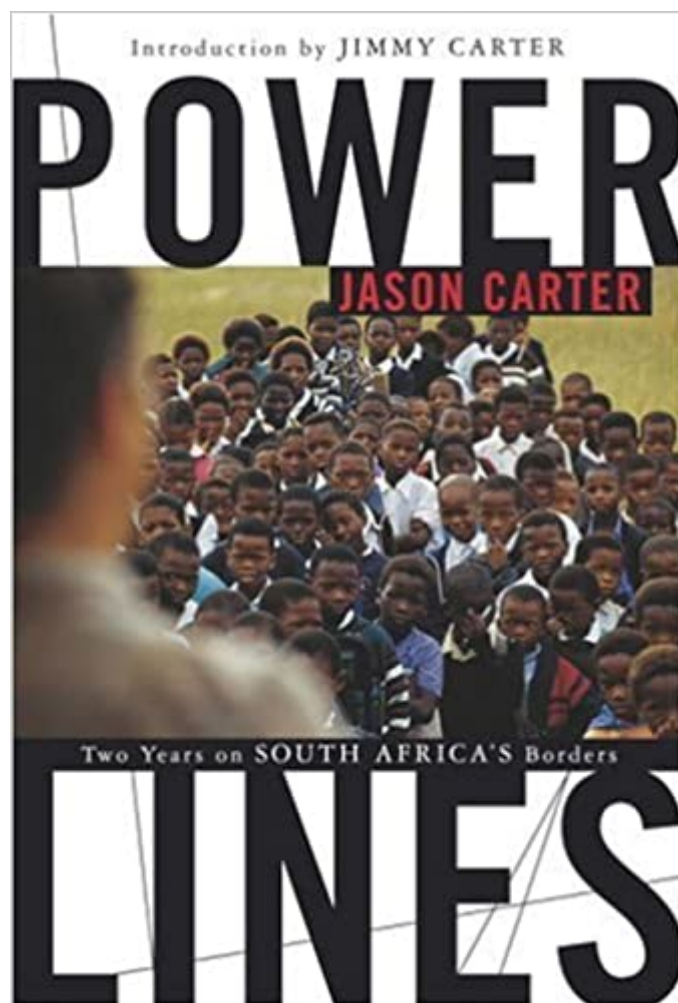


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# Power Lines: Two Years On South Africa's Borders (Adventure Press)



## Synopsis

Jason Carter, the grandson of former President Jimmy Carter, writes of a South Africa few people ever see. During his two years as a Peace Corps volunteer, Carter stayed with a rural family in Lochiel, a former black homeland near the Swaziland border. South Africa is a country still racked by deep racial divides. The whites live much as other Westerners, with nice houses and nice cars. The blacks, Carter found, live in a world of grinding poverty and unemployment, where school children do not dare to hope, and where casual crime is accepted as a way to get back at whites. Even after Nelson Mandela's regime-shattering election as president, whites and blacks literally cannot communicate with each other. During his training Carter learned Zulu and Siswati, two of the many black languages, and with these tools he began breaking down racial barriers. Everywhere blacks befriended him, delighted to find a white person who spoke in their tongue. Carter was invited to engagement parties and funerals. He rode all over the country in overcrowded black taxis and hitchhiked in cars driven by both blacks and whites. In the process he found many people on both sides that want to reach out to each other. And that is Carter's message. Even in a society as divided as South Africa, people's desire to come together will triumph over all.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A thoughtful window into lives most tourists will never encounter."

Jason spent two years in a poor rural community (location) in RSA, on the border with SW, with

