



## The Other Side of Truth

*Beverley Naidoo*

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After the murder of their mother, twelve-year-old Sade and her younger brother are smuggled out of Nigeria by their journalist father to escape the corrupt military government and growing violence. They are sent to their uncle in London, but when they arrive, he is missing and they are abandoned, passed between foster homes. Their father escapes to England to find them -- but he will be sent back to Nigeria unless Sade can find a way to tell the world what happened to her family.

A Silver Medal winner of England's Smarties Book Prize, Beverly Naidoo's new novel explores the issues of family, exile, and freedom with eloquence and stunning realism.

## **The Other Side of Truth Details**

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Author : Beverley Naidoo

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## From Reader Review The Other Side of Truth for online ebook

### Emma Long says

'The Other Side of Truth' is a harrowing account of how the lives of Sade and her brother, Femi, are turned upside down. The story is set during the Autumn of 1995 in the aftermath of Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution in Nigeria for alleged political crimes. Sade's father, a controversial journalist for the Newspaper 'Speak' is determined to unveil the oppressive military regime in Nigeria. In an attempted assassination on his life, his wife is shot in the chest and it is made known that the culprits will return and the family must flee Nigeria. Sade and Femi are sent ahead to London with a shady woman, Mrs Bankole. On arrival in London, the children are abandoned by the Nigerian woman and have to find their own means of living. Walking through the concrete jungle of London the siblings are met with a series of unfortunate events. They are soon swept into care and have to deal with the despair of not knowing if their father is even alive whilst attending a school system which is completely foreign to them and applying for political asylum.

The text deals well with real issues of fear, loss, political trouble, asylum and racism in a heart-warming manner. Naidoo's novel speaks out on many levels, but above all she highlights the very notion that if "you keep quiet about the truth, injustice always wins". The novel is a clever blend of fact and fiction which is sure to pull at the heart strings.

I particularly enjoyed how the author drew parallels between bullying in British schools and political repression in oppressed countries. As our schools become a melting pot of multiculturalism it is important for the younger generations to become acquainted with the wider world and the issues that come with it.

I highly recommend this book to readers of all ages, since it is both fascinating, gripping and educational. Naidoo's story fits in perfectly with Refugee week which falls in June, it can be used as the basis for in class discussion and research. It can be used in History lessons to discuss political leaders like Nelson Mandela and Saro-Wiwa himself, as well as Geography lessons for locating countries in Africa.

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### Anna says

Okay, so this novel was not at all like I expected (perhaps I should have read the flap more carefully) but it was still really good. It's a surprisingly complicated and engaging story about a girl named Sade and her brother Femi who live in Nigeria but have to leave suddenly after their mother is killed by the government. Their father is a controversial journalist who is not afraid to speak the truth and, therefore, is not well-liked by the government. They meant to shoot him but killed mama accidentally and dad is worried they'll go over the kids next so they have to flee. Dad arranges for them to be smuggled to London, where his brother lives.

Anyway, yes, this is technically a young adult novel but I struggled to view it that way while I was reading. The issues are actually really complex and you have to have a decent grasp on Nigerian history and politics as well as colonization and the relationship that England and Nigeria have in this novel. It's not talked about explicitly but unless you are aware of certain things, I don't think the novel would make a lot of sense.

I thought the story felt very realistic overall and Beverly Naidoo was able to convey how the characters felt

quite well. I thought it was interesting that a lot of the story comprised of the students' experiences at school. This part of the novel felt very YA to me but at the same time it's important for us to realize that immigrants (refugees in particular) face a lot of challenges when they arrive in a new country. They have to get used to the customs, often the language (although Sade already spoke English in this novel), and they have to deal with peer pressure and fitting in.

Other parts, though, all of the dealings with Mama Appiah, Auntie Gracie, their father (in prison), the immigration lawyer, and others all felt way too mature for some younger readers. I did feel like the ending was a bit too optimistic for my liking (again, very YA) but I was glad it turned out the way it did.

I really liked that African proverbs were mixed into much of the story. I think proverbs are wonderful, especially for young adults who need to sort of infer their deeper meaning.

I would have liked for there to be a greater focus on Nigerian culture in this book and I realize now that I can't use it for the purpose that I had intended (African culture-themed book clubs) but I still think this is a great book that I'm sure I'll recommend to some people. I'm just not sure yet who.

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### **Madeline says**

*"Sade is slipping her English book into her schoolbag when Mama screams. Two sharp cracks splinter the air. She hears her father's fierce cry, rising, falling.*

*'No! No!'*

*The revving of a car engine and skidding of tires smother his voice.*

*...Papa is kneeling in the driveway, Mama partly curled up against him. One bare leg stretches out in front of her. His strong hands grip her, trying to halt the growing scarlet monster. But it has already spread down her bright white nurse's uniform. It stains the earth around them.*

*A few seconds, that is all. Later, it will always seem much longer."*

Hmm. Can you say, *intense* opening?

