



"Heartfelt and immediate, the film expands their individual tales, of language both lost and found, into a universal primer of how culture is kept alive through words..."
 -Filmmaker Magazine

Tongues of Heaven 天堂的語言

What do you lose when you lose your native language?



A film by Anita Wen-Shin Chang 張文馨



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TONGUES OF HEAVEN

A FILM BY ANITA WEN-SHIN CHANG, AN-CHI CHEN, LEIVALLYN KAINOA KAUPU, MONICA HAU'OLI WAIU & SHIN-LAN YU

Set in Taiwan and Hawai'i, territories where the Austronesian family languages are spoken, TONGUES OF HEAVEN focuses on the questions, desires and challenges of young indigenous peoples to learn the languages of their forebears—languages that are endangered or facing extinction.

Four young indigenous women from divergent backgrounds collaborate and exchange ideas to consider the impact of language on identity and culture. With 96% of the world's population speaking only 4% of the world's languages, what does it mean to speak your mother tongue in this age of language homogenization? To put it another way, what do you lose when you lose your native language? These are just some of the questions that these women, with camera in hand, ask themselves, their families and peers.

Co-directors Shin-Lan Yu and An-Chi Chen from Taiwan, and Lei Kainoa Kaupu and Monica Hau'oli Waiu from Hawai'i, worked with independent filmmaker Anita Chang and field producer and Native Hawaiian educator Malia Nobrega to create this experimental documentary. TONGUES OF HEAVEN is part of ROOT TONGUE, an interactive documentary platform where participants will be able to explore the challenges of language endangerment and preservation on a personal level by sharing their own perspective through dialogue and creative expression. Users will also be able to access educational and community resources pertaining to language preservation. Visit the website here: root-tongue.com

Anita Wen-Shin Chang (Director and Co-producer) is an independent filmmaker, educator and writer. Her award-winning works have screened and broadcast internationally, and been presented at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Walker Arts Center, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and National Museum of Women. Chang's experimental and documentary works are inspired by and engaged in discourses on postcolonialism, ethnography, diaspora, and cross-cultural representation.

Malia Nobrega-Olivera (Co-producer) is from Hanapēpē Valley, Kona, Kaua'i. She is currently the Hawai'i inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge Director of Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement and also the Director of a program called Loli Aniau, Makaala Aniau (Climate Change, Climate Alert). Malia is a Native Hawaiian educator, kumu hula, salt maker, cultural practitioner, filmmaker, community organizer, and advocate of indigenous rights at all levels – locally, regionally, and internationally.



“Anita Chang and her collaborators follow the extraordinary prehistoric expansion of the Austronesian-speaking peoples across the Pacific from Taiwan to Hawai'i... Personal reflections and interviews with older and younger speakers of both Formosan aboriginal languages and Hawaiian illustrate the varying attitudes of members of these communities toward the value and future of their languages.”

ROBERT A. BLUST
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