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A Country Unmasked: Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Alex Boraine

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As Apartheid ended, South Africans felt it was necessary to put the past behind them and turn the page of history--but first they needed to *read* that heart-breaking, gut-wrenching page. To that end they formed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which had the monumental task of uncovering decades of systematic human rights violations--and doing so in a way that would help a very damaged nation to reconcile and move forward.
Here is an insider's story of the TRC, a tale arising out of the white heat of traumatic and often harrowing disclosures from victims, survivors, and perpetrators alike. Alex Boraine, who was Vice Chairperson of the TRC (serving under Desmond Tutu), offers us an account that is by turns descriptive, reflective, analytical, anecdotal, and quite candid. We learn how he listened in awe as many of the tortured, the mourning, the insulted, the damaged, and the poor shared not only their experiences as victims but their triumph as survivors, accounts all the more remarkable because so few people showed a desire for vengeance. Indeed, many expressed their willingness to forsake revenge and commit themselves to forgiveness and reconciliation. Boraine concludes by discussing how the TRC model might benefit other societies in transition, such as Northern Ireland, Bosnia, or Rwanda.
Drawing from public documents and his own private diary, Alex Boraine shares with us the moving journey he took to come to terms with his country's past. It is a personal account of hope breaking the bonds of hopelessness and goodness triumphing over evil.

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