

ALMOST SUNRISE: Demonstrates the Power of Meditation & Nature in Healing â??Moral Injuryâ?• of War

Description

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Inspiring New Documentary *Almost Sunrise* and Its Immersive Impact Campaign

Demonstrates the Power of Meditation & Nature in Healing â??Moral Injuryâ?• from War

DC Premiere at AFI Docs:

AFI DOCS
FILM FESTIVAL • JUNE 22–26, 2016
Presenting sponsor

Thursday, June 23 at 4:00 p.m. at Landmark E Street Cinema (Theatre 1)

Friday, June 24 at 6:45 p.m. at AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center (Theatre 3)

From the Emmy-Nominated Filmmakers of *Give Up Tomorrow*

Once in a while, a film comes along that breaks from the genre. War documentaries are usually somber pieces that explore the darkness of battle but few, if any, venture past the shadows. But a unique new film takes a rare, uplifting look at the life of veterans beyond their demons.

Itâ??s a staggering statistic: 22 U.S. veterans take their own lives every day, which means, we lose more soldiers to suicide than to combat. Despite millions of dollars spent on the mental health of veterans, the crisis rages unabated. Almost Sunrise, a new feature documentary by the award-winning filmmaking team behind Give Up Tomorrow (a 2013 News & Documentary Emmy nominee) Michael Collins (director) and Marty Syjuco (producer), is a timely and groundbreaking look at what could be a missing piece of the puzzleâ??the true nature of the psychological wounds of returning soldiers known as â??moral injuryâ?• and the undeniable potential power of meditation and nature therapy in helping veterans to reclaim their lives.

Almost Sunrise will make its World Premiere on Memorial Day weekend at the Telluride Mountainfilm Festival with one of the opening night slots on May 27 at the 650-seat Palm Theater, followed by screenings on May 29 and 30. The film will next make its East Coast Premiere at the prestigious Human Rights Watch Film Festival New York, June 11 and 13. It is also an official selection of the distinguished AFI Docs in Washington, DC, screening June 23 and 24. Along with its film festival premieres, Almost Sunrise launches an immersive two-year impact campaign.

â??Our vision for the campaign is to walk with veterans on a path towards healing,â?• says Syjuco. â??Our goals are three-fold: 1. Changing the Narrative; 2. Promoting Wellness; 3. Supporting Legislation (Veteran Wellness Act H.R. 2555).â?•

Almost Sunrise tells the inspiring story of two Iraq veterans, Tom Voss and Anthony Anderson, who, in an attempt to put their haunting combat experience behind, embark on an extraordinary 2,700 mile trek on foot across America. While the physical trek across snowy mountains and vast deserts is punishing, the inner journey proves to be, by far, the most dangerous mission they will ever undertake. Like many of their fellow returned servicemen and women, Tom and Anthony are tackling post traumatic stress, or PTS, but the pair are simultaneously dealing with an unseen battle scar called â??moral injuryâ?• â??often manifested as an extreme brand of guilt and shame that arises when one goes against oneâ??s own moral code. While PTS, characterized by fear, can be treated with drugs, therapists are finding that no amount of medication can treat the pain that comes from carrying a moral burden. Almost Sunrise is the first feature documentary film to introduce the emerging term â??moral injury,â?• what some experts believe may eventually be recognized as the signature war wound of our generation.

While the film exposes some of the brutality of war, it does not dwell there. â??Itâ??s ultimately a story of hope and potential solutions,â?• Collins says. Most importantly, the film reveals the promise of holistic practices for healing. When Tom signs up for a special breathing workshop for veterans, he must confront his deepest spiritual identity. He encounters Father Thomas Keating, a renowned Trappist monk who has counseled veterans for decades, who gently illuminates the need to turn inward to achieve true peace, guidance that culminates in a remarkable transformation, rarely depicted on screen. Where the stereotypes of â??the broken veteranâ?• and â??homecoming heroâ?• leave off,

Almost Sunrise continues onward, presenting audiences with an unprecedented portrait of those who return from war; richer, far more complex beingsâ??driven by a universal human aspiration for happinessâ??who discover lifeâ??s soaring possibilities.

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN:

The Almost Sunrise Impact Campaign is a two-year initiative designed to educate and engage target audiences. The campaign will include the national broadcast premiere of Almost Sunrise in 2017 on the PBS documentary series POV (date and time to be announced), as well as an interactive multimedia exhibit including a photo essay, videos, audio, articles, educational curricula and more (dates and times to be determined.)

