

## GUILT-FREE VALENTINES?

The timing couldn't be worse for the chocolate industry. A week before Valentine's Day, Nestlé, Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland—the cocoa suppliers for virtually every major chocolate producer in the U.S.—will

TYLER HICKS—GETTY



### Ivory Coast cocoa workers

have to show up in court to answer for allegedly supporting child slavery on West African farms, where 70% of the world's cocoa is grown. The hearing, set for this week in Los Angeles, stems from a lawsuit filed by the International Labor Rights Fund, which is also taking aim at another Valentine's Day staple: lovely bouquets that happen to be laden with pesticides. Some 70% of cut flowers sold in the U.S. are imported, mostly from Colombia and Ecuador. A recent U.N. study found that nearly 60% of Ecuadorian flower workers, many of them children, suffered from pesticide poisoning, with such symptoms as dizziness and blurred vision. But take heart, socially responsible suitors: Transfairusa.org helps consumers find chocolates made with responsible labor and eco-friendly practices. Ditto for blooms at Organic-Bouquet.com, whose CEO, Gerald Prolman, boasts, "Our flowers have a deeper layer of beauty."

—By Margot Roosevelt

## NOTEBOOK

### Less Cash, More Crash

FOR OSCAR THIS YEAR, CHEAP is chic. Four of the five films nominated for Best Picture cost under \$15 million to make, less than a fifth of the average Hollywood budget. Of them, the very cheapest was *Crash*, which cost \$6.5 million and earned six Oscar nods, including three for writer-director-producer Paul Haggis. Yet the film's domestic box-office total (\$56 million) was higher than that of any of its laureled rivals when the nominations came out last Tuesday.

When the execs at Lionsgate Films told Haggis several months ago that they were aiming for Best Picture, he literally laughed at them. As Haggis recalls, "I told them, 'Please, don't embarrass me by even saying things like that.'"



### CHASING OSCAR

He should have trusted the Lionsgaters. Handed the tough sell of a multistory drama about racial tension, they made bold decisions: to open the film in May and play it on 1,900 screens, get the cast on *Oprah*, then saturate the film community with 130,000 DVDs. "Nothing sells itself," says co-star and co-producer Don Cheadle, who was pleased when *Crash* became the right kind of controversial film—"the quin-

essential watercooler movie."

But Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* is still the favorite for the top awards. At least Haggis thinks so: "We all know that George [Clooney] and Bennett [Miller] and I and Steven [Spielberg] are going to be in the audience applauding Ang. But one always hopes we'll be up there for something." Maybe. So don't count *Crash* out. The little movie that could may have one last surprise in store.  
—By Richard Corliss. Reported by Jeffrey Ressler and Sonja Steptoe

Oscar nominee Matt Dillon and *Crash* co-star Thandie Newton



LOREY SEBASTIAN—LIONSGATE FILMS

### THESE TS HAVE 'TUDE!

FASHION STATEMENTS can be risky, as antiwar activist Cindy Sheehan, below, and a Congressman's support-the-troops wife learned last week when they got booted from the Capitol for sporting political T shirts. Here's a look at other wearable agendas. —By Clayton Neuman

BELOW: MIKE THEILER—EPA



#### RACE RELATIONS

Mayor Ray Nagin's call for a "chocolate New Orleans" sounded pretty tasty to a Louisiana man who has sold some 3,000 WILLY NAGIN AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY shirts at [imnotchocolate.com](http://imnotchocolate.com)

#### GENETIC WARS

After President Bush called for a ban on "human-animal hybrids" in the State of the Union address, [humananimalhybrid.net](http://humananimalhybrid.net) sprang up to mock the oversimplification of complex issues

#### FISCAL POLICY

As Alan Greenspan ended his 18-year reign as Federal Reserve Chairman last week, [yque.com](http://yque.com) was primed to capitalize on the maestro's legacy—and bizarre pop-culture appeal