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Thu Thu's Saving Journey  
Logline, Artistic Approach, Story Summary, Topic Summary

**Logline:** Distraught people struggling and fighting for their democratic freedoms in Myanmar come together through outside aid to support their local rights as they are fleeing and hiding from the military junta to protest for their own human rights. We visit individual stories through this documentary series told through the lens of Thu Thu May Oo, who lost her very own stepfather and who has suffered severe loss in her life witnessing the accounts of the military dictatorship and how it has affected her people. She and her colleagues with advocacy grassroots organizations in Myanmar work to provide support and fiscal aid to Myanmar pro democracy people through education in nutrition, business initiatives, and in supporting their creative endeavors and talents so that the affected Myanmar people can continue their livelihoods with peace in their communities.

**Artistic Summary:** Our Immersive Documentary Series is told through the lens of Thu Thu May Oo who has suffered tremendous loss since the 2021 military Coup in Myanmar and who now initiates and sustains resilience in the Myanmar community through creative business initiatives. We engage in 8 episodes that are visualized similar to that of the film *Waking Life* and series *Undone*; the film being graphically visualized in order to protect the characters anonymity. We get a glimpse into 8 thirty minute stories of current Myanmar people who are struggling for their livelihood and basic human rights under the heavy oppression of the Military dictatorship in Myanmar.

**Story Summary:** The military coup d'état in 2021 brought upon extensive civil unrest in Myanmar, known as Burma in 1989. This volatility in the government system and Myanmar people has been a long standing issue following a coup d'état in 1962 when it became a military dictatorship under the Burma Socialist Programme Party. In the 2021 coup d'état, the Myanmar military detained the leaders of the National League for Democracy and other civilian officials, including Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi and

President U Win Myint, cabinet ministers, the chief ministers of several regions, opposition politicians, writers and activists.

For most of its independent years, the country has been engulfed in rampant ethnic strife and its myriad ethnic groups have been involved in one of the world's longest-running ongoing civil wars. During this time, the United Nations and several other organizations have reported consistent and systemic human rights violations in the country. Many people all over Myanmar have been struggling for many years, fleeing their homes to remote or rural villages to hide from the military junta.

On February 1st, 2021, Thu Thu May Oo received a call from her mother in the middle of the afternoon, U.S. time. In a trembling voice, she told her that the Myanmar military had staged a coup. That day, the military had declared the November 2020 results fraudulent and detained the elected officials - along with civil activists, authors, artists and monks - before they could be sworn in at Parliament.

By the second day of the coup, thousands of protesters were marching in the streets of the nation's largest city, and commercial capital, Yangon, and other protests erupted nationwide, largely halting commerce and transportation. Despite the military's arrests and killings of protesters, the first weeks of the coup found growing public participation, including groups of civil servants, teachers, students, workers, monks and religious leaders – even normally disaffected ethnic minorities.

Thu Thu has lost her step father due to the Myanmar military regime where he was shot in broad daylight. The uncertainties of when her family would be the next target of the military junta were a constant fear she faced daily. Unfortunately, when you are living under the fascist military regime, no one is safe. Thu Thu shares this story because the shattering of Myanmar's fragile democracy has once again destroyed the hopes and dreams of families like hers.

As the demonstrations entered their second month, the military, notorious for having crushed democracy movements in 1988 and 2007 by shooting peaceful protesters, became more violent in its response. Since the coup, nearly 1,300 people have been killed by the junta and more than 10,000 have been arrested, according to a monitoring group. Among the protesters, there is a growing recognition that the Tatmadaw needs to be countered on its own terms. In the country's jungles, people are training with firearms and hand grenades. The country is now on the verge of a civil war, according to the departing U.N. special envoy on Myanmar.

Amidst these despairs and traumatic events, Thu Thu sees a glimmer of hope in the strength and resilience presented by people both inside and outside of Myanmar. She finds a sense of living in the growth in humility that she has witnessed during the Spring Revolution, and in the hopes of building culture and society that truly represents Myanmar, especially among the younger generations. This Spring Revolution is the movement, the revolution of our generation to stop all the wars and atrocities against marginalized ethnic and religious communities, and dismantle Bamar-Buddhist patriarchal supremacy and all forms of oppression perpetrated by colonialism, imperialism and authoritarianism.

Thu Thu is working with local Myanmar grassroots organizations to bring aid to the Myanmar people who have fallen victim to the Myanmar military dictatorship. Thu Thu and her colleague in Myanmar, Kyaw Lin have built a relationship when meeting around the age of 12-13 years old. After the coup, the internet connection was poor and Myanmar people were without access to information. Thu Thu asked for Kyaw Lin to check in on her family and then they became a force working together in the beginnings of the Spring Revolution. Kyaw Lin manages an online community for civil servants who join the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and aids in business initiatives and community driven support for Myanmar communities and individuals.

Our documentary series is the story of a resilient global community where the pursuit of sustaining livelihood and stability is urgent to their human rights. It will be told through several main characters, each of whom offers a different prism through which to understand this community. Here is a brief introduction to each:

Meet Thu Thu May Oo, from Myanmar, who is currently completing MS Nutrition Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, aiming to attain her Phd in Public Health Nutrition. She also serves as the consultant and editor-in-chief for the Spring University Myanmar, the interim education program that provides continuous learning opportunities to Myanmar people all over the nation from the cities to war-conflicted and refugee camps at the border regions during this tumultuous time. Thu Thu is also currently conducting graduate research on the qualitative study of food and nutrition insecurity among the civil disobedience movement participants in Myanmar.

