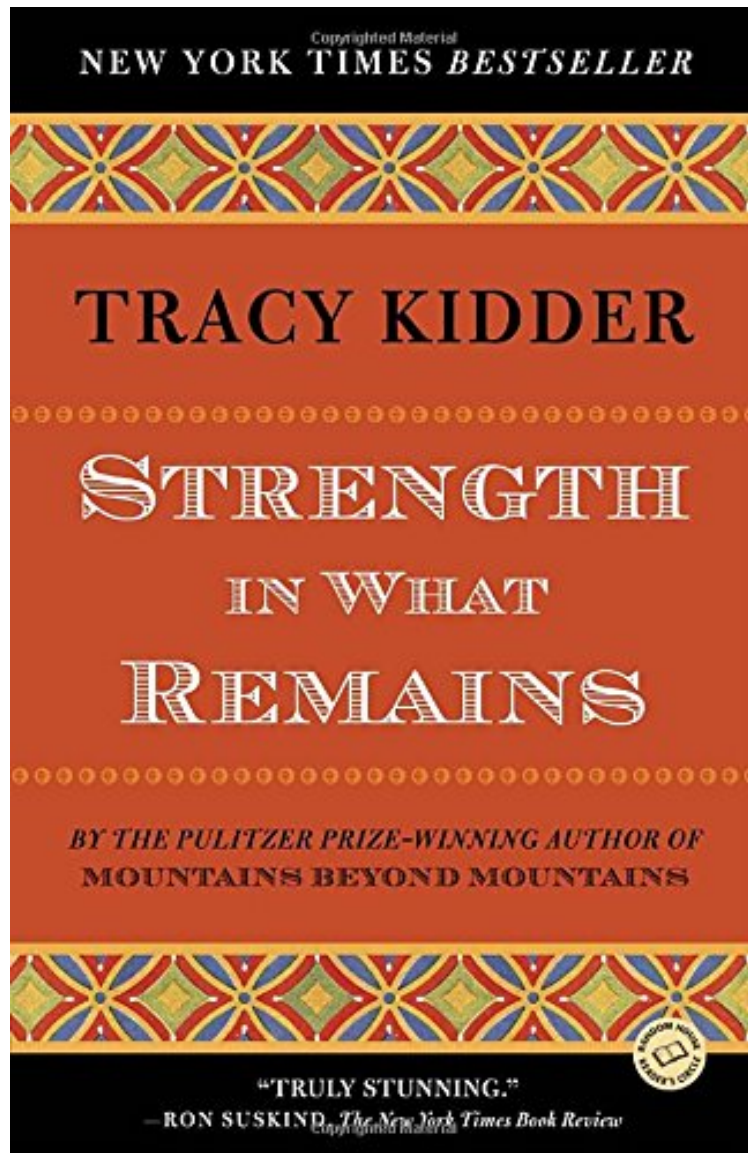


(Mobile ebook) Strength in What Remains (Random House Reader's Circle)

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Tracy Kidder

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#45687 in Books Tracy Kidder 2010-05-04 2010-05-04 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.99 x .66 x 5.191, .55 #File Name: 0812977610284 pages Strength in What Remains | File size: 41.Mb

Tracy Kidder : Strength in What Remains (Random House Reader's Circle) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Strength in What Remains (Random House Reader's Circle):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A First Hand Account of Triumph Over Genocide By Anita C. Dudek It is sobering to those of us in "the West" when we realize how little we actually know of the suffering so many thousands/millions are enduring in places of civil unrest all over the world. This book is told by another about Deaogratias a third year medical student who was of the Tutsi tribe in Burundi who managed to escape a massacre.

