

LETTER TO GEORGE CLOONEY by Si Frumkin, 835 words

Dear Mr. Clooney:

Let me say this up front: I like you. I like most of the movies you were in. You are an excellent actor. And yes, I don't agree with your political views, but I certainly believe that you are entitled to your opinions, just as I am entitled to mine.

I was prompted to write to you by a major front page article in the June 19, 2007 Los Angeles Times. It was impressive – a half-page photo of yourself over a title in large capital letters, “FAME? PRICELESS” and then just a little smaller, “‘If celebrity is a credit card, then I’m using it,’ Clooney says of his Darfur campaign.”

The interview wasn't about film. The reporter, Tina Daunt, explained that, “Clooney had more serious matters on his mind”. She said that you wanted to only discuss two subjects: American presidential politics and the Darfur conflict.

I doubt that we could agree on the first issue - your enthusiastic support of Barak Obama - but I do share and respect your concern with slaughter in Darfur. (By the way, I did resent the use of the word “recently” when referring to the slaughter as “the ethnic cleansing campaign that President George W. Bush *recently* declared a genocide”. I assume that it was Tina's mistake - surely you know that Bush declared it genocide in September 2004, restated it in June 2005 and again in April 2006. This is not recent and compares very favorably with Europe and the U.N. that have yet to use the “g” word).

As I said already, I respect your concern and your work in mobilizing public opinion. I am convinced that your intentions and motives are beyond reproach. I regret, however, that you are unfortunately confusing good intentions with good results.

At the risk of being simplistic I suggest that there are two major goals to be achieved in Darfur: (1) helping the victims and (2) stopping the genocide.

You are primarily concerned with the first goal. Your success in raising money for Darfur is indeed impressive. However, there is no mention what these millions will be spent on and who will control the spending. Will it be the U.N. with its

sorry record of corruption and inefficiency (think “Oil for Food)? Will it be the local African leaders and politicians? Is there any kind of a paper trail of the collected funds and their use? Who checks that the money doesn’t end up in the pockets of the suppliers, providers, organizers, and commissions and salaries for all concerned? Surely, you know – or should know – how much well intentioned help simply disappears and never reaches those for whom it is intended.

And, anyway, how does money prevent the murderers, the janjaweed, the government helicopters and Antonov bombers from continuing the genocide?

You can get – or try to get – the answers. Have you tried?

I know that the last question is somewhat naïve. I know that violence cannot be stopped by money and that, usually, murderers can only be stopped by force, not gentle persuasion. In normal times, force would probably have been provided, as it usually was when help was needed, by the U.S. But these are not normal times. The political climate that you have helped create makes it impossible for this president to send in even a few platoons of Marines.

Well, there are soldiers who could do the job and who are in the immediate neighborhood. Your influence and celebrity could do much to bring them into action, or at least, make the world aware of them.

There are between 1500 and 2000 French troops stationed in Chad, a country sharing a border with Sudan. The exact number and composition are difficult to obtain but it is certain that they have tanks, helicopters and even Mirage fighters that have already been used in the Ivory Coast, the Central African Republic and in Chad itself in 2006 and 2007. They could impose a no-fly zone over Darfur and stop the Sudanese helicopters and bombers just as we and the Brits stopped Saddam’s in northern Iraq. The famed French Foreign Legion could easily intercede and stop the camel-riding Janjaweed murderers.

New York Times’ Nicholas Kristoff devoted much space to Darfur. He is aware of the French forces in Darfur and says, “...the French aren’t saying what they’ll do.”

I know what they’ll do: nothing!

Your appearance in the U.N. was directed at getting people to know and feel the pain of Darfur. It should have been focused on what can be done and, more importantly, what is not being done by France and by the rest of Europe.

Dear Mr. Clooney, use the phrase that was used by Emil Zola over a century ago: say "*J'accuse*" to France and to the rest of the crocodile-tear crying Europeans who criticize us but are not willing to take our place in fighting evil.

Sincerely, Si Frumkin, 3755 Goodland Ave., Studio City, CA 91604 Ph.: 818-769-8862

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