



## Same Sky Bracelets – Socially Conscious Jewelry

by Wendy Lerman



The launch party of Same Sky Bracelets.

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**The launch party was only last Thursday**, but you may already be seeing **Same Sky Bracelets** on the wrists of some notable celebrities and fashion forward socialites around town. They are the brainchild and the heart and soul of award-winning producer and philanthropist, **Francine LeFrak**. These gorgeous bracelets that come in a range of stunning colors, are handmade in Rwanda by female artisans, using a traditional Rwandan weaving skill and 165-180 hand-blown glass beads.

But, Same Sky Bracelets are so much more than a fashion statement. They are truly an

innovative initiative described as “trade-not-aid” that is using jewelry to effect change in Rwanda – one woman at a time. All of the Rwandan artisans are survivors of the 1994 genocide, a cause that Francine LeFrak has been passionate about since working for more than eight years to produce a motion picture on the plight of Rwandan women.

An estimated one million people were killed during the 100-day Rwandan genocide and over 250,000 women were raped and as a result, became infected with HIV/AIDS. While the documentary was never completed, through Francine’s determination to improve their lives and to empower these women, Same Sky Bracelets was conceived.

Same Sky’s “women-helping-women” mission teaches the Rwandan artisans to be self-sufficient, giving them full-time employment, and the chance to become economically independent.

“Same Sky provides a hand-up instead of a hand-out.” Says founder Francine LeFrak. “Each bracelet not only supports the artisan who crafted it but impacts her entire family. We provide the women with transportation to and from work and also give them a meal so they can be strong enough to take HIV/AIDS medications.”



Francine LeFrak and Janet Nkubana with Same Sky Bracelets.

To help understand the real impact purchasing a bracelet has on these women, read the artisans personal stories on the Same Sky website. Each bracelet is signed by the woman who made that piece, so you can’t help but feel instantly connected.

“Our message is that women are in this together, owning our power, all living under the same sky,” explains Ms. LeFrak. “With the purchase of a bracelet, you become fashionable, socially mindful and part of the powerful circle connecting women everywhere.”

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Same Sky Bracelets on display among the “Grace of Africa” exhibition at Ana Tzarev Gallery.





Beautifully set at the Ana Tzarev Gallery where the “Grace of Africa” exhibit is currently on display, Francine LeFrak hosted the launch event along with **Gayle Perkins Atkins, Donna D’Cruz, Grace Hightower De Niro, Somers Farkas, and Margo MacNabb Nederlander** who were joined by the 2008 Africa Prize Laureate **Janet Nkubana, Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, Geoffrey Bradfield, Margo Castimatidis, Alexandra Reeve, Gina Gershon, Jim McGreevey and Mark O’Donnell, Muffie Potter Aston, Cindy Adams, Jimmy Nederlander, Rita Crosby, Greg Kelly, Veronica Kelly, Bobby Sager, Broadway’s Soshana Bean, Nancy Falchuck** (National President of Hadassah, WZOA, Inc.) and **Princess Keisha Omilana**. The event featured special guest Janet Nkubana, who spoke about what Same Sky means for the women in Rwanda.

The bracelets are available for \$150 at Zitomer’s and Z Chemist in New York, Tootsies in Houston, and in the Wynn Hotels in Las Vegas. They can also be purchased online at [www.samesky.com](http://www.samesky.com).

All profits from the sale of the bracelets go directly back into growing Same Sky and economically empowering and employing more women.



Bridget Bailey, Ashley Lauren Fisher, Gae Exton, and Alexandra Reeve.



*L. to r.:* Princess Keisha Omilana and Nancy Falchuk ... Somers Farkas and Margo McNabb.



Cindy Adams and Francine LeFrak.





Francine LeFrak, Gina Gershon, Janet Nkubana, and Ivanka Trump.



Ivanka Trump with Gabe and Daniel Erem.



Jared Kushner, Ivanka Trump, Mark O'Donnell, and Rick Friedberg.

*Photographs by Will Ragozzino, Social Shutterbug.*