



Requiem, Rwanda

Laura Apol

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A marvelous, moving new collection of poems, *Requiem, Rwanda* has its roots in 2006, when Laura Apol made her first trip to Rwanda. Apol's initial goal was to develop, in conjunction with Rwandan and American colleagues, a project using narrative writing to facilitate healing among young survivors of the 1994 genocide. During the time she spent leading workshops, Apol felt moved to write her own poems, and after the writing-for-healing project ended, she returned to Rwanda several times to continue her creative work. The legacy of the genocide—on the people, on the land itself—makes its presence felt in many of the poems. The poems are also accounts of Apol's relationships with and understandings of people post-genocide—where their stories go, how they reenter their lives, and how a country that has been deeply wounded by its history continues on. These poems don't shy away from exploring the complications of being a white woman, a Westerner, and a witness in this setting: Apol relates her sense of compassion, privilege, horror, guilt, voyeurism, obligation, and love. This new collection is a rich testimonial to the strength of a nation and its people. The collection includes a closing essay, "Writer as a Witness."

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