ARTISTS FOR AMNESTY

ARTISTS FOR AMNESTY IS A GROUP OF ARTISTS COMMITTED TO PREVENTING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, SAVING LIVES AND PROMOTING A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS.

MONTHLY BULLETIN

MARCH 2007

BORDERTOWN

AI awards Lopez for raising awareness on femicide in Juarez

On Valentine's Day, Amnesty International awarded Jennifer Lopez the Artists for Amnesty award at the Berlin Film Festival for her work as producer and star of *Bordertown*, a film exposing the ongoing murders of hundreds of women in the border city of Juarez, Mexico. Nobel Peace Prize winner Jose Ramos-Horta presented the award to Lopez at a ceremony co-hosted by Artists for Amnesty and the William Morris Agency.

"I am deeply honored to receive this award," said Lopez. "Since first hearing of these atrocities in 1998..., I desperately wanted to tell this story. I began working to ensure we made this film in order to bring the attention of the world to this tragedy and to pressure the Mexican government to bring to justice those responsible for these horrible crimes."

Lopez plays an American reporter who heads to Juarez, a bordertown that is home to Fortune 500 factories, to investigate a string of murders involving young women who are factory workers. She gains the trust of local factory workers during her investigation, but falls into danger.

From left: Prime Minister Jose Ramos-Horta of Timor-Leste, Jennifer Lopez, and Antonio Banderas. © Amnesty International

"It sends a strong message to the public when someone like Jennifer Lopez demonstrates her personal commitment to a cause," said Larry Cox, executive director of Amnesty International USA. "We are thrilled that her support will help us reach entirely new audiences who can invigorate an international movement to save women's lives."

Lopez also received special recognition and thanks from Norma Andrade, co-founder of Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (Bring Our Daughters Home), an organization consisting of mothers and other family members of the murdered women of Juarez.

Andrade--whose 17-year-old daughter, Lilia, was kidnapped, raped and murdered six years ago--was extremely moved by the movie. "It was as if I were seeing my daughter again," she explained.

Like Lilia, the girl in the film was 17 years old, worked in a NAFTA factory and was kidnapped on her way home. She was raped and killed – for no reason except that these men know they can do it and no one will stop them. That is why the murders continue today.

More than 400 women have been murdered since 1993. Local investigations into the killings have been sloppy and fraught with problems, including unjustifiable delays in the initial and most important stages of the investigations, a failure to secure the crime scene and the falsification of evidence. AI brought international attention to the issue with missions to Juarez and Mexico City, and by mobilizing its worldwide membership in letter-writing campaigns. In 2006, thousands of AIUSA activists in the U.S. helped ensure passage of a bipartisan congressional resolution that called on the U.S. and Mexico to stop the human rights scandal.

"I admire the efforts by human rights activists around the world and fellow artists like Salma Hayek, Eve Ensler, Jane Fonda, Sally Field, Gloria Steinem and journalist Diana Washington Valdez," added Lopez. "I am deeply honored to join them to continue the work on this very important issue."

Norma Andrade speaks to the press. © Amnesty International

Lopez launched a bilingual Web site for Amnesty in memory of all of the murdered women to help raise awareness about the femicide in Juarez. The site will be used to inspire activism and seek justice for those who have been abducted and murdered in Juarez and Chihuahua, Mexico for more than a decade. The website includes AI reports, petitions, documentary footage, testimonials, online chats, contact information for non-governmental organizations in Juarez, and a recently produced flash animation depicting the severity of the problem.

Lopez and her husband, Marc Anthony, produced a song "Porque La Vida Es Asi" ("Because Life is Like That"), inspired by and dedicated to the women of Juarez. The song can also be found on the website.

Learn more and take action at www.amnestyusa.org/bordertown

79TH ACADEMY AWARDS™: RED TEAR DROP PIN

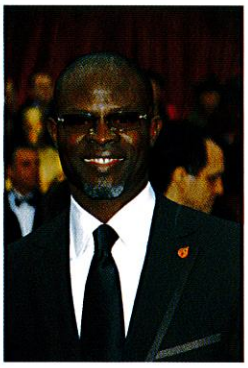
With diamonds playing a visible role on Oscar night, Amnesty International USA and Global Witness asked artists and filmmakers to wear a red teardrop pin to raise awareness about conflict diamonds and their impact on child soldiers.

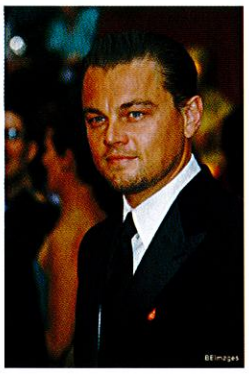
Artists who wore the pin at the Academy Awards® ceremony and at Oscar celebrations included nominees Leonardo DiCaprio, Ryan Gosling and Djimon Hounsou.

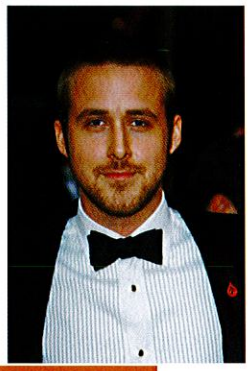
As the public's attention was focused on the Academy Awards® and Oscar celebrations, the director and cast of "Blood Diamond," as well as other artist supporters of human rights, signified their commitment to action by wearing a gem-free, tear-shaped pin, designed by Alessandra Gallo Jewellery (www.alessandragallo.com) and hand-made by Ricardo Basta of Beverly Hills, who generously donated labor and materials (www.ricardobasta.com).

The pins sent the message to millions of viewers that the story depicted in "Blood Diamond," while fictional, is based on a devastating reality in terms of the deaths and human rights abuses tied to conflict diamonds. Ours is a very modest gesture, but one that affirms the message that all human life is precious. Diamonds are not priceless -- human life is."

The pins will be auctioned in the Fall, with the proceeds going to the rehabilitation of child soldiers through the work of Amnesty International and partner organizations, as well as Global Witness's work on conflict diamonds.







Clockwise: Leonardo DiCaprio, Ryan Gosling, Ed Zwick, and Djimon Hounsou wear the red tear drop pin on the red carpet. © BE Images

SPRITUS MUNDI

On February 8th at A & I in Hollywood, Q'Orianka Kilcher joined AFA and Great Circle Books to fete **Spiritus Mundi**, a collection of photographs depicting the lives of indigenous cultures in Latin America, taken by Sacha Dean Biyan. All proceeds of the print sales benefited Amnesty, along with a portion of the book sales. Indigenous peoples are being uprooted from their lands and communities as a consequence of discriminatory government policies, the impact of armed conflicts, and the actions of private economic interests. She spoke about her recent trip to the Amazon where she met with representatives of local tribes.

Artists for Amnesty would like to thank A & I Hollywood, Great Circle Books, Hewlett Packard, Rex Weiner, and Sacha Dean Biyan. For more information, contact Lucia Noyce at LNoyce@aiusa.org.

Q'Orianka Kilcher and Sasha Dean Biyan. © A & I

UPCOMING EVENTS

MICHELE DOMINGUEZ GREENE
Concert for the women of Ciudad Juarez
March 17, 8pm
Brava Theater in San Francisco
and
March 25, 3:30pm
The Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA)
Free admission

For more information, please call Lucia Noyce at (310) 815 0450.

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