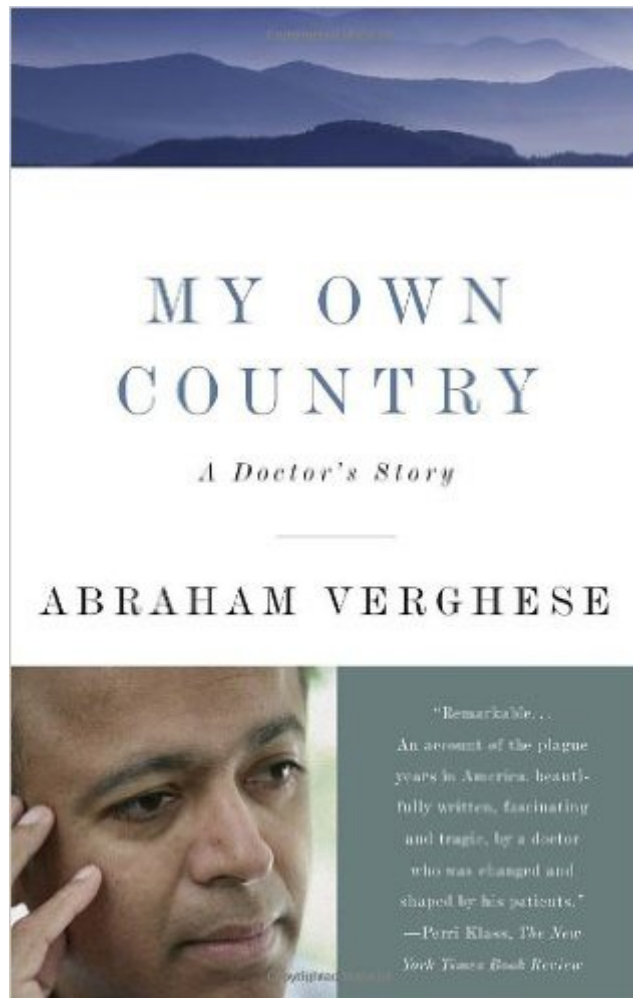


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# My Own Country: A Doctor's Story



## Synopsis

Nestled in the Smoky Mountains of eastern Tennessee, the town of Johnson City had always seemed exempt from the anxieties of modern American life. But when the local hospital treated its first AIDS patient, a crisis that had once seemed an urban problem had arrived in the town to stay. Working in Johnson City was Abraham Verghese, a young Indian doctor specializing in infectious diseases. Dr. Verghese became by necessity the local AIDS expert, soon besieged by a shocking number of male and female patients whose stories came to occupy his mind, and even take over his life. Verghese brought a singular perspective to Johnson City: as a doctor unique in his abilities; as an outsider who could talk to people suspicious of local practitioners; above all, as a writer of grace and compassion who saw that what was happening in this conservative community was both a medical and a spiritual emergency. Out of his experience comes a startling but ultimately uplifting portrait of the American heartland as it confronts and surmounts its deepest prejudices and fears.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a physician who was just finishing training when AIDS burst on the scene in the 80's, the panic and fear among medical staff described in this book are actually tame to what I saw in my hospital. I am one of those "who would," as Dr. Verghese categorized those who would or would not care for HIV infected patients, and this truly separated us from the vast majority of those at that time who let their fear rule over their intellect. Dr. Verghese tells this exciting story with great compassion for his patients and their families, and it is clear that his emotional connection to them, which is strongly

discouraged in medical training, came at great personal cost. As someone who now lives and practices in East Tennessee, I feel he accurately described the people, the culture, and the region's great beauty. His yearning to fit in--to have a home--is poignantly obvious throughout the book even as he becomes more and more isolated from his family and his colleagues. Several of my colleagues trained under or worked with Dr. Verghese during this time, and they all attest to his brilliance as a diagnostician, his great empathy for his patients, his nonjudgemental approach to the gay lifestyle, and his decency and approachability as a person. This book, in their opinions, is an accurate portrayal of the AIDS story in the rural setting. I am drawn to medical writing, particularly when written by physicians themselves, and Dr. Verghese is a master. This book moved me to tears as the deaths of all of these patients began to add up toward the end of the book, and one can't help but to feel the great waste of life that this virus causes. As a hospice medical director, I was also touched by Dr.

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