My class this semester is focusing on young adult literature that deals with hardship, death, trauma, etc (we're reading at least four Holocaust books) and weren't exactly eased into this with *The Other Side of Truth*. It's narrated by 12-year-old Sade, who lives in Nigeria with her parents and younger brother. Her father is a journalist, one of the few who's willing to speak out against the corrupt government, and because of this two gunmen visit the family's home one morning. They try to shoot Sade's father, but hit and kill her mother instead. Dad decides it's high time to get the fuck outta Dodge, so he arranges for the kids to be smuggled out of the country and into London, where they'll stay with their uncle until their dad can join them. Unfortunately, Sade and her brother Femi arrive in London, are left alone, and find out that their uncle is missing. Eventually they are placed in foster care and sent to school. This all has a happy ending, but things are pretty intense and depressing until then.

The writing is good (it should be, judging by how many awards this book has won) even if it gets repetitive after awhile. Sade has a habit of giving adults nicknames, like "Police Business Woman," "Video Man," and "Cool Gaze," which got old after the second time, and later on Naidoo is pretty determined to make us see that Sade's struggles against two bullies at her school are a parallel to the corrupt government in her home country - but these are all minor complaints. For the most part, it was a very sad but well-done story. Probably not for kids under 10, though, what with all the shooting and stuff.

### **Den says**

This helps me on my around the world journey: Nigeria has now been visited.

Sade and Femi are smuggled out of their country for their own safety and away from everyone and everything they know after their mother is murdered by the government due to their father being a very outspoken journalist who wants the world to know the truth about Nigeria. In the UK they are abandoned by the woman paid to deliver them to their uncle and when they finally get to his place of work, they discover he is missing too.

So now we have two young people who have been abandoned in a strange country, not knowing anything and not trusting anyone. After being mistaken for thieves they go into care while people try to discover their story. A huge part of the story is also about how they are treated at school and I think this is important with the number of refugees who are coming into the country and having to cope with life in new schools. When their father does make it over to them, he gets detained and the Nigerian government say they are after him for murder and needed him sent back. After seeing a programme on the TV, Sade goes to talk to one of the presenters and gets their story shown so her father now has lots of people behind him.

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### **The Book Queen says**

Gah. This was so boring and the characters were so uninteresting and annoying - especially Sade; I had no sympathy for her at all - that I had to put it down. I thought I was going to love this, after the first page, which immediately caught my attention, but Sade's immaturity and emotionless narration really got on my nerves.

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### **Nadhira Ramadhani says**

Amazing read with a mix of volatile emotions that I didn't want to put the book down! Eye-opener to those who want to see what goes on in our World! Though it might have been set in 1995, it still faces relevant issues in today's world. Rare do I find a novel that I would like to read for a second time straight-away. If possible, a good novel to introduce at Key Stage 2.

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### **Cristian G says**

#### **Personal Response**

I read *The Other Side of Truth*. I liked that the book was about a poor country with a corrupt government. I also liked how the author gave me a point of view of the refugees. I also liked how the author was so realistic with his descriptions and about the children and the situation they were in. It made me sad knowing that there are so many refugees that go to different countries just like Sade and Femi just to be safe.

### Plot

Sade and Femi lived in Nigeria, which had a corrupt government. After their mother was killed, Sade's father and uncle agreed that it was not safe for the children to stay in Nigeria. Sade's father was a journalist and he published an article about the government. This angered a lot of people which lead to the death of Sade's mother. Sade and Femi later fled with Mrs. Bankole to England, where they hope to find refuge. When they arrived in England, Mrs. Bankole abandoned the children and left. Without any money and nowhere to go, Sade and Femi decided to go to the college where their uncle Dele worked. They found no sign of their uncle and went to find refuge in a video store, but were mistaken for thieves and the owner called the police. The police took them to a foster home and the children were later fostered by Mrs. Graham and then by a Jamaican family. The children went to different schools and later became reticent to one another. The children later found out that their father was caught trying to enter England illegally and was being held. They later release him from jail and Sade had hopes that one day they would travel back safely to Nigeria.

### Characterization

Sade was the main character in the story. Sade changes at the way she looked at life and her country. With her mother dead, she became mature and knew what she had to do to survive and be safe. When she traveled to England, she saw England as a whole new world.

Sade and Femi were the protagonists all throughout the book. The children had to leave their own country for their safety. The Nigerian government was the antagonists. At the beginning of the book they killed Sade's mother and threatened their family.

### Setting

The setting was a huge part of the plot. Sade and Femi were born in Nigeria to a bad government, who later killed their mother. Sade and Femi later travel to London, England where they met new people. The setting was very important for the plot because it explained why Sade and Femi had to leave Nigeria and travel to a more secure country. This story took place in the present.

