

Novelist Decries Congo Humanitarian Crisis

(West Harrison, NY) Unadulterated greed created the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the author of *Heart of Diamonds*, a newly-released novel about the endless violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Author Dave Donelson says his fictional treatment of the Congo's ongoing strife points to lust for the nation's riches as the cause of over five million deaths since 1998.

"We shouldn't even pretend that conflicting ideologies or ethnic rivalries are the causes of this crisis," Donelson says. "Those are nothing more than convenient excuses for the looting and pillaging that threatens to destroy the DRC."

In his novel, Donelson uses a diamond smuggling scheme to represent the fight for control of the DRC's gold, timber, uranium, copper, coltan, and other natural resources. An intricate plot involving an American televangelist, the President of the DRC, and the White House reflects the convoluted relationships of the factions involved in the struggle. His heroine, Valerie Grey, is a TV journalist who uncovers the scheme and fights to expose it to the world.

Donelson believes that ethnic conflicts like those between the Tsutis and Hutus that spilled over from Rwanda and between the Hema and Lindu are fronts for war lords looking to control territory in the DRC where they can exploit natural resources. Many of those militias receive support—sometimes openly—from governments or rebel factions in neighboring countries.

"*Heart of Diamonds* is a work of fiction," Donelson avers, "But it is based on actual events in the most deadly conflict since World War II." The author says he drew heavily on news accounts of rape as a weapon of terror, child soldiers, widespread corruption at all levels of government, and the very sad plight of the hundreds of thousands of refugees from the violence that continues to wrack the nation.

Donelson is a freelance writer and photographer. *Heart of Diamonds* is his third book, but the West Harrison, NY, author's first foray into the thriller genre. "I wanted to write something that captures the vibrancy and complexity of Africa, and a suspenseful adventure framed against the endless war in the DRC seemed like the perfect approach," he says.

"Since I started writing the book, there have been glimmers of hope in the situation," he points out. "But violence continues and hundreds of thousands of people are still suffering as refugees. Peace and prosperity are still a long way away." He adds, "I hope *Heart of Diamonds* will help draw attention to the crisis."

Heart of Diamonds was published by Kunati Books, named Independent Publisher of the Year at the 2008 Book Expo America.

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