



BY MADELINE SULLA

Unique and rare, diamonds have existed long before life on earth, forming billions of years ago nearly 100 miles beneath the earth's surface, waiting for their chance to shine. Today, the diamond is the universal symbol of love, representing our emotions, relationships and milestones. But beyond their sentimental value, diamonds serve a greater purpose, providing livelihoods, education, healthcare and infrastructure for millions of people who touch these precious gems, from mine to finger, by an industry dedicated to giving back to the communities where they do business.

The **Diamond Empowerment Fund (D.E.F.)** is a global non-profit organization inspired by Nelson Mandela and founded by leaders in the diamond industry in 2007. With the goal of empowering youth living in areas where the diamond industry does business, D.E.F. works with organizations to provide educational and vocational scholarships to young people across Africa, India and Canada, with plans to expand giving in the future.

Through the lens of D.E.F's own giving and inspired by the additional giving committed by our supporters and other industry members, D.E.F. launched the global campaign, **Diamonds Do Good** to showcase these efforts to the world. From **healthcare** and **education, infrastructure** and **environment, employment** and **childcare**, the diamond industry gives back to communities, and Diamonds Do Good is the platform under which these good stories are being told.

Last year, the Diamond Empowerment Fund launched their first-ever millennial targeted contest called **'Real Stories. Real Diamonds. Real Impact'** under the Diamonds Do Good banner. The contest called on newly engaged and married couples with an itch for adventure to get creative and share their bling. The winners would be flown to Botswana, the world's largest producer of gem quality diamonds, to experience first-hand the positive impact natural diamonds have had on the country.

## BOTSWANA DIAMOND FACTS



Diamonds have made Botswana one of Africa's fastest growing economies.

**60%**

of the revenue generated by diamonds are re-invested back into the community.

**3X**

the amount of land used for mining is protected by the industry.



Botswana has seen a 5.9% GDP growth per annum since its independence.





Entrants were tasked with creating a one-minute video detailing their proposal story, what they love about their diamond, and what their ring means to them and their relationship. The winning couple was selected with the help of three social media influencers, **Roamaroo** covering travel, **Green Wedding Shoes** covering marriage and weddings, and **The Diamonds Girl**, of course, covering diamonds.



Lucky winners Robyn Stephens and Austin Consaul experienced a once in a lifetime opportunity this past July – a week-long trip to Botswana, now one of Africa's fastest growing economies thanks to its abundance of natural diamonds. "Africa still feels like a dream," Robyn recounted upon returning home to Tampa, Florida last week. Ending in a four-day safari, the couple experienced Botswana like never before, taking pottery classes on the premises of the beautiful Grand Palm Hotel and learning about Botswana's history and culture.

*"we were very happy to learn that the money made from this goes back into the economy and that the industry provided jobs and opportunities for many of the people in the country."*

The couple had the opportunity to witness Botswana's President's Day festivities as well as attend the 2019 Presidential Awards. This 50-year tradition dates back to 1966 when Seretse Khama became the country's first President after leading the country to independence along with his English wife Ruth Williams. This fascinating story was recently told on film through 'A United Kingdom' starring David Oyelowo and Rosamund Pike.



Beyond the culture and natural beauty, Robyn and Austin witnessed first-hand the positive impact the diamond industry has on Botswana and its people every day. Before their safari, the couple visited the Okavango Diamond Company and had lunch with





*“Each of them took their experience with the program to follow their dreams.”*



some of their **Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (ODC YEP)** students. ODC YEP provides participants the opportunity to develop a greater appreciation of the diamond industry through extensive workshops and field trips covering exploration through to diamond jewelry retail. As part of their learning each participant has been equipped to refine their own unique business idea.



