

Diamonds

By Chris Harrington

The commodity of diamonds is sold throughout the world and is a symbol of both wealth and stability. Normally, people try to have the largest and most clear diamond on their finger, to commemorate their wedding and connection to their loved one with wealth and rich feelings. However, there is a very dark reality behind how these diamonds are created. To further understand the impact and importance of diamond mining, we need to understand both the process and where it all starts from.

To begin diamonds are mined throughout the world but especially in countries such as Russia, Botswana, and Angola. Here, miners dig anywhere to 3500 ft into the earth's surface and create large craters used for diamond mining. In Russia and Botswana alone, they mine 62.2 million carat of diamonds a year. The main companies that deal with mining raw diamonds are De Beers, Alrosa, and Debswana. All of these companies have their own faults such as De Beers who is a co-owner of the Zimbabwe mines. Here, there are awful work conditions such as whippings, torture, and rape and are paid anywhere from \$1-5 a day. Alrosa is a diamond mine company based in Russia and owns 85% of the diamond market, which is considered to be a monopoly. They also buy illegal diamonds from African rebels who use that money to fund wars. This is commonly referred to as "blood diamonds", which is banned by the United Nations, however companies do illegal purchases to maximize profits.

After these diamonds are mined, they are sent to organizations like De Beers Central Selling Organization where they are broken down into different categories based on the type of diamond they are. There are 5000 different types of diamonds that will cause them to be worth either a lot of money and be used for jewelry or be poor quality and used for tools such as tips for drilling.

Following this, they are sent to World Cutting Centers where the diamonds are cut into the best size and shape to maximize the profit. The diamond cutters look at three factors; size, number, and position of internal inclusions (internal flaws). After they are examined, they are cleaved into the "perfect diamond", polished, and sent around the world to diamond wholesalers like Kay Jewelers.

There are a lot of issues with diamond mined that have to do with environmental impacts. Diamond mining is very demanding on the earth and these mines that are 3500 feet deep and never filled in after they are deemed useless. On top of this, the craters formed by the diamond miners fill with water and attract mosquitoes who spread malaria. Diamond miners have also been known for rerouting water ways that affect fish ecosystems as well as creating dangerous waterways that cause flooding and irrigation issues.

In order to combat issues like these, it's important to ask your jeweler where the diamonds are from. When buying diamonds, you should avoid diamonds from Zimbabwe because they are usually blood diamonds and cause a lot of violence. In addition joining companies like Brilliant Earth who combat environmental issues and human rights issues is a great program. It is very important to be cognitive of where you are buying these diamonds from, because the more money you put in these people's pockets, the less they will do to stop the terror they are causing.