The tale of his wandering 6 month journey through the forest hiding from everyone, not knowing who is friend or foe, eating roots and drinking unsafe water, then languishing in a refugee camp is riveting. He landed in NYC, and was helped by other African immigrants to get an under the table cash only subsistence job delivering groceries, to live as a squatter with them because it was "free" lodging. This brilliant man learned what American racial prejudice felt like, choosing to live in Central Park for 6 months until he was ultimately helped by a former nun who found him a family who invested in his education and helped him to ultimately thrive in the US, finishing medical school at Columbia University and Harvard then returning to Burundi to help his people recover and build themselves and their communities back up. I think of him as the Mandela of Burundi. I highly recommend this book in both the audible and kindle formats. It is one that makes you think and tell other people about it.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Powerful, but would have been better if Kidder hadn't inserted his own story.

By Martha E. Pollack

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world, but the misery suffered by its population goes well beyond profound poverty. As is well known, both Burundi and the neighboring country of Rwanda had gruesome civil wars in the late 1990s. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed in fighting between the two main ethnic groups in these countries, the Hutu and the Tutsi. "Strength in What Remains" is the story of Deogratias--or "Deo"--a young Burundi medical student and a Tutsi. When the Burundi war breaks out in 1994, Deo escapes to New York with \$200 in his pocket and finds work as a grocery store delivery clerk. Living on the street, he almost gives up in despair, but he befriends a politically active nun who finds him a home in Lower Manhattan with an older, childless couple, who later pay his way through Columbia. Deo subsequently finds work with the global health organization founded by Paul Farmer, the subject of one of Kidder's earlier books, "Mountains Beyond Mountains." With the experience he gains at PIH, Deo eventually returns to Burundi to build a health clinic there.

Tracy Kidder's true story of Deo's life has two parts. The first part tells Deo's story from the time he is a small child to the time he graduates from Columbia and starts to work at PIH. It's powerful, indeed frequently overwhelming. But the second half of the problem is problematic. Here Kidder describes the trip he took with Deo back to Burundi, to retrace the path Deo's took while escaping the violence and to make plans for the health clinic. Reading this section recalls watching a Michael Moore movie: you just wish that Moore would get back behind the camera and make his movie, without inserting himself into it, and the same seems true of Kidder. His reactions to the killing fields of Burundi aren't what should matter, and yet there he is telling you about his inability to feel the appropriate feelings. There's also another problem with the second half of the book: sometimes it seems that Kidder has forgotten what he already wrote. For example, one of the most memorable moments in Deo's experience occurs when he's been on the run for weeks, and, exhausted, is about to give up just short of the Rwandan border. A Hutu woman sees him, coaxes to keep moving, and lies to the border police saying that he is her son, in order to save him. Kidder tells this story in detail, in the first half of the book, writing: "I'm too tired," [Deo] told the woman. "I'm just going to stay here." "No, no," she said. "The border, it's nearby." In the second half, when they revisit the scene, Kidder describes a conversation he has with Deo: "'What was it you told her?' I asked over the noise of the plane. Gazing out, Deo replied 'I'm too tired. I'm just going to stay here.' And she said 'No, no. It's not too far to the border.'" I happened to read this book shortly after reading Chimamanda Ngozi's "Half the Yellow Sun," a fictional account of a different African civil war: the Nigerian war that predated Burundi's by about 30 years. Both books pack an emotional wallop, but somehow Ngozi's fiction had an immediacy for me that Kidder was approaching in the first part of his book, but upset in the second.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Survival and Redemption with Deogratias

By William Capodanno

A book like "Strength in What Remains" forces you to question your faith in the human race and helps restore it at the same time. Tracy Kidder brings us the indelible Deo, a Burundian medical student who survives the Burundian genocide in the mid-90s. He "escapes" to New York City with virtually no money and no friends or family to turn to for help and support and eventually returns to Burundi to set up a medical clinic for the poor. His survival and success causes anyone who anyone reading this book to ask themselves whether they could have not only survived such circumstances, but prospered after what he had been through. We view Deo with a sense of awe and respect for what he went through, how he overcame those nearly insurmountable obstacles and where he is now. If this book can't lift your spirits, you may not have a heart that is beating.

