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Roos Neil, *Ordinary Whites in Apartheid Society: Social Histories of Accommodation*. Indiana University Press, 2024, 264 pages. ISBN: 9780253068033.

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This book uses the ordinary or common whites of South Africa as a prism to navigate the complex and intricate history of racial segregation in South Africa. Roos weaves the changing scenes of the Apartheid regime in South Africa with the various policies and laws governing it and the way it was felt and implemented among ordinary whites in South Africa. He has connected this argument with the broader history of the whites' relations (Afrikaners, British) to the Cape, Boer Trek, and the suffering of the Afrikaners during the Anglo-Boer Wars (1899-1902). The book reveals the day-to-day experiences of the Whites from the Apartheid era to the liberation struggle period which ended in 1994 by forming the majority rule in South Africa after intricate negotiations towards the current structure of South Africa.

While many books on the history of South Africa focus overwhelmingly on the race question by taking the blacks as a focal point, Neil Roos has struck the balance by doing justice to the always ignored, the ordinary whites' experience during the Apartheid era (1948-1994). The book brings to light that the Apartheid policies and laws brought changes that were positive and negative to both races, whites and blacks, despite the whites being close to the very system of racial segregation and the very voters of the racist government. The author weaves all these bitter truths of the divided South African society where black South Africans felt marginalized during the Apartheid period. This book proves that the whites experienced life difficulties which scholarship still needs to unearth for public scrutiny.

Roos contributes scholarship on the dynamics of Apartheid regime via the life of the common whites in South Africa, revealing that the relationship between the whites and the Apartheid government was complex while its policies were lenient to the very voters of the sitting government. The common whites in South Africans felt the problems of the capitalist economic crisis which brought in by the First World

War (1914-1918) though in different ways. Many common whites were compelled to enlist in the fighting for the War on the side of the British, making Louis Botha, a former Anglo-Boer War commander, command the Campaign of the British troops in East Africa against the German troops. The common whites of South Africa participated in this huge endeavor for a few years after the signing of the Vereniging Treaty of 31 May 1910 with the unification of the Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange River colonies. Moreover, Roos has highlighted the debate on "social engineering" by the Apartheid regime by showing that the regime was concerned with family issues as it was considered that the family was the backbone of any whites and indeed, dealing with the poverty of the "poor whites". [1] Again, the debate of language questions in the context of South Africa, that even within the "whites" there was segregation for those who were pro-English vs Afrikaner speakers was not left behind as part of branding the Afrikaner language. Interestingly, the debate about alcoholism was also well debated as the regime wanted to control almost everything in South Africa.

The author's writing style is superb as it uses experience and family memories to debate the broader history of South Africa. It is indeed a lesson to many historians that they can author a book by simply connecting the life memories of their families to the history of a nation.

#### **Research Africa**

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