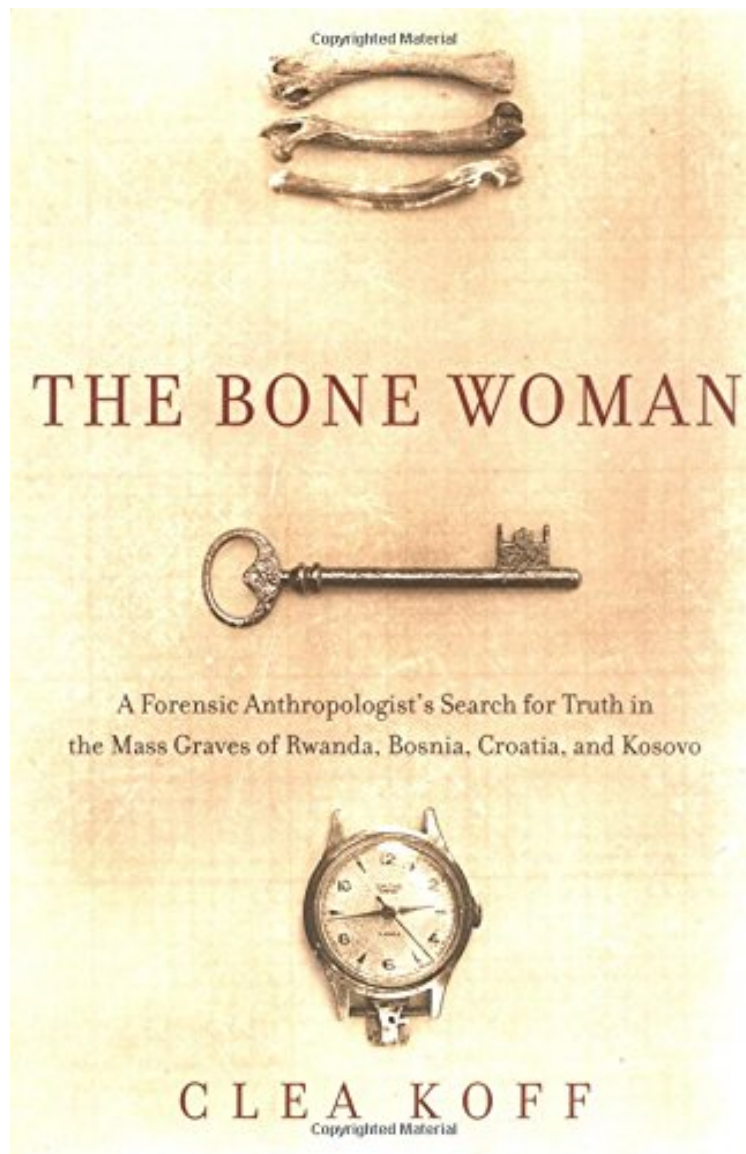


[FREE] The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo

The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo

Clea Koff

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Clea Koff : The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Just "The Bone Woman" and not a CSI Super StarBy phansuul can't imagine so such a young person, in this case, Clea Koff could professionally embrace and thrive on a "unglamorous" forensic anthropologist career. Her descriptions, "saw-off", brushing...of the human bones through decomposed bodies to obtain evidence, to convey to authorities the alleged perpetrators showed me how much love she has for the human kind in general and for the families'survivors in particular. Clea, though encountered a handful of all kinds of "difficulties" with her work sites, her colleagues and certainly with herself, came out on top achieving her goals. Sacrificing herself by getting out of her comfort zone, the USA, at 23 years of age to seek justice for the defenseless and to bring hope to all of us that even the dead deserve a commanding voice. "Truth does not bring back the death. Truth allows their voices to be heard."0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. One Account Of Grim But Important WorkBy EpicFehlReaderThough this was published in 2004, this memoir looks back at Koff's work as a budding forensic anthropologist going out on her first major assignments in the mid to late 90s (the last bit of the book ends around 2000) and how these first jobs affected and molded her not only professionally, but as a person. I personally found this memoir fascinating. Not only is the work she does grim but interesting, but Koff herself comes from a unique background -- born in England, Koff comes from an American father with Polish-Russian heritage and an English-raised Tansanian mother (with 1/2 her family being from Uganda). As Koff puts it, "instead of national identity, we had strong family identity." This background influences Koff some emotionally when she takes her first job working for the UN to investigate mass graves of victims of the genocide in Rwanda. She quickly learns that many of the victims came from multiple backgrounds within one family tree and were often killed for it during the months of the genocide.Koff first visits the mass graves in Rwanda in 1994, and again in 1996. Through her investigations and information that became available in the months and years after the genocide, it's learned that in less than four months, 800,000 people were murdered, most by blunt force trauma. In Kibuye (just one county in Rwanda) alone, 250,000 were killed in just three months, and over 100,000 children were left orphaned. IN MONTHS. One thing that Koff says she quickly picks up on and something she is really moved by is the clearly indomitable spirit of the people of Rwanda. Despite these horrors these families had to survive, she still found a community full of warm and friendly people who (maybe not always, but oftentimes) welcomed her into their homes and their lives. This maybe plays a part in her experiencing what she describes as occupational "double vision" -- where her professional distance with a skeleton was temporarily lost and she would get a strong vision of what the person might have been like / looked like as a living, breathing human being. As you might imagine, this