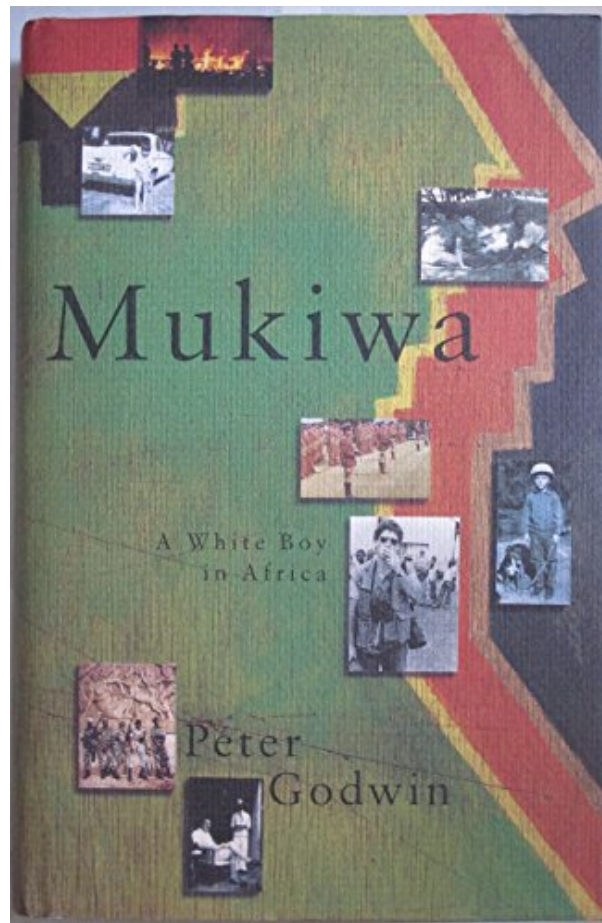
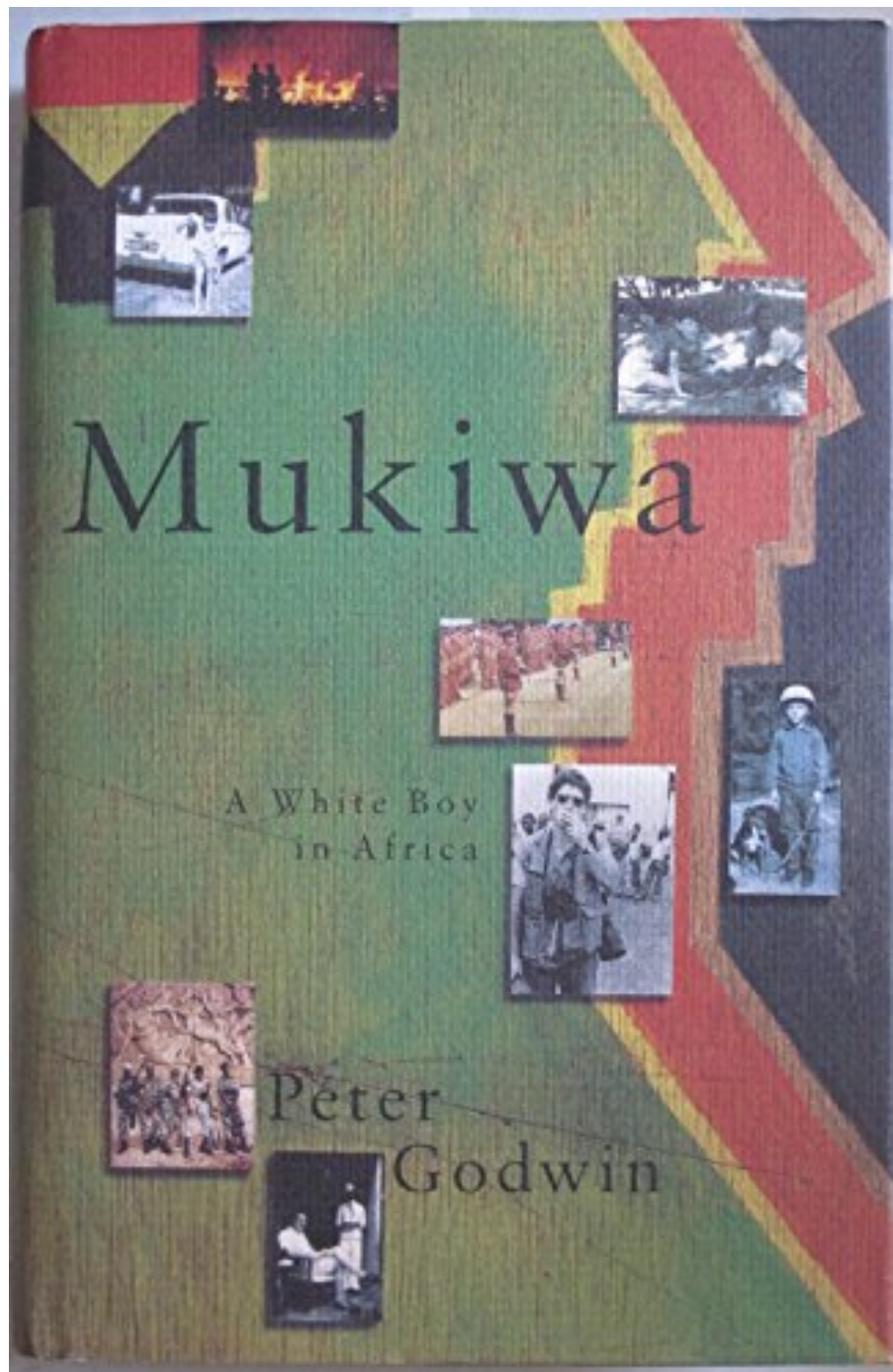


