand what my mother went through, but I understand what discrimination was like," Coolidge says. "It gave me an understanding of why she did what she did to fit in with mainstream culture."

Despite language and cultural barriers, Coolidge says he has always felt welcomed in Taiwan. He now lives in Tainan with his wife, Shu-min Hsu Coolidge (徐淑敏), and their three children.

In the film, Shu-min is candid about the misconceptions she had about Taiwanese Aborigines before accompanying her husband on his journey of discovery. *Voices in the Clouds* was made for American audiences, but Coolidge and Hose hope it will give Taiwanese people a chance to reflect on their country's complex, multi-layered ethnic heritage.

Hose says that when the film was screened at US film festivals, several Taiwanese-born audience members told him that they, like Coolidge, were surprised to find out about their home country's Aboriginal tribes.

"I figured, 'How are we ever going to help preserve a dying culture if people from their own country don't even know the culture exists?'" Hose said. "Raising awareness is the first step on a long road toward preservation."

"It's from having a strong sense of belonging that you have a foundation to move forward in your life," Hose said.

### FILM NOTES

**WHAT:** Aaron Hose's *Voices in the Clouds* (家族同聲) at the Urban Nomad Film Festival's closing night

**WHEN AND WHERE:** The film will be shown on Sunday after an awards ceremony and screening of *Pangcah* (饗道), a short film by Kawa Ume, and followed by a question-and-answer session with Tony Coolidge. The event starts at 7:30pm on Sunday in Warehouse 2 of Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914), 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德路一段1號)

**ADMISSION:** Tickets are NT\$220 (NT\$170 for students)

**ON THE NET:** [urbannomadfilmfest.blogspot.com](http://urbannomadfilmfest.blogspot.com); [www.voicesintheclouds.com](http://www.voicesintheclouds.com); [www.atayal.org](http://www.atayal.org)





PHOTOS FROM AARON HOSE/"VOICES IN THE CLOUDS"

Filmmaker Aaron Hose, above, shot "Voices in the Clouds" in locales from Orlando to Taiwan. At left, Tony Coolidge meets one of the elders of Taiwan's Atayal tribe in a scene from the movie.

## Preview

# OLA Fest welcomes a documentary 'birthed' at an earlier edition

### See for yourself

**OLA Fest 7, the Orlando Latin American Film and Heritage Festival**

**When:** Thursday-Feb. 13

**Where:** Premiere Cinemas Fashion Square 14, Lake Eola Park, other locales

**Online:** olafest.org

**By Roger Moore**  
MOVIE CRITIC

**T**he Orlando Latin American Film & Heritage Festival's seventh edition opens Thursday, with four days of movies, music, talks and a staged reading of a play.

The films are a collection of Latin titles, including films made by Colombian director **Sergio Cabrera**, and issues documentaries — "The Garden," "South

of the Border," "Countdown to Zero."

And then there's "Voices in the Clouds."

This documentary — "a film practically birthed at OLA Fest 5 years ago," says festival organizer **Nelson Betancourt** — is about one man's search for his Taiwanese roots. Orlando filmmaker **Aaron Hose** spent years documenting former Orlandoan **Tony Coolidge's** search for the indigenous heritage his mother

hid from him all his life.

"Tony was doing things around town to make people aware that Taiwan was not just Chinese, that there were these tribes that were there before the Han Chinese came and took over the culture," says Hose. "His mother, who had died, had never told him she was from the Atayal tribe. We thought 'there's a documentary in that story.'"

Hose, 35, is a Valencia Community College and University of Central Florida film program alumnus who works in video production at UCF. He's a native of Aruba, "and the multicultural aspect of Tony's story appealed to me, this search he and his brother went on to find out who their people were."

"Voices in the Clouds" follows Coolidge and his brother on a visit to the mountains of Taiwan,

once called Formosa, where they visit remnants of the 14 recognized tribes that predate the Chinese presence on the island. They are a tiny, obscure and discriminated against minority, almost invisible in the culture at large.

