

For Thomas Sankara, African revolutionary, who knew that “women hold up the other half of the sky”. And for my father, who was his friend. A.

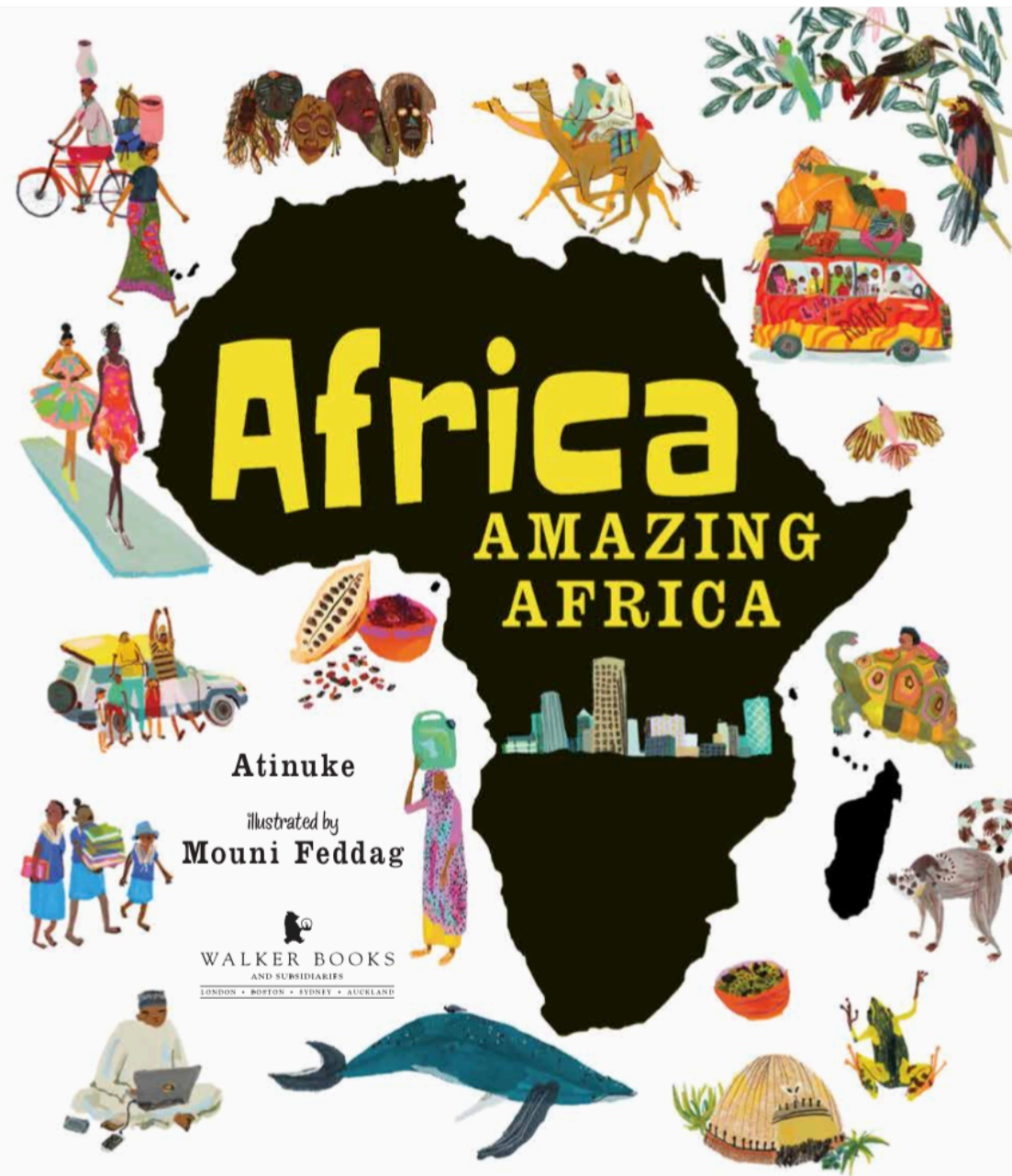
For my father, the first African in my life - I wish he'd seen this book. M.F.



**Note from the Author:**

Africa is changing all the time: new countries are being created and old traditions are being swallowed up. This book can only give an idea of what Africa is like right now as I'm writing it. I think that all the information is correct – we have double- and triple-checked it – but everyone makes mistakes. So please forgive any that you might find, and enjoy this book for what it is: a tiny glimpse into this most amazing continent.