A few things make this book stand out above others of this genre. First, Kidder's use of flashback to alternate between the "present" and Deo's life in Burundi, escape to NY and eventual return to Burundi is far more effective and engaging than a linear approach to storytelling. The second thing Kidder does well is bring us closer to secondary characters that intersect and are instrumental in Deo's resurrection -- from the ex-nun who first befriends Deo in NY, to the Wolf's, the couple that take Deo in to live with them, to Dr. Paul Farmer. In other books, these secondary characters often remain nameless and faceless with little credit or importance placed on their role in helping the main protagonist overcome their obstacles. Kidder brings us close to these characters and reinforces their contributions in helping Deo overcome his past and becoming his new, extended family in his adopted homeland of America. "Strength in What Remains" has a palpable undercurrent of "fear" throughout the book. This tone is set early with the stark horror as Deo hides from the ethnic killers and narrowly avoids the same fate. However, this fear remains with us through Deo's journey --- from the degrading and denigrating employer/boss Deo has at the grocery store to his first visit to Burundi during the reconciliation where tension and fear still lurks underneath the surface. This is a book not to be missed. This is a book about survival and

redemption that will leave a lasting imprint on anyone fortunate to get to know Deo's story.

In *Strength in What Remains*, Tracy Kidder gives us the story of one man's inspiring American journey and of the ordinary people who helped him, providing brilliant testament to the power of second chances. Deo arrives in the United States from Burundi in search of a new life. Having survived a civil war and genocide, he lands at JFK airport with two hundred dollars, no English, and no contacts. He ekes out a precarious existence delivering groceries, living in Central Park, and learning English by reading dictionaries in bookstores. Then Deo begins to meet the strangers who will change his life, pointing him eventually in the direction of Columbia University, medical school, and a life devoted to healing. Kidder breaks new ground in telling this unforgettable story as he travels with Deo back over a turbulent life and shows us what it means to be fully human.

