

SHARING AN ARTICLE FROM
MARTIN RAPAPORT: "GUILT TRIP"

HON. TONY P. HALL

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 19, 2000

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today I share with our colleagues a moving plea written by one of the most respected experts in the diamond industry to other members of the industry.

Martin Rapaport, publisher of one of the top trade publications, traveled to Sierra Leone in the weeks before United Nations peacekeepers were captured. His article, "Guilt Trip," was written to propose a solution to the mayhem war diamonds fuel. It needs no embellishing, and I excerpt it here for my colleagues' review:

I don't know how to tell this story. There are no words to describe what I have seen in Sierra Leone. My mind tells me to block out the really bad stuff, to deny the impossible reality. But the images of the amputee camp haunt me and the voices of the victims cry out. "Tell them what has happened to us," say the survivors. "Show them what the diamonds have done to us."

"I am angry. I am upset. I am afraid that my words will not be strong enough to convey the suffering and injustice I have witnessed. How do I tell you about Maria, a pretty eight-month-old baby whose arm has been hacked off by the rebels? How can I fully describe the amputee camp with 1,400 people living in huts made of plastic sheets, babies in cardboard boxes, food cooked in open fires on the ground, no electricity or plumbing—everywhere you look someone is missing an arm, a leg or both. What can I say about the tens of thousands that live in displaced persons camps without adequate medicine, food, clothing and shelter.

Friends, members of the diamond trade. Please, stop and think for a minute. Read my words. Perhaps what is happening in Sierra Leone is our problem. Perhaps it is our business.

Sierra Leone is a beautiful country. It has a cornucopia of natural resources and a population that includes many well educated, highly intelligent people. In spite of the wars, which have decimated the population and destroyed the basic infrastructure of the country, the people of Sierra Leone are industrious and kind-hearted. During my visit last week, the capital, Freetown, was bustling with people trying to rebuild their lives and their country.

While there is much to be hopeful and optimistic about, the peace process is moving too slowly. The diamonds are holding up the peace process. The war in Sierra Leone is about power. It is about who controls the country, how they control it and what they do with their control. There is a strong perception that he who controls the diamonds will control the country.

Simply put, Sierra Leone's diamond industry is totally black market, underground, illegal and corrupt. Hundreds of millions of dollars of Sierra Leone diamonds are being traded on the world markets without any benefit going to the government, or people, of Sierra Leone.

The bastards are not just stealing Sierra Leone's diamonds, they are trading them for guns. Guns which are used to kill people to keep the war going, which assures that the government will not be able to control the illegal trade, assuring that the bad guys can continue to steal the diamonds. The real challenge facing Sierra Leone and the world

diamond trade, is how to stop this horrific murderous cycle of illegal diamond activity.

The problems of Sierra Leone are so great and discouraging that one hesitates to suggest solutions. . . [but] the situation in Africa is such that we must adopt a pro-active attitude towards the resolution of problems. We cannot sit back and write off the problems of Africa as unsolvable—the human suffering is simply too great.

The diamond industry must address the fact that illegal diamonds from Sierra Leone and other war zones are in fact finding their way into the diamond marketplace. While the industry in general cannot solve Sierra Leone's problems it can, and must, take realistic measures to assure that illegal diamonds are excluded from the marketplace.

The bottom line is that our industry must stop dealing with questionable diamonds. Consider the market for stolen diamonds and jewelry. Now we all know that these markets exist in a limited way, but no decent, legitimate or even semi-honest diamond dealer would ever consider buying stolen diamonds. When you buy a stolen diamond you encourage the thieves to go out and steal another diamond. You endanger your own life and you destroy the security of your business.

Would we walk around saying there is no way to tell if a diamond is stolen and just let the thieves market prosper? By the way—how is it that our industry is able to self-regulate in a reasonable manner against thieves, but not against conflict diamonds? Is the life of a black in Sierra Leone worth less than the life of a diamond dealer or jeweler in the U.S.?

Mr. Speaker, I met Mr. Rapaport before I went to Sierra Leone last year, and I have heard the industry's admiration for him. He and his colleagues are savvy, clever business people. I am confident they not only can figure out how to stop war diamonds from enriching butchers—but, more importantly, how to turn diamonds' economic potential into a positive force for the African people who so need that.

I applaud Mr. Rapaport for making his trip to Sierra Leone and for eloquently appealing to the diamond industry to find a solution to this urgent problem. And I urge my colleagues to join me in pressing for a targeted solution to the diamond smuggling that is destroying Sierra Leone's democracy and its people.

Please join Sierra Leone's democratic government, the U.S. diamond industry, and some of our most thoughtful colleagues in supporting H. Con. Res. 323.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE EXCELLENCE OF MARIEMONT HIGH SCHOOL'S DESTINATION IMAGINATION TEAM

HON. ROB PORTMAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 19, 2000

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, today I honor Mariemont High School's Destination ImagiNation Team. The team has seven students: Carrie Badanes, Lizzy Anthony, Bobby Zepf, Juli Newton, Ben Cober, John Rutherford and Kate Young. They are coached by Anne Badanes and Sue Cober, and will compete in the 2000 Destination ImagiNation world championships. The competition will be held in Ames, Iowa on May 24–27.

During the event, the Mariemont team will compete using its creativity, teamwork, and

wits to solve difficult problems. The teams are judged by their ability to integrate a myriad of elements into a performance, which draws upon their knowledge of history, their acting skills, and their ability to improvise. Since last December, the Mariemont High School team has trained extensively. They have spent many hours working with their coaches, learning new skills, researching history, and attending live performances of a professional improvisation group at the Aronoff Center in Cincinnati. In addition, they continue to work with their teacher, Carrie Dattilo, honing their acting skills.

In 1999, the Mariemont High School team placed first at the regional competition and second at the state competition in Columbus. In previous years, the team has always placed second or third in the region and has won an unprecedented three Renatra Fusca awards for outstanding creativity. This year, they took first place in the regional and state competitions. At the regional competition, in March, they were awarded the prestigious DaVinci Award for outstanding creativity and teamwork. They are the first team from the Mariemont School District to compete in the world championships, and they are the sole team representing the Greater Cincinnati area.

We are very proud of the Mariemont team's accomplishments, and all of us in the Cincinnati area wish its members the very best in their upcoming competition.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, BRANCH 70, BRANCH 1100, BRANCH 2525: COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 19, 2000

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, today I recognize the National Association of Letter Carriers Branches 70, 1100, and 2525, as they are honored by the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, AFL-CIO, at its 12th annual Worker's Memorial Dinner with its Community Service Award.

Some eight years ago the National Association of Letter Carriers began its annual food drive and has collected millions of pounds of food every year since. In 1999, more than 1,500 local National Association of Letter Carriers branches in more than 10,000 cities and towns across the country collected a total of over 50 million pounds of food for the needy.

NALC Branch 70, Branch 1100, and Branch 2525 annually collect large amounts of food that directly benefit families in need in our community. Their food drive provides local food banks and pantries with food to serve to needy families throughout the year.

The NALC's commitment to serving the community and especially those members of our community who are most in need is exemplary and worthy of our highest praise. My congratulations go to National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 70, Branch 1100, and Branch 2525 for these significant contributions.