can make your work extraordinarily difficult when processing mass graves every day if this happens multiple times a day, trying to document that many remains!The memoir goes on to also share her experiences working in mass graves (victims of war crimes) in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo. The book is divided into sections by country and the beginning of each section includes a paragraph map of the area briefly explaining the political situation at the time that led to the mass graves she ends up excavating. I thought this was a helpful touch for those who either don't remember all the historical facts of the time or have yet to learn them.It's here that she illustrates cracks in the UN's systems of protection for their workers out in the field: she shares a story of how a security team was sent out in an armoured Land Rover that could withstand bullets but didn't come with doors that lock!The accounts of her work in Bosnia I found especially saddening. Koff discusses how she is struck by the tragedy that bodies were being identified by family members recognizing their stitching patterns on the clothes (As Koff explains, during the war many citizens were left too poor to buy new clothes so old clothes were stitched together multiple times -- mothers, wives, daughters, etc were coming to grave sites and recognizing stitches on clothes. That's how they ended up identifying many). The grave sites ran so large sometimes that they actually had to be divided up into quadrants! But the story that struck me the most was regarding the body of a boy Koff discovers who still had marbles in his pocket. That's how young the victim was. That story just crushed me when I read that.I think I can safely say, this book won't be for everyone. I for one though found her story fascinating and moving. Tragic, yes, but important work. Her job enables her to give surviving family members a sense of closure they maybe could not get otherwise. And like she said, her work also forces the killers to be held accountable. This memoir also makes the reader contemplate just how badly people can treat each other and how that has to change. But it won't change unless we face what's happened in the past. That's why I find this book an important read for those brave enough to delve into it.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Engaging and interesting all in one!By ClarePThis book is amazing. I'm studying to become a forensic anthropologist and Clea Koff's writing makes it feel like I'm able to understand what she was experiencing, which helps me understand what I will be experiencing later on. She's engaging and pulls you into her story.

In the spring of 1994, Rwanda was the scene of the first acts since World War II to be legally defined as genocide. Two years later, Clea Koff, a twenty-three-year-old forensic anthropologist analyzing prehistoric skeletons in the safe confines of Berkeley, California, was one of sixteen scientists chosen by the UN International Criminal Tribunal to go to Rwanda to unearth the physical evidence of genocide and crimes against humanity. The Bone Woman is Koff's riveting, deeply personal account of that mission and the six subsequent missions she undertook to Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo on behalf of the UN. In order to prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity, the UN needs to know the