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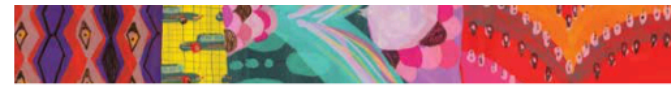
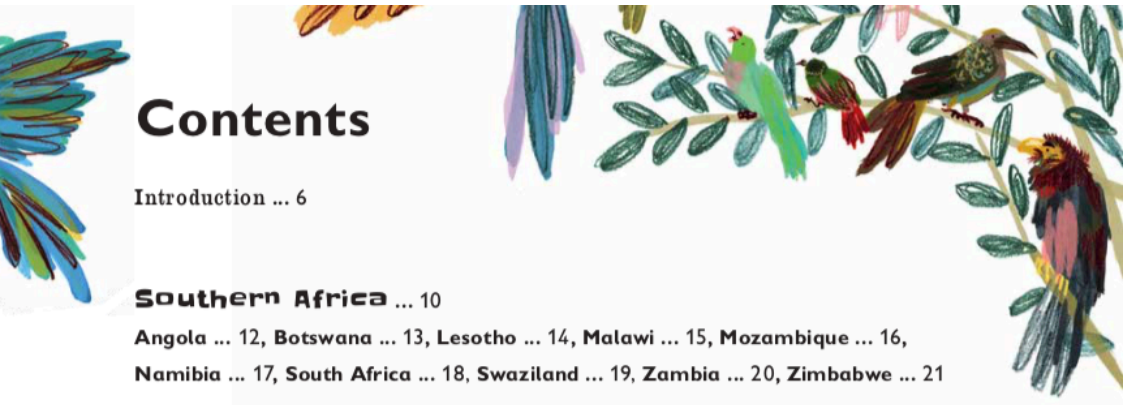
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# Introduction

**W**RITING this book has been an adventure. I wanted to write it so that I could share the things that I find exciting about Africa. But while I was working on it I found out a zillion more really exciting things.

Did you know that the first human beings to walk this earth were African? They went on to populate the whole planet. So we are all from Africa, originally!

Did you know that Africa is gigantic? It is as big as Europe, the USA, Mexico, India and Japan all put together!

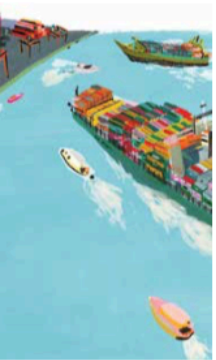
Did you know that no one can decide on the official number of African countries? This is because there are countries that are still unofficial. These are new countries that are struggling to become independent from old countries.

Did you know that in each modern African country many different languages are spoken? This is because African countries are made up of lots of ancient African kingdoms. Those original kingdoms all had their own languages and customs that still exist.

Africa is not one place. It has at least 55 different countries. And each country has many different cultures, different histories, and lots of different landscapes. African countries must be the most diverse on the planet!

Africa is hot, blinding deserts; wild, wet deltas; dark, dripping rainforests; white, sandy beaches; flat, grassy savannahs; cold, snowy mountains; black volcano islands; deep blue oceans and more...

Africa is modern mega-cities with skyscrapers and motorways.



Africa is ancient cities of clay with mosques and libraries. Africa is villages of huts with goats and chickens. Africa is shanty-towns made out of cardboard and corrugated iron.

Africa is donkeys and diamonds, camels and Coca-Cola, lions and Lamborghinis, oil-rigs and armies, football and voodoo, and more...

Africa is people – more than one billion people when I was writing this book and more born every day. Almost half the people on the continent are young people – we have the youngest population on the planet!

Africa is also animals – thousands of incredible animals that are quickly becoming extinct. These animals were hunted for millennia by hunter-gathering people who never threatened their existence. It is our modern lifestyles that are

wiping them out.

Climate change is changing landscapes and cultures and the lifestyles and habitats of both animals and peoples. And so is the modern technological age that is taking over the world.

Some African countries are incredibly modern, with cutting-edge hospitals and cyber-cities and fancy sports cars. Other countries are old-fashioned, with people herding camels and goats, and walking miles to collect water. Most, in fact, are both. Africa has always been a mixture of ancient traditions and innovations.

Africa had the first university in the world, more than 200 years before Europe; and centres of learning thrived there more than 1,000



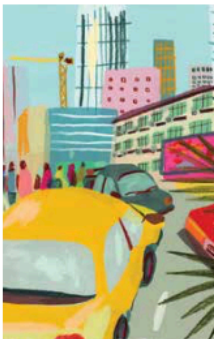
years before that. It was in Africa that medicine, engineering, maths and astronomy were all developed. African scholars knew that the earth was round and circled the sun centuries before European scholars did. The first alphabets were invented in Africa, as well as the idea of counting in tens.

Today, inventors from African countries are making discoveries in medicine, robotics, software engineering, sustainable technology, banking and more.

The world has a lot to thank Africa for!

