

continued from page 6

with high degrees of absenteeism. Punam worries about the ways in which Rabina's disability will affect Rabina's future, and hopes that through education Rabina will be able to find office work where her gait will not be a disadvantage.

Rural to urban migration is also increasing throughout most of the developing world, and Punam can also open discussion on why families migrate. Punam's family recently migrated from Sindhupalchok district, an area north-east of Bhaktapur where 84 percent of employment is in agriculture. In Bhaktapur, their livelihood is less dependent on land and weather and Punam's father can make more money. Schooling opportunities for his family are also better. While Sindhupalchok has 41 primary school students for every teacher, in Bhaktapur there are 15 primary school students per teacher. Like 17 percent of primary students in Nepal, Punam attends a private school, and much of the difference in pupil-teacher ratios between these districts reflects the prevalence of private schools in relatively well off urban areas like Bhaktapur. Overall, 17 percent of primary school students go to private schools in Nepal. Perhaps in part because of higher quality schools and better availability, school attendance is also much higher in Bhaktapur: 72 percent of 9-year-old girls attend school in Sindhupalchok, compared to 97 percent in Bhaktapur.

Overall, Lucian Muntean's film provides a realistic description of the life of a young urban girl in Nepal that is useful to frame a discussion of child labor, addressing the central questions of why children work and why they attend school, as well as a host of related issues that are more subtly portrayed in the film such as schooling, maternal mortality, health care, and migration in low income countries. All of the issues other than child labor are subtle enough within the film that educators need not feel compelled to discuss them along with the central question of why children work and why children attend school. ■

Eric Edmonds is an associate professor of economics at Dartmouth College and he is director of the Child Labor Network at the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA). His research focuses on improving our empirical understanding of the reasons for the prevalence and persistence of child labor, illiteracy, and low levels of schooling attainment in low income countries.

HOW TO PURCHASE: *Punam* is available on DVD from 7th Art Releasing. Price is \$175.



Campaign (Senkyo)

■ Directed by Kazuhiro Soda, 120 minutes, 2007. In Japanese with English subtitles.

Yamauchi Kazuhiko, the protagonist in this documentary about a local election campaign in Japan, is a novice candidate chosen by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to run in a special election for the Kawasaki City Council. With the Council deadlocked 18-18 after the resignation of an LDP heavyweight to run for higher office, it is up to Yamauchi to run a successful campaign so that his party will be able to hold onto the seat and preserve its hold on power in the city.

Viewers may have trouble getting too excited over the political stakes in the election. Kawasaki, after all, is a medium-sized suburban city adjoining Tokyo, not a world-famous place like Tokyo or Osaka, and the election is very local, not national. When the candidates talk about policy issues (not often), they mainly touch on "budget reform" and "childcare services." At one point, even candidate Yamauchi has trouble remembering what the election is about, stumbling in his attempt to recall the term "waiting lists" during an interview with the local paper, even though these are central to local public concerns about shortages of childcare.

Nevertheless, the documentary does an excellent job of drawing viewers into the story and the experience of campaigning in Japan by inviting them to relate to the campaign from Yamauchi's own perspective. He looks young (I guessed he was in his 20s or 30s before learning that his actual age is 40), and he is obviously new at politics: He has to be taught how to look a voter in the eyes when handing out pamphlets and how to talk on the phone to supporters.

The early scenes of the documentary gradually reveal the precariousness of his situation. He is a "businessman" who sells stamps and coins to collectors, and his home was actually in Tokyo. He tells friends that he had hoped to build a political career there and maybe become prime minister one day, but before he had a chance to run for office

there, a friend in the LDP came to him suggesting that he move to Kawasaki to become the standard-bearer for the LDP in this special election.

The LDP is fully behind him for this election, sending senior politicians to aid and advise him. But it turns out that many LDP heavyweights in Kawasaki don't want him to get too comfortable in office. They need him to win this special election so that the LDP will stay on top locally, but at the next regular election—which, at the local level, pits LDP members against each other in multi-member districts—they don't want him to get in their way.

