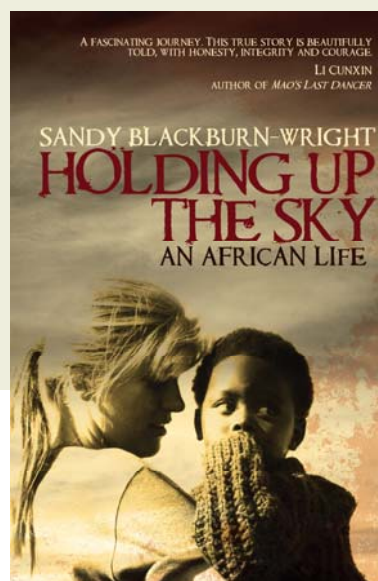


Holding Up the Sky: An African Life

Sandy Blackburn-Wright

Title	Holding Up the Sky: An African Life
Author	Sandy Blackburn-Wright
ISBN	9781921208232
Imprint	Pier 9
Binding	Trade paperback with flaps
Extent	520 pages
Dimensions	234 x 153mm
RRP	\$34.95
Release Date	March 2008



Description

This astonishing autobiographical work is the story of Australian woman Sandy Blackburn-Wright's complex love affair with Africa and its people. Sandy lived and worked in South Africa between 1988 and 2003, years coinciding with some of the most tumultuous and significant events in the history of the nation, including the release of Mandela.

Set against a background of profound political and social change, Sandy tells her personal story with honesty, passion, intelligence and humour. As a community development worker in the townships she witnessed the brutality of life under the apartheid regime yet at the same time she was bewitched by the uncrushable richness and vibrancy of the culture and traditions of the people, and the grandeur and beauty of the land. Her encounters were intense and often dangerous. While living with a black family in a township she was caught up in the violence of the 1990 Seven Day War between Inkatha and ANC factions, in which hundreds were killed. She was forced to flee from gun-wielding attackers and watched helplessly as a young man was shot dead in the driveway of her home.

Through her work she met the man who was to become her husband, and began the next phase of her life as a member of an extended and welcoming traditional, rural black South African Family. Together she and her husband sought to contribute to the rebuilding and transformation of a post apartheid nation. At first it seemed their love and commitment were strong enough to overcome the prejudice of the white – and black – communities, prejudices that were exacerbated by their adoption of her husband's young niece, followed by the birth of their own son.

But having given up so much for the love of a man of Africa, Sandy found that no amount of commitment and determination could prevent the rifts that formed within her marriage. Her final choice was unavoidable, she left her marriage and the land she loved to return to Australia and begin a new life. But she will carry forever in her heart the land that changed her life, and which she in turn sought to support on its journey towards freedom.

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Sales Points

- Sandy Blackburn-Wright's grippingly insightful attention to detail will take you deep into the South African landscape – political, racial, emotional and cultural – during a decade of extraordinary, world-changing events
- Sandy will be a guest at the Sydney Writers' Festival in May 2008. She is an experienced public speaker and presenter and will be a wonderful media performer to support the release of her book
- With its fascinating subject matter and universal themes of prejudice, loyalty, betrayal, compassion and love, this book will appeal to a wide range of readers
- The striking front cover carries an endorsement quote from Li Cunxin, the bestselling author of *Mao's Last Dancer*
- A2 poster available (ISBN: 9787777003007)

Author Profile

Sandy Blackburn-Wright was born on a dairy farm in NSW. Her parents returned to Sydney after 12 years on the farm and Sandy and her brother attended school in Sydney. Sandy grew up in the idyllic setting of the bookstore her parents bought after they sold the farm, with thousands of books to choose from each night for her bedtime story.

As a teenager, she became involved with a local church youth group, soon taking on a role in the leadership team of the 200-strong group. It was here that she began to learn skills that would be needed on the other side of the world, and it was through her church that she met one of the community leaders in South Africa who was working for social change.

She and her friends then received an invitation to join a youth leadership program run by this organisation. What began as a three month program in 1988 soon turned into a decision to move to South Africa permanently, ill-prepared as she was for the political violence and turmoil of the late 1980s. But that decision allowed her to take part in the most extraordinary transformation in modern history.

Sandy lived in South Africa for 15 years, before returning to Australia where she now lives with her family. Sandy currently works in human resources for Westpac.