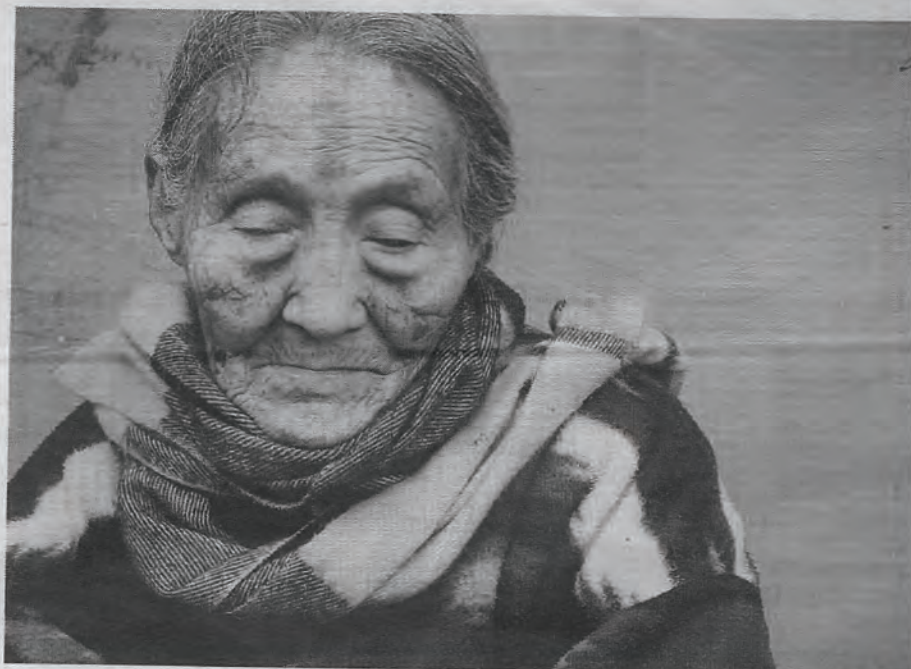
"We showed this film at the San Diego Asian Film Festival, and there were natives of Taiwan who came up to us afterward and said, 'I had no idea there were these other cultures on the island,'" Hose says. "Their parents never told them and the tribal people have done so much to assimilate."

Hose's film depicts perhaps the last generation of members of one tribe who wear facial tattoos and speak a native dialect. "The songs and dance of these tribes are passed down, but there's still a lot of traditions that are fading

**Other films showcased at OLA Fest, Page 11**

PLEASE SEE **OLA FEST, 11**





"VOICES IN THE CLOUDS"

A member of Taiwan's indigenous Atayal people in a scene from "Voices in the Clouds."

## OLA FEST

FROM PAGE 6

away."

Hose and his crew faced a double layer of language barriers, not speaking either Mandarin Chinese or the language of the Atayal. "We had to have translators, to know what footage we were actually getting, what people were saying in the interviews. Then we had to have more translators here to tell us what we'd gotten so that we could pull the story out of the footage."

"Voices in the Clouds" will be shown at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 12 at Premiere Cinemas; 2 p.m. Feb. 13 at Premiere Cinemas.

Among the other titles at OLA Fest 2011:

### 'South of the Border'

★★★ (2010)  
**Oliver Stone's** documentary about his meetings with assorted leaders of Central and South America was controversial for its almost fawning take on people like Venezuela's **Hugo Chavez**,

but it is still a fascinating alternative view of folks who don't come off as the caricatures they're sometimes made out to be on American TV news. **Showing:** Feb. 13 at 6 p.m., Premiere Cinemas

### 'The Garden'

★★★ (2008)  
This award-winning documentary is about an activist's efforts to save a 14-acre community garden in the middle of Los Angeles. **Showing:** Feb. 13 at 4 p.m., Premiere Cinemas

### 'Countdown to Zero'

★★½ (2010)  
Just when you thought it was safe to stop worrying so much about nuclear weapons, here's a sobering if somewhat fussy, unfocused and overly star-studded reminder of just how dangerous the world is becoming as these weapons are developed by more countries. **Showing:** Feb. 12 at 3 p.m., Premiere Cinemas

### 'The Two Escobars'

★★★ (2010)  
An eye-opening sports docu-

mentary made for ESPN about the role of narcotics money in backing Colombia's national soccer team in the 1980s and '90s — a team starring Andres Escobar and largely backed by the drug lord (no relation) Pablo Escobar. **Showing:** Feb. 12 at 9 p.m., Premiere Cinemas

### 'The Unforeseen'

★★★ (2010)  
This documentary is about residents of Austin, Texas, who battle developers and the state in an effort to save their endangered watershed. **Showing:** Feb. 11 at 7 p.m., Premiere Cinemas

### 'La Estrategia Del Caracol' ("The Strategy of the Snail")

★★★ (1993)  
**Sergio Cabrera's** deadpan comedy, in Spanish with English subtitles, is about the colorful residents of a Bogota apartment house who use assorted methods in fending off the owner's efforts to evict them. **Showing:** Feb. 11 at 7 p.m., Feb. 13 at 6 p.m., both at Premiere Cinemas

The Orlando Sentinel  
Feb 4, 2011



## 眾族同聲 亞歷山卓電影節 美東首映

記者許惠敏維州報導

November 03, 2010 06:00 AM | 212 觀看次數 | 0 0 0



柯立芝(左)回到母親故鄉島來尋根而拍成的「眾族同聲」(Voices in the Clouds)紀錄片, 將在第四屆亞歷山卓電影節美東首映。(圖: 亞歷山卓電影節提供)

「眾族同聲」(Voices in the Clouds)的片中主角柯立芝 (Tony Coolidge) 是尋常不過的一個美國人, 和許多生長在這民族大熔爐的移民一樣, 偏黑的膚色、深邃的眼眸, 說明他的「混種」血緣, 在27歲以前, 柯立芝從沒探索過這張臉的背後: 我是誰? 我從哪裡來?

