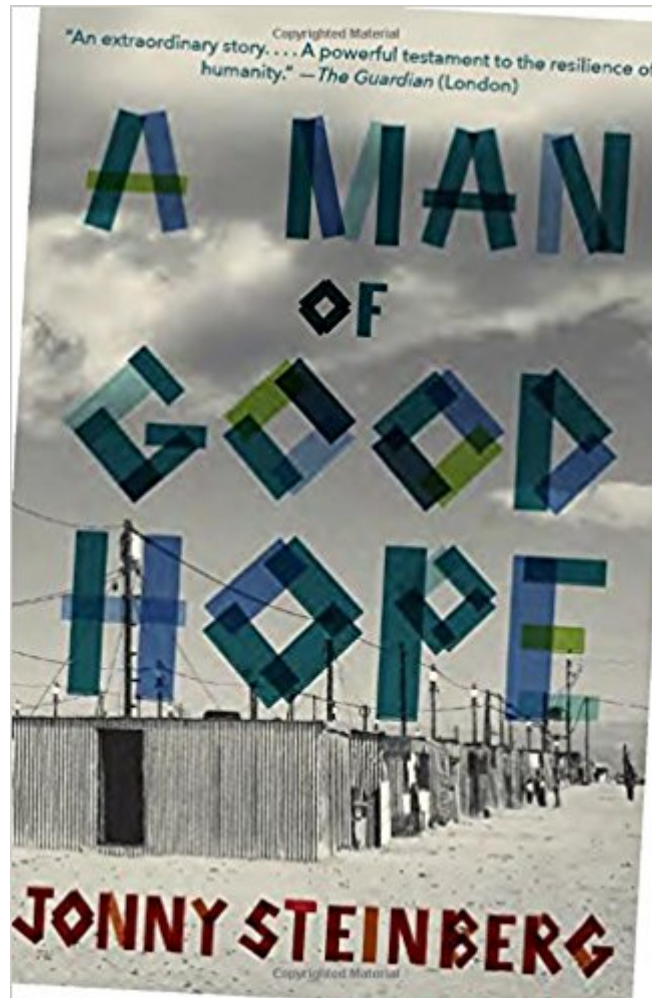




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A Man Of Good Hope



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Synopsis

When civil war came to Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, in January 1991, two-thirds of the city's population fled. Among them was eight-year-old Asad Abdullahi. His mother murdered by a militia, his father somewhere in hiding, he was swept alone into the great wartime migration that scattered the Somali people throughout sub-Saharan Africa and the world. This extraordinary book tells Asad's story. Tossed from one catastrophe to another, Asad's journey covers countries and continents, from the cosmopolitan streets of inner-city Nairobi to the Ethiopian hinterland; and the promises and pitfalls of Johannesburg, South Africa, whose streets he believed would be lined with gold. Thus begins a shocking adventure in a country richer and more violent than he could possibly have imagined, leading to the final coda of America. Throughout, *A Man of Good Hope* is a complex, affecting, ultimately hopeful portrait of Asad's search for salvation, suffused with dreams and desires and a need to leave something permanent on this earth.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Vintage; Reprint edition (December 8, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0804171041

ISBN-13: 978-0804171045

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 71 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #202,554 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in Books > History > Africa > Southern Africa #50 in Books > History > Africa > East Africa #151 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Africa

Customer Reviews

"An extraordinary story. . . . A powerful testament to the resilience of humanity."
•The Guardian (London) "Razor-sharp. . . . [Steinberg] works from the inside out. He places himself at the living, palpitating, always fragile heart of a story-in-the-making. . . . [A Man of Good Hope] trembles with the contingency of the lives Steinberg inhabits as a writer, as though the story itself, the telling of it, right now as you read, is implicated in his protagonist's fate."
•Los Angeles Review of Books "An

engrossing book. . . . Compelling. . . . The humanity, suffering and bravery of Mr Abdullahi are palpable and make *A Man of Good Hope* a book well worth reading. • The Economist • “[Steinberg writes] true, relevant, modern narratives conveyed with such eloquence and poignancy they acquire almost Shakespearean gravitas. • The Spectator (London) • “Beautifully recounted. . . . personal without being intrusive, educational without being preachy, and absolutely worth reading. • Pittsburgh Post-Gazette • “A tale of luck, hustle, survival, and determination, *A Man of Good Hope* is an extraordinary examination of what it means to be human. • BuzzFeed • “What a brave, important book. Steinberg’s writing is so human, so humane and so honest. . . . Steinberg stands shoulder to shoulder with other great writers who have also made sensible and visible so much that might otherwise remain insensible and invisible out of the political and human tragedies all too common in Africa • Michela Wong, Ryszard Kapuscinski and Ishmael Beah. Steinberg’s central question is one for all of us: what does it mean to live a fully human life, and whom among us has either the courage or the luck to live that life? • Alexandra Fuller, author of *Scribbling the Cat* • “[A Man of Good Hope] tells one man’s extraordinary and moving story, revealing the reality of life at the bottom of the world’s worst pile. • The Times (London) • “A masterpiece. Steinberg has illuminated a modern African odyssey to brilliant effect. • Martin Meredith, author of *The State of Africa* • “Only through Steinberg’s adroit persistence • he knows when to probe and pry and when to retreat when Asad seems nettled by constant questioning • can the account of Asad’s remarkable, almost miraculous life journey emerge. • Minneapolis Star Tribune • “South African journalist Steinberg vividly recounts one Somali man’s experience of diaspora, resulting in a book that is part biography and part contemporary history. . . . Steinberg’s thoughtful approach and Asad’s attitude of droll resilience make for a tale that any reader can appreciate. • Publishers Weekly • “Painstaking and humane. • Irish Examiner • “Weaves together the many personas of a man whose story is at once unique and an archetypal example of an all-too-large collective. • For truly capturing the power of dreams and the resilience of human nature, this book deserves a wide audience. • Kirkus Reviews • “[I]ntuitively gentle writer, patiently and thoughtfully teases out the memories of a young Somali man, Asad Abdullahi, a boy kicked through life like a stone. . . . [Steinberg’s] caring, questioning prose illuminates how, after all Asad has endured and all he remembers, he can

