

WIP A AGANAI - The Atonement



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Japan

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME: Documentary | Digital Format | Japanese | 90 mins

DIRECTOR:

SAKAHARA Atsushi

PRODUCER:

SAKAHARA Atsushi

WIP GOALS:

Funds, Sales agents, Pre-sales, Festival screening

PRODUCTION BUDGET:

US\$ 250,000

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

First Feature Director

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

Atsushi, the director, a victim of a sarin gas attack in 1995 and an ex-husband of a former cult member, faces the cult in his first documentary film.

SYNOPSIS

Film director Atsushi, a victim of a sarin gas attack, contacts Aum Shinrikyo, to request an interview for his documentary. 30 years ago, Atsushi promised his friend to become an acclaimed filmmaker, but the friend committed suicide. Atsushi tries to keep his word despite his sarin damage.

He finally convinces Hiroshi, an executive member of the cult to be in his film. They travel together. At Atsushi's country home house, Atsushi finds Hiroshi is totally brainwashed by the cult. At Hiroshi's country home, Atsushi questions Hiroshi about his guru's responsibility for sarin gas attack. In the end, Hiroshi cannot deny it.

They visit their alma mater together, and on a riverbank, they talk about ongoing recruiting activities by the cult. Atsushi was once married to an ex-member of the cult, yet his ex-wife's career was ruined by the cult. On a mountain top, Hiroshi is challenged by Atsushi's philosophical questions.

Hiroshi meets Atsushi's parents. Hiroshi visits his parents. Atsushi takes Hiroshi to the memorial service for the attack. Atsushi fails to change Hiroshi. But the film records the destroyed humans by the cult and has the power to challenge the right of the cult to be recognized as a religion. Atsushi achieves his atonement.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Aum Shinrikyo, a religious cult, attacked the Tokyo subway system with sarin gas on 20th March, 1995. 13 people died, and more than 6000 people were injured. I was a victim in that car.

I had promised to become an acclaimed filmmaker. When I was a student at a test prep, after high school, I made the promise to my friend. But the next year, he committed suicide; I couldn't stop him. For 30 years, I have been pursuing my dream to keep my word.

I struggled to become a filmmaker, especially after sarin gas. I decided to get married. A couple of days before the marriage, my wife revealed she had once naively joined Aum Shinrikyo although she was not so serious. I married her anyway. But we were separated after one and a half years.

Finally, I decided to face Aum Shinrikyo for my own resolution. I convinced the cult's non-criminal executive to be in my film. I started shooting in 2015 and made the first cut, but didn't like it. So I dismissed the editor with a different view of the cult, and I shot additional footage and edited it by myself.

DIRECTOR

SAKAHARA Atsushi

Atsushi is originally from Kyoto. He studied at Kyoto University. After college, he joined an advertising agency as a marketing professional. He left the company and Japan for the U.S. where he earned an MBA at the University of California. While at the business school, he produced a Palm d'Or-winning short film. He has published multiple books: his latest work, *The Size Doesn't Matter*, is an entertainment novel with business theories that became a bestseller in its category of Amazon Japan in December 2017. He directed his first short film, *Don't Call Me Father* in 2012. *AGANAI - The Atonement* is his first feature film.

PRODUCER

SAKAHARA Atsushi (same as director)

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Good People Inc.

Good People Inc. is a vehicle for Atsushi's various activities such as film production and business consulting.