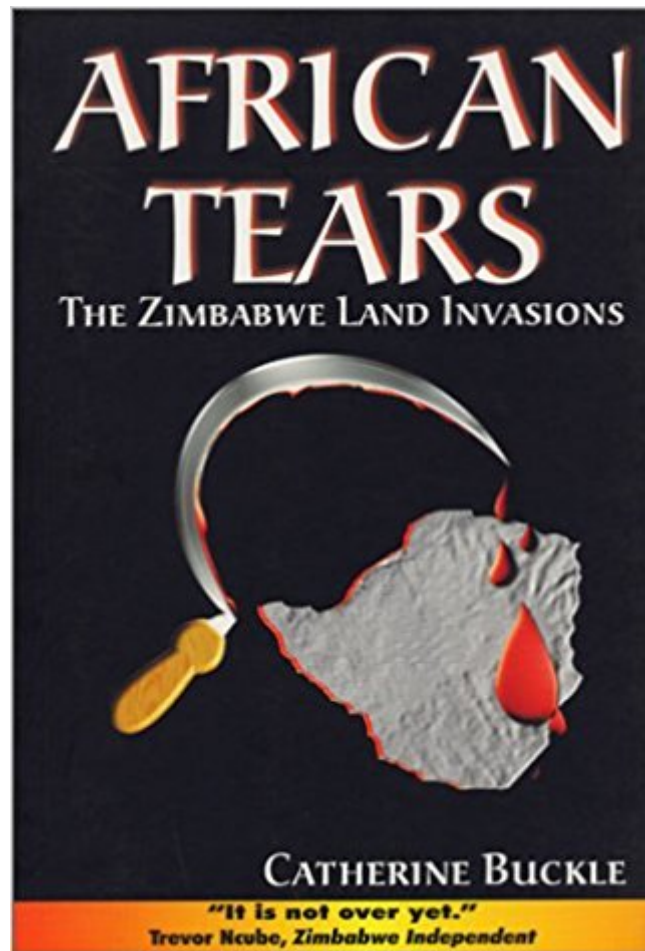




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African Tears: The Zimbabwe Land Invasions



Synopsis

"They broke us eventually, crippled us psychologically and drove us to the brink of bankruptcy. They harassed us and our employees, tortured one of our workers, pulled a gun and threatened to kill me, slaughtered one of our oxen, roamed our fields with packs of hunting dogs, felled over 3,000 gum trees and burnt the entire farm to the ground. Our farm remains undesignated, unlisted and not required by the government for compulsory acquisition." Catherine Buckle. "'African Tears' is the story of a white farmer in Zimbabwe, living side by side with 'war veterans' for 7 months. The veterans claimed the small 1,000-acre farm belonged to their ancestors. For 7 months the squatters watched and intimidated, claiming the farm field by field, 'liberating' the small stock dams and then the timber plantation. The farm was claimed as a war veterans headquarters and every weekend political meetings were held in the field below the house--with hundreds in attendance. Search your heart, revisit your past and squint into the future, into your greatest fears, your truest loves. Then understand that the emotional and psychological traumas one family has had to endure--in the face of unabashed greed, ignorance and savagery--has been pushed to its limits; their lives threatened; their farm stolen before their eyes and burned to the ground. Readers may well want to ask author Catherine Buckle, 'If things are so bad in Zimbabwe, why don't they leave?' Her answer sums things up swiftly by asking, 'How much longer are we going to be made to pay for the sins of our fathers, grandfathers?' She wants to know why history cannot be laid to rest. Blame for the injustices of the past has been placed squarely on the white population of Zimbabwe; she wants to know why the nation cannot accept this blame, admit that what went on 100 years ago was a disgrace, and move on. She admits openly that her patriotism is both old-fashioned and deep-set. 'I love my country, I love the people here, I love being here. That's why I wrote 'African Tears.' Perhaps, because I don't want to leave. I want to belong."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The human effects of Mugabe's madness told as never before. Frightening: it could be repeated in South Africa." -- James Mitchell, Books Editor, The Star, Johannesburg
"Zimbabweans will need every scrap of resourcefulness, stamina, and goodwill to defeat the evil that stalks our land." -- Trevor Ncube, Zimbabwe Independent

Born and raised in Zimbabwe, Catherine Buckle has a background in social work and librarianship. She and her husband bought a farm in Marondera ten years ago and worked hard to make it successful. A prolific writer, Catherine Buckle has also written four children's books and published many articles on wildlife and conservation.

