



Madison Park: A Place of Hope

Eric L. Motley, Walter Isaacson (Foreword)

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Welcome to Madison Park, a small community in Alabama founded by freed slaves in 1880. And meet Eric Motley, a native son who came of age in this remarkable place where constant lessons in self-determination, hope, and unceasing belief in the American dream taught him everything he needed for his journey to the Oval Office as a Special Assistant to President George W. Bush.

Eric grew up among people whose belief was to “give” and never turn away from your neighbor’s need. There was Aunt Shine, the goodly matriarch who cared so much about young Motley’s schooling that she would stand up in a crowded church and announce Eric’s progress or his shortcomings. There was Old Man Salery, who secretly siphoned gasoline from his beat-up car into the Motley’s tank at night. There were Motley’s grandparents, who bought books for Eric they couldn’t afford, spending the last of their seed money. And there was Reverend Brinkley, a man of enormous faith and simple living. It was said that whenever the Reverend came your way, light abounded. Life in Madison Park wasn’t always easy or fair, and Motley reveals personal and heartbreaking stories of racial injustice and segregation. But Eric shows how the community taught him everything he needed to know about love and faith.

This charming, engaging, and deeply inspiring memoir will help you remember that we can create a world of shared values based on love and hope. It is a story that reveals the amazing power of faith in God and each other. If you’re in search of hope during troubled times, look no further than Madison Park.

Madison Park: A Place of Hope Details

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From Reader Review Madison Park: A Place of Hope for online ebook

Nandi Crawford says

I have earlier stated that Angie Thomas', "The Hate You Give" was probably the best book I've read all year. Well, for fiction, it was, This book, imho, was the best in nonfiction. Period. The very first time I saw the book at Walmart, I picked it up, intrigued. When I read that it was about a young man's journey that started in an all black community in Montgomery, I was doubly intrigued, and when a book tends to stay on my mind, I really have to break down and get it. I got it for Kindle and it was such an enjoyable read. I was truly sorry to see it end. I loved his grandparents, the people of the community(to me, THAT'S how a community should be. They got it). I was sad about him and his birth mother's estrangement. I loved how he did great things and met even greater people in life truly. But, it pained me to know that he had no relationship with his birth mother. But towards the end, that changed. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED and A MUST READ>>** Since I live in this fair state only two hours or so away, I want to check out Madison Park for myself and pay tribute to the community. I will do so and look forward to it.

Sandra M Pennoyer says

Wonderful book!

Reading Eric Morley's book was refreshing and eye opening. It instilled a feeling of gratitude for the rural south that is overlooked and dismissed by those that consider themselves "educated and enlightened". Men like him and those from Madison Park need to be held up as heroes instead of the celebrities that are so often just a "piece of fiction" in print, not REAL MEN, who actually contribute to the betterment of others. Real men, quietly do the right thing and make small decisions each day that benefit others without expecting public praise. Thank God for men like these....they are the backbone of all that's good about America. Of course, smart men like these, know the value of a good woman and how to appreciate them and especially how to treat these wonderful, strong, intelligent, and beautiful women in their lives!

Marianne Evans says

I'm sorry I just didn't find this book compelling. Perhaps it's because I grew up in Montgomery AL and found this all too familiar and predictable. (I did however love being reminded of Thomas Bobo. Bobo was such a lovely man.)

Kate says

I don't read a lot of memoirs for a reason. I had to really stay on myself to finish this book. It wasn't that I didn't find it interesting, because his story is full of amazing moments, but at times, I was skimming, especially through a lineup of names or details that didn't matter to me. In some parts it's like he was writing

the book more as a diary, in others, more as a testament to his success. I appreciate the path he took from the sheltered life of a small community to the public life of a White House official. It did seem though that there wasn't much strife along the way. He says there was, but doesn't call it out enough, or give it enough in-depth attention in the book to make it seem real. At parts, his story seemed unreal to me. It's hard to realize whether his ascension from Madison Park to the White House truly was one built on hard work or the opportunity he was given by others as he glosses over some of the very incredible ways he took steps. I don't necessarily think his story is toned down, but it did make me wonder if it was as fairy-tale like as it was presented.

Stephanie says

This book was a breath of fresh air in these disconnected, digital times, a reminder of what community once meant. Motley's voice is authentic, and the people in his life are painted vividly in the quiet stories running throughout the book. A moving tribute and thoughtful reminder of both how far we've come as a country and how far we have yet to go.

Heather Swanner says

I am a bit of a biased reader since I have known Motley since our days at Samford. He is a rare jewel who possesses a lovable quirkiness and a genuine heart for God and country. What I did not know about Motley were the variables that made him the person he is. In his memoir, not only does one learn what makes this rare time-piece tick, one also walks away with a tremendous appreciation for the value of a true community who pulls together to raise its children. Madison Park's story is a lovely reminder that it truly does take a village to help one reach his full potential.

