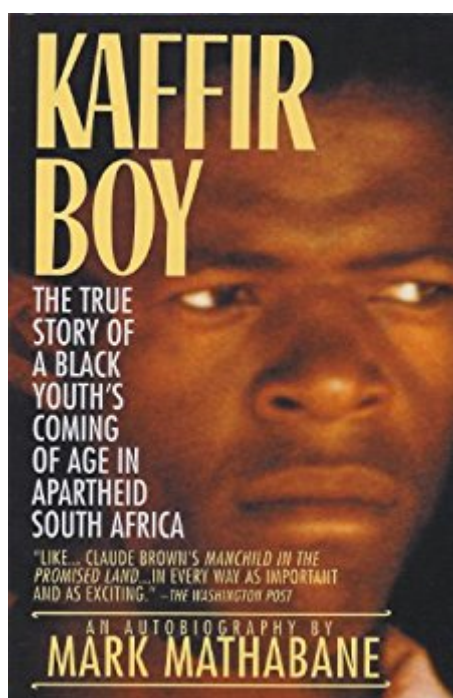


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# Kaffir Boy: The True Story Of A Black Youth's Coming Of Age In Apartheid South Africa



## Synopsis

"This is a rare look inside the festering adobe shanties of Alexandra, one of South Africa's notorious black townships. Rare because it comes from the heart of a passionate young African who grew up there." -- Chicago Tribune

Mark Mathabane was weaned on devastating poverty and schooled in the cruel streets of South Africa's most desperate ghetto, where bloody gang wars and midnight police raids were his rites of passage. Like every other child born in the hopelessness of apartheid, he learned to measure his life in days, not years. Yet Mark Mathabane, armed only with the courage of his family and a hard-won education, raised himself up from the squalor and humiliation to cross the line between black and white and win a scholarship to an American university. This extraordinary memoir of life under apartheid is itself a triumph of the human spirit over hatred and unspeakable degradation. For Mark Mathabane did what no physically and psychologically battered "Kaffir" from the rat-infested alleys of Alexandra was supposed to do - he escaped to tell about it. "Powerful, intense, inspiring." -- Publishers Weekly

"An eloquent cry from the land of silent people, where blacks are assigned by whites to a permanent role of inferiority." --John Barkham

Reviews

"Compelling, chilling, authentic...an emotionally charged explanation of how it felt to grow up under South Africa's system of legalized racism known as apartheid." --Milwaukee Sentinel

"Despite the South African government's creation of a virtually impenetrable border between black and white lives, this searing autobiography breaches that boundary, drawing readers into the turmoil, terror, and sad stratagems for survival in a black township." --Foreign Affairs

"Told with relentless honesty...the reader is given a rare glimpse behind the televised protests and boycotts, of the daily fear and hunger which is devastating to both body and soul." --The Christian Science Monitor

"A chilling, gruesome, brave memoir...Mathabane provides a straightforward, harrowing account of apartheid as it is practiced." Kaffir Boy won a Christopher Award for being inspiring and is on the American Library Association's List of Outstanding Books for the College-Bound and Lifelong Learners. It is the first widely published memoir written in English by a black South African. When it first appeared in 1986, the book stunned readers in much the same way the Frederick Douglass' 1845 slave narrative had, forcing many to rethink American support of South Africa's white political regime. Kaffir Boy was written in the United States, where for the first time in his life Mathabane felt free to express his thoughts and feelings without fear of imprisonment. The author-narrator, Johannes, is trapped in a terrifying world that robbed him of his childhood and forced him into the role of protector and provider for his younger siblings at an early age. What gives Kaffir Boy its unique place in world literature is its central message that we are all human beings, and that the suffering of one individual leads to the suffering of humanity as a whole. Without

bitterness or anger, Mathabane presents the facts of his life in a way that celebrates the power of family bonds and the value of a strong community. A sought-after lecturer, Mathabane was nominated for Speaker of the Year by the National Association for Campus Activities. He continues to write about mankind's pressing need to abolish, once and for all, racial injustice, intolerance and prejudice of any kind. He currently lives in Portland, Oregon with his wife, Gail, and their three children. Also by Mark Mathabane: *Kaffir Boy in America*, *Love in Black and White: the Triumph of Love Over Prejudice and Taboo*, *African Women: Three Generations*, *Miriam's Song*, available at .

