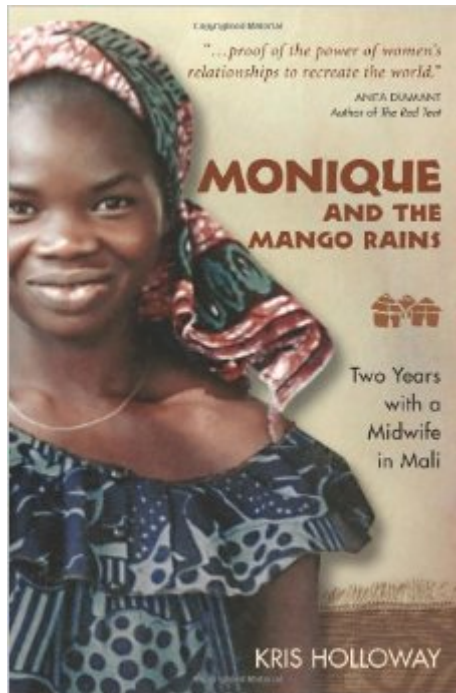


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# Monique And The Mango Rains: Two Years With A Midwife In Mali



## Synopsis

What is it like to live and work in a remote corner of the world and befriend a courageous midwife who breaks traditional roles? *Monique and the Mango Rains: Two Years with a Mali Midwife* is the inspiring story of Monique Dembele, an accidental midwife who became a legend, and Kris Holloway, the young Peace Corps volunteer who became her closest confidante. In a small village in Mali, West Africa, Monique saved lives and dispensed hope every day in a place where childbirth is a life-and-death matter and where many children are buried before they cut a tooth. Kris worked side-by-side with her as they cared for each other through sickness and tragedy and shared their innermost secrets and hopes. Monique's life was representative of many women in one of the world's poorest nations, yet she faced her challenges in extraordinary ways. Despite her fiercely traditional society and her limited education she fought for her beliefs birth control, the end of female genital mutilation, the right to receive a salary, and the right to educate her daughters. And she struggled to be with the man she loved. Her story is one of tragedy joy, rebellion, and of an ancient culture in the midst of change. It is an uplifting tribute to indomitable spirits everywhere. *Monique and the Mango Rains* is a fascinating voyage to an unforgettable place, a voyage spent close to the ground, immersed in village life, learning first-hand the rhythms of this world. From witnessing her first village birth to the night of Monique's own tragic death, Kris draws on her first-person experiences in Mali, her graduate studies in maternal and child health, medical and clinic records, letters and journals, as well as conversations with Monique, her family, friends and colleagues, to give readers a unique view and a friend in West Africa. Latest printing includes "2012 Postscript." Not-for-sale instructor resource material available to college and university faculty only; contact the publisher directly.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I love the music of Mali. Love how the songs of Ali Farka Toure and Boubacar Traore are about community --- farming and water and schools. And a passionate, exciting CD called Divas of Mali taught me that however poor Mali is --- and it's the fifth poorest nation on the planet --- women in Mali are encouraged to sing. And is that not positive as well? When she got her letter from the Peace Corps in 1989, a college senior named Kris Holloway knew a few things about Mali I seem to have overlooked. Like: Forget singing --- it's a particularly hard place for women. Most marry by 18 and have 7 children. Mortality rate for pregnant women: about 1 in 12, among the 10 highest. Genital cutting? In Mali, it's almost universal. And yet here is Monique Dembele, the young midwife in Nampossela, doing amazing work against ridiculous odds. The town's birthing house stinks. A storm has ripped off a corner of the roof. The heat is oppressive. But it is one place where men may not go --- though she has little medicine and modest training, Monique rules here. The Peace Corps has sent Kris --- the first white person ever to live in this village of 1,400 --- to be Monique's assistant. The friendship is instant. But who wouldn't be inspired by Monique? She has an unfaithful husband. Her father-in-law, a village elder, gets her pay and skims off so much for himself and his son that she can't take good care of the household. And yet Monique is one of life's ebullient spirits: ever-positive, warm-hearted, always looking to help others. This book is many things --- a reminder of our good fortune in the West, a granular look at another culture, an appreciation of the rich variety of human experience --- but I like it best as an account of a friendship.

This is such a fitting tribute to a brave, strong woman that no one outside of her country would have had reason to read about if it weren't for a good friend she made in a Peace Corps volunteer. Monique was a midwife in a small African village, surrounded by a war-torn country and constantly defeated at every turn by a patriarchal society and a lack of some of the most basic resources needed to survive. She was a real-life hero, sacrificing her own happiness to do what she knew was her duty - educate women in caring for themselves and their children, educate villagers about personal health and medicine, and save lives through her own rudimentary medicinal skills. Monique made the best of what she had to work with. She found ways to increase her own knowledge, found resources where there were none to be found, and found ways to discover joys in

the simple life she led. The author, Kris Holloway, tells Monique's story with such an obvious personal interest that it can't help but grab your attention and hold it. Her love for this woman, the village they worked side-by-side in, and the country that is not in any way kind to its women, seep under your skin as you read this well-written memoir. It is upbeat and optimistic, even as it has to tell the harsh realities that many of us have never had to face about life. It is matter-of-fact about things that cannot be changed, and passionate about things that must, one way or another, change for the better. It is never tiresome, boring, or whiny - in fact, it is surprisingly free of any of the negatives that can come from someone writing about a time or a person they may have romanticized, or their own role in such a story. I'm so glad of the chance to read about this woman and her fascinating culture.

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