

School Library Journal

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Gr 10 Up—This disturbing examination of the consequences of the many nuclear tests conducted in the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958 raises many moral and legal questions. In 1954, the most powerful atomic bomb was exploded in this South Pacific region and the fallout covered the inhabited island of Rongelap. The question of whether the U.S. military was aware of the changing wind which blew the radiation over the island, or if it was an accidental event, is the focus here. Recently declassified documents seem to show that the government made a conscious choice to use the people of the island as an experiment to study the consequences of radiation exposure. Using archival films and contemporary interviews, the film's creator, Adam Horowitz, documents the racist and inhumane attitudes of American government officials of the time as well as the continuing reluctance to properly address the health issues of both the survivors and their descendants. The effects of the 67 tests done over the Marshall Islands still remains classified today. Horowitz argues that the deliberate exposure of the islanders can be equated with Nazi experiments during WWII and should be considered a war crime. Narrated by the filmmaker, the cheerful pop music of the 1940's and 50's extolling the beauty of the South Pacific contrasts sharply with the images of the burned and ravaged people and deformed children. This thought-provoking and controversial film can be the basis of classroom discussions in both science and history classes. An edited version is to be aired on PBS in 2013.—Eva Elisabeth VonAncken, formerly Trinity-Pawling School, NY

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