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- Rebels close in on Haiti capital 2/28/2004 11:06:43 AM
- U.S. Catholic priests abused 10,600 children 2/28/2004 11:05:06 AM
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- Palace debunks new coup rumors 2/27/2004 6:09:08 PM
- Macedonian president's crashed plane found 2/27/2004 6:07:06 PM
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Monday, February 16, 2004 6:04 PM

Celebrity

TODAY

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Interactive

Op-Ed

Curiouser

The official line peddled on Friday by no less than President Arroyo in Pagadian City, regarding the inexplicable delay in formalizing the appointment to the Supreme Court of Sandiganbayan Special Division Presiding Justice Minita Chico Nazario, has only compounded the crisis in confidence sparked by the case.



Indicators

As of Feb 27 2004 5:44PM
 PHISIX 1,483.18 dn -2.79
 FOREX 56.3350 = \$1

Weather



Intermittent
 Clouds
 Hi: 33°C
 Low: 21°C

Celebrity



- Sarah gets a teleserve



RICKY L. CALDERON/TODAY

- All about Ai-Ai
JET VALLE/TODAY
- *Passion* takes in \$15 million to 20 million on first day
TODAY
- 'The Passion' generates divine box office
abs-cbnNEWS.com
- Harry Potter author Rowling joins billionaire club
Reuters/abs-cbnNEWS.com
- Comedian Rosie O'Donnell weds gay partner
abs-cbnNEWS.com
- U.K. letters get 'Lord of the Rings' magic
Reuters/abs-cbnNEWS.com
- Stern blames suspension on Janet Jackson's breast
Reuters/abs-cbnNEWS.com

Mel Gibson says *Passion* about love, not blaming Jews

NEW YORK - Mel Gibson said critics who found his controversial film "The Passion of the Christ" anti-Semitic were missing the point, and defended his violent depiction of the crucifixion, saying he had deliberately set out to make a movie that would shock.

Decrying anti-Semitism as an "un-Christian" sin that went against the tenets of his faith, Gibson told ABC's Diane Sawyer in a "Primetime" interview that he had never intended the film to trigger a "blame game" over responsibility for Christ's death.

"It's about faith, hope, love and forgiveness. That's what this film is about. It's about Christ's sacrifice," he said, in excerpts of the interview released ahead of its broadcast on Monday evening.

"The Passion," which gets its US release on February 25, purports to be a faithful and graphic account of Christ's last 12 hours on earth.

Jewish leaders who have attended advance screenings have voiced concerns that its portrayal of the Jews' role in Christ's execution could stir up anti-Semitic sentiment.

Gibson, who belongs to an ultra-conservative Catholic group that does not recognize the reforms of Vatican II, poured 25 million dollars of his own money into making the film, which he directed.

In comments to be broadcast alongside the interview, Abraham Foxman, national director of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, argued that while Gibson may not be

anti-Semitic, he was being slightly naive about the film's potential impact.

"This is his vision, his faith; he's a true believer, and I respect that," Foxman said. "But there are times that there are unintended consequences. I believe that this movie has the potential to fuel anti-Semitism, to reinforce it."

Asked by Sawyer who he considered culpable for Christ's death, Gibson said mankind as a whole was responsible.

Jesus Christ "was beaten for our iniquities," Gibson said. "He was wounded for our transgressions and by his wounds we are healed. That's the point of the film. It's not about pointing fingers."

The star of the *Lethal Weapon* series and *Braveheart* acknowledged that the depiction of Christ's punishment and eventual crucifixion was "very violent" but insisted that the movie's R-rating was enough to warn cinemagoers in advance.

"I wanted it to be shocking," he said. "And I also wanted it to be extreme."

"I wanted it to push the viewer over the edge so that they see the enormity – the enormity of that sacrifice – to see that someone could endure that and still come back with love and forgiveness, even through extreme pain and suffering and ridicule."

Gibson traced the genesis of *The Passion* back to his own spiritual crisis 13 years ago when he became suicidal and came close to throwing himself out of a window.

"I was looking down thinking, 'Man, this is just easier this way'," he said. "You have to be mad, you have to be insane, to despair in that way. But that is the height of spiritual bankruptcy. There's nothing left."

Those feelings led him to reexamine Christianity, and ultimately to create *The Passion* – "my vision, with God's help" of the final hours in the life of Jesus.

"This is my version of what happened, according to the Gospels and what I wanted to show," he said.

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