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Transforming Cape Town (California Series In Public Anthropology)



Synopsis

This study provides a window into the lives of ordinary South Africans more than ten years after the end of apartheid, with the promises of the democracy movement remaining largely unfulfilled.

Catherine Besteman explores the emotional and personal aspects of the transition to black majority rule by homing in on intimate questions of love, family, and community and capturing the complex, sometimes contradictory voices of a wide variety of Capetonians. Her evaluation of the physical and psychic costs to individuals involved in working for social change is grounded in the experiences of the participants and illuminates two overarching dimensions of life in Cape Town: the aggregate forces determined to maintain the apartheid-era status quo, and the grassroots efforts to effect social change.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I used this ethnography for a 200 level anthropology course taught to a general audience. The book is rich in detail, but not organized as clearly or smoothly as it could/should be. Besteman's reflections on the anthropological process, and her own hesitations and development as an anthropologist were very useful in the context of our class. She left students wishing anthropologists could have the prominence of politicians in setting social policy, clearly a message she would hope students might carry away. One African American student who had spent a month in South Africa himself liked the book, and the way it discussed Americans in SA. I found myself wishing for less jumping around in the book, and more ethnographic detail about the three organizations she profiles

BRIEFLY at the end of the book. I'm glad I read it, glad I taught it this semester, but unsure if I will use it again.

Anyone reading this book should also read parallel studies that are part of The Shock Doctrine, by Naomi Klein. Publisher: Picador; 1st edition (June 24, 2008) The economic and political fusion of moving out of apartheid have been seriously, and perhaps permanently, handicapped by the politics of Nelson Mandela not recognizing the maneuvering of the former leadership taking control of the economics whilst letting it seem that Mandela's party was in control universally.

Great price, and the book arrived in time. No problems. wants me to keep writing but I don't know what else to say.

Transforming Cape Town is an incredible book, combining experience with just the right amount of quantitative data to paint a realistic portrait of a city which routinely defies definition. Besteman draws upon her experiences with people from all walks of life in Cape Town, never failing to directly address many of the more chilling realities and contradictions present in modern-day South Africa. The result is an honest and gripping portrayal of a truly shocking social reality.

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