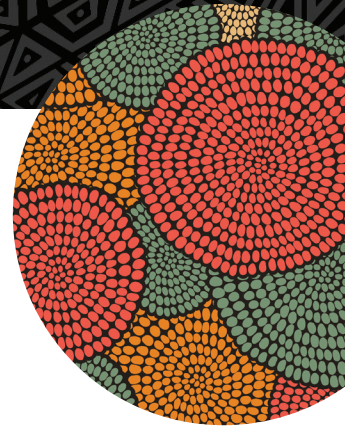




## Unnatural Resources by Mindy Uhrlaub

Permanent Press, 2020 | 200 pages

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1579626402



For Media or Speaking Inquiries Contact:

Laurel Hilton  
415.254.6302  
marinwritersnest@gmail.com

San Francisco, CA – Inspired by true stories, author and activist Mindy Uhrlaub shines a light on the injustices against women, children and other at-risk populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in her latest book, a novel called *Unnatural Resources*.

Considered by many as the “rape capital of the world,” the DRC in central Africa is beset by acts of violence, torture and murder, perpetrated by bands of organized militia groups. Women, young girls and child soldiers are subdued and victimized on a daily basis.

*Unnatural Resources* (Permanent Press, 2020) details the ongoing violence against the Congolese. The author, Mindy Uhrlaub, has traveled several times to the Congo with Human Rights Watch and Eve Ensler’s V-Day to interview rape survivors and child soldiers. She was stunned by “how dangerous it is for the people who live there – both the victims and the activists who try to help them,” said Uhrlaub.

“The author beautifully captures the politics, family, friendship, and young love of a place and its people. It is an excellent introduction into a country’s history, its human rights challenges, and the complexities of international humanitarian aid,” said Jennifer F. Haile, City Director, San Francisco Human Rights Watch. “I finished it knowing much more about the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and what a better world we can have when women are educated and empowered,” said Haile.



## About *Unnatural Resources*

When her Congolese village is destroyed by an invading militia group, eleven-year-old Therese is injured and outcast. Stranded in a war-torn jungle, she is forced to make a choice: lie down and become another victim of the war or stand up and survive. Desperate to find her mother and brother, she uses her greatest gift, her knowledge of English, to navigate the vast web of humanitarian aid groups. *Unnatural Resources* is a stunning and unflinchingly brutal redefinition of the meaning of family. This book tells the story of a young Congolese girl who becomes a symbol of hope in the worst place in the world to be female.

## What others are saying about *Unnatural Resources*

*“Uhrlaub’s harrowing novel doesn’t spare readers the grim reality of children harmed by sadists. Readers who like their fiction with a conscience will want to take a look.”*

- Publishers Weekly

*“Mindy Uhrlaub draws us, with gripping power, into the midst of one of the bloodiest, and most ignored, conflicts in the world today. If you don’t believe both the cruelty and bravery she writes about could actually happen, trust me: it does; I’ve been there. I wish more novelists were bold enough to take on stories like this.”*

- Adam Hochschild, Author of *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*

*“This straightforward account of the trail of pillage, rape, and murder left by multinational companies dramatizes a recurrent archetype in literature about Africa, as well as an economic failing too rarely addressed. This novel a worthy contribution to the growing pool of migrant literature.”*

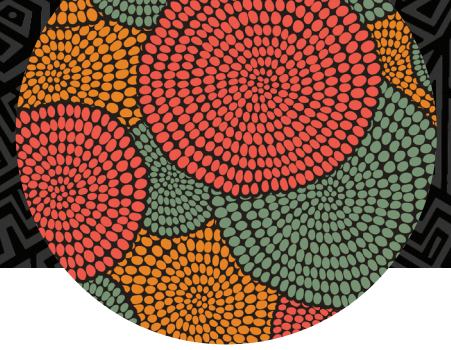
- The Library Journal



## About the Author

Mindy has traveled twice with Human Rights Watch and Eve Ensler’s *V-Day* to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has taken testimony of rape survivors and child soldiers. Her interest in preventing the pillage of resources in Congo has also led her to visit Virunga National Park and to sit on the committee for Human Rights Watch’s Voices for Justice Dinner.

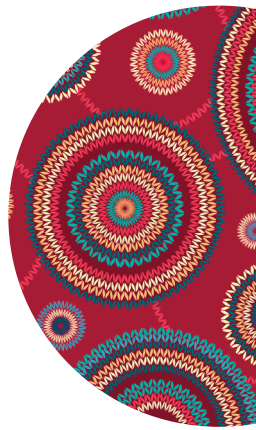
## Mindy Uhrlaub: Bio



### **Mindy Uhrlaub**

Mindy has traveled twice with Human Rights Watch and Eve Ensler's V-Day to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has taken testimony of rape survivors and child soldiers. Her interest in preventing the pillage of resources in Congo has also led her to visit Virunga National Park and to sit on the committee for Human Rights Watch's Voices for Justice Dinner.

Prior to writing *Unnatural Resources*, Uhrlaub wrote and produced *STALLED*, a feature-length film (distributed by Concorde New Horizons). She was also a music reviewer and copy editor for Denver's *PULP* magazine. In addition, Mindy plays keyboards in 40th Day, a band that has toured with Kansas and performed with groups like The Smashing Pumpkins. She is a contributing author in the anthologies *Mamas Write* and *She's Got This* (named 2019 Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Finalist, Kindle Book Awards Reader's Choice, and Best Book Awards Finalist). She has spoken several times at San Francisco's Litquake and lives in the Bay Area with her husband and sons.



## Mindy Uhrlaub: Publisher's Weekly Review



PUBLISHERS  
WEEKLY

Therese, the 11-year-old heroine of Uhrlaub's searing debut, lives quietly with her family in a lakeshore village near an urban center identified only as the City, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. One day, armed men arrive in her community, and shoot her father and cut him to pieces before her eyes. The soldiers take her mother and Felix, her nine-year-old brother and best friend, and burn the village to the ground. Therese herself is sexually assaulted by a man wearing a necklace made of human teeth. She manages to reach a United Nations unit and get medical treatment. At the UN hospital, Therese meets Robert, a rescued child soldier, who hands over a cryptic, blood-stained note from Felix reading simply, "I am here. Felix." Therese dedicates herself to pursuing the slim lead the message provides and reuniting with Felix. Uhrlaub's harrowing novel doesn't spare readers the grim reality of children harmed by sadists. Readers who like their fiction with a conscience will want to take a look. (Oct.)

## Mindy Uhrlaub: Library Journal Review



In action-based prose, Uhrlaub's debut about squandered Congolese resources unfolds cinematically. Therese spends her childhood in a bountiful village, surrounded by ripening bananas and silver fish from the lake. When it turns out that the bubbles in the lake come from methane gas rather than fish, big business encroaches. Rather than using the gas to power the Congo for generations, white men hire militia to enslave the locals, extract the resources from the land, and send the money into orbit. Therese's stolid character blends the fears and aspirations of childhood with the maturity of a girl whose world has been swept away. Hemmed into a mothering role as she cares for her lost brother's friend, 11-year-old Therese's moving search for her family leads the way through a brilliant landscape of dangerous beauty amid displays of uncommon ability.

This straightforward account of the trail of pillage, rape, and murder left by multinational companies dramatizes a recurrent archetype in literature about Africa, as well as an economic failing too rarely addressed. Therese's shame in her dirty dress and her dignity as she treks across the land in search of her people make this novel a worthy contribution to the growing pool of migrant literature.