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Ancient ways

Filmmaker Edgy Lee only requires one simple item to drill home her point about saving Hawaii's indigenous culture: a time machine. That way, she could round up all Americans, in small groups if necessary; shuttle them back to the 19th century when the federal government was ethnically cleansing the various native tribes that called the islands home; and, presuming they're saddled with enough collective guilt to give a damn, ask, "What would we have done?" Even if their reply was only a meek "something," it'd be enough to galvanize them into at least attempting to stem the blood tide sweeping the nation at the time.

Transport those same Americans with those same feelings of guilt to contemporary Hawaii, point to the destruction of its indigenous population by tossing out some numbers -- like 7,000, as in the number of pure Hawaiians left in the world -- and Lee wouldn't ask them anything: She'd tell them it's happening again, albeit without the bloodshed. Only this time, it's not too late to do something about it.

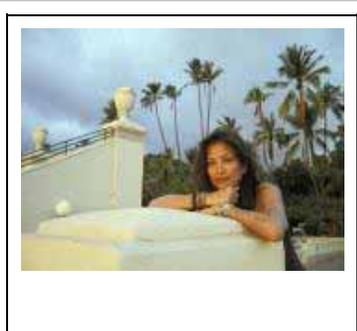
Since neither GM or Ford has yet to churn out a time machine, Lee settled for making a documentary detailing "a thousand years of history in one hour." And it's surprisingly good. Shot in six months on high-definition video, *The Hawaiians: Reflecting Spirit*, set to air on PBS in the summer, details the evolution of Hawaiian culture, its people's historical connection to the earth and the political wrangling (*coup d'états*, the corrupting effect of big business, the usual) that drove this land-based people to their current, desperate state.

But her purpose isn't limited to shining a spotlight on the homestead issue (lands set aside for natives that have yet to be turned over by the government) or Hollywood's trivialization of Hawaiian culture (Elvis Presley, for example, didn't exactly get all anthropological with 1966's *Paradise, Hawaiian Style*). It goes way beyond that to a topic currently grabbing headlines, but not necessarily the attention of national leaders: global sustainability.

"This is one of the most unique places in the union," says Lee. "These indigenous cultures have set a path if we'd only listen."

And barring the invention of time travel, listening is actually something we can do.

The Hawaiians: Reflecting Spirit premieres at 6:00 p.m., April 11, at the Marjorie Barrick Museum of Natural History at UNLV.



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