

Cocktail Party

Directed and Produced by Regge Life

108 minutes, Color

Lifecycle Productions, 2016

Based on the Akutagawa Prizewinning Novel by Tatsuhiro Oshiro

Reviewed by David Huebner

As a frequent film critic for *Education About Asia*, I have viewed and critiqued several documentaries. *Cocktail Party*, however, is the first full-length movie I've reviewed. It features superb acting, an intriguing plot, and an informative portrayal of the social conditions on Okinawa that have complicated US and Japanese relations for decades. A documentary of the Okinawa problem may not have the personal and emotional impact this film has on the viewer.



Screen capture from *Cocktail Party* © 2016. See <http://www.cocktailpartythemovie.com>

the long-established tradition in postwar Japan to stimulate understanding between the American military presence and Okinawa's residents. At the party, Uehara is honored by the Marine commander, Major Porter, for his integrity, reputation, and honor. In this setting, Kenji Ohashi, who has just moved with his family to Okinawa from Japan, becomes acquainted with Uehara—and an important bond is forged.

Cocktail Party portrays, sometimes in a graphic manner, the rape of Ohashi's daughter Naomi by a US Marine on the same night as the cocktail party. The drama is intense and riveting, reminding us of decades of unreported and reported assaults by US servicemen of women on the islands. The plot takes several unusual twists and turns, as Ohashi, his wife, and his daughter struggle with how to handle a situation that can cause great anguish and embarrassment to his family. Ohashi meets with his new friend, Uehara, and bares his soul. What does Uehara do? What does he suggest Ohashi do? See the film to discover what choices are made.

Such scenes and conversations throughout the film are deeply personal, touching, and give the film an unusual strength that draws in the viewer. Director Regge Life juxtaposes these conversations with scenes of everyday life in Okinawa—life going on while some deal with pain and hurt. This is not a film that handles interruptions well. Be prepared to watch the complete film in one sitting. The impact is immediate and the questions raised are numerous. Look for an unusual ending that engages the Ohashi family. And then you can decide what happens next!

DAVID HUEBNER is a full-time Social Studies teacher in Columbia, Tennessee, and resides in nearby Spring Hill. He is President of the Tennessee Council for the Social Studies. Active in his local community, as well as in the Tennessee Council for the Social Studies and the Tennessee Geographic Alliance, David was honored as Tennessee Geography Teacher of the Year (2007), High School Teacher of the Year (National Conference for Geographic Education, 2008), and Tennessee Social Studies Teacher of the Year (2009). He is also presently serving as Maury County Education Association President.