

MO' WEEKEND

The Oscars

Sunday, March 07, 2010 By Miki Turner

Oscar nominee Mo'Nique, who has graciously allowed JET magazine to chronicle her activities leading up to Oscar night, is on top of the world—or at least on top of the San Fernando Valley.

One day before the 82nd Annual Academy Awards, Mo'Nique, who is up for best supporting actress for her stellar work in "Precious," and her good friend comedienne Kym Whitley, started their day with a 7 a.m. hike up a trail in Tarzana. Mo' was moving so fast that it was hard for our camera crew to keep up with her. We were all eating her dust.



Don't stop, don't stop," she kept saying to Whitley, who at times looked as though she'd rather be at Starbucks sipping some lattes. But make no mistake, she wanted to be there. Whitley has been inspired by Mo's weight loss and her commitment to staying healthy.

"One time we went out and I thought I wasn't going to make it," Whitley said. "But this girl told me to hold on to her towel and she literally pulled me up the hill."

That's a good friend.

And later that day a lot of Mo's good friends came out to wish her well at a luncheon hosted for her by her BFF Shondrella Avery at Philippe Chow in West Hollywood. All guests were given white gloves and pearls and the atmosphere in that room was electric as stars like Oprah Winfrey, Gabourey Sidibe, Ruby Dee, Natalie Cole, Macy Gray, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Nia Long, Malinda Williams, Vivica A. Fox, Alfre Woodard and Margaret Avery saluted their peer, drank champagne and dined on French-inspired Asian cuisine. Also present were Johnson Publishing CEO and Chairman Linda Johnson Rice, BET Chairman Debra Lee and Mo's favorite aunts Betty and Joan.

Shondrella knows how to throw a nice tea party!

Once Mo' arrived everyone in the place rushed her to congratulate her on her success. As Sidibe said, "she's won everything!" On Friday night, she won the best supporting actress trophy at the Independent Spirit Awards and "Precious," winner of five other awards, won best picture.

"To see all these women who came here to be with me today is just so overwhelming," Mo' said as tears rolled down her cheeks. "Ruby Dee is sitting there telling me how proud she is of me and how I'm going to be opening doors...What do you even say to that? She's the reason why you and I are here talking now because she took all the hits and all the abuse. I'm just so full."

Award season can be exhausting for some, but Mo', who plans on going on another 7 a.m. hike today, is in such great shape she just keeps going. "My feet aren't touching the ground," she said. "More than all the awards I'm just so happy that this film's message is reaching so many people. When we went into this, that's what we wanted to do. That's my real validation."

There were some fun times, too. Mo', encouraged by Pauletta Washington (Denzel's wife), demonstrated her red carpet stroll, her acceptance stroll and her "and the winner is" expression for the cameras. "You know this is so ignorant," she said with a hearty laugh.

But since just about everyone on the planet thinks Mo' will be clutching a golden boy tomorrow when she leaves the Kodak Theatre, it's probably good that she'll be well rehearsed. If she wins she'll become only the 12th African-American to win an Oscar—13th if you count Peter Ustinov, who was of African descent. She'll also be only the fourth African-American female to win a best supporting award, following in the footsteps of Hattie McDaniel, Whoopi Goldberg and Jennifer Hudson.

As she was making her final rounds Saturday afternoon, Mo' gave JET a heads up on what she'll be wearing to the Oscars. She'll be wearing a gown by Tom and Linda Platt. "Baby it is such old Hollywood! It's that kind of old Hollywood where you drag! Baby, it drags! It is beautiful!"