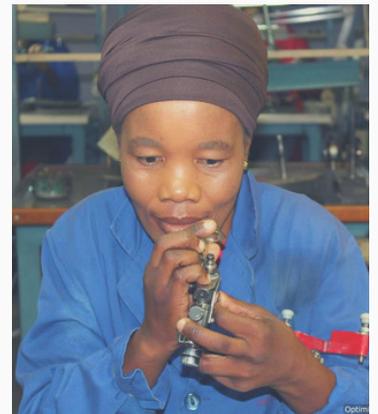
“The entrepreneurs we met from the ODC YEP were very inspiring,” recounts Robyn, “each of them took the program as their chance to further their entrepreneurial skills and expand their businesses. . . [and] took their experience with the program to follow their dreams.”

Boitshoko Kebakile, pictured on the right, is an ODC YEP alumni who now runs her own jewelry business, House of Divinity. Boitshoko credits Okavango Diamond Company Youth Entrepreneurship Programme with providing her not only the tools, but the encouragement to succeed in her business. “In all honesty,” she says, “it has brought a lot of hope about what I want to make of myself and has related that hope to practical action.”



The couple then traveled to the small Village of Molepolole, where they visited the Leo Schachter Diamond Factory and met Master Diamond Craftswoman **Kemmony Khatetswe**. Growing up in poverty that carried through to adulthood,

Kemmony dreamed of a life where she could provide for her children. Thanks to Leo Schachter, Kemmony was employed and trained to cut and polish beautiful diamonds with precision and care.



“There were several different stages we got to see in the diamond polishing process,” the couple noted. “It all was very detailed work. we learned how



much time they spend on creating a diamond from beginning to end and how much precision it takes from the workers to get to the final product."

In sitting down with Kemmony, Robyn and Austin said, "she told us how she has been with the company for 25 years and that it helped give her a job that enabled her to provide for her children."



Of course, one cannot visit Africa without going on a safari and this trip was no exception as Robyn and Austin experienced the vast beauty of the Okavango Delta. "Our favorite part of the safari experience was being able to disconnect from everything and really immerse ourselves in nature," says the couple.

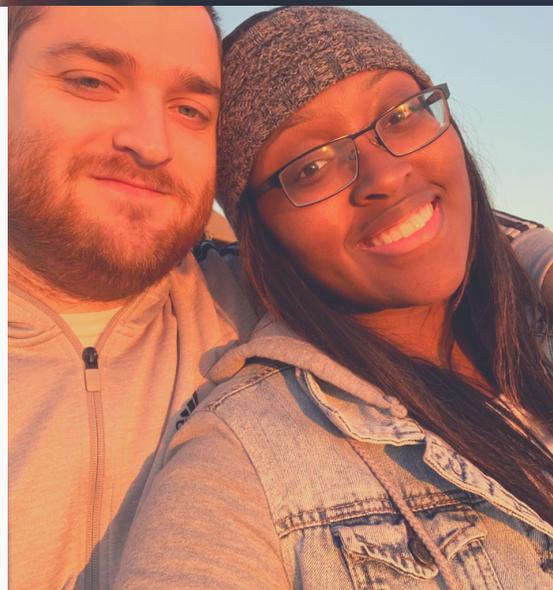
On their 4-day Chobe Off the Beaten Track Safari, Austin and Robyn were truly immersed in the natural beauty Botswana has to offer, getting up close and personal with some of Botswana's biggest inhabitants. "Getting the chance to watch elephants at a waterhole with a beautiful African sunset in the background will always be something we remember," they said.

Overall, the couple coined their trip as "life changing," and eye opening in many ways, especially in regards to their knowledge of the diamond industry. "We went in without knowing much about the diamond industry at all," Robyn said. By the end of



their trip, though, the couple had a new outlook and appreciation for an industry that is so committed to building strong communities and creating beautiful jewelry from gems formed within the earth.

"We were very happy to learn that the money made from this goes back into the economy and that the industry provided jobs and opportunities for many of the people in the country," says Robyn.



*"We went in without knowing much about the diamond industry at all. . it all was very detailed work."*

