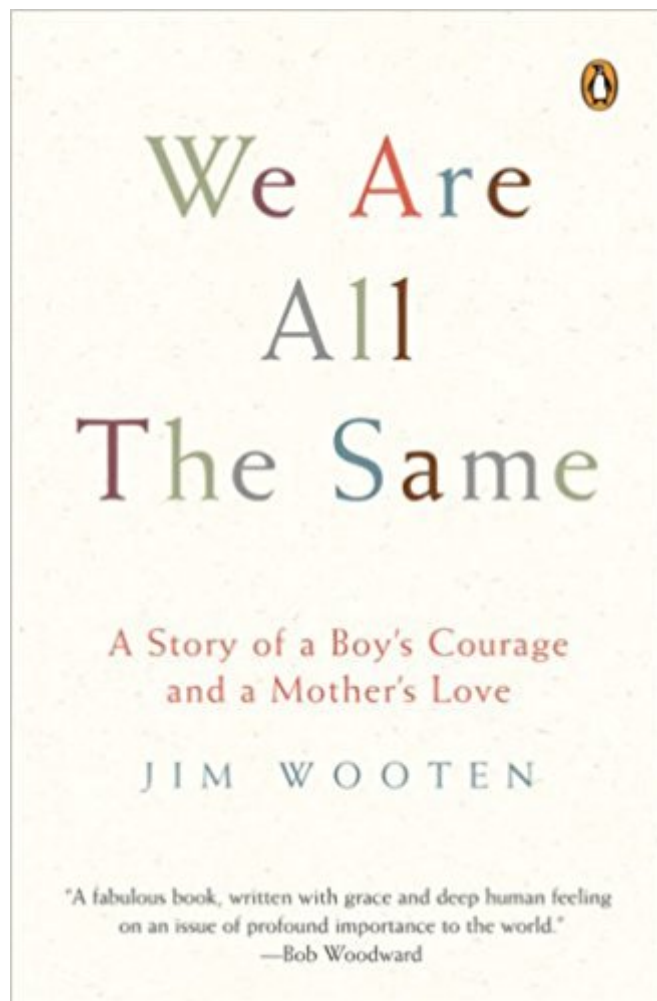




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# We Are All The Same: A Story Of A Boy's Courage And A Mother's Love



## 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*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The author, an award-winning senior correspondent for ABC News, has written an extraordinarily moving account of a courageous South African boy's battle with AIDS that is also a scathing indictment of South African leaders who have failed to confront the AIDS epidemic in their country. Nkosi, born in 1989 in the former Zululand, was infected by his poverty-stricken mother, Daphne. As Wooten recounts, Daphne moved heaven and earth to insure that her son would be provided for after her own death and agreed to his adoption, at age three, by Gail Johnson, a white South African, who had met Nkosi at a hospice. A hero in her own right, Johnson nourished Nkosi's strong spirit, which gave out only when he died at the age of 12. Before then, Johnson and Nkosi traveled internationally to gain support for Nkosi's Haven, a home for women and children with AIDS in South Africa. Looking at the larger picture, Wooten points out that Nelson Mandela refused to deal with the AIDS crisis because he was embarrassed to speak publicly about sex (a position he later