Peace Corps to assist with the implementation of the new curriculum in the local schools. This book describes the current constraints gripping both blacks and white South Africans, focusing on the intricacies and complexities of how race and socio/economic status defines interactions in post-Apartheid South Africa. The book highlights the cultural and economic clash between South Africa's western, urban, rich first world and the rural deprived poor countryside. The book also provides a view of the challenges that the Country has to face in terms of bridging inequalities and creating a more just and equal society, while at the same time ensuring that the rule of law is adhered to. I believe Jason did a great work portraying a balanced view of a complicated, magnificent but troublesome Country. Of particular interest is the ominous fear of white population, which permeates every aspect of life, and the economic and cultural contraposition within black South Africans between the rural poor, the low-income township dwellers and the rich urban elite working for corporations and government. Stemming from his Peace Corps experience, the author also provides some perspectives on the States, in particular on its race-relations issues. Great book to read, worth your time, if you are interested in modern RSA. The author details the challenges that South African poor rural areas are facing in terms of crime, hazardous natural and built environment, road accidents, alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS, tensions between races, culture contrapositions, language barriers, lack of skills, unemployment, lack of resources in the education system, corruption in the police force, prostitution, lack of moral values, and poverty in general. Interesting was the author's experience with the administration of justice in a South African court and its inefficiency and appalling bureaucracy. However, he also brings to the fore the positive things stemming out from a ruinous past: Ubuntu, the willingness to make things work, the desire to better the life of people across the board and the willingness to bridge divisions and historical differences. In particular, one aspect, which should be underlined and which stems out of Jason's work to kick-start successful new projects and ideas to enhance education is the endless possibilities and opportunities that exist in South Africa to make things better. The book closes on a positive note: in spite of widespread Western African pessimism, Jason provides us with encouraging and constructive perspective about a poor rural South African town, highlighting the opportunities that exist for a better future for all: "[Africa's] The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa giving the world a more human face" (S. Biko, mentioned in the book).

Great read. Both my husband and I enjoyed reading it. I have now passed it on to a family whose

son has studied in South Africa.

When my local media do a "Hometown Heroes" piece or series, the heroes sometimes turn out to be firefighters or in law enforcement. Generally, however, the heroes are military personnel or officers. I've never seen somebody from the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps so designated. What does this say about our society and its values and goals? The Peace Corps Act of 1961 sets out the mission of promoting world peace and friendship. Sargent Shriver, the architect of the Peace Corps, forcefully maintained: "No matter how many bombs we drop, no matter how skillfully our soldiers fight, we are not responding to the ultimate challenge until we show the world how and why we must all learn to live in peace--until peace becomes the only permanent alternative to war." Jason Carter's patent dedication, ingenuity, and enthusiasm for his Peace Corps assignment in (barely) post-apartheid South Africa give us another definition of heroism to thoughtfully consider. The stark proximity of First World South Africa, mere minutes away, to the Third World South African village in which he was based is an appalling revelation. The amount of the Peace Corps' entire budget in its first 50 years--roughly \$8.7 billion--was spent by the Department of Defense budget in just five days during the past year. Bombs and drones--or Jason Carters? Which is more likely to make us safe and secure? Read this book before you answer that question.

I am a writer and a poet. I have been living in the USA for over 40 years. I came to the United States in 1966 as a thirteen year old. I was recommended this book by a friend at the Sarah Lawrence Summer Writing Institute where I have been writing poetry. So much in this book resonates with me. I understand many things that Jason is describing: his culture shock, the great divide between blacks and whites that remains until this day. What I related to most of all was his having to explain himself over and over as a white person -- his daily practices. That is exactly what I encountered coming to the United States. People still ask me after forty years, why it is that I am white and Jewish, and other quite ridiculous questions that to me, should be obvious. I even had both of my daughters who are five years apart call me from school, and beg me to speak to their friends on the phone, assuring them that I am white and Jewish. So, in spite of Nelson Mandela's world fame and the dismantling of apartheid, many people in the world are still basically ignorant about South Africa and its people. And I can say the same thing for South Africans: many of them are ignorant about Americans who come to their towns, especially Peace Corps workers like Jason Carter who lived as a white amongst blacks as he worked hard to update the obsolete apartheid-based black education. Reading this book was like hearing from a long lost brother, and I recommend it to anyone who is

eager to learn about South Africa's history and its struggles since the ending of Apartheid.

very nice . The product has an excellent edge, works wonderfully on my homemade bread! would purchase again. for Tina , great,

I loaned this book out from the library hoping to find something relating to travel, to the Peace Corps, and something relating to new ideas and places. I got this and a great story from a very successful teller. Carter's experiences are exactly what many dream of while working in the Peace Corps. But this book is full of history and even more personal experience. I enjoyed it immensely.

Just received Power Lines and am excited to read it. I glanced at the Introduction written by the author's grandfather, former President Jimmy Carter, in which he describes how his own mother joined the Peace Corps at 70. She was based in India; her grandson spent his time in Africa.

Looking forward to reading!

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