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BOOK REVIEW

Thula Simpson, *History of South Africa: From 1902 to the Present*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2022, Hardcover ISBN: 9780197672020.

The title of the book reviewed is “History of South Africa: From 1902 to the Present” and the author is Professor Thula Simpson. The book has a beautiful cover with images of the former and current South African presidents, and a group of men whom I would assume are mine workers after having read the book. From one glance the book is quite dense, and one would start to wonder on the amount of time it would take to complete, however once you start reading the book you will stay captivated and intrigued to complete reading it. The first page of the book has reviews from others, gives you other peoples’ perspectives of the book and what to expect in it.

As a history student and teacher, I think this book is exceptional in capturing the making of politics in South Africa (SA), from the aftermath of the South African war to the present. From the narratives and sources provided in the book, Simpson provides readers with a background that assists in understanding how modern-day politics have been shaped in SA. Through several political events that are significant to the history of SA, Simpson brings us stories of many political individuals, some of which were not celebrated or known as others that are constantly embraced. He has brought out the voices of individuals whose stories and roles in the making of South African politics and history have been hidden in the archives. This book makes you aware of some of those who were a part of the struggle but are not often talked about. I love how in the book Simpson illuminates the roles of some of the forgotten individuals who contributed to

addressing and fighting against inequalities and injustices. The book is like a timeline of major events that took place from 1902 to the present, unlike others, it is very detailed and informative. It is a pot of gold to those that have interest in understanding the history of the making of the new South Africa; and understanding the existing political, social, and economic structures today. Because of the wide range of sources that Simpson used, the book provides us with a navigation of the information available in the archives for those that are researchers and would be interested in such content.

In the book he covers themes like labour history and the role of politics in the mining industry. This information could be very useful to someone who has research interests in labour history and politics especially those related to gold mining in Johannesburg. He talks about the formation of trade unions and the inequalities that existed in the mines and migrant labourers from Southern Africa and Asia. Simpson provides you with an overall history that is based on various themes of political struggle and violence both in rural and urban areas expressing inequalities which are quite valuable today. He also details the history of the formation of some political parties which are still in existence in the present day. The book also details the impact that global politics had on South African politics by detailing meetings and events that occurred in countries affiliated with South Africa. I like his use of sources and how he captures some of the minutes and interactions from important meetings between different political leaders and the masses. His use of images in between the chapters, creates a visual summary to the writings in the chapters and puts some of the faces behind the stories. There is just a good chronology of events from 1902 up to date which makes a connection between the past with present realities. The book is captivating, and it draws you into the stories/ events from start to finish, and the fact that it takes you from the earlier histories to the present moments, it shows how far along South Africa has changed and developed over the years. It is a book that I would recommend to be part of the curriculum for university students studying history particularly South African history politics.