### Recommendation

I recommend this book to high school students because it is a book that has to be read by mature readers. Younger readers would not be able to comprehend the actual reality of this book. This book is an interesting book that can be read by any boy or girl who likes a good fictional book.

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### **Elizabeth says**

This was such an interesting story of corruption in Nigeria, through the eyes of some children. Very informative and yet easy to read. I really enjoyed it.

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### **Leo Valdez says**

"The truth keeps hands cleaner than soap."

An amazing story revealing the struggles of Nigerians. Wonderfully written and a must-read book.

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### **Liralen says**

Refugee stories seem topical at the moment, don't they? I imagine that if Sade and Femi arrived in England now, in 2015, their experience would be very different (better, worse, I don't know—but different) than in 1995, when this book takes place.

I feel a bit 'meh' about the plot. Despite complications, Sade and Femi seem to have really good luck in foster care, but much of the book is devoted to that struggle to fit in and so on, and...well, I kind of think Femi has it right: he takes a back seat to Sade, but perhaps because of that he's given a chance to *grieve* in a way that Sade isn't. I rather wish the mean-girls-at-school plot had been excised in favour of a deeper look at Sade's grief or the harder aspects of the asylum system. (I also wonder...was Mariam included to show young readers 'oh, look, here's a refugee story that sounds more familiar to you'? Because I can't think why else she would be.)

Straightforward and serviceable, I suppose.

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### **Susan says**

Sade sees her Mom shot in the driveway of her home in Nigeria because her father who is a journalist has upset powerful people by publishing the truth. Sade and her brother are smuggled out of Nigeria to London to an uncle who lives there. But the woman who smuggles them out leaves them on their own and when they try to find their uncle, he is missing! They are alone in a foreign place and must find a way to survive. I think this book could teach us sympathy for the many students in our schools who have come from awful circumstances in their home countries and deserve our help and friendship. I loved the stories and old sayings of Nigeria in the book. "Tell a lie, play with fire, but don't complain of the smoke." "Don't judge the village by the thief. If the dog steals will you punish the goat?"

Susan Huff, Library Media Specialist

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### **Samir says**

I just finished reading The Other Side of Truth by Beverly Naidoo and it was a very interesting novel. The author keeps you in the book the whole time.

What this book is about is Sade and her younger brother have to flee Nigeria because of the civil war. They flee by themselves because their mother was killed and their father works for the government. Eventually they flee and get to London but then are abandoned by this person who helped them get there. What I liked about this book is about how real it was. The author described the situation of fear so well in this book that I did not want to put it down. On top of that what struck me about this book is the level of maturity that Naidoo gives her characters. Sade is 12 and Femi her younger brother is 10. They are fleeing the country and they are surviving. They are making some wise choices and I still can't go over the fact of how mature they are and they know what they're doing. I recommend this book to people who like to see character development in a book and want to read well rounded novel.

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### **Noam says**

In this book the main characters face dangers, fears, and conflicts. I am a big fan of this book. It is really good because it makes you think about the challenges of some people in the world. I loved the context but I think the author (Beverly Naidoo) at some parts was too descriptive and then it got a little boring. The book is sad because you can never imagine something so terrible happening to you. Although the characters are fictional they seem real. In this book you hear about the challenges that the colored people in South Africa experienced, and it makes you grateful for what you have. When I read it, I thought a lot about their mother who was killed. She was mentioned a lot like her touch and the way she would have known what to do in hard times. The Other Side of the Truth is very interesting, when you start it you can't stop.

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### **Lisa Simmons says**

Refugees' story that clearly illustrates bravery, risks and sadness involved in fleeing one's home country. Great book for lower middle school-and older. Definitely doesn't skimp on emotion and tragedy without being too graphic, given brutality of military regime.

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### **Debbie says**

Sade lives in Nigeria with her mother (a nurse), her father (a journalist), and her younger brother, Femi. Her father writes articles for the last remaining newspaper in Nigeria that dares to publish the truth about Nigeria's brutal military government.

When their mother is killed by government gunmen, their father hires a woman to pose as their mother and smuggle them into London, where they will stay with an uncle. Their father plans to join them as soon as he can get a fake passport.

Sade and Femi make it to London, but are left alone when their uncle does not meet them at the airport. After some scary experiences while wandering around a strange new city, they are taken in by a government agency that works with refugees. Not wanting to put their father in danger back in Nigeria, they lie about their last name and hometown. When their father makes it to London, he is imprisoned for entering the country with a fake passport.

This is a beautifully written novel and the descriptions and metaphors are stunning. The only part of the story that didn't work for me was the fact that Sade, so brave and true to herself when it comes to bringing her father's story to light, does the opposite when faced with bullies at school. Perhaps it was more realistic the way Naidoo wrote it, but I really wanted to see Sade stand up to her personal bullies just like her dad.

This is a compelling and moving novel. A must-read.