One of the misconceptions that people who have not read this book apparently have is that the Buckle family is "reaping what it's sown" by having gotten their farm through illegitimate means (ie. colonialism). This is a very crass attitude grounded in both ignorance and racism. In fact the Buckle family purchased their farm AFTER Zimbabwean independence with the explicit written promise from Mugabe's government that the land would not be targeted for redistribution. The real story here is how a demagogue like Mugabe, who manufactures racial hatred for his own political gain, can be so disrespectful of the very principles that he espoused to obtain power in the first place. For those who think that the land reform issue is a simple matter of taking from the rich and giving to the poor, it may be quite a shock to learn that the only ones benefiting so far from newly acquired farmland are Mugabe's wealthy political cronies. Everyone else is on the verge of starvation due to the inevitable collapse of the economic infrastructure following the demise of the rule of law. The rest of the world stood by and watched it happen. Perhaps someday we'll realize that it's far more humanitarian and cost-efficient to prevent famines before they occur.

Are, Read this Book! For almost two years, "veterans" of Zimbabwe's (formerly Rhodesia) civil war, many of them too young have actually fought in the war, have been invading farms and ranches, and intimidating, beating, and, in many cases, killing the lawful owners of those properties. Throughout this tortured land, these invaders have succeeded in driving out productive farmers,

only to take over land that they themselves don't know how to farm. As a result, uncultivated acres lie fallow, livestock are untended and dying, and thousands of farm workers have been thrown out of work. The police will do nothing to help the beleaguered farmers because these thefts are taking place with the approval of Zimbabwe's dictator, Robert Mugabe. *African Tears* is the heartbreaking story of one woman's efforts to thwart the squatters who invaded her farm, destroyed her property, killed her livestock, and worst of all, tortured and beat her employees. For seven long months, Cathy Buckle made a valiant stand against this lawlessness, only to have to give up when her struggle became too dangerous. Her story is emblematic of what is taking place all across Zimbabwe. Everyone should read this book, so that when famine strikes this suffering nation and Mugabe appeals for international aid on behalf of his starving people, more people will be able to understand his role in their agonies.

Catherine Buckle's '*African Tears*' is a memoir of the violent and bloody Zimbabwean land invasions of 2000. Her story is a tragic account of ignorant 'war veterans' turning her peaceful farm into a blackened garbage dump. I have great sympathy for Buckle and the other white farmers who suffer like her. The complete destruction of a prosperous life's work is a personal tragedy that all readers will empathize with. Buckle's story is mostly devoid of political commentary. She prefers to recount her own experiences during the invasions as a factual representation of Zimbabwe's dilemma. I couldn't help but notice that Buckle's persecutors, the so-called 'war veterans', most of them too young to be veterans at all, were conducting themselves much as they did 2 decades ago. The 'veterans' attack the small farming community and their hard working employees who cannot protect themselves - how brave! '*African Tears*' is a noble account of a horrendous situation. I hope Catherine Buckle will choose to write again of the place she still calls her home.

Although not a professional writer and maybe because of it Cathy Buckle gives an insight to the tragedy that is befalling the normal person in Zimbabwe. Mainly due to her own direct involvement in this, is the point brought across that there is a major problem in Zimbabwe of racism. But not racism of whites on blacks as is normally always what is brought to the world's attention by the media. This is Shona racism against anyone who defies Robert Mugabe. And to those of you who apparently read this book, and reviewed it as trash and declined to leave your name, showing the courage of your convictions, I say to you can you actually read? Well done Cathy, a brilliant work done under what must have been the most trying of circumstances.

African Tears is a harrowing story of bravery, human decency, and conviction in the face of overwhelming tyranny and cruelty. Ms. Buckle, regardless of her politics, was tormented, intimidated, and lived in fear for her life and that of her family. Her humanity and decency throughout this period is inspiring to behold and again, regardless of her politics, should give us all hope for the future. Her greatest gift in writing this book, is to try and bring to the attention of the world, that this dictator, Mugabe, must be brought to the public's attention and must be stopped. Read this book and take heart. There are still good people left in the world.

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