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### **Honor killing documentary 'Two Sides of the Moon' to screen at Rhode Island International Film Festival**

Hatun Aynur Sürücü and her youngest brother, Ayhan, were close. But somehow, on Feb. 7, 2005, he felt compelled to murder his sister by shooting her three times in the head.

Her death was labeled an "honor killing," which occurs when the perpetrator murders a family member – usually a woman – based on the belief that she has brought shame to the family, perhaps through clothing choices, terminating a marriage or engaging in sexual acts deemed inappropriate.

"Two Sides of the Moon" is the story of the divided life and shocking death of the 23-year-old woman of Kurdish descent, who lived in Berlin when she was killed by her brother. The 33-minute film will screen at Flickers: Rhode Island International Film Festival, a qualifying festival for the Academy Awards, at 4 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 11 at Metcalf Auditorium, located in the Rhode Island School of Design's Museum of Art, 20 N. Main St., Providence, R.I.

"Hatun's story is that of a woman caught between two cultures," said David Gould, director/producer of the MySweetLord Entertainment film. "Had she broken free from her family, she would have lived. Had she not questioned her family and culture, she likely would have been kept safe. It was having a foot in both worlds that sealed her fate."

The conflict Sürücü faced is typical to many young Muslim women born in Germany. She was torn between the wish to live as a free, independent Western woman, and the desire to be close to her conservative Muslim family.

For Sürücü, the concept of being Turkish and German at the same time worked. She had male and female German friends. She lived independently. She wore make-up and jewelry. She enjoyed dancing at discos. She began going by her middle name, Aynur, which means moonbeam, to reflect her new life.

At the same time, she celebrated Muslim holidays, did not eat pork, and had friends in the Turkish community. She even wore a necklace, hidden under her clothes, with words from the Koran. This amulet was meant to protect her and keep evil away, but in the end it failed.

After 30 years in Germany, Sürücü's parents were still living and thinking much like people decades ago in their Eastern Anatolian village. Like many in the Kurdish-Turkish community of Berlin, they were unable to accept her new lifestyle.

Integrated throughout Sürücü's story are interviews with Nobel Peace Prize winners Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, and His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama. Two prominent anthropologists – Unni Wilkan and Werner Schiffauer – put the topic into cultural and historical context. Honor crimes attorney Seyran Ates, and Taina Bien-Aimé, executive director of Equality Now, an international human-rights organization that works for the protection of women and girls, address the topic from a social justice perspective.

"The film is organized in three layers: the factual telling of Hatun's story, the experts who help us understand the culture, and those who speak above the story to challenge us to a higher calling," Gould said. "Desmond Tutu and the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, point to who we are at our darkest, and who we can be at our best."

Gould is a filmmaker whose credits include "Freestyle: The Victories of Dan Gable" and "The Checker King." These films premiered on HBO Signature and HBO2, respectively, and enjoyed favorable reviews from the Los Angeles Times and Newsweek. Other key players on the crew include executive producer Thomas J. Kenney, founder and president of MySweetLord Entertainment, associate producer/editor Kevin Kelley, and screenwriter Michael Scott Moore.

The project began four years ago. Gould teaches at the University of Iowa and was approached by Chivy Sok, the former deputy director of the UI Center for Human Rights, about producing a documentary on honor crimes.

“Chivy, a former child laborer from the ‘Killing Fields’ of Cambodia, impressed upon me the extent of these abuses, and the lack of attention they receive,” Gould said. “I began writing women’s rights groups asking for specific stories. The tragic tale of Hatun Aynur Sürücü’s honor killing was one of the first to arrive, and it touched me immediately.”

“Two Sides of the Moon” will not be sold because the filmmakers want to share Sürücü’s story freely. It will not be shown in Berlin because the publicity generated by Sürücü’s killing has forced her friends into the spotlight, causing them to live cautious lives. The goal of the project is to make an impact on the issue of violence against women.

“Our wish for ‘Two Sides of the Moon’ is that it resonates on a human level, and calls us to fight this issue in our backyards, and around the world,” Gould said. “Hatun’s story demands action. There are shelters to be staffed, laws to be championed, and cycles of violence to be broken. Our success as filmmakers will be measured by what goes on after the audience leaves the theater.”

Now in its 15th year, Flickers is New England's largest and most prestigious festival. Ranked as one of the Top 12 film festivals in the country, this world-class event will be held at venues around Providence Aug. 9-14. In 2002, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences elected to recognize the Rhode Island International Film Festival as a qualifier for the Academy Awards’ short films category. Only 65 of the 7,000 film festivals worldwide have this recognition. For details on the festival and information on tickets or media credentials, visit [www.film-festival.org](http://www.film-festival.org).

**NOTES TO MEDIA:** Hatun Aynur Sürücü is pronounced Ha-TOON Ah-NOOR Sa-ROO-Chu. Photos and crew bios are available at [www.twosidesofthemoon.com](http://www.twosidesofthemoon.com). Review copies of the film and high-resolution photos are available upon request.

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