**Love in the Driest Season**

*Love in the Driest Season*, by Neely Tucker, is a book I think everyone should read. It is a true story about a man, the narrator, and his wife, Vita, and their attempt to adopt a child from Zimbabwe in the 1990’s. Neely is stationed in Zimbabwe as a journalist for a newspaper back in the States. He has to cope with being discriminated against for only wanting to help a child, and for being a white man married to a black woman living in a predominately black nation. Constant war paints the background of every day life in Zimbabwe, and at this particular time, Robert Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe has targeted journalists as terrorists of the state and unpatriotic. Many journalists are being thrown in prison and tortured for only writing stories about the current administration in the country, while Tucker and his wife, are trying to save a child’s life by adopting her, a task that has never been done in Zimbabwe by a foreign couple.

One of the most realistic, and appalling descriptions in the book is when Tucker walks in to an orphanage named Chinyaradzo filled to the brim with infants who have been abandoned by their mothers, most of which are dying from illness and malnutrition. The orphanage doesn’t have the supplies, trained workers, or money to take care of so many children who are so sick, so close to 20 babies have been died in the past year at the time Tucker and his wife arrive. The newspapers have pleaded for people to adopt the packed orphanages, but the government only accepts Zimbabwean adoptions. Tests for HIV are too expensive to test all the children, so they only have a rough estimate of the number of abandoned children with HIV. Vaccines for simple bacterial infections aren’t available in the amounts necessary to treat all the children, and cost too much anyway.

The sanitation for these children sounds like something out of the Middle Ages, before vaccines or modern sanitary conveniences were available, yet this story takes place in the mid and late 1990’s. I don’t think it’s arguable to say that most people in the mid and late 1990’s were, or even are today, concerned with the vast numbers of children abandoned and dying in the 3rd World from simple sicknesses that we take for granted will be avoided through childhood vaccinations here in the U.S. and in almost all of the Western World. This book has done a great job of opening my eyes to problems we’re not normally exposed to through the Nightly World News on TV, but should perhaps be educated on before we get to learn about the newest nuclear weapon the U.S. has created.

*Love in the Driest Season* also fits in nicely with what we’ve been talking about in class with HIV and childhood vaccines. Thousands of people, and in most cases, their children, are being infected with HIV every year in Africa. Healthcare is almost nonexistent in many of these areas, and the per capita annual income is close to what we’re capable of making in a week. If possible, every last cent made is spent on food, not a vaccination for someone’s child as a preventative measure. The corruption in many African nations’ government is atrocious and leaders put very little effort towards helping the citizens of their countries. It’s clearly displayed in the book that the Africans don’t want pity taken on them by arrogant Westerners, and would rather Americans and Europeans stay out of their business and stop trying to ‘help’ them by adopting their
children, in the case of the Tuckers. At the same time, they are well aware of the situation they’re in, and know they need the help, but in most cases, can’t count on their own governments, much less governments overseas, to know what’s best for the Africans and doing what’s ethical and unselfish to help them.

Neely Tucker has told an amazing true story in this book. In the end, the couple is able to adopt the child, named Chipo, and return to the states before a new administration is elected which would no doubt kill or hold all foreign journalists prisoner. I highly recommend this story if you are looking for something very touching and emotional, yet shockingly realistic in description of what’s been going on recently in Africa, while the rest of the world has turned its back.