

VOICES from the --- CAPE

A series of short stories
by AJ Morris

Published by

The logo for MCA (McAlpine Media) features the letters 'MCA' in a bold, black, cursive script. A thick, black horizontal line is drawn underneath the letters, starting from the left and ending under the 'A'.

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Dedication

With all my love to my husband, Paul

Ons engel, sy is baie mooi

Acknowledgements

I offer my heartfelt thanks to:

My publishers, and friends, Gary & Joanne McAlpine of McAlpine Media. Also, Ann McAlpine, Gary's wonderful Mammie, who took the time to read my wee stories.

Jane, my oldest friend (change to dearest, or she will murder me) and her coffee pot.

My South African friends. Charmien, a very special lady with a warm heart. And, Des, the one and only fabulous Des!

About the Book

VOICES FROM THE CAPE is a collection of short stories, all set in Cape Town. Each story is the voice of a person, or people, from the diverse communities who live within the truly wonderful Rainbow Nation of South Africa.

Most of the stories have a little, sometimes quite a big, 'nod' to Scotland.

The stories are poignant, funny, hopeful and some unashamedly political.

The characters are mainly from my imagination, although a number are based on real people and the reality of the lives they live.

The book was written while I was staying at a cottage in Cape Town, especially for my dear friend Jane. A friendship which dates back to our school days in Coatbridge, Scotland.

I would send her a story by email every few days. A tale just long enough to read with a cup of coffee, preferably a wee cappuccino. Jane would then email me back her comments. 'Our names are Alma and Russell', was Jane's particular favourite.

About the Author

I live, with my husband Paul, in Ayr on the West Coast of Scotland. However, since the year 2000 we have been lucky enough to join the flight of Swallows who head south to Africa each winter.

I love the Western Cape, its rich heritage and wonderful people. Each day I spend there I enjoy the beauty of nature in all its forms which feed my soul. Not to mention the amazing privilege of living beside a mountain.

As 'a disabled lady with a bus pass' I decided that I had two options: mourn what I could no longer do OR embrace what I can. And, so my new career as an author was born.

My first book was set in Scotland. The Laws of Gartsherrie, based on my mother's family, this was my tribute to Gartsherrie and the fine folk who lived their lives in Coatbridge and its villages during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

My name is
JONATHAN

My name is Jonathan, Jonny to my employers and friends. My mother still calls me by my given name of Jonathan, as mothers do all over the world.

I live in a corrugated iron hut in a township near Cape Town, my neighbours are fellow Malawians. Like me their homes and hearts are in villages all over our beautiful, fertile, land. Alas, our homeland is poor so the young people must leave in order to earn money.

My wife is called Agnes, a name that she shares with her mother, grandmother and a Scottish midwife who brought her grandmother into the world.

At the moment Agnes shares the hut with me but soon she must return to our village to spend time with our children, who are being looked after by our parents. Poor Agnes, her heart is in two places, half is with me in the little hut, because we love each other. The other half of her heart is in the village with our four children, two boys and two girls, children she has not seen for almost four years. Her heart can never be whole.

If we work very hard, take every shift available, and live as cheaply as we can, Agnes can spend six months with our children this year. Then she must take the long long journey by bus back to Cape Town.

While she is gone I will rent her space in the hut to another Malawian, the extra money will help towards keeping a roof over my head.

We work as housekeepers, cleaning houses for rich people. The people we work for are in the main decent and in their own way very kind. For example, if they were going on holiday they might say.

“Jonny, we are off for a little holiday, please take all the extra food from the fridge, if it will

be of use to you.”

I gather up the food and take it home, of course it is of use, our budget is so very tight.

However, my employers do not for one moment guess the poverty in which we live in order to support our family in the village back in Malawi. They will spend more on the taxi to the airport than we will spend on food for the week.

I am not stupid, I can speak two languages fluently and I also have an understanding of French and Afrikaans. However, if I want to get live-in employment as the house manager of a nice home in Constantia I need a driving licence. An ambition out of my reach, I could never afford the driving lessons. Besides, I am here without paperwork so I have to keep well away from officials.

I know my lot in life. My children will grow, marry, and have children. My parents will grow old, infirm and die. Agnes and I will eventually leave the Cape, when we are in the autumn of our lives. My children will entrust their children to Agnes and me as they, in their turn, take the long bus journey south in order to earn money.

We will then spend the remainder of our lives raising our grandchildren and get to know them in a way we have never been able to know our own children. Our children, who are almost strangers to us, will send money which we will use to educate and feed our grandchildren.

And so, year after year, generation after generation, the cycle continues. How can we, the poor without a voice, break the cycle of loss and poverty? I do not know, but I do know this. All over Africa there are rich and powerful men and women who do not want the cycle to end. Why on earth should they?