In one scene later in the documentary, Yamauchi is invited by a local politician to join him for a meeting of his host's support group. But rather than extolling his virtues, the host merely instructs his supporters to vote for Yamauchi *this time* and come back to him at the next regular election. Watching Yamauchi endure this meeting, we feel his sense of humiliation and alienation.

This episode is just one of many that give viewers a sense of the frustrations and limitations of campaigning Japanese-style (to borrow a phrase from Gerald Curtis). Yamauchi spends most of his time standing in front of stations and other locations where people gather or live, repeating his name endlessly and talking about how he is for "reform." Discussion of issues is extremely superficial. Posters, which are plastered everywhere, show his name and face but give no idea of what he stands for.

When he is not giving speeches, Yamauchi is forced to endure the indignities of cozying up to party bigwigs who can deliver votes for him. We see him bow and accept rude instruction many times. Even his wife is criticized for refusing to play the role of subservient wife. She has a career and has taken a paid vacation from work to assist

continued on page 8

Asian Educational Media Service
Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, MC-025
Urbana, Illinois 61801
www.aems.uiuc.edu

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage

PAID

Permit No. 75
Champaign, IL

Campaign

continued from page 7

her husband, but it is clear that her refusal to sacrifice more for her husband's election does not fit well with the expectations of conservative party members in local LDP support organizations.

The documentary is full of scenes that will help students in classes on Japanese politics, Japanese culture and society, or broader comparative politics classes that include a section on Japan, gain a better understanding of what politics there is really like. I have described sound trucks many times in class and even used slides and photos, but students will develop much more of a feel for what these are once they see Yamauchi go out in one with a bevy of "warblers," professional young women with cultivated feminine voices who repeat Yamauchi's name many times as the truck moves through neighborhoods.

The film raises many points that can be discussed with students once they have viewed it, but the central one is raised by Yamauchi himself halfway through the film (scenes 16 to 17) when he visits with several old friends from college and talks to them about what the campaign has been like. He sometimes wonders, he says, about the quality of democracy in Japan. The politics that he's experienced seem to him to be like politics in a developing country where "tribal chiefs control election results."

Does democracy elsewhere work better? After

watching this film, students will be inspired to reflect not only on the quality of democracy in Japan, but also on the limits of democratic systems in their own societies. ■

Leonard Schoppa is professor of politics at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *Race for the Exits: The Unraveling of Japan's System of Social Protection* (Cornell University Press, 2006), *Education Reform in Japan* (Routledge, 1991), and *Bargaining with Japan: What American Pressure Can and Cannot Do* (Columbia University Press, 1997). He has served as a visiting researcher at Keio University and University of Tokyo.

HOW TO PURCHASE: *Campaign* will be officially released on DVD in the U.S. in the summer of 2008. It will also be broadcast in the U.S. on

PBS's P.O.V. series in 2008. Please see the film website at www.laboratoryx.us/campaign for up-to-date information.

Related Reading

Curtis, Gerald. 1971. *Election Campaigning Japanese Style*. New York: Columbia University Press. This book covers an election campaign several decades ago in a much more rural area, but it remains the classic work that gives a feel for campaigning in Japan and could be used with the film to get students to identify continuities and change.

Scheiner, Ethan. 2006. *Democracy Without Competition: Opposition Failure in a One-Party Dominant State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Distributors in this Issue

Bullfrog Films, P.O. Box 149, Oley, PA 19547. Tel: 800-543-3764 or 610-779-8226. Fax: 610-370-1978. Email: video@bullfrogfilms.com. Website: www.bullfrogfilms.com.

Center for Asian American Media, 45 Ninth Street, Suite 350, San Francisco, CA 94103. Tel: 415-552-9550. Fax: 415-863-7428. Email: distribution@asianamericanmedia.org. Website: www.asianamericanmedia.org.

7th Art Releasing, 7551 Sunset Blvd. Suite 104, Los Angeles, CA 90046. Tel: 323-845-1455. Fax: 323-845-4717. Website: www.7thart.com.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Universities Service Centre for China Studies, 8/F, Tin Ka Ping Building, Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong. Tel: 852-2609-8762/8765. Fax: 852-2603-5030. Email: USC@cuhk.edu.hk or films@cuhk.edu.hk.