Kyaw Lin collects and shares stories written by activists and civil servants supporting the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). He is also an admin of art4cdm, an online community that provides a safe space and a platform for the CDM community to express themselves by writing essays, poems, and short stories. He moved from Yangon to Chiang Mai, Thailand in the beginning of this year for my safety, and he is continuing his work from there. Recently Kyaw Lin started providing start-up funding to

small businesses started by activists who would like to give back to the CDM community. Both Ma Zarli and Ma Ei are his beneficiaries.

Ma Ei used to work in community projects that create job opportunities for the youths in Myanmar. When the military took power on 1st February 2021, she got involved in the pro-democracy movement. She had to flee her home and arrived in Karen State in June 2021. She then attended a three-month training course organized by PDF. She realized the need to help young children in that area have access to education, so she decided to help the teachers with their teaching.

Zarli makes bags, and she with her husband Ko Saw used to have a successful bag-making business called Ochityar in Yangon. Ochityar initially gained recognition for its customizable products, and Zarli and her team used to paint portraits and caricatures on their bags according to the customer's instructions. They participated in exhibitions that promoted smallscale handicraft businesses, and they sold their products at various events organized by The Secretariat, Sule Square, and Times City.

**Topic Summary:** Thu Thu's Saving journey engages the audience through multiple storylines including visiting local Myanmar communities to travel with them through their daily lives in combatting the Myanmar military Junta. Over the course of now more than half a century, the Burmese (Myanmar) people have been fighting for the democracy and ability to live without the constraints of military regime.

BBC reports just "yesterday an air raid targeting one of Myanmar's biggest ethnic insurgent groups has killed at least 50 people and injured about 100. The death toll was given to the BBC by Colonel Naw Bu, spokesman of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). Eyewitnesses in Kachin State, northern Myanmar, say aircraft dropped three bombs on a concert organized by the KIA in Kansai village. Villagers said there was no warning before the raid. The concert in Kansai was to mark the 62nd anniversary of the rebel army's campaign for autonomy."

The documentary series narrative also focuses on Thu Thu and her personal journey in her personal family members being killed due to the military dictatorship and how she is now inspired to and committed to giving back to her community in contributing to grassroots organizations for education in nutrition, business initiatives, journalism, and financial aid. As the story is being told through Thu Thu's lens in documentary series, we also embark upon the journey with Thu Thu's colleague local to Myanmar, Kyaw Lin who is working with Thu Thu and the Spring Revolution. Kyaw Lin also becomes a focal point as he links Thu Thu and our privy journey to the community through which he is

building in business initiatives to help small businesses survive the brutal military control through his Civil Disobedience Movement campaigns.

We take journey with Kyaw Lin guided and told by Thu Thu to understand the urgency in the lives of people who are desperate for aid and who are fleeing from their homes hiding out in rural areas. Ma Ei, tells us the story of how she is working to educate youth and communities but she is hiding out and trying to escape being caught by the military for not abiding by their policies in education.

Karli and her husband, Ko Saw lead us through their struggles with their business and in their story we see resilience as Kyaw Lin provides financial aid to their hand making bag business so that Karli and her husband have a means of livelihood, and personal illnesses that struck their ability to keep their business surviving. One day, Karli and Ko Saw faced a series of events that they honestly wished was a nightmare would wake up from. A lot of people died in this nightmare, and a lot of them got their lives ruined. That is why they resisted the military that forcefully took control of the country by staging a violent coup. They joined the revolution to stand up for what is right. They supported and encouraged each other, and because of that, the junta's security hunted us down and tried to capture them. They had to flee to Mae Sot in Thailand for their safety. Truth be told, they are undocumented aliens in this country, and their future in Thailand is uncertain. They feel as if they are under house arrest, and they feel scared and trapped in their house. There is no denying that they are slowly becoming people without a country.

We also meet Thu Thu's colleague Peng Guan in the documentary series where we visit the impact that they are both making in their United Nations Refugee Agency Campaign where they are currently producing classical music concerts and NFT's to help raise money for the Myanmar victims of global human rights violations done by the Myanmar military junta. We see how Peng and Thu Thu are providing aid through the United Nations Refugee agency and how they work to provide resilience and positive structure to these desperate ethnic communities.

The Myanmar military, since staging a coup on February 1, 2021, has carried out a brutal nationwide crackdown on millions of people protesting its rule. The junta security forces' mass killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual violence, and other abuses against protesters, journalists, health workers, and political opposition members amount to crimes against humanity. Free speech and assembly face severe restrictions. Renewed military operations have resulted in numerous war crimes. Myanmar has long defied international calls for accountability, including for crimes against humanity and other atrocity crimes committed against the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities.

In a new report warning that serious rights abuses uncovered in Myanmar may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, appealed to the international community to take “concerted, immediate measures to stem the spiral of violence” there. The report, released for the 49th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council, upheld that Myanmar's military and security forces have shown “a flagrant disregard for human life,” explaining that many have been shot in the head, burned to death, arbitrarily arrested, tortured or used as human shields. Lauding the determination of Myanmar's people opposing the coup, she called on the international community to do all it can to resolve the crisis and hold perpetrators of gross violations of international human rights law accountable.

The narrative thickens as we visit each character and multiple real time stories with the situation in current Myanmar becoming more and more grave with the consistency of human life being threatened on a daily basis. As these stories weave in each episode the main narrative of the gravity of human life crisis becomes our central focus with resilience at its core counter uplifting and enlightening our experience through individuals who are currently contributing to sustaining life and who believe in the power of human compassion and service to another. Thu Thu's journey becomes the journey we take together toward understanding and contributing toward a better humanity in our actions and awareness of this very serious human life crisis in historical and current Myanmar.

Despite spiralling violence however, the UN human rights chief attested that “the will of the people has clearly not been broken.” “Throughout the tumult and violence of the past year...they remain committed to seeing a return to democracy and to institutions that reflect their will and aspirations.” Michelle Bachelet