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

The main message! My teenage daughter was assigned to read this in school, so at her suggestion I went ahead and read it with her. I was familiar with apartheid in the academic sense, but reading a first hand account really slams the message home. Authoritarian states love using violence and pointless cruelty to enforce their rule. My only real complaint is that Mathabane is an exception to the rule, an outstanding athlete and academic he managed to escape and give us this story. Not exactly a flaw in the author. He does have a tendency towards long exposition dumps in the form of conversations that are wildly implausible. It gets the message across. Anyway highly recommended.

Coming of age in a racially charged country where division and or discrimination are the norms, and constitute parts of the law of the land is an emotionally disturbing or distressing process for anybody, let alone a young man. Whether it is about colonialism and Fascism/Nazism as "Disciples of Fortune" succinctly portrays; whether it is about slavery as depicted in "Uncle Tom's Cabin", nobody should be made to grow up feeling or knowing that society or let alone his government of the system considers him or her, or the group he or she comes from as undesirables. However, Mark Mathabane ups our insight into the most advanced form of state discrimination, which was first literalized by "Cry The Beloved Country" by the masterly crafted "Kaffir Boy", his powerful autobiography that takes us through his shocking but revealing life in a system that traumatizes those it is designed to subjugate, an injurious process whose effects could take generations to undo. The ugliness of Apartheid South Africa is brought to the reader through the story of this simple victim who refused to see himself as one, and it is written in a strong voice, clearness, and humaneness that is truly enriching. This is a book for eternity.

I chose this book to read after backpacking through South Africa for a month with my boyfriend. We are an interracial couple. We both noticed an unsettling amount of segregation still happening in the towns and countryside we travelled through. I realized that I didn't really understand the true impact of apartheid laws and decided I should do some research. This book definitely provided some insight and I'm looking forward to learning more. We did enjoy our time in South Africa, it's simply beautiful, and we met a lot of great people, but there is still work to be done on human rights issues. The author had so many hurdles to jump through to accomplish his dreams. He's truly an inspiring fellow.

Short chapters, definite page turner. Valuable lessons. Hope, determination, appreciation, education, family, and hard work. This book is a definite gut check, makes me a heterosexual, white male, living in America grateful for my circumstances. If I had this book in my youth, things would be a lot different. Oh well such is life. I highly recommend this book

Mark Mathabane was born and raised in the unbelievable, hopeless poverty of one of South Africa's all black, rat and gang infested towns, Alexandra. As one of the children born in an area where de-humanizing police raids -a lot of times led by people of their own race, was a standard, almost nightly thing, he measured his life in days -not years. He writes as Johannes -the narrator and main

character of the story. With the courage he learns from his mother and the education she fought for, he helps to look after and feed his younger siblings. Then with the help of his grandmother he overcomes the unimaginable rules and laws set for the 'blacks', to earn a living in the 'white' community. Eventually he meets up with a tennis star who helps him work towards a scholarship to an American University. This is where this part of the story basically ends. We all need to read about the unbelievable situations that some of our fellow humans live in -and who survive to grow and live a 'normal' life. It is a testament to the author's tenacity that he lived to tell this story. You will not easily forget this book and you will be looking forward to reading the next one.

Never understood what really happened in South Africa until I read this Memoir. It was appalling and fascinating at the same time.

I recommend this book to anyone who thinks their life stinks. Reading this will give you a whole new perspective on life. I think everyone should read this book. It may give us a better understanding of ourselves and others!!

In my fifties, I thought I've learned about survival and hope (I'm Jewish...The Holocaust and everything about IT taught me almost more than I could bare). Yet, Kaffir Boy is a book I find myself thinking about and referring to almost weekly. It is my daughter's favorite book. It took me a while to ask her why. One day, she ordered it for me. It is My favorite book now. We both have recommended this inspirational story to many, many people.

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