

March 25, 2016

Dear Mr. DiCaprio,

Your efforts to sell synthetic diamonds as an ethical substitute for natural diamonds threatens the lives and livelihood of millions of artisanal diggers in Africa. One and a half million diggers support an additional seven million people by digging for diamonds. These diggers are among the poorest people in the world, earning as little as one dollar per day. Their primary daily concern is getting food to feed their children. Things are so bad that in places like Sierra Leone, the child mortality rate is the fourth highest in the world; 12 percent of children die before the age of five.

Instead of using your fame and fortune to help these diamond diggers and their families, you and your company are falsely claiming that it is more ethical to buy your synthetic diamonds than their natural diamonds. You are literally taking bread out of the mouths of the poorest people on earth. And you are calling it ethical. That is super wrong.

Mr. DiCaprio — what will happen to the millions of poor diggers and their families if you succeed in convincing a new generation of Millennial diamond consumers that it is more ethical to buy your synthetic diamonds than their natural diamonds? Will you feed these people? Will you provide them with an alternate livelihood? Are you willing to take personal ethical responsibility for the suffering you will cause?

Dear Mr. DiCaprio, I plead with you to take two urgent actions. 1) Stop promoting your synthetic diamonds as a more ethical product than legitimate natural diamonds. 2) Use your fame and fortune to help us and others promote fair trade diamonds and jewelry that will ensure good living and environmental conditions while paying artisanal diggers fair prices that lift them out of poverty.

You can and should play an important role in promoting ethical consumerism and an ethical diamond trade. The real issue before us is not diamonds, it's people like the diggers in Sierra Leone and how we can use diamonds to help them. I urge you to contact me and follow up with a discussion about how we and others can create a more ethical diamond and jewelry trade that will significantly improve the lives of millions of artisanal diggers.

Yours truly,

Martin Rapaport
Chairman, RAPAPORT
martin@diamonds.net

*A Message From Ian Smillie
Chairman, Diamond Development Initiative (DDI)*

Leonardo DiCaprio's investment in synthetic diamonds won't do anything at all to end the problems that he is concerned about: child labor in the artisanal diamond fields of Africa, bad working conditions, poor prices and environmental degradation.

Synthetic diamonds may have their own logic, but as long as natural alluvial diamonds exist, as long as people where they are found are poor and as long as nobody tackles the problem head on, bad conditions will persist. The Diamond Development Initiative is tackling the problem head on. It is organizing Sierra Leonean diggers around standards that will improve their conditions and their income, and which deal with environmental remediation and child labor. We have independent third-party monitoring of mine sites and we are creating chains of custody that guarantee the origin of these diamonds for retailers and consumers.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, we are organizing legal status for miners, reducing their vulnerability to predators, and we are taking mobile schools to mining communities as an alternative for mining parents who don't want their kids walking five miles through the forest every day.

All of this is a work in progress, but the progress is good. As a man who is passionate about the environment and who helped wake the world up to conflict diamonds, it would be terrific if Leonardo DiCaprio could generate attention and support for the development needs of the people who suffered most from that trauma.

Ian Smillie
Chairman, Board of Directors
Diamond Development Initiative

