

Foreword

Robert Coles

I first met John Western in Cape Town, a city whose mixture of natural beauty (I know no place anywhere quite so dramatically appealing) and terrible human tragedy is the subject of this remarkable and important inquiry. The year was 1974; I had come to the city at the invitation of the students at the University of Cape Town, South Africa's oldest educational institution. During my stay in the city, I began to hear, naturally, of the various racially connected injustices that, in sum, are South Africa's exceedingly heavy burden— heavy to the point that one wonders how long it will be until an awful Armageddon is faced by the millions of human beings who live in cities such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and Port Elizabeth, not to mention the countless towns and villages of South Africa. Among the students I met during that rainy August I spent in Cape Town was a rangy and obviously bright and discerning Englishman who struck me as being brilliantly informed, not only about the people of South Africa and its history and cultural life, but about my own country as well, especially about the difficulties America's blacks and Indians have faced as they have tried to obtain an all too elusive political and economic equity with their powerful, white fellow citizens.

Since 1974 I have stayed in touch with John Western and his South African wife, Wendy Western; I have watched a research project get done, a couple realize how hard it would be for them morally to live in South Africa, and two "foreigners" take up residence in the United States and contribute significantly to its educational assets. I have also watched this book gradually take shape: the careful and knowing observations, the interviews, the statistical data