said he regretted). Mandela's successor, Thabo Mkebi, has also hampered attempts to get antiretroviral drugs to AIDS victims, absurdly denying that the virus HIV exists. According to Wooten, 20% of South African girls are currently infected with HIV and 7,000 infants die of AIDS each month. This powerful account puts a human face on a catastrophic epidemic that grows worse daily. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In 1989, the year that Mandela was released from prison, a Zulu baby named Nkosi was born HIV-positive to a teen single mother dying of AIDS. Wooten, ABC News senior correspondent, tells Nkosi's family story of hope and heartbreak in a clear dramatic narrative that personalizes the apartheid politics as well as the present devastating statistics and the struggle against prejudice. At age 2, the sick little boy was taken in by a loving white family, and with the support of his activist foster mother, Gail, he became a famous public figure in the battle against discrimination. He won the legal right to attend school. At 11, shortly before he died, he gave an electrifying speech to an international audience. Wooten gets close to the dying child and his white family, and he writes passionately about Gail's fight and about President Mbeki's absurd denial that has enraged the health profession. Most haunting is the breakup of black family life stretching back across generations, the desperation of the teen who gets AIDS and gives it to her son. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A poignant and important book. So many reviewers have articulated what makes this a story one never forgets. The title says it all. Perhaps if we all shared in that belief system, that we are the same, we are humans, and by virtue of that fact, deserve to be treated with compassion, understanding and respect. That's what the young protagonist was saying to the world around him. I remember the 80s, the statistics from South Africa, the multiple deaths, and the denial of those in power, those who could have done something but chose to do nothing. And I remember the vilification of AIDS victims, from the self-righteous who had far less character and integrity than this young boy, who, even though he was dying, stood up for what he believed without flinching. A remarkable book.

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, Mandela'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.) It is sad to learn that Nelson Mandela, certainly one of the world's heroes, did not speak out against AIDS as he could have while he was president because he was uncomfortable discussing sex. I would nominate the president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, as an unusual hero too who did use his position to speak out about AIDS and when faced with opposition by the Catholic archbishop of the use of condoms by Uganda citizens to curb the spread of AIDS simply said to the archbishop: "'Your Eminence, shut up!'" According to the president, that's precisely what the archbishop did. He shut up. Finally Wooten is to be commended for breaking the rules of journalism and becoming emotionally involved as he fell under the spell of this young boy. If you read this fine story-- and certainly this is a great book for this season-- you will not soon forget Mr. Wooten's lying down beside the dying boy to say his own goodbyes. This remarkable story of courage and love will warm your heart.

This was such a good book! I read it for a public health class but would recommend it to anyone seeking a personal insight to HIV/AIDS or a story of communities banding together under the direction of an incredibly determined parent.

"We Are All the Same" is the compelling account of the life of Xolani Nkosi Johnson, an African child that was bound by the wrath of HIV and AIDS. The book also details the social, environmental, and

political environment which allowed this treacherous disease (AIDS) to pollute and emaciate entire populations of citizens: A disease which knows no boundaries; a disease which does not discriminate; a disease that kills all that are infected by its virus. Wooten is a writer to be revered for his honesty, and applauded for covering what is often regarded as a subject to be discussed in hushed circumstances. As compelling as "Tuesday's with Morrie," this book will leave the reader in a state of deep thought and introspect. "We Are All the Same" forces the reader to enter an emotional state that opens the heart to the raw brutality of the consequences of AIDS and the unfortunate position that many developed nations take as they turn a blind eye to what is commonly referred to as the "Dark Continent." Angela, PhD Candidate

This was an amazing and sad story I really found it showed me what life was like for this family and how hard the impact of HIV and aids really is in developing countries and our own I think everyone should read this at least once to truly understand humanity that such a small boy could have a large impact is amazing and gives hope for the future while teaching us that we can judge what we do not fully understand.

This is an absolutely incredible book about the story of AIDs in South Africa. Never before has the AIDs crisis been made so real to the reader. The story is focused around hero Nkosi Johnson's short life and legacy. Jim Wooten did a wonderful job of conveying the emotion and struggle of this conflict which is the greatest enemy of Africa today. Whoever gave this book two stars for not saying Wooten got across the emotion, must not have a pulse. I highly recommend this book for your own good of exposure to the AIDs crisis. There is something for all of us to learn from this story.

This is a heart wrenching book, very well done. It gives historical context without feeling like a history lesson. Loved it, will share with family!!!

This is one of the most moving book I have ever read in my life. After reading it you are sure to understand a lot more about the impact of AIDS, while at the same time you are able to connect with so many individuals in this book. I will warn you that this is a tear jerker.

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