.com Best of the Month, September 2009: *Strength in What Remains* is an unlikely story about an unreasonable man. Deo was a young medical student who fled the genocidal civil war in Burundi in 1994 for the uncertainty of New York City. Against absurd odds--he arrived with little money and less English and slept in Central Park while delivering groceries for starvation wages--his own ambition and a few kind New Yorkers led him to Columbia University and, beyond that, to medical school and American citizenship. That his rise followed a familiar immigrant's path to success doesn't make it any less remarkable, but what gives Deo's story its particular power is that becoming an American citizen did not erase his connection to Burundi, in either his memory or his dreams for the future. Writing with the same modest but dogged empathy that made his recent *Mountains Beyond Mountains* (about Deo's colleague and mentor, Dr. Paul Farmer) a modern classic, Tracy Kidder follows Deo back to Burundi, where he recalls the horrors of his narrow escape from the war and begins to build a medical clinic where none had been before. Deo's terrible journey makes his story a hard one to tell; his tirelessly hopeful but clear-eyed efforts make it a gripping and inspiring one to read. --Tom Nissley Exclusive: Tracy Kidder on *Strength in What Remains* *Strength in What Remains* is the story of Deogratias, a young man from the central African nation of Burundi. In 1993, through no fault of his own, he was forced onto a terrifying journey, a journey that split his life in two. First he made a six-months-long escape, on foot, from ethnic violence in Burundi and from genocide in Rwanda. Then, in a strange twist of fate, he was, as it were, transported to New York City, where it sometimes seemed that his travails had only just begun. I met Deo by chance 6 years ago. When I first heard his story, I had one simple thought: I would not have survived. I hoped in part to reproduce that feeling as I retold his story. I also hoped to humanize what, to most westerners anyway, is a mysterious, little-known part of the world. We hear about mass slaughter in distant countries and we imagine that murder and mayhem define those locales. Deo's story opens up one of those places into a comprehensible landscape—and also opens up a part of New York that is designed to be invisible, the service entrances of the upper East Side, the camping sites that homeless people use in Central Park. But above all, I think, this is a book about coming to terms with memories. How can a person deal with memories like Deo's, tormenting memories, memories with a distinctly ungovernable quality? In the first part of *Strength In What Remains*, I recount Deo's story. In the second part, I tell about going back with him to the stations of his life, in New York and Burundi. So the story that I tell isn't only about the memories that Deo related to me. It's also about seeing him overtaken by memories—again and again, and sometimes acutely. But Deo didn't take me to Burundi just to show me around. Giving me a tour of his past was incidental to what he was up to in the present and the future. His story has a denouement that even now amazes me. Deo is an American citizen. He doesn't have to go back to Burundi. But he has returned continually and keeps on returning, and, amid the postwar wreckage, with the help of friends and family, he has created a clinic and public health system, free to those who can't pay, in a rural village—part of a beginning, Deo dreams, of a new Burundi. This facility was a pile of rocks when I visited the site in the summer of 2006. By the fall of 2008, it had become a medical center with several new buildings, a trained professional staff, and a fully stocked pharmacy. In its first year of operation it treated 21,000 different patients. (The organization that Deo founded and that sponsors and operates this facility is called Village Health Works.) Deo was very young when he went through his long travail. Several strangers helped to save him from death and despair in Burundi and New York. So did sheer courage and pluck, and also Columbia University, which he attended as an undergraduate. But when it's come to dealing with the burden of his memories, the public health system and clinic that he founded has been the nearest thing to a solution. In the end, it's neither forgetting the past nor dwelling on the past that has worked for him. For him the answer has been remembering and acting. I once asked Deo why he had studied philosophy at Columbia. He told me, "I wanted to understand what had happened to me." In the end, he received what most students of philosophy receive—not answers, but more questions. As I was trying to describe his effort to build a clinic, I found myself writing: "Deo had discovered a way to quiet the questions he'd been asking at Columbia. That is, he saw there might be an answer for what troubled him most about the world, an answer that lay in his hands, indeed in his memory. You had to do something."—Tracy Kidder (Photo © Gabriel Amadeus Cooney) From Publishers Weekly Starred . With an anthropologist's eye and a novelist's pen, Pulitzer Prize-winning Kidder (*Mountains Beyond Mountains*) recounts the story of Deo, the Burundian former medical student turned American émigré at the center of this strikingly vivid story. Told in

flashbacks from Deo's 2006 return visit to Burundi to mid-1990s New York and the Burundi of childhood memory and young adulthood—as the Rwandan genocide spilled across the border following the same inflamed ethnic divisions—then picking up in 2003, when author and subject first meet, Deo's experience is conveyed with a remarkable depth of vision and feeling. Kidder renders his subject with deep yet unfussy fidelity and the conflict with detail and nuance. While the book might recall Dave Eggers's novelized version of a real-life Sudanese refugee's experience in *What Is the What*, reading this book hardly covers old ground, but enables one to walk in the footsteps of its singular subject and see worlds new and old afresh. This profoundly gripping, hopeful and crucial testament is a work of the utmost skill, sympathy and moral clarity. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From *Bookmarks Magazine* Saluted as "a high priest of the narrative arts" (*New York Times Book*) and "a master of creative nonfiction" (*Dallas Morning News*), Kidder has written an unforgettable tribute to the resilience of the human spirit. Riveting, sad, terrible, but ultimately optimistic, Kidder's harrowing descriptions of Central Africa's bloody ethnic hostilities and Deo's amazing survival have been hailed by critics as some of the finest writing in contemporary nonfiction. The *Washington Post* objected to Kidder's frequent narrative jumps, while the *Miami Herald* remained unconvinced by Deo's saintly virtues. However, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* hailed *Strength* "an instant classic," and most critics agreed. "Let's put this tragedy behind us," says Deo, "because remembering is not going to benefit anyone." Readers will surely beg to differ.