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All Souls: A Family Story From Southie



Synopsis

A breakaway bestseller since its first printing, *All Souls* takes us deep into Michael Patrick MacDonald's Southie, the proudly insular neighborhood with the highest concentration of white poverty in America. Rocked by Whitey Bulger's crime schemes and busing riots, MacDonald's Southie is populated by sharply hewn characters like his Ma, a miniskirted, accordion-playing single mother who endures the deaths of four of her eleven children. Nearly suffocated by his grief and his community's code of silence, MacDonald tells his family story here with gritty but moving honesty.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I grew up in Dorchester which was on the other side of the tracks. Therefore, I already had something wrong with me should I venture to Southie. I was labeled an outsider and wouldn't dare go there alone even though I was white, Irish and Catholic. They were dangerous kids and if one of them accused you of looking at any of them the wrong way, that was enough for a gang beating. They were so full of anger and rage, and they could not ever form a sentence without using a slur of obscenities. I often wondered as a kid how these so called Irish Catholics could be so consumed with hate and venom not only against the rest of society, but towards each other as well. It never made

sense to me. I am also Mike's cousin and even though we haven't seen each other since he was a kid, I always felt there was something different about Mike as compared to the rest of the pack. I did go to the apartment a couple of times and the atmosphere was exactly as he described it. Helen getting ready to go out with her accordion, the other tenant's yelling echoing in the halls, Mike at the window or watching TV and the endless metal door slamming from the coming and going activity. I was there for the Frank's funeral, he was a good guy who made a fatal error in judgement just looking for a way out. I also spent a little time with Kathy after her accident. A beautiful girl who loved to dance, now another statistic to the horrors of drugs. What might have been if she had grown up somewhere else is now just speculation. The family's pain was unbearable as one by one they were slipping away. They were caught up in a world of out of control madness with devastating consequences. Mike did an excellent job telling the truth for the most part.

This piece of literature has it all: it's moving, riveting, gripping, and revealing; and it's very well written. The author's clearly a talented story teller, and he's very courageous to put this revealing story of his family's tragic experiences in the public domain. Michael MacDonald (and Ma) should be commended just for that courage, not even considering his literary talents. I can't imagine the level of pain he endured writing it because of the pain I felt just reading it. The book's emotional spectrum runs the whole gamut from sadness, grief, and despair to sheer hilarity...there's that Irish wit and humor throughout. I strongly recommend this book to anyone and everyone in our American society. The story had to be told: it's poverty and class, folks, not race! Whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, etc., whatever ethnic or racial group there is, those at the poor end of the spectrum will suffer until society changes. "All Souls" teaches us that. Hopefully we'll learn from this marvelous work, and things will improve. Like Michael, I'm someone born and brought up in a Southie housing project (The Old Harbor Village), albeit some 25 years earlier. I was luckier than Michael and his siblings because I had two parents, and drugs and guns were virtually nonexistent in Southie's projects in the 40's, 50's, and early 60's when I was there. However, I can identify with and testify to the existence of "Southie Pride", and the insular nature of "The Town", that "us versus the rest of the world" mentality.

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