



Time's Witness

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Things have changed in Hillston, North Carolina. A young black man is on Death Row and the Klan is again rearing its head, while a dirty tricks campaign is mounting against the womanizing candidate for state governor - who also happens to be the husband of Hillston chief of police's true love.

Time's Witness Details

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Author : Michael Malone

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From Reader Review Time's Witness for online ebook

Lavande says

I've always liked Michael Malone because his writing is tamely eccentric and amusing. This is a departure from his usual madcap adventures. It's a well-written murder mystery with sharp descriptions and even pacing. Michael Malone knows what he's doing. However (not to sound cynical or anything) I've gotten just a little tired of reading another murder mystery about racial inequality that is solved, yet again, by a heroic white guy who battles the odds to bring justice to light. Still, a good effort by Malone.

Mary Frances says

I love the best of Malone's books, and this is one of them. I find them engrossing and enjoyable. Some readers, who read mysteries only for plot, will dislike this book for the complexity of the human interactions that surround the plot, but for me, any book without richly imagined characters who change and grow is a bit of a letdown. Malone is known for writing novels, and his mysteries are fully formed novels as well. I have read this book more than once, and I continue to enjoy it upon rereading.

C.M. Barrett says

I read this book as a selection chosen by my book club, although I'd originally read it when it was first published in the late 1980s. Although there was a huge cast of characters, the author made each character distinct.

Without being pedantic or doctrinaire, the author uses the story line to show, rather than tell, his philosophy: that the super-rich use racism to keep poor and working-class whites and African-Americans divided. This is a singularly significant premise at this time, as we note the way in which women's rights, religious bigotry, and other issues have been added to the arsenal.

I don't want to leave the impression that this is a grim tale. The author has a unique sense of humor, and at times, his characters are almost too witty, as if they'd stepped into the pages of the novel from a stage where they'd been doing improv. I enjoy this style of humor, but others may not.

Overall, this is a big, richly dramatic, and greatly satisfying book.

Sara says

Great book. Love it for the glimpses of North Carolina small-town life that it gives, as well as the Big Themes it addresses-- Malone (who lives in Hillsborough) manages to keep the story and characters intimate while addresses topics of racism, classism, and the death penalty, among others.

A page-turner and definitely worth a read.

Charles Ellenbogen says

I always worry about the pace of a long mystery (541 pages) and this one reinforced that concern. A Southern story, so race is involved, the characters are largely cartoons, and everyone is wittier than sitcom characters. I know part of the point was that everyone in this small town had a past with everyone else, but that made the characters hard to track.

Lanaya says

A follow-up to "Uncivil Seasons," this is another book worth the read! Told from his partner's perspective, the character is well developed (although sometimes his motives are not so clear). It can be a little cumbersome to keep track of all of the characters--not a book you can set down for a few days without having to remind yourself who's who.

Lindsey says

THIS is the Malone I had been looking for!!

Several years ago I had picked up Handling Sin on a whim from the dollar bin somewhere. I thought it was an extremely well-written and thought-out book. So, I looked for more Malone books. Then I found The Four Corners of the Sky and it was a bit of a disappointment.

I still had Time's Witness on my shelf, but I was hesitant to try it because I was so let down by the plane book. There were a few times I picked it up and started, but it didn't click with me.

I just finished this book yesterday, and I'm wondering if I need to seek out more Malone books again (but be a little more choosy). The book was well-planned and very well written.

The story revolved around a single plot-point/event, but there were so many little things that happened around and because of this that it didn't seem as linear as it could have. Adding all those little details made the world feel complete and real. The characters were likable, despite being flawed - which again made them feel like real people. There was a mystery but it was so languidly laid out that it didn't feel like your typical, formulaic mystery novel.

I think certain Malone books are must-reads. I'm going to add this book to the ones that I recommend to others.

Susan says

The cover of the book has a quote from Booklist comparing this novel to "To Kill A Mockingbird." I think that's a fair comparison although this will not have the stature of the classic. It's full of richly drawn Southern characters and has a great courtroom drama along with wonderful writing. I've said it before and will say it again that I think that Michael Malone deserves to be better known.