The campaign focuses on the following key goals:

Changing the Narrative

We are challenging stereotypes of veterans through public education, engaging communities through the use of screenings, panel discussions, visual and performance arts and partnering with targeted NGOs to use the film as a tool to support and promote their interrelated missions.

Promoting Wellness

We are challenging the dependence and possible overuse of medication to treat psychic wounds and promote the growing body of research and documented experience around the benefits of holistic practices and its as yet untapped potential to contribute to the healing of veterans.

Changing Legislation

We are working with Congressman Tim Ryan to support the Veterans Wellness Act (HR 2555) legislation that will improve the ability of Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) to promote good health among our nationâ??s veterans. These facilities are a place of comfort and familiarity for thousands of men and women and their families. The new legislation would expand upon the activities in which these organizations are currently engaged, and create greater opportunities for veterans to access wellness programs and therapies.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS:

Director Michael Collins is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker and the founder of Thoughtful Robot, a production company specializing in social issue documentary films. Producer Marty Syjuco is from the Philippines. Their film Give Up Tomorrow (POV 2012) won the Audience Award and a Special Jury Mention for Best New Director at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival, a Media Award from Amnesty International, and was nominated for a 2013 News & Documentary Emmy Award for Outstanding

Investigative Journalism.

SCREENINGS/TICKET INFO AND IMMERSION ACTIVITIES:

Almost Sunrise at Telluride Mountainfilm Festival (World Premiere)

(Q & Aâ??s after screenings, with director Michael Collins, producer Marty Syjuco and film subject Tom Voss attending)

Friday, May 27 @ 6:30 p.m.

Palm Theater

Sunday, May 29 @ 9:15 a.m.

High Camp

Monday, May 30 (Memorial Day) @ 11:45 am

High Camp

TO BUY TICKETS:

http://www.mountainfilm.org/festival/passes-and-tickets

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

Moral Injury
Saturday, May 28th, 8 a.m.
Christ Church Upstairs

COFFEE TALK:

Meditation and Healing

Sunday, May 29th, 8 a.m.

Ah Haa East

COFFEE TALK:

The Long Walk
Sunday, May 29th, 8 a.m.
Ah Haa West

MEMORIAL DAY WALK:

Monday, May 30, 9:15 A.M.

Meet in front of Ghost Town 210 W. Colorado Ave.

LIBRARY PRESENTATION:
Tracings: An Interactive Performance
Monday, May 30th, 9:30 a.m.
Wilkinson Public Library

Almost Sunrise at Human Rights Watch Film Festival New York (East Coast Premiere)

(Q & Aâ??s after screenings, with director Michael Collins, producer Marty Syjuco and film subject Tom Voss attending)

Saturday, June 11 @ 9:15pm

IFC Center

Monday, June 13 @ 6:30pm

Lincoln Center

TO BUY TICKETS:

http://ff.hrw.org/new-york

Almost Sunrise Urban Hike

Sunday, June 12 in New York City

3:00-5:00 p.m.

A contemplative walk into the woods of Central Park led by Tom Voss, an Iraq veteran and meditation teacher, featured in Almost Sunrise. Voss has experienced first-hand, the restorative, soul-nourishing benefits of spending time in natureâ??he recently completed an epic 2,700 mile walk from Wisconsin to California. â??Walking is being with yourself,â?• Voss says. As ancient spiritual traditions around the world demonstrate, the simple act of walking can elevate consciousness. Allow yourself a space for reflection and feel the aliveness of your environment and your own self with every step.

Almost Sunrise Breathing & Meditation Intro Session

Tuesday, June 14 in New York City

7:00-8:00 p.m.

An introduction to meditation and an ancient practice called â??The Power Breathâ?• designed to unlock a happier, more relaxed state of being with higher levels of awareness, focus and clarity. Led by Tom Voss, an Iraq veteran and holistic teacher, featured in Almost Sunrise, the workshop will explore

the connection between breath, meditation and state of mind. Empower and refresh your spirit daily, by discovering these tools that can lead you to a calm, centered mind and access to an unlimited storehouse of energy.

Almost Sunrise at AFI Docs (Washington, DC, Premiere)

(Q & Aâ??s after screenings, with director Michael Collins, producer Marty Syjuco and film subject Tom Voss attending)

Thursday, June 23 @ 4:00 p.m.

E Street Theater 1

Friday, June 24 @ 6:45 p.m.

AFI Silver Theater 3

TO BUY TICKETS:

http://afi.com/afidocs/tickets.aspx

SOCIAL MEDIA:

www.facebook.com/almostsunrise

www.twitter.com/almost_sunrise

www.sunrisedocumentary.com

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(Press release provided by Brian Geldin)

Brian Geldin Public Relations

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