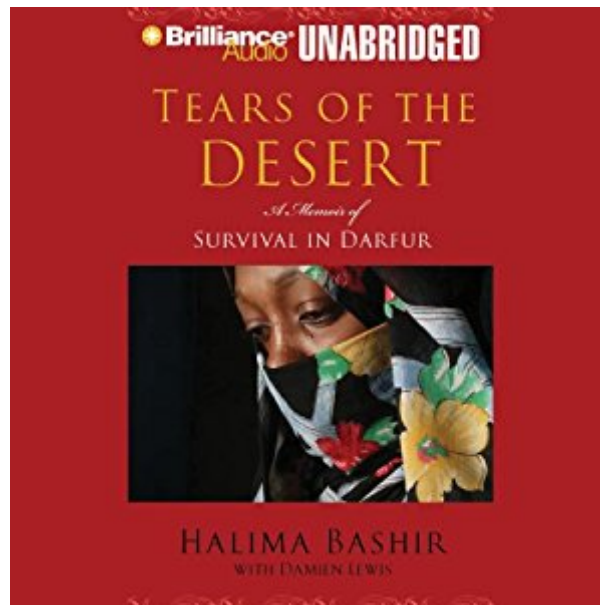


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Tears Of The Desert: A Memoir Of Survival In Darfur



Synopsis

Like the single white eyelash that graces her row of dark lashes—“seen by her people as a mark of good fortune”—Halima Bashir’s story stands out. *Tears of the Desert* is the first memoir ever written by a woman caught up in the war in Darfur. It is a survivor’s tale of a conflicted country, a resilient people, and the uncompromising spirit of a young woman who refused to be silenced. Born into the Zaghawa tribe in the Sudanese desert, Halima was doted on by her father, a cattle herder, and kept in line by her formidable grandmother. A politically astute man, Halima’s father saw to it that his daughter received a good education away from their rural surroundings. Halima excelled in her studies and exams, surpassing even the privileged Arab girls who looked down their noses at the black Africans. With her love of learning and her father’s support, Halima went on to study medicine, and at twenty-four became her village’s first formal doctor. Yet not even the symbol of good luck that dotted her eye could protect her from the encroaching conflict that would consume her land. Janjaweed Arab militias started savagely assaulting the Zaghawa, often with the backing of the Sudanese military. Then, in early 2004, the Janjaweed attacked Bashir’s village and surrounding areas, raping forty-two schoolgirls and their teachers. Bashir, who treated the traumatized victims, some as young as eight years old, could no longer remain quiet. But breaking her silence ignited a horrifying turn of events. In this harrowing and heartbreaking account, Halima Bashir sheds light on the hundreds of thousands of innocent lives being eradicated by what is fast becoming one of the most terrifying genocides of the twenty-first century. Raw and riveting, *Tears of the Desert* is more than just a memoir—it is Halima Bashir’s global call to action. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tears in the Desert is a memoir of genocide in the Sudan, Muslim against Muslim over skin color. Halima Bashir is a black African raised in the Zaghawa tribe in a family of comparative wealth. The Zaghawa men are proud of their history as fierce warriors who protect their village territory and their families from invaders. Halima is proud of her heritage and her intellectual gifts, particularly mathematics. Her gifts and her family's wealth allow her to attend a private school for girls and later university in Khartoum. The history of tribal pride has led to competition in Darfur and throughout the Sudan for land and prestige. But there is more than tribal rivalry. The Khartoum government is run by white "Arab" Muslims whose proud heritage causes the people to despise the black tribal Africans. Although Halima's advantages paid off in education, her M.D. degree is fully useful to her only if all Sudanese are treated equally. Of course, in the Sudan they are not. After being mistreated for many years, African tribes attacked Arabs and regrouped in the hills. Government attacks on villages were carried out leaving few surviving men and a great many women and children. For the survivors like Halima, brutal female circumcision, rape, and mayhem were perpetuated by the Arab Muslims in the rationalization of jihad. Halima survived, but barely. Many others died or left their villages to stay in large refugee centers. The memoir is written like a novel with the help of Damien Lewis, a BBC reporter and writer who has covered conflicts in Africa for many years.

I welcome a wake-up call. It is so easy to unconsciously become cocooned in my protected life on the West Coast of the United States, where daily issues end up being hunting for the best price for gasoline for my car, battling the crowded freeways and looking for a parking place, discussing the what to fix for dinner that night. I try to stay abreast of the global situation by watching the nightly News Hour on our local PBS station, but it is easy to glaze over or become anesthetized by the onslaught of words from talking heads, figures and maps so that the news takes on an element of the unreal. So when something happens to hit my radar in a way that makes me say, "I didn't know that!" or that says to me, "Open your eyes!" I am grateful and I feel a little more connected to reality. The book, "Tears of the Desert" was slipped inside my screendoor, an advance review copy I was sent to read. I looked at the cover, the title word "Desert", the subtitle word "Darfur" and thought to myself, "I am going to read something I know very little about." I had heard of the cries of genocide in the Sudan, seen pictures of streams of refugees, and read of the outcry of protestors

during the summer Olympics in China, but I didn't understand the conflict and it felt very impersonal to me. However, when I began to read the book I entered a new world and culture, the life of Halima Bashir in a Zaghawa tribal village in South Darfur. The first part of the book described the tribal life, the traditions and practices as seen through the eyes of a child. Her descriptions of her family members brought the characters to life and her portrayals were so personal that when events involved them later in the book, I felt a personal sorrow and outrage.

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