still be a man who carries hope with him. A remarkable story, skillfully etched. —

— •Booklist

Jonny Steinberg was born and bred in South Africa. He is the author of the critically acclaimed *Sizwe's Test*, published by Vintage (also published under the title *Three Letter Plague*), as well as *Midlands* and *The Number*, both of which won South Africa's premier nonfiction literary award, the Sunday Times Alan Paton Prize. Steinberg was also a recipient of one of the inaugural Windham Campbell Prizes. He teaches African Studies at Oxford University.

Jonny Steinberg draw me into the tragic story of a boy from Somalia and Africa. From the outset his beautiful writing skills kept me locked in. As an African and one who lived through Apartheid, its demise and then the exciting post-Apartheid period I was attracted to this book in order to personally and 'safely' experience the xenophobic attacks against Somalians and violence of my own South Africa. This book allowed me to better understand how and why 'the Men of Good Hope' came down to South Africa. It gave me an insight into the Somali story back home in their country, their amazing sense of community and also their own tragedy and destruction. I also wanted to gain a better insight into how colonisation and racism had played its role once again in mutilating Africa. I was provided an insightful glimpse into our own democratic evolution and why it had failed these people and itself. As a 'white' South African in particular I appreciated all the insights provided by Jonny Steinberg but mostly just his uncanny ability to tell a story.

A book that strikes the heart and brings to the fore the immense difficulties that refugees endure in Africa in their quest for peace and security. The fact that the protagonist, together with millions of others, chose South Africa as the place to find these qualities of life has especial resonance and irony, given the disgraceful xenophobic violence wracking the country at present - triggered by, of all people, the Zulu king. The author gets into the being of the "man of good hope" and quotes him extensively, so one gets the impression of being in Asad's presence. Would that the mobs running amok at present throughout South Africa had the sensitivity to read and digest this moving account.

As a white South African, I lived through the attacks on foreign nationals happening within the city I lived. I assisted with food aid for a few days in one of the tented camps, but I never allowed it to get too personal. This book is the story of the eyes that gleamed back at me as I stood dishing out 'Pap

& Wors' to a long line of hungry, angry, broken people. It is the story I was too afraid to ask, or too ashamed to acknowledge. Jonny did a hauntingly good job writing this book. The places are vividly described, and the characters come to life as if they had lived through your very own memory. It is a sad but accurate tale of so many refugees who live in this country. It is a story I wish never repeats, but is almost guaranteed to be happening to many others right now on African soil.

I was reminded of these words, attributed to the late Nelson Mandela when reading the story of Asad... It is a story of surviving in spite of unimaginable odds - it's the story of kind people and cruel people and people in whose narrow little worlds there simply isn't space for the 'other' and the 'different' and the 'not us' people... But the true charm of this story is in the telling of it : well done Jonny - your humble honesty and unapologetic telling of the story as it unfolded in front of you, is unique - it takes a special kind of person to tell a story without giving in to the temptation to express your opinion - to colour an event with your perspective. It's not an easy read - but then, it was not an easy or comfortable story to tell...

In view of the recent attacks on illegal immigrants to South Africa, Jonny Steinberg has written a very topical and thought provoking book giving the points of view of both sides. We feel sympathy for Asad who travels the perilous journey to South Africa from Somalia. When he finally arrives he finds he is despised by the locals who perceive him to be taking away their livelihoods, and finds his life in danger.. But by the end of the book we wonder whether he ever will be happy, and whether he would have been happier staying among his own people in Somalia.

This is the Biographical story of a Somali man orphaned as a boy who makes his way from Somalia to Cape Town and then America. It has helped improve my understanding of the Somali Clan system which also gives some insight into the Islamic conflicts which the world faces to-day. It is a very sad story made readable by Jonny Steinberg's well paced readable style. I hope many people from all cultures read this book, including teenagers. This book does not judge and left me very grateful for my life and circumstance.

As a South African I find Jonny's books completely riveting. The truths he relates and interprets through others' experiences highlight what is so wrong with Africa and the society it breeds. This book like others Jonny has written cuts deep into one's thinking.

This is a story worth reading, especially as a South African, because it changes one's perception of the plight of immigrants/refugees in general and lets one into the very moving and poignant story of Asad, and many others just like him, who live amongst us in the cities and towns of our country. I was humbled by this man's life story - a tale of courage, determination, despair, hope, loyalty and tenacity and all told by Jonny Steinberg who writes so eloquently and who has the ability to capture the heart of the reader. I recommend it highly.

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