This book is a celebration of Africa. But there is a lot of heartbreak as well. There is still slavery, still war, still hunger. We are one global village now, so to make Africa a better place, we have to make the whole world a better place. That means we can start right where we are. Buying Fairtrade things, even if they are more expensive, is one way to start. If we are willing to eat less, and own less, then other people can eat more.

I could not squeeze everything that I know and love about Africa into this book. There is only room to say two or three things about each country. But hopefully this book will make you want to find out more ... about the most amazing continent on the planet!



# Southern Africa

Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe



Southern Africa has long white beaches on the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, where people swim with whales and dolphins. Southern Africa has wide open savannah, where giraffes, zebras, and rhinos roam, and hunters used to stalk them. Southern Africa has the oldest deserts in the world, where, over millions of years, antelope, elephants, lions and humans have learnt to live. Southern Africa has some of the most modern cities in the world, with big banks, cutting-edge hospitals, huge museums and crazy nightclubs. Most Southern Africans have African ancestors, but some have ancestors from Europe, or India. So just like in America and Britain there are black and white and Asian Southern Africans and tons of mixed heritage people as well.

Welcome to Southern Africa!

"Mawya!" (Shona), "NgiyaNEMUKeLa!" (Zulu),

"Welkom!" (Afrikaans), "Siyalemukela!" (Ndebele)

"Namkelekile!" (Xhosa), "Welcome!" (English)



# Angola



Angola's capital city Luanda is right on the beach where skyscrapers overlook palm trees and big white yachts in the bay. In the offices, people are busy on their computers and mobile phones; and in the streets people are busy shouting their wares and honking their car horns. Outside the city is the rainforest: a place where the forest people tread silently with their spears and arrows. A place busy with butterflies, birds, monkeys and lizards. A rainforest thick with trees that help our planet to breathe.

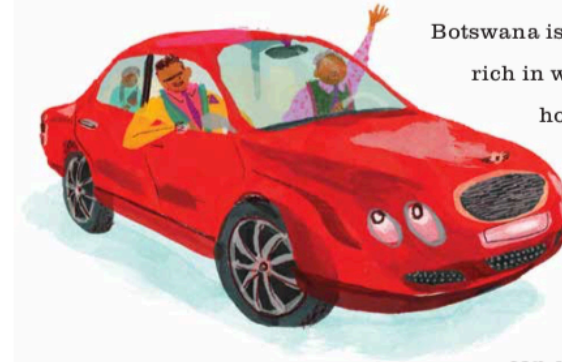
★ Basketball is very popular in Angola. Many of Angola's basketball players are signed by international teams.



\* Angola supplies the world with oil and diamonds.

● The Brazilian martial art of Capoeira probably came from Angola.

# Botswana



Botswana is rich in diamonds, rich in cattle, and rich in wildlife. It is home to millionaires, home to cattle-herders, and home to hunter-gathering people. The millionaires want to dig up the land and mine it for diamonds. The cattle-loving people want the land free of predators so their cattle can graze safely. To them, cattle are riches.

The nomadic San people do not care about diamonds or cattle, they want the land to stay wild and free – just like them.

● In the Tsodilo Hills of the Kalahari desert is a gallery of rock paintings and carvings by ancient nomadic peoples. They say it's on that very spot, that the creation of the world began.

\* Black rhinos were once totally extinct in Botswana, and white rhinos were so endangered that the people of Serowe made their land into a rhino sanctuary. White rhinos multiplied there, and one day a black rhino crossed the border from Zimbabwe into the sanctuary. Now there are four black rhinos living happily in Botswana!



## Lesotho

Lesotho is one of the highest countries in the world so it is called “Kingdom in the Sky”. Some places can only be reached on foot or in tiny planes. It is snowy in winter and the skiing is great; but it's also very cold, so blankets are important. People don't just sleep under them – they wear them during the day. Now there are factories in Lesotho making clothes for Gap and Saks and Foot Locker, and people wear coats and jackets just as often as they wear their traditional blankets.



- \* There are fossilized dinosaur footprints in Lesotho, which are more than 180 million years old!
- Lesotho sells electricity and water to its big neighbour South Africa. A massive dam in the highlands tunnels water to South Africa – making electricity as it goes.

## Malawi



Once, Malawi was famous for its woven baskets and carved wooden masks. Now it's known for its car fuel! Petrol is expensive in Malawi, so to make cars cheaper to run Malawians experimented with mixing ethanol (made from sugarcane or corn) with petrol. Then they invented a kit that lets cars use ethanol alone. It's a very cheap way to get around.

- \* Malawi has some great young inventors and engineers. William Kamkwamba is one – when he was fourteen he built a working windmill from old scrap metal after seeing a diagram in a library book.
- \* Lake Malawi has more than 1,000 sorts of fish, and most of them are found only in the lake. These fish are so bright and beautiful that they are sold to pet shops all over the world for people to put in their tropical fish tanks.