

# Photographers to Use Camera Lens as Weapon Against Children's Poverty in Africa

New Book, "Portraits of Our World" to put a face on the cause

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Deborah and Carlton Grooms did not set out to create a bound collection of fine art as a weapon against children's poverty in Africa and the world. They originally endeavored to take a year off from their work as portrait photographers and expand their artistic horizons by shooting the faces of the world. This combined with a year to focus on family drove them to leave Florida on July 15, 2005 and start an extended journey east-bound. Not one month into the trip, in Southern Africa, it became apparent that their year of travel had already been transformed from a open ended relaxed undertaking to one of utmost importance. Today, with the trip ending, sales of their new book "Portraits of Our World" coming in, and their promise to dedicate all the profits from it's sale to charitable children's causes, they are taking an active role in this fight for children.

Deborah Grooms, who conceived this trip elaborates. "At first the trip was just to satisfy our curiosity about the world around us, to travel and to become closer to our children at a formative stage in their middle school lives. After the first month, the focus took a dramatic change. Now the family is focused as a team to change the lives of children in Africa and the world. We decided to create this book of fine art as our gift of thanks to the people who graciously allowed us insight into their lives. Faces of novice monks in Thailand, workers in the tea plantations in India, the children's laughter in the midst of the unspeakable poverty of South African townships, all touched us. We needed to share our experiences with others. This book is meant to not only spread the message of need in the world, which has been well documented by so many, but to give it a face of hope."

Carlton had lived in Zambia as a child which was the motivation to visit this part of Africa. While they visited Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe and Livingstone, Zambia they were struck by the children and the poverty. "We were not surprised by it and we were not shocked by it, but it affected us nonetheless," said Carlton. "The eyes of the children called out to us through our lens and we felt that we had our own personal weapon in this battle in our hands."

People are inherently good. Families all over the world want better lives for their children. We all wish poverty and peace would spread all over the world. The question is what can we do about it? How can each of us help in small or large ways? What are you willing to give up in order to ease the suffering of another less fortunate? The Grooms have decided to donate all profits of "Portraits of the World" to children's charities. The funds will start in Africa because this is where the greatest impact with the least amount of investment can be made. There is an expectation to expand to other

regions of the world as the project grows and more books are sold. To help those at home as well, Deborah and Carlton intend to hire those less fortunate in their local town of Sarasota to help distribute and market the book further. "Charity still begins at home and we can't turn our back on our neighbors," said Deborah.

After two total months in Africa the idea began to take shape. "We started to do our homework on the problems around us," said Carlton Grooms who had lived through the times of Apartheid and the civil war that changed Rhodesia into Zimbabwe as a child. "What is so special about this region of the world is that there is hope. We can feel it. There is a chance that the corner can be turned here but the statistics speak for themselves."

- One in six African children dies before the age of five. Most could have been prevented. (Africa 2015)
- Between 12 and 14 million African children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS. (WorldBank/UNICEF)
- Nearly 2 million children under 14 years old are HIV positive. (UNICEF)
- 43% of children in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have safe, accessible drinking water. (UNICEF)
- Only 57% of Africa children are enrolled in primary education, and one in three of those does not complete school. (Africa 2015)
- For every 100 boys there are only 83 girls enrolled at primary school. (World Bank)

There is a bright and hopeful side to all of this. A number of countries within Africa have made real progress ([fightpoverty.mmbriico.com](http://fightpoverty.mmbriico.com)):

- In the last five years, Mozambique has reduced poverty from 70% to 55% and has doubled the number of children in school
- Kenya has introduced free primary education, which has brought 1.2 million children back into school
- In Tanzania, 1000 new schools have been built and 18,000 teachers recruited. This will enable Tanzania to achieve the goal of primary education for all in 2006 – 9 years before the target date of 2015
- Uganda has reduced HIV from 20% in 1991 to around 6.5% in 2001. The experience of Uganda in relation to HIV/AIDS shows that with political will the tide of an epidemic can be turned

"We are huge believers in education. Africa has been given too many financial hand-outs over the years with no direction and/or education to support that money. In turn

these funds face a high level of waste and corruption, never making it to the people meant to receive them.” Deborah continues passionately, “by educating the next generation we know the result will be lower poverty, better health as it relates to HIV/AIDS, better sanitation and greater economic activity for villages. Children inherit the world around them, when it is broken it is up to us the adults, who have either contributed to the demise or have allowed it to perpetuate, to act.”

After ten more months of travel and thousands of portraits and images taken the Grooms Families trip (Carlton & Deborah (38 y/o) and Alexa & Connor (12 and 11 y/o) is coming to an end. “We have been to over twenty countries this year,” says Alexa who along with her brother have outgrown the few clothes that were packed for her. “We’ve seen kids in lots of situations, poor and rich, happy and sad. What I have seen will change my life. I knew I wanted to build a school in Zambia before my parents ever said anything out loud to us.”

The Grooms family traveled through Europe (Ireland, Switzerland, Germany); Africa (Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa); The Middle East (Dubai, Oman); India; South East Asia (Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines); North Asia (Japan, China); Oceania (Australia, New Zealand). Broken twice by Deborah and once by the entire family with a trip back to Florida to maintain their portrait business that adds up to a lot of air miles!

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“Portraits of Our World” is a large format bound collection of fine art portraiture created by Deborah and Carlton Grooms with help from Alexa and Connor Grooms. It is a book of portraiture created from a one year journey around the world. Subjects include children in a township of South Africa, a poverty stricken woman in Vietnam and the wise and weathered face of a man in Egypt. After being moved by what they saw through their lenses they decided to allocate all the profits from the sale of the work to charitable causes in support of children around the world. The collection is scheduled for release prior to the 2007 Christmas shopping season and is currently for sale on-line at [www.portraitsfourworld.com](http://www.portraitsfourworld.com).

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Sources: [www.standupforafrica.org.uk](http://www.standupforafrica.org.uk)  
[www.fightpoverty.mmbrico.com](http://www.fightpoverty.mmbrico.com)  
UNICEF  
Africa 2015  
World Bank

Supporting images available at: [http://www.portraitsfourworld.com/press\\_releases/images.html](http://www.portraitsfourworld.com/press_releases/images.html)

Additional artists’ sites: <http://www.groomsglobetrek.com>  
<http://www.deborahgrooms.com>

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