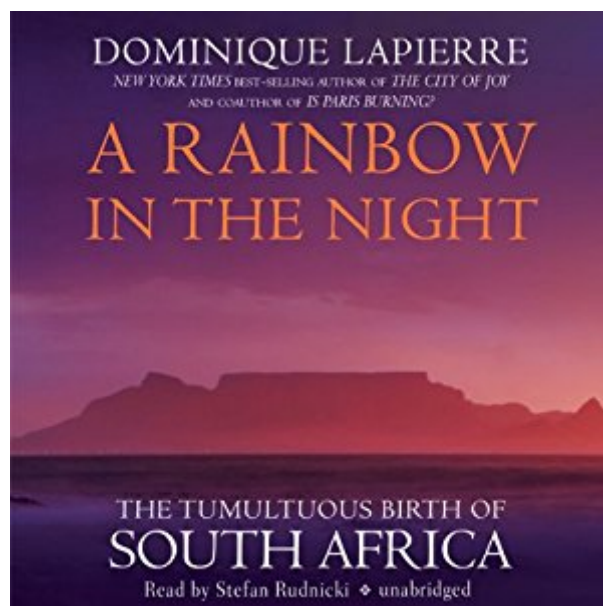


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A Rainbow In The Night: The Tumultuous Birth Of South Africa



Synopsis

In 1652 a small group of Dutch farmers landed on the southernmost tip of Africa. Sent by the powerful Dutch India Company, their mission was simply to grow vegetables and supply ships rounding the cape. The colonists, however, were convinced by their strict Calvinist faith that they were among God's "Elect", chosen to rule over the continent. Their saga - bloody, ferocious, and fervent - would culminate three centuries later in one of the greatest tragedies of history: the establishment of a racist regime in which a white minority would subjugate and victimize millions of blacks. Called apartheid, it was a poisonous system that would only end with the liberation from prison of one of the moral giants of our time, Nelson Mandela. A Rainbow in the Night is Dominique Lapierre's epic account of South Africa's tragic history and the heroic men and women - famous and obscure, white and black, European and African - who have, with their blood and tears, brought to life the country that is today known as the Rainbow Nation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dominique LaPierre writes a completely engaging story of South Africa, translated from the French by Kathryn Spink. For those, like me, who mostly know South Africa through the words of Nelson Mandela (as in the wonderful, highly recommended Long Walk to Freedom), this history fills in much more of the history of this fascinating nation. For example, the initial Dutch presence in southern Africa stemmed from the Dutch East India Company's desire to provide vegetables for passing ships, with no desire for conquest or empire there. The history is not comprehensive: As the author says in his note, "I did not set out to compile an exhaustive history of South Africa. Rather, I wanted to recount, as accurately as possible, a powerful human epic" (ix). He does exactly that. He

recounts the history through people's stories: Christiaan Barnard, who performed the world's first heart transplant (and, shortly thereafter, the first inter-racial heart transplant, in defiance of apartheid); Helen Lieberman, a white speech therapist who worked in poor townships; Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who led the work for reconciliation; Nelson Mandela; Wouter Basson, a doctor who spent his career developing unconventional weapons against blacks (such as poisoned underclothing intended to assassinate Archbishop Tutu (p186-7), various pre-Mandela presidents; and the architects of apartheid. I was particularly struck by the influence of Nazism in informing the apartheid regime.

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