Jbsfaculty says

This is one of Michael Malone's mystery novels - not as funny as *Handling Sin* (an all time favorite), but good nonetheless

David Carr says

An exhausting read, completed for a Let's Talk About It conversation to occur in New Bern on September 12, 2011. There is a 250-page novel somewhere inside these 500+ pages, and it is a sorry thing that Malone did not cut the excess, the smartass dialogue, the Southern flamboyance, and the multiple characters whose contributions to the narrative are negligible clutter. The redemption comes from the women, the fine court scenes, and the persistent (but too often obscured) theme of conscience throughout the book. For a book about race, too small a voice is given to African-American characters; for a book about capital punishment, too little attention is given to the deep roots of injustice; and in a book about the conventions of racism, the swampland of vile politics is not drained. Having both brains and spine, the main character does not need the lip. Malone, however, is beguiling to readers of New South fiction, a brand I have unfortunately found to have both light charm and even lighter consequence. Still, I think we will have a good conversation, with enthusiastic readers, in whom I take constant delight.

Chris Peterson says

I really liked this one, not just because it was set in Hillsborough (ok, it was "Hillston", but still....). Good story all around - mystery, race issues, southern traditions, a little romance.

Jim Leckband says

"Time's Witness" was written in 1989, but for some sad reason it is still relevant today. A man has been seven years on death row for the shooting of a out of uniform cop after a brawl. However, the cop was white, the man was black, the state was North Carolina and this was no brawl. I know, ancient history right?

I have no idea why Malone's work has not been filmed. Not that these books need the validation of Hollywood, they exist perfectly well without Tinseltown. But geez, with the right director/casting this book in particular would be a joy to see as a movie or a TV mini-series.

Ensiform says

The sequel to *Uncivil Seasons*. This time, it is Cuddy Mangum, now police chief in Hillston, who is the narrator, and the eccentric scion of North Carolina aristocracy Justin Savile, now married and an expectant father, is relegated to a minor role. In this novel, George Hall, a black man on Death Row for the murder

seven years previously of an off-duty white cop in a bar in the black side of town, is given an unexpected reprieve by the governor. The governor is running for reelection against war hero Andrew Brookside, whose heiress wife, Lee, just happens to be an old flame of Cuddy's and whom he still loves desperately. When Hall's brother, a vocal activist, is shot and killed, Cuddy starts to uncover a vast web of conspiracy and crime, from gun smuggling out of a rich paper magnate's factory, to political intrigues by white power militia yahoos, to attempted blackmail of the philandering Brookside, to underhanded brinksmanship by the governor. After Cuddy's friend, larger-than-life attorney Isaac Rosethorn, gets George Hall a new trial, some of these secrets threaten to come into the light, and Cuddy is targeted by the now-fugitive rogue cops.

Over 535 pages with a cast of dozens, this opus evokes not just the south, or the American justice system, but all of life's rich pageant: the tattered glory of very old, very rich families who believe their money grants them superiority; the casual racism of the populace; the institutionalized racism of the death penalty, especially in the south; the dizzying highs and crushing lows of love won and lost. There are no "good guys," and characters who come into conflict with Cuddy are not straw men but fully realized characters who have their own ideals and morals. Characters get married, have children, die; Cuddy tries to maintain his equilibrium as he walks a fine line between his affair with Lee, providing protection to Brookside, who has been getting death threats, and uncovering possible malfeasance in his lover's husband's campaign. Malone is a fine writer, capable of pathos, Wodehousian wit ("Fattie's whole body, of which there was an unbridled glut, relaxed with a shiver..."), action, suspense, romance, and deep perspicacity. Malone doesn't shy away from any issues; the novel culminates in a searing courtroom speech at Hall's retrial, then quietly notes that about a month after this sensationalist event, another black man was executed without fanfare. This may not be the Great American Novel, but it's a contender for the Great American Novel About Justice.

Charles Kerns says

Plain and simple, -Time's Witness- is a romance. Not a bodice ripper romance, more of a politico-smalltown ripper. A liberal southern (cast against type) police chief plays more than footsie with the soon-to-be governor's wife; his head detective has reeled in an ex-firebrand red, helping her become a comfortable middle class state legislator (but fighting for leftie causes); one cop courts another and they do the baby first marriage; and the next door neighbor has the woohos for the police chief whenever possible. That's a romance, even though the book's first half plays with being a police procedural and the second, a courtroom drama

The supporting cast: racism, Klan, militias, the power elite, politics, and blacks in North Carolina. The stereotypes: the Jewish smart lawyer, the ambitious prosecutor, the black pimp, the killer on death row trying for a last minute reprieve, the schoolboy-looking priest. But even with all this, the book moves along smartly through its 500 plus pages. You can see why Malone was such a hit writing soap operas. This could be one hot miniseries.

Melanie says

This book draws you in slowly, but you can't stop reading it. I love the humor and good story writing that is mixed together. I just discovered this author thanks to People magazine.