1967年出生於台灣台北, 媽媽是台灣人, 爸爸是駐台美軍, 柯立芝在4歲時離開台灣, 回到爸爸的國家, 從此當美國人, 成長過程中, 母親很少談起台灣, 只說她非常想家、想念她的親人。

一向和母親很貼近的柯立芝多次跟媽媽保證: 有一天會帶她回台灣, 這個許諾, 卻一再跳票, 終於無法實現。柯立芝的媽媽1995年不敵病魔, 在佛州奧蘭多過世。

母親去世一年後, 柯立芝帶著媽媽的願望回到故鄉島來, 畢生首次見到親族, 也才知道自己是邊緣部落愛泰雅族的一分子。柯立芝這次的尋根之旅不僅發現自己, 也愛上了這「雲端的村落」, 從此, 他下定決心改善台灣的原住民部落、以發掘、傳承部落文化為己任。

畢業自德州大學奧斯汀分校的柯立芝是奧蘭多青年企業家, 創建iBidUSA.com, 並在2003年將這家公司上市。柯立芝的另一半來自台灣, 兩夫婦過去十多年來致力改善台灣原住民部落生活, 並創立了非政府組織「愛泰雅協會」(Atayal Inc.), 為台灣原住民部落在美國發聲, 並引導世界認識台灣的原住民文化。

2004年10月, 愛泰雅協會和美國佛州的台裔美國團體及賽米諾族合作, 共同舉辦國際原住民慶典「世界原住民文化祭」, 也引起導演荷西 (Arron Hose) 的注意, 為紀錄片「眾族同聲——雲端的村落」埋下種子。

導演荷西表示, 原住民依循自然定律生活, 世界上的原住民人口達3億4000萬人, 他們追求平衡、簡單生活方式卻不斷被文明擠壓、持續遭到剝削, 年輕人外移、追求文明、放棄文化, 世界上有兩萬種原住民語言正以驚人速度消失。這部紀錄片的拍攝, 希望激發地球村民對文明進化的重新思考, 並對沉默而消失中的人類珍寶, 付出一份關切。

「一介平凡台裔美國人的尋根之旅, 為世界傳達出不平凡的訊息」, 第四屆亞歷山卓電影節如此介紹「眾族同聲」(Voices in the Clouds)。「眾」片獲2010年阿魯巴國際電影節參展, 這次受邀參加亞歷山卓電影節, 將是該片的美東首映。

「眾族同聲」片長77分鐘, 將於6日下午1時假北維亞歷山卓的AMC Hoffman-Theatre 21放映, 該片導演荷西將出席電影節, 和影迷們分享這部紀錄片拍攝的幕後花絮、及該片對他個人、對主角柯立芝生命更新的心路歷程。

訂票詳情可查閱網站「www.alexandriafilm.org」。AMC Hoffman-Theatre 21影院地址: 206 Swamp Fox Rd., Alexandria, VA。



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### **“Voices in the Clouds” to be screened at Alexandria Film Festival**

Voices in the Clouds’ protagonist Tony Coolidge is an unusual American, and like many, grew up in this melting pot nation of immigrants. His darker color skin, dark eyes indicate his mixed blood. Before the age of 27, Coolidge never explored such questions, “*Who am I? Where do I come from?*”

Born in 1967 in Taipei, Taiwan, to a Taiwanese mother and a U.S. military father stationed in Taiwan. At the age of 4 he left Taiwan and moved to his father's country, and grew up as an American. His mother rarely talked about Taiwan, but shared that she was very homesick and missed her family. Coolidge was very close to his mother and ensured that one day he would take her back to Taiwan. The promise was finally impossible to fulfill when his mother died in 1995 in Orlando, Florida.

One year later, he returned to Taiwan to see his mother’s relatives in Wulai and discovered that he was a member of the Atayal tribe. Coolidge fell in love with this "village in the clouds." From then on, he was determined to take part in improving the life of Taiwan's aboriginal tribes, and to carry on his cultural heritage.

A graduate from the University of Texas at Austin, Coolidge became a young entrepreneur. He founded iBidUSA.com, which got listed in 2003. Coolidge's wife is from Taiwan. The couple has worked together in preserving Atayal culture for the past decade through the "Atayal Foundation,” introducing the Atayal culture to the United States. In October 2004, the Atayal Foundation and Taiwanese-American groups in Florida, along with the Sai Minuo tribe co-organized the "World Indigenous Cultural Festival," drawing ‘Voices’ director Aaron José’s attention.

Hosé mentioned that, “the world has about 300 million indigenous people, and their pursuit of a balanced, simple way of life is constantly being squeezed. Tens of thousands of the world's indigenous languages are disappearing at an alarming rate.” He hopes this documentary can help stimulate the global villagers to rethink the evolution of civilization, and be concerned about the disappearance of indigenous cultures.

The fourth annual Alexandria Film Festival described the film as, “***an ordinary Taiwanese American’s root-searching journey... an extraordinary message to the world.***” The film premiered at the 2010 International Film Festival in Aruba. This screening at the Alexandria Film Festival is the East Coast premiere of the film.