

Book review by Susan Toffolon, BA, CCE, CD(DONA)

Monique and the Mango Rains: Two Years with a Midwife in Mali

Kris Holloway

Waveland Press; Long Grove, IL 2007

When women and men such as ourselves are involved and enveloped in a field of interest that truly feels like a calling, much of our reading is often geared toward the research and learning components of that field. I would venture a fairly safe guess that being a doula, for most of us, is just such a field of interest.

Personally, except for required textbooks while finishing graduate school, my reading for 17 years has seldom strayed from articles, journals and books about maternal and child health; however, I stumbled across a book entitled *Monique and the Mango Rains: Two Years with a Midwife in Mali* by Kris Holloway. When I originally purchased this book, it was with the thought that it would comfortably fit into the more interesting research and learning components category. I was intrinsically wrong.

Monique and the Mango Rains is the recounting of Ms. Holloway's service as a young Peace Corp Volunteer and her relationship with Monique Dembele, the young village midwife who acted as Ms. Holloway's hostess during her two years in Mali. Monique was a true maternal and child health advocate, often to the detriment of her own person, in a country where childbirth is often a life and death challenge to women and their infants and traditional patriarchal rules are not commonly challenged.

This narrative is funny, frank, poignant, respectful, educational, heart wrenching, thought provoking and deeply personal. Ms. Holloway's style makes this true life ethnography as engaging and exciting as any best-selling fiction novel. *Monique and the Mango Rains: Two Years with a Midwife in Mali* definitely did not comfortably fit into the more interesting research and learning components category—it exploded the category to a whole new echelon.

Susan is the mother of four and grandmother of six and is a DONA certified birth doula and approved birth doula trainer in Florida. She served as the DONA International Treasurer for six years and is currently serving as the President-Elect.