

"What Hope Have You!" is a story of three families in South Africa, one white, one black and one of mixed race. The story extends over four generations and is about a society rooted in colonialism and ruled by apartheid. It is told, in part, by Kate, great-granddaughter of a Jewish couple who leave their home in Eastern Europe in the 1870's because of racial intolerance and emigrate to South Africa where diamonds have recently been discovered.

The Prologue sets the theme of the novel. The sunny days spent on picnics, a metaphor for the carefree lifestyle of white people, while the sudden thunder storms implies periodic Black unrest. The Gothic reference of the waving willow trees forebodes trouble and the laying down together of the orphaned lion cub and the lamb, promises hope and reconciliation.

Two women meet in unusual circumstances at a low point in their respective lives. In spite of very different cultural backgrounds they form a friendship that lasts throughout their lives, bringing their families together. The white woman has been abused and betrayed by her husband; the black woman has been raped by a white farmer and abandoned by her husband. She fears what the future holds for the half-caste child she carries. As the story unfolds her fears are realised and will haunt future generations, leading to secrecy, subterfuges and separation of the families in a country increasingly torn apart by racism. The novel is about the struggle for political and human rights for black people, but it is also about the struggle of women for liberation in the male dominated society under colonialism in the past and in both the Afrikaner and African cultures to-day. Ironically, women's liberation has also "liberated" men in that they have become, in general, more sensitive and less abusive than their great-grandfathers. This is seen as the male characters in the story evolve over four generations.

Against a background of political intrigue and police brutality the plot unfolds. Finally, an ironic twist brings the families together and, with the release of Nelson Mandela, there is a new mood in the country of reconciliation and hope.

The title "What Hope Have You!" is an exclamation and not a question because it truly is amazing that black people in South Africa have always had, and still do have, such hope and optimism in spite of decades of suppression.

My paternal great-grandparents emigrated to South Africa from the United Kingdom in 1820 and my maternal grandmother was taken to South Africa from Eastern Europe by her parents in the mid 1870's to escape pogroms against Jews. My mother was born in Kimberley in 1896 and her father was associated with De Beers Mining Corporation. I was born in Durban in 1928 and after my marriage in 1950 my husband and I lived in Johannesburg. In 1978 when the apartheid government was firmly entrenched and there seemed no hope of change, my husband and I and our three married children emigrated to Vancouver, Canada. We are now both retired and live in Victoria, British Columbia near our youngest daughter and her family. Our eldest daughter and her husband were killed in an air crash in 1989. Her three children live in Vancouver. Our son and his wife have returned to live in South Africa where he is studying law at the University of the Witwatersrand and she is working in the field of educating people about Aids.



\$24.95



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