Paul Wilson says

my parents grew up in rural Alabama, so reading this book was like taking a walk down memory lane: Motley's retelling of being raised by his grandparents is delightful and so beautifully crafted. His recollections of the deep south in the 1970's was fabulous. The characters - real people - that impacted his life - are all presented wonderfully. I loved every page of this book - and when I compare it to Hillbilly Elegy, well, there is NO comparison: this book is superior in writing and story telling by far.

Homerun2 says

This is a book I would not have picked up had it not been a book club choice. And while it is a touching story of a tight knit and nurturing black Alabama community, it really is a long expression of gratitude by the author to all those family and friends who believed in him. A very nice story, but not one I found particularly interesting.

Lois says

Y/A directed and heartwarming...about 'it takes a village' to raise the intelligent and driven Eric Motley in a strong African American community in Alabama. I was enjoying mildly and thinking of the students who would benefit from this, sometimes marveling at how much of his experiences read 20 years earlier from my perspective (he grew up in the 80s and 90s, but it reads 60s ish.) Startled to read, though, of his meeting with Clarence Thomas where his focus was entirely on 'what Thomas had suffered.' Hmm

Clara Roberts says

This was one of the best memoirs that I have read in some time. Eric Motley was adopted by the parents of his mother who was also adopted by this same couple. The mother deserted her son when he was 13 months old. He was reared in a self contained black town in Alabama that had been founded by freed slaves. He had little contact with the racism of the time. He gives great credit to his parents and the community for equipping him to constantly strive for excellence. When he left his black community to enter the greater community he could compete with others based on his natural ability that had been honed in his all black community. He attended Samford University, got a Ph.D from St. Andrews University in Scotland and worked for George W. Bush in the White House. Today he works for the Aspen Institute. My review does not do justice to this wonderful book.

Coleen Dailey says

What an excellent story! I could not put this book down. This young man certainly was loved and supported not only by his grandparents, but by his community and everyone he met to accomplish the things he wanted to do with his life and become the strong, dedicated person he is today. His family helped him every step of the way helping him reach his goals and he certainly can be proud of his accomplishments. His community can be proud of him. It is a cliche to say it takes a village but if more people showed an interest in our young people today, I believe we would have more success stories like Mr. Motley. I intend to give this book to my daughter who teaches first grade to help inspire her students to achieve their goals.

Congratulations Eric Motley on a life well lived and congratulations to your family and your support for their part in your success.

Kien Pham says

I have to echo another review that I read. The book is hard to finish. The interesting stories and engaging characters became tedious quickly. I definitely have lost my interests about mid way through.

Kelly Brill says

I wanted to like this book, but for some reason, I just couldn't connect with it. I admire Motley, and I loved the story of his grandparents. Madison Park nurtured him well and it's inspiring to see how much he has accomplished. I appreciate his gratitude and humility. I kept thinking of *Hillbilly Elegy*, and perhaps I was bracing myself for some pointed political comments - Motley's book is not very political at all so that's not fair of me. Madison Park existed for him, but as he admits, it doesn't really exist any more. And perhaps that's my struggle - his story seems so anomalous...

E says

This is a wonderful account of a remarkable community, a determined individual, and American opportunity. Sometimes it read like a travelogue but memoirs can be like that.

I had a friend who's Mom would often refer to "Mother School". "I learned it in Mother School", she would reply when my friend asked her why she did something. Well, long ago I decided that *Little Women* was surely on the textbook list for 'Mother School' and now I add this one. Madison Park is an example of what a caring community of selfless individuals can do to help children achieve their goals and become healthy contributing adults and thereby bolster the community and our country. The good sense, work ethic, and generosity shared in these pages is gold.

There does seem to be a focus on the good stories. Certainly he encountered racism, and roadblocks on his journey, however, it is optimism and gratitude that gets folks past roadblocks and prejudice and that's what he focuses on. Overall I feel like this book is a loving tale of gratitude. It's excellent.

Emily London says

I am most definitely a biased reader, as a student of the university Motley attended (Samford in Birmingham, Alabama,) but I found Motley's memoir a captivating glimpse into his piece of Montgomery, Samford, and DC. Motley came last semester to speak at Samford, and it was probably one of my favorite events all year. Though I don't normally appreciate a didactic thrust when reading, I thought his overall reminder toward gratitude and appreciation of the communal aspect of anyone's success was poignant and appropriate. Perhaps I am simply excited by the mention of professors I still take classes from at Samford in his memoir, and perhaps I am just a sentimental reader, but I thought Eric Motley's story was a worthwhile and touching read.
