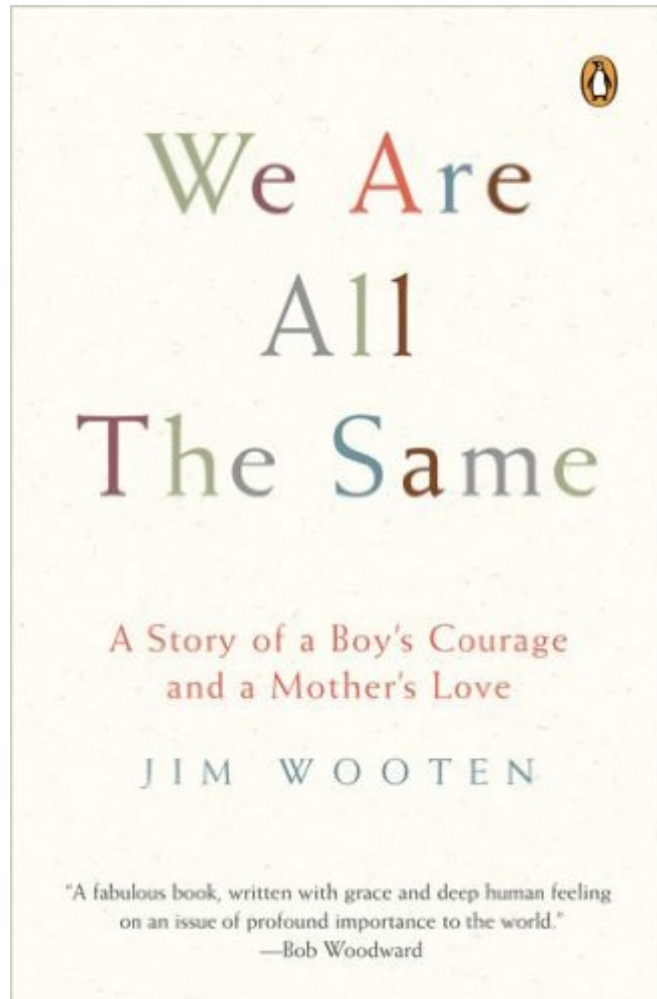


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We Are All The Same: A Story Of A Boy's Courage And A Mother's Love



Synopsis

"Wooten has pulled off something close to miraculous... and touched the face of HIV/AIDS with compassion and humanity." — Alexandra Fuller, Chicago Tribune "This is a book not to be missed." — "People" "Amazing and tender... in this special book [Wooten] brings home the tragedy of AIDS." — Liz Smith, New York Post "Wooten rightly disregards journalistic distance and writes himself into the work, making it read like a contemplative literary memoir." — Time Out New York

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Customer Reviews

When I read this poignant book, I wondered as to how some people seem to get it-- in this instance Gail Johnson who crossed class and race lines to care for Nkosi Johnson, the young Zulu boy who died at the age of 12 with AIDS-- and others either cannot or do not want to get it-- here I refer to President Mbeki of South Africa, Mandella's successor, who believes that an "omnipotent apparatus" is using AIDS as an instrument of genocide against black Africans. These instruments are pharmaceutical companies, scientists, physicians, medical researchers and Western governments. The author of this book, Jim Wooten of ABC News, says that he is writing "about the relationship between a black child who never grew up and a white woman who never gave up. It has neither a happy ending nor even a promising beginning, for the child had no choice and no chance, and the woman knew all along what she was up against." Like the current U. S. deficit, the numbers of AIDS cases in Africa, or anywhere else for that matter, have very little impact on us. They are so large and impersonal. But the story of the courageous young Nkosi puts a face on the pandemic and in a small way brings it home to all of us. As the youngster said so eloquently: "We

are all the same."Both Nkosi and his adopted mother-- she actually did not adopt him legally and, according to Wooten, made every effort to see that he maintained a relationship with his birth family-- were heroes of the first order. (I kept wishing as I read this book in one setting that Wooten had provided the reader with a photograph of Ms. Johnson. I wanted to put a face on Nkosi's adopted "angel" mother.

By the late 1980s AIDS had become an epidemic. The dreaded disease was particularly devastating to black South Africans, segregated by race, poverty and cruel social stigma. Those afflicted did not know the name of this illness; they called it "the thin disease." They knew only that to contract it was to receive a death sentence. Veteran news correspondent Jim Wooten had spent much time reporting war, strife and upheaval on the African continent. It is through Jim's eyes, ears and soul that Nkosi Johnson's story is revealed. In February 1989 a tiny, sickly baby boy was born to Daphne, a single teenager living in poverty in a remote village with no name in what had once been Zululand. Daphne contracted AIDS during this second pregnancy, so at birth her baby was already destined to suffer. While more developed parts of the world were setting up AIDS care centers, shelters and hospices, South Africa remained, medically speaking, in the Stone Age. Public officials refused to deal with the grave situation. President Thabo Mbeki stonewalled efforts to provide information about the disease and any possible treatment for it. In fact, Mbeki went so far as to say that AIDS medications were poison. Daphne was frightened because her tiny baby was constantly ill and could not gain weight. She crossed social and cultural barriers just to take Nkosi to a clinic in the white part of town where a kindly doctor gave her the dreaded news that both she and Nkosi were afflicted. Daphne was determined to place her son someplace where he would be taken care of when she became too ill to look after him.

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