

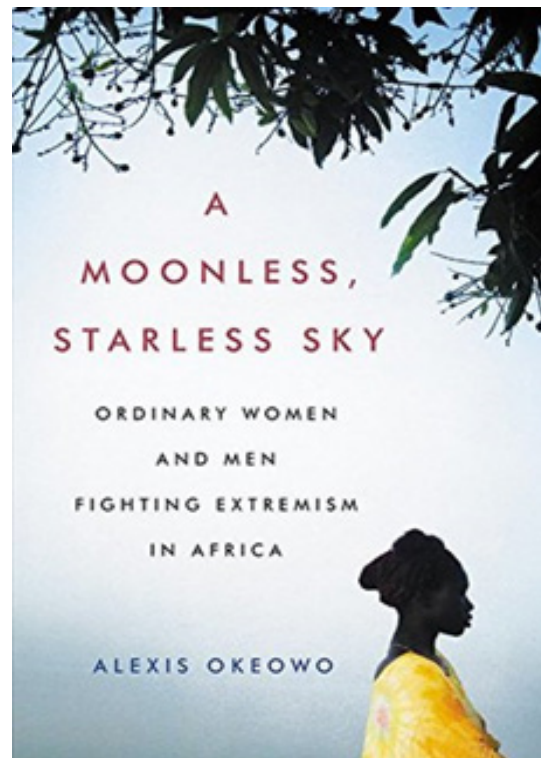
# BOOK REVIEWS

**TITLE: A MOONLESS, STARLESS SKY:  
ORDINARY WOMEN AND MEN FIGHTING  
EXTREMISM IN AFRICA**

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**DATE OF PUBLICATION: OCT/3/2017**

**PUBLISHER: HACHETTE BOOKS**



In *A Moonless, Starless Sky* Alexis Okeowo weaves together four narratives that form a powerful tapestry of modern Africa: a young couple, kidnap victims of Joseph Kony's LRA; a Mauritanian waging a lonely campaign against modern-day slavery; a women's basketball team flourishing amid war-torn Somalia; and a vigilante who takes up arms against the extremist group Boko Haram. She effortlessly weaves together stories, detailing atrocious experiences with frankness, simplicity, and above all humanity. She showcases the courage and resilience of everyday people, painting a picture of countries we usually only hear about through a very imperialistic lens.

## **Uganda**

This is the story of two people who were abducted by Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army as teens. After fifteen-year-old Eunice was abducted, she was forced to marry nineteen-year-old Bosco. What happens to these forced unions if the abductees escape and why do so many of these couples choose to stay together? How are the children of these marriages affected? Okeowo also explores the difficult relationships between the former child soldiers and the communities they may have been forced to harm.

## **Mauritania**

Mauritania became the last country to abolish slavery in 1981, but the government did little to actually eradicate the practice. Okeowo explains how slavery became such an accepted part of Mauritanian society and how demographic divisions contributed to its endurance. This section focuses on abolitionist Biram Dah Abeid's fight to end slavery in Mauritania, a crusade that has put him and his family in peril. What makes someone stand up for others, even at great risk to themselves? In this story we learn how slaveowners are able to enslave people without chains and about the obstacles that arise when adjusting to sudden freedom.

## **Nigeria**

In recent years, Boko Haram has terrorized northern Nigeria and kidnapped thousands of boys and girls. Rebecca Ishaku was one of the hundreds of girls abducted from a boarding school in Chibok, Nigeria. This is an account of one young woman's risky escape and the enduring effects of terror. Okeowo also interviews a government clerk who refused to stand idle while his community was being relentlessly attacked by Boko Haram's members. Elder became a unit commander for the Civilian Joint Task Force, a volunteer group that sought to reclaim their communities from the terrorists when

the government failed. This story of ordinary citizens fighting Boko Haram is remarkable.

## **Somalia**

Aisha received her first death threat from terrorists when she was thirteen. Her supposed crime? Playing basketball. Somalia went from having one of the best women's basketball teams in the region to a place where it's unsafe for women to play sports at all. This is the story of young women who continue to play the game they love despite the risks.

These accounts of ordinary people trying to live their lives freely are both distressing and inspiring. Rebellion doesn't come without sacrifices and many of these people endured death threats, survived harrowing escapes, and/or remained steadfast against relentless outside pressure. In the face of adversity, these people stand firm in their beliefs and manage to preserve their autonomy. The individuals may not make the choices one would expect or that are easy for outsiders to understand, but they're all doing the best they can to live their lives of their own free will and/or cultivate a society where everyone can live freely.