

Every Living Thing

Every Living Thing

Facing Down Terrorists, Warlords, and
Thugs in West Africa—
A Story of Justice

David M. Crane
Founding Chief Prosecutor
Special Court for Sierra Leone



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This book is dedicated to

My wife

Judi Ponder Crane,

My children

Katherine C. Blanchard

and David L. Crane

And to

All those who served in

The Office of the Prosecutor
Special Court for Sierra Leone
2002–2012

You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to
their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere
earthly mortals *will never again strike terror*.

Psalm 10:17–18 NIV

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Preface

I was terrified writing this book. My initial fear was that I would have to relive all the pain, the horror, the suffering. However, as I wrote, I found the fear to be less than I thought, and I gained a renewed sense of awe for what took place in West Africa, in a war-torn and downtrodden part of the world.

In many ways I was humbled, not by what I did, but what I saw others do to return the rule of law to a lawless land. In turn, the quiet dignity of the people of Sierra Leone showed that, despite this horror, mankind still retains the capacity for hope, for love, and for a universal desire to matter.

These pages will bring out many emotions. It did for me. You will weep, laugh, and be inspired. At times, this kaleidoscope of emotions will happen almost at the same time. To say that this was hell on earth for a decade is not an understatement. I was thunderstruck at the devastation, the poverty, the ruin. In turn, I was aghast at the arrogance of the ruling elite, the corruption, the sense of greed that permeated their society as a whole.

Overlay the numerous actors in this cynical joint criminal enterprise and you have a boiling cauldron of extremes. For decades gun runners, diamond dealers, international criminals, terrorists, and various commercial entities all worked together to turn West Africa into that hell on earth. This joint criminal enterprise, managed by boy-generals with bizarre nicknames like Rambo, Superman, the Maskita, to name a few, along with corrupt heads of state and businessmen, directly caused the displacement of millions of people and the murder, rape, maiming, and mutilation of over 1.2 million West Africans.

This conflict, created by criminals for their own personal criminal gain, ended what I call the world's bloodiest century. The 20th century saw over 235 million human beings die, over 60% at the hand of their own government. Death by government was an ignored phenomenon that captured the dark side of civilization. Begun by King Leopold II of Belgium and ending with President Charles Taylor of Liberia, the tyrants and dictators that destroyed their own countries and those around them racked up astounding numbers of death and destruction.

This certainly begs the question, are we doomed to repeat this path of pain once again in the 21st century? I am hopeful that we will not, as the international community finally has come to terms with accountability and facing down the beast of impunity. With the advent of modern international criminal law, a new legal discipline has arisen to ensure that those who kill massively will be humbled before the law.

The past century showed us that when the rule of law is overshadowed by arrogance, greed, and avarice, horrific consequences result.

One of the central themes I stressed to the people of Sierra Leone and West Africa were that no one is above the law, the law is fair, and that the rule of law is more powerful than the rule of the gun.

You are about to enter a world of highs, lows, of triumph and despair, a world of joy and pain, my world as Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. I was a reluctant participant at first. I never sought the position and was a reluctant nominee for months during the laborious process in selecting the founding Chief Prosecutor of the international war crimes tribunal for West Africa called the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Reflecting back over a decade ago on those early months, I am amazed, I even marvel at being able to have the patience to even go through the selection process itself. The only reason I did persevere was my not understanding what it took to be appointed a senior member of a tribunal within the United Nations system. It was painful.

Yet, I am glad that I did. I have come to realize what a privilege it was to be the person who was responsible for seeking justice for the murder, rape, maiming and mutilation of over one million West Africans. I have mentioned often that “the lucky ones” died, as those who survived live on maimed, psychologically devastated, and beyond hope economically. Even today, they live day to day in the hopes of surviving to the end of the week. Despite this, our work there helped put a region of the world on a path towards peace and a possible future for millions of West Africans.

During my three years in West Africa, headquartered in Freetown, Sierra Leone, I came to admire the people, their openness, and desire to move forward. I also realized how much they wanted justice, not by the gun but by the law. I learned humility from them. I was humbled everyday by their faith in themselves and their families.

I met them by the thousands as I walked the countryside listening to them tell me their thoughts and perspectives on what took place in West Africa as part of our ground-breaking outreach program. I learned a great deal about how a mineral could bring such wanton destruction. That mineral was diamonds, many of which found and still find their way into the American marketplace.

At the end of the day, this is the true blood diamond story. In some ways it is a good news story, as the good guys win in the end unlike the movie. It wasn't easy; in some ways it wasn't pretty, but the tribunal worked to bring justice to the victims of the conflict in West Africa and, in particular, Sierra Leone.

The West African Joint Criminal Enterprise, the blood diamond cabal, was the mastermind of then President Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. Setting his nefarious sights on sub-Saharan Africa, he plotted for years to become the emperor of the continent. All of the major players in the story you are about to read were part of this criminal enterprise and graduates of Gaddafi's terror training camps. The havoc these men wrought for twenty years can be directly traced back to Gaddafi.

In this mix of thugs, dictators, and tyrants, one will see diamond dealers, gun runners, international criminal cartels, as well as terrorists such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and even Al Qaeda. We will see the “Lords of War” Vladimir Mennen and Victor Bout lurking in the shadows, assisting all by moving guns to the rebels in return for cash garnered by the sale of diamonds, gold and even timber.

The diamond industry also plays a part in the criminal enterprise. The diamonds mined by Sierra Leoneans chained to pits and worked to death, were the catalyst for the conflict and the life blood of the unrest and the destruction of major portions of West Africa. The industry turned a blind eye to the source of these alluvial diamonds, placing them into the market to be purchased mainly in the West, particularly the United States. At one point in the 1990s, almost a third of all diamonds on the market were blood diamonds.

The story you are about to read comes directly from my diary. Encouraged by a colleague, I kept a detailed chronicle of my daily activities. In the end, I handwrote over four volumes about my time with the Special Court for Sierra Leone. This book captures it all in a deeply personal way.

The reader will get the inside account of how Charles Taylor was investigated and indicted for the murder, rape, mutilation, and maiming of tens of thousands of people in Sierra Leone and in Liberia. Though amended, Charles Taylor was found guilty on all of the charges in the indictment I signed back in March of 2003. That indictment brought him down and removed him from power in the summer of 2003. The never before discussed details of how all this came to be follows, and you will have to believe the unbelievable.