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Don't let's go to Zimbabwe tonight

By Gillian A

'Mukiwa' opens with a six year old boy describing what he sees of a local murder. So begins this enthralling memoir. This saga of a youth growing up in troubled Zimbabwe (Rhodesia at that time), is divided into three parts.

Book I, which comprises half of the book, is seen through the eyes of a child and told in that voice. As such it is reminiscent of 'Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight' by Alexandra Fuller. Both authors grew up in the eastern highlands of Rhodesia, near Umtali and the Mozambique border. One is a boy's story, the other a girl's and the differences are largely stylistic. They were separated by about ten years and 'Dogs' focuses only on one family, with the bush war only in the background, whereas 'Mukiwa' gives a broader picture of life in the remote, often dangerous, areas of the country. A preschool boy accompanies his mother, a doctor, to various bush clinics where she is both GP and pathologist. Before long he can recognize not only dead bodies, but also malaria, TB, leprosy and other ailments. In this lonely place he forms close relationships with the various African staff and describes the harshness of their life there as well as the miseries of boarding school for a young child.

In Book II, the author's hopes dashed that he cannot leave the country to attend university because of the compulsory conscription policy, finds himself in the midst of a brutal guerrilla war. His job is made harder by his ambivalent feelings as he frequently sympathizes with the 'terrorists'. He leaves finally only when defeat is conceded.

In Book III he returns to the country, now with a law degree from Cambridge. Joining a distinguished firm in the capital, he is put to work defending prominent, former 'freedom fighters' of the Matabele tribe. The new Mugabe government, dominated by the Shona tribe, ignores the fact that the Matabele had fought alongside them to win the war and are now moving against them, re-establishing the age-old hatred and rivalry between the two groups. With a bitter-sweet outcome of the trial, the author decides to become a journalist with a London newspaper. In this capacity he is urged to investigate reports of genocide and acts of brutality

in Matabeleland, again perpetrated by government forces. His reports are largely ignored by both the Zimbabwe government and the international community.

Published in 1996, the book naturally does not cover the more recent atrocities metered out by Robert Mugabe. It is disappointing that very few dates are given, so that the whole story sort of floats in an indistinct time. However, it is ever-absorbing, sometimes shocking and by the last part, a totally gripping tale. I even thought it would make a very good movie.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Provides A Clear Understanding of Zimbabwe's Tribal Problems

By Tommy Lee Brock

In some respects this might be a white boy's account of growing up in Zimbabwe, sort of a counter part to Alexandra Fuller's "Don't Lets go to the Dogs Tonight, " a girl's account of life there. In fact they were raised in the same far east part of the country, but the Godwins were there ten years before. There is not the crazy, yet sympathetic antics of a mother that has had a breakdown, and Peter's father, unlike Mr. Fuller, had too much good sense to develop into an exciting character. That leaves it up to Peter Goodwin himself. And he certainly does the job. His own explorations and encounters with the curious Shona, curious other Africans, and curious whites are presented matter of fact, with lots of gritty detail.

I also understand much better the tribal aspects among Zimbabwe's native Africans, particularly between the Shona, the Matabele, and the Manicas. Their dislike for one another began many years before the white tribe ever arrived, and persists long after they left.

Among the many characters was Godwin's hippie cousin, Oliver, who traveled to Rhodesia with the notion that if he and his counterparts across the world could teach the whites of the country to treat the blacks with more understanding, more kindness, and more consideration, while providing them with a better irrigation system, lots more nourishing food, and better plumbing, Zimbabwe would evolve into a country where everyone could understand each other. Coming to understand the tribal background of Zimbabwe, and the many character sketches such as the one of Oliver are why I rated Mukiwa five stars.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

A One-of-a-kind and very special book

By Joe McDaniel

Mukiwa is a one-of-a-kind and very special book. The author's descriptive abilities are exceptional. Having lived in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe for 13 years (1966 to 1980) and having first-hand knowledge of Godwin's material, I was totally enthralled with his narrative and the truthfulness of his account. I cannot recommend this book more highly. I wish there was a 10-star measure. It nudges Ruark's *Something of Value* and Wilbur Smith's *When the Lion Feeds* from the top of my list of all-time favorite books about Africa and the African Experience.

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