Jessica Chastain Tackles US-Mexico Politics In New Film ‘Dreams’

AFP- ‘I’ve kind of made it my desire to play characters who make a lot of mistakes,’ said Chastain (STEFANIE LOOS)
Academy Award-winning US actor Jessica Chastain on Saturday said her latest movie, about a Mexican ballet dancer who longs to move to the US, was “undeniably political” as it premiered at the Berlin film festival.

“Dreams”, from Mexican director Michel Franco, follows the story of Fernando (Isaac Hernandez), a young ballet dancer from Mexico City who dreams of international fame.

Fernando believes that his lover Jennifer (Chastain), a wealthy socialite based in San Francisco, will support him in his ambitions and makes the fateful decision to cross into the US illegally to be with her.

Fernando leaves everything behind, crossing the border in a cramped lorry and narrowly escaping death when he gets dumped on the side of the road on a blisteringly hot day.

Once he has arrived in San Francisco however, he struggles to find a place in Jennifer’s carefully controlled world and relations between the lovers quickly turn sour.

Speaking to reporters ahead of the premiere of “Dreams” in Berlin, Chastain said the film “really does delve into the relationship between the United States and Mexico”.

The story is “incredibly political, (partly) because of what’s happening right now… not just the United States, all over the world”, she said.

When US President Donald Trump began his second term in January, he issued a slew of executive orders aimed at reshaping how the United States deals with immigration – especially from Mexico.

Trump declared a national emergency at the US-Mexico border and said he would send troops there “to repel the disastrous invasion of our country”.

During the election campaign, Trump frequently invoked dark imagery about how illegal migration was “poisoning the blood” of the nation, words seized on by opponents as reminiscent of Nazi Germany.

Director Franco is known for the dystopian thriller “New Order” and nursing drama “Chronic”.

He said the relationship between Jennifer and Fernando in the film could be understood as a mirror of relations between the two countries.

Director Franco is known for the dystopian thriller ‘New Order’ and nursing drama ‘Chronic’ PHOTO: JOHN MACDOUGALL

“The relationship between Mexico and the US is a complex one, where we need each other, we abuse each other,” he said.

In “Dreams”, Chastain’s character Jessica makes a drastic decision she believes will enable her to keep hold of Fernando and cling to her life in San Francisco at the same time – with devastating consequences.

Chastain, 47, who is known for starring in projects with

feminist themes, said it had been “really interesting to play a character like Jennifer”.

“I couldn’t filter her through the lens of my own moral beliefs or political views, because in doing so would have completely changed the character and changed the plot of the story,” she said.

“I’ve kind of made it my desire to play characters who make a lot of mistakes, make a lot of missteps.

“I don’t care if they’re likable or palatable, but I want people to talk about it.”

AFP