answer to one question: Are the bodies those of noncombatants? To answer this, one must learn who the victims were, and how they were killed. Only one group of specialists in the world can make both those determinations: forensic anthropologists, trained to identify otherwise unidentifiable human remains by analyzing their skeletons. Forensic anthropologists unlock the stories of peoples lives, as well as of their last moments. Koff's unflinching account of her years with the UN what she saw, how it affected her, who was prosecuted based on evidence she found, what she learned about the world is alternately gripping, frightening, and miraculously hopeful. Readers join Koff as she comes face-to-face with the realities of genocide: nearly five hundred bodies exhumed from a single grave in Kibuye, Rwanda; the wire-bound wrists of Srebrenica massacre victims uncovered in Bosnia; the disinterment of the body of a young man in southwestern Kosovo as his grandfather looks on in silence. Yet even as she recounts the hellish working conditions, the tangled bureaucracy of the UN, and the heartbreak of survivors, Koff imbues her story with purpose, humanity, and an unflinching sense of justice. This is a book only Clea Koff could have written, charting her journey from wide-eyed innocent to soul-weary veteran across geography synonymous with some of the worst crimes of the twentieth century. A tale of science in the service of human rights, *The Bone Woman* is, even more profoundly, a story of hope and enduring moral principles.

From Booklist Any title containing the words mass graves portends some tough reading, and Koff's unblinking, direct memoir is not lacking in ghastliness. One of her aims, however, is to contrast her interior reactions to her work of exhuming and examining the victims of the Balkan and Rwandan massacres of the early 1990s with the meticulous professionalism needed to conduct it. Koff's observation that "when I analyze human remains I am interested, not repulsed" is shown in her objective descriptive writing about particular victims' physical characteristics and traumas. Away from the grave or autopsy table, however, Koff allows glimpses of the mental effort her professionalism requires by relating her numerous nightmares and manifestations of stress. She accepts this burden out of a deeply idealistic motivation--her hope that her career in forensic anthropology will reduce human rights violations in the world. Koff also writes about incidents of her field experiences such as privations, the dangers of gunfire and mines, and the interpersonal relations with her colleagues and UN guards. Gilbert Taylor Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved 'It is impossible to reach the end of *The Bone Woman* without great admiration for Clea Koff's tenacity and stoicism.' Caroline Moorehead, Independent 'Clea Koff's work is the place where science, idealism and humanism most intersect.' Laurence Phelan, Independent 'Fascinating... Despite the extraordinary depravity of the crimes detailed in its pages, *The Bone Woman* is a humane, hopeful and involving book.' Phil Whitaker, Guardian 'A hugely important book... It may be that this is the ultimate memoir of the post-Cold War decade.' Alec Russell, Daily Telegraph From the Inside Flap Published ten years after the genocide in Rwanda, *The Bone Woman* is a riveting, deeply personal account by a forensic anthropologist sent on seven missions by the UN War Crimes Tribunal. To prosecute charges of genocide and crimes against humanity, the UN needs proof that the bodies found are those of non-combatants. This means answering two questions: who the victims were, and how they were killed. The only people who can answer both these questions are forensic anthropologists. Before being sent to Rwanda in 1996, Clea Koff was a twenty-three-year-old graduate student studying prehistoric skeletons in the safe confines of Berkeley, California. Over the next four years, her gruelling investigation into events that shocked the world transformed her from a wide-eyed student into a soul-weary veteran -- and a wise and deeply thoughtful woman. Her unflinching account of those years -- what she saw, how it affected her, who went to trial based on evidence she collected -- makes for an unforgettable read, alternately riveting, frightening and miraculously hopeful. Readers join Koff as she comes face to face with the human meaning of genocide: exhuming almost five hundred bodies from a single grave in Kibuye, Rwanda; uncovering the wire-bound wrists of Srebrenica massacre victims in Bosnia; disinterring the body of a young man in southwestern Kosovo as his grandfather looks on in silence. As she recounts the fascinating details of her work, the hellish working conditions, the bureaucracy of the UN, and the heartbreak of survivors, Koff imbues her story with an immense sense of hope, humanity and justice.