



Learning to Love Africa: My Journey from Africa to Harvard Business School and Back

Monique Maddy

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From the remote mountains of Liberia to the epicenter of New York City, Monique Maddy's life has been an extraordinary journey from an idyllic community to the chaos of city living. But *Learning to Love Africa* is far more than an exile's dream of return. Sent to the west at the tender age of six by her doting father, Maddy has spent her entire life struggling to reclaim her father's dream of progress in his beloved homeland.

Born in Yekepa, a tiny village transformed into a utopian global community by a Swedish multinational corporation, Maddy introduces us to her remarkable father, Emmanuel, an enterprising driver-turned-restaurateur, and her mother, Julia, the descendant of an equally remarkable family of Mandingo entrepreneurs. With loving descriptions of life in this developing world, Maddy introduces us to the sophisticated business skills of her ancestors and shows how her family's acumen and emotional strength became a launching pad for her own ambitions.

In haunting passages that describe her schooling first in England and then in America, we see Maddy's gradual transformation from country girl to savvy intellectual. But her first attempt to return to the continent of her birth, under the auspices of the United Nations, leads only to embittered frustration when it becomes clear to her that the bureaucracy of the international organization will do little to actually improve the lives of Africans -- and will often make their already difficult existence even more miserable.

Disillusioned, Maddy returns to the United States to attend Harvard Business School where she hatches a bold plan to start a telecommunications company in Africa.

Rallying her fellow Harvard students, Maddy sets off to the continent of her birth once again. *Learning to Love Africa* tells the story of her two-fisted battle against the corruption of African politics and economic life on one hand and the complacency of her Harvard intern team on the other. Unbowed by the obstacles in her way, Maddy tells a rousing tale of what it takes to build a business where the political framework for capitalism doesn't exist, and how to persevere in bringing Africa into the twenty-first century.

Along the way, Maddy recounts with poignant regret and horror how her homeland slips into anarchy and civil war while her father's dream of a better life evaporates and his business and home are destroyed in the conflict. Emotionally charged, vividly described, and deeply felt, *Learning to Love Africa* is a memoir of despair for Africa, which seemingly has been written off by the developed world, and of tempered optimism for the future Maddy knows Africa can achieve.

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