



***The Blood of Yingzhou District* triumphs at Academy Awards**

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The China AIDS Media Project is pleased to announce that *The Blood of Yingzhou District*, produced by Thomas Lennon and directed by Ruby Yang, has won the Oscar in the 2007 Academy Awards® Documentary Short Subject category. This is the first win for both Thomas Lennon and Ruby Yang. Lennon has previously been nominated for the feature documentary *The Battle Over Citizen Kane* (1995).

The Blood of Yingzhou District tells the story of traditional Chinese obligations of family and village colliding with the terror of AIDS. Gao Jun, a young village boy from Anhui province, lost both parents to the disease and is himself infected. Little is known about him, even his age, and he does not speak a word until the closing minutes of the film. Yet Gao Jun reveals a ferocious resolve to live, even as his extended family weighs whether or not to keep him.

“Our work in China is a humanitarian effort first, and artistic considerations are a distant second. How could it be otherwise?” said Lennon. “And yet, here Ruby Yang has made a highly personal film.”

Yang and Lennon are architects of the China AIDS Media Project (CAMP), established in 2003 to help spread AIDS information in the most populous country on earth. *The Blood of Yingzhou District* is the project’s first effort to reach international audiences.

Shot with small-format cameras entirely by Chinese film crews, notably Beijing cinematographer Qu Jiangtao, the film achieves a level of intimacy and candor rarely seen in documentary work from China.

For Yang, that level of intimacy reached its climax in a visit to the home of the Huang siblings, who also lost both parents to AIDS.

“The three Huang children led me to their family home. It was full of empty medicine bottles and old toys, and children’s scribbles covered the walls. But it was the smell -- the smell of death -- that had a deep impact on me,” Yang said. “It was something that couldn’t be captured in a documentary.

“But what could be captured was the range of the children’s desires and feelings: hurt, yes, but also anger, playfulness, mischief, longing and above all, a fierce will to live.”



That will was what inspired Yang and Lennon in their current project: China's first major public awareness campaign about AIDS.

Many of the children featured in the documentary appear in the campaign, made in cooperation with the Chinese Ministry of Health. The latest series of ads, featuring popular folk singer Peng Liyuan, are designed to ease the stigma and social rejection suffered by children affected with AIDS. The PSAs have aired over a thousand times on China's national television network, CCTV, reaching an estimated 200 million viewers or more. In 2004, in cooperation with the NBA and noted AIDS researcher Dr. David Ho, Lennon and Yang created a widely-seen PSA and web campaign about AIDS featuring basketball stars Yao Ming and Magic Johnson. Until recently, AIDS has been a taboo subject in the Chinese media, and many Chinese are still ignorant of how the disease is spread.

"With this disease, film and television can save more lives than doctors can," Lennon said.

The Blood of Yingzhou District premiered at the AFI/Discovery Channel Film Festival Silverdocs in June 2006, taking home the DOCS Rx Grand Jury Award, and has since been shown at over 24 festivals and screening venues worldwide and around the U.S.

Key advisors to CAMP include Prof. Jing Jun of Tsinghua University in Beijing and Sesame Workshop co-founder Joan Ganz Cooney. *The Blood of Yingzhou District* was produced in association with Sesame Workshop and HBO Documentary Films and was made possible in part by a grant from the Starr Foundation.

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The China AIDS Media Project

Thomas Lennon Films, Inc.
New York: (212) 875 6181
Beijing: 86 (10) 6569 6288
info@chinaaidsmedia.com
www.chinaaidsmedia.com