Beyond the Gates of Splendor

Ignorance is a central part of this documentary. Spearing was a norm and an expected practice and culture of the Waodani people, and they didn't know any other way of life. These people didn't know there was a better way to live until the missionaries' families came into the picture, and they were just waiting there for the outside world to come in and set them right. No one wants to live in eternal fear and chaos; if people were given the chance to be good and upright, they would. Not everyone in that village was too evil or too barbaric to change their ways or thinking. It was a misunderstanding caused by that one violent and deceitful Waodani that first initiated the spearing of those five missionaries. If they knew that they had the wrong man, then I think they wouldn't have killed those missionaries and would apologize for their mistake. In the end the Waodani learned to live in peace and harmony because they were given the chance to.

The families of the missionaries who were speared could not hate the Waodani forever; it would have been no way to live. It would have been hard for them forgive, but it would have been harder to live in hate. Instead of ceaselessly grieving over their husbands' or fathers' or brothers' deaths, they tried to understand as to why it happened. Once they understood the nature and situation of these people, they could not hate them for their ignorance, and it helped them get over their grieving process much easier. We have to look at it from the Waodani people's perspective. The same thing could have happen if it was the other way around. Someone from our world because of their selfish agenda could have also easily killed the Waodani people. Instead of hating them, the families tried to understand their differences and loved them for their similarities, and instead of making enemies, the families turned them into lifelong friends.
The movie starts with the family of Dayumae, a young Waongoni girl, with her family. Her father had been injured. His wife confronts him and tells him that there is no food and if that if he dies, she will strangle her and put her in the ground with her, which means she will bury her with him. The father of Dayumae instructs his son to hide his sister from his wife. While in the woods, they encounter foreigners and Dayumae runs to them. At this point, the brother doesn't know if his sister goes on to live or die.

This encounter with a frightened little girl is what sets the stage for what happens next. The missionaries take in this girl and they start to teach her English while she teaches them her language. There were a number of missionary families that live in the jungle and they start making plans as to how they are going to reach these people and minister to them. The pilot of the group, Nate Saint, develops an ingenious method to communicate with these people using a string and a bucket. After a period of searching, they locate their village and proceed to make frequent trips putting gifts in the bucket for the Waongoni to take. After some time, the Waongoni, who were being led by mincayani, who is the brother of Dayumae, start to put back gifts of their own into the bucket.

This led to a desire by the group to find a way and preach to these people. Their concern was that these people were so violent that they were about to kill each other out of existence, in addition to killing shell gas station workers that were in the jungle. The missionaries feared that the Waongoni violence might force the government to send in troops to neutralize the situation and that this encounter with the government forces might mean their extinction.

At this point, a search of the river bank led to a spot they called Palm Beach. They landed at Palm Beach and started using the little Waongoni they had learned, and started to preach in a loud voice, hoping that they would get the message and come out. After some time, three of the tribe members came out. This encounter also started a conflict within the tribe. However, contact was made between the missionaries and the Waongoni. Later, this conflict within the tribe escalated, which caused one of the tribe members to lie, which then caused the death of these missionaries.

A search party found the bodies of the missionaries. In addition, they found two of the Waongoni females, who had fled the tribe because they wanted to find Dayumae, their sister. When they found out that she was fine, they were very pleased and showed them that there was a different way to live then to kill each other for any reason. This led to them leading Rachel, the sister of the pilot that was killed by the Waongoni, to their tribe. Rachel lived among these people and when she died, the son of the pilot went back to live with them.

This encounter taught the Waongoni people that they didn't have to spear each other to death. They also received the Gospel taught to them by Dayumae and Rachel Saint.
The movie, Beyond the Gates of Splendor, was quite intriguing, moving and enlightening. The son of one of the victims narrated it. It started by giving a short description of the people in Ecuador called the Alkas. They are a very primitive tribe that lived in the Amazon jungle and are vicious killers of anybody they didn’t like or offended them, be it a foreigner or a member of their own tribe. According to an Anthropologist that was on the documentary, this was because they are a very autonomous society and did not like anybody infringing on their “rights” or desires. In addition, they did not have any means of resolving conflict. The movie explains how this led them to be a society that was vicious and feared by all other tribes in the region.

It then gives background information on the group of missionaries that went to the region in Ecuador where these tribes lived. The documentary goes on to tell stories of how the couples met and uses the wives and siblings of the victims to tell these stories. This follows the stories told by living members of the tribe that are still alive, of how life used to be for them before these missionaries came and ministered to them. These stories were stories of their family members being speared by other members of their tribe with vivid descriptions of how their family members died.

The trailing half or so of the documentary tells how the wives of these missionary men went to live with the wild Alka tribe and how they ministered to them. These wives went to separate tribes and lived amongst the tribes with their children. They ministered to them, taught them, and showed them that there was a different way to live than the way that they have been living.

Later on in the movie, they showed how the grown son of one of the missionaries took his family to live amongst the tribe and flew the plane, supplying them with medicine and flying the sick to medical care clinics. When one of the daughters of the missionaries was baptized, she wanted to be among the people that meant a lot to her and had two men, who in their youth had killed her father, by her side when she was baptized in the river where her father’s body had been.

At the end of the movie, we see how the missionary pilot tells the people that they have to do things for themselves and so teaches the son of the person whose he had gotten his father killed, to fly and maintain a plane so he can supply the tribe members with medicine and other supplies.

The ending was poignant in that it shows the tribe member coming to the US and watching a World War II movie of a plane bombing and not being able to comprehend how people can kill other people without even seeing them. And when he later heard the story of the Columbine shootings, he said “we used to live like that.”
Beyond the Gates summary/response

Thursday's presentation of *Beyond the Gates* was very stirring. It's hard to imagine that people can be so malicious. However it's not hard to believe when events such as the Columbine massacre and 9/11 took place. For reasons I don't know it makes me glad the Waodani reconsidered telling their story. I guess I am just glad that there are people in the world that care about issues such as violence and how they effect other parts of the world.

Emotionally this video affected me in several ways. The video made me sad but emotionally I was more scared due to the aspect of this culture where they think that spearing people is ok.

I give the missionaries my highest respect. To have lived with these people for song long doing the things that they did is very honorary.

The portion of the video that touched me the most was the end. When the boy asked one of the village members to come see him graduate, plainly I just felt good. The boy in the movie had a real connection to that village member and I can relate to that aspect.

I haven't been on this earth for that long, but I have been alive for some historical events that have taken place in my life time. This movie did not touch me very much emotionally it was more of a wake up call to some of the different cultures and how people in different parts of this world live.

In closing, I am glad to have seen this movie. Not just because this assignment is worth points, but because I learned that there are missionaries in the world that where making a difference by helping these people. There are good people in this world trying to make a difference and that is something to be thankful for.
Response to "The Other Side of Splendor"

At the beginning of the movie I had a hard following what was going on. Once I had picked up on what was going on I mentally related the story to the Bible story of Cain and Abel. God gave everyone free will and we are able to do with it what we want. In the movie one person used this free will, but with consequences that would reach generations.

If one of the widows hadn't had the conviction that she had the story would have had a different outcome. Anyway this widow chose to stay. She chose to stay in an area that proved to be hostel. That was a monumental decision in itself. She CHOSE to STAY. Then she chose to live with the people that had killed her husband. That is incredible.

At this point I feel that both peoples had no where to go but up. They had grief, and threw that grief they forgave together. Grief put them all on the same playing field. Everyone was equal, because they all had lost loved ones to the spear. They are now equal, so where do you go? They again used their free will and forgave, thus allowing themselves to grow.