

# THE HUFFINGTON POST

THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY



Arielle Ford

March 29, 2010 03:39 PM

## Getting to Know You

Not all book signings are entirely about your book. Sharing lives, laughs and loves can connect you with a reader far beyond the pages that once held their attention. I recently went to a book signing that was like being on a great first date where you discover that even if you don't marry the guy you've found a friend for life.

Last year I read a riveting novel entitled *Cutting for Stone* by Abraham Verghese. It's a sweeping story that takes place in Ethiopia. Written by a medical doctor, the story is about what happens in a rural hospital where a young nun secretly gets pregnant and dies birthing twin boys. This dramatic, biblical story is set against the backdrop of political turmoil, the life of the hospital compound in which the twins grow up, and the love story of their adopted parents, who were both doctors. The writing and the story captivated me.

The other day, as I was tidying up the house I was surprised to discover in the local weekly paper that Abraham Verghese was scheduled to speak at UCSD the next evening. Even though I had never before paid to hear an author speak during their book tour (*Cutting for Stone* is now out in paperback and is on the *New York Times* list) my book buddy, Rita and I decided the ticket price of \$25 would be well spent to hear this remarkable author share his story.

We weren't disappointed.

Like many experienced speakers, Dr. Verghese opened with a joke but from then on his presentation was anything but predictable. A specialist in infectious diseases, he was a resident in the early 1980's where he saw the early stages of the HIV epidemic. He walked us through those dark, early days of the disease where, as a young doctor, he was discovering for himself what it takes to be a healer in addition to having a medical license. He even recited the Hippocratic Oath from which he found the title of his book. As many novelists do, he read to us from his book, but only briefly. What was even more delightful was when he read to us some of his favorite passages from other books. He also shared many anecdotes from his life, most of which didn't have anything to do with his book, but provided intimate glimpses into who he is as a human being.

During the question and answer period he was asked what advice he had for aspiring authors. His answer was priceless, and I paraphrase: "Find a day job that you love, one that provides a good living. Writers and artists shouldn't have to rely on their art to pay the bills; they should be able to enjoy the act of creation."

By just being himself, and being open and willing to share who he was and what he has done, Dr. Verghese entertained the standing room only auditorium, most of whom now consider themselves friends.

As authors we sometimes feel compelled to only provide our audiences with the best gems of our content when in fact sometimes the best gems of who we are connects us closer to loyal followers.

*Arielle Ford has launched the careers of many NY Times bestselling authors including Deepak Chopra, Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Neale Donald Walsch & Debbie Ford. She is a former book publicist, literary agent and the author of seven books. To learn how to get started writing a book please visit: [www.HowToWriteMyBook.com](http://www.HowToWriteMyBook.com)*