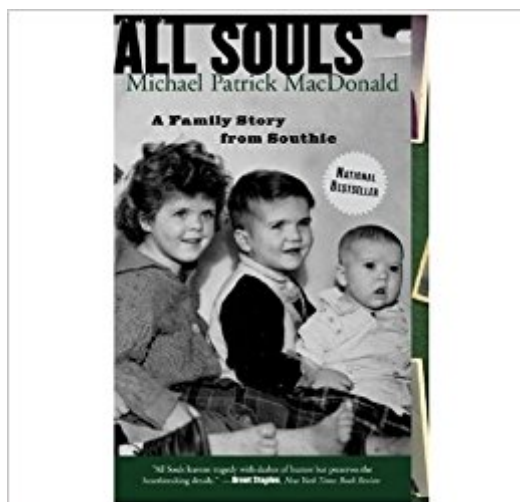


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All Souls: A Family Story From Southie



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. The anti-busing riots of 1974 forever changed Southie, Boston's working class Irish community, branding it as a violent, racist enclave. Michael Patrick MacDonald grew up in Southie's Old Colony housing project. He describes the way this world within a world felt to the troubled yet keenly gifted observer he was even as a child: "[as if] we were protected, as if the whole neighborhood was watching our backs for threats, watching for all the enemies we could never really define. But the threats—poverty, drugs, a shadowy gangster world—were real. MacDonald lost four of his siblings to violence and poverty. *All Souls* is heart-breaking testimony to lives lost too early, and the story of how a place so filled with pain could still be "the best place in the world." We meet Ma, Michael's mini-skirted, accordion-playing, usually single mother who cares for her children there are eventually eleven through a combination of high spirits and inspired "getting over." And there are Michael's older siblings Davey, sweet artist-dreamer; Kevin, child genius of scam; and Frankie, Golden Gloves boxer and neighborhood hero whose lives are high-wire acts played out in a world of poverty and pride. But too soon Southie becomes a place controlled by resident gangster Whitey Bulger, later revealed to be an FBI informant even as he ran the drug culture that Southie supposedly never had. It was a world primed for the escalation of class violence—and then, with deadly and sickening inevitability, of racial violence that swirled around forced busing. MacDonald, eight years old when the riots hit, gives an explosive account of the asphalt warfare. He tells of feeling "part of it all, part of something bigger than I'd ever imagined, part of something that was on the national news every night." Within a few years—a sequence laid out in *All Souls* with mesmerizing urgency—the neighborhood's collapse is echoed by the MacDonald family's tragedies. All but destroyed by grief and by the Southie code that doesn't allow him to feel it, MacDonald gets out. His work as a peace activist, first in the all-Black neighborhoods of nearby Roxbury, then back to the Southie he can't help but love, is the powerfully redemptive close to a story that will leave readers utterly shaken and changed.

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Customer Reviews

In this plainly written, powerful memoir, MacDonald, now 32, details not only his own story of growing up in Southie, Boston's Irish Catholic enclave, but examines the myriad ways in which the media and law enforcement agencies exploit marginalized working-class communities. MacDonald was one of nine children born (of several fathers) to his mother, Helen MacDonald, a colorful woman who played the accordion in local Irish pubs to supplement her welfare checks. Having grown up in the Old Colony housing project, he describes his neighbors' indigence and pride of place, as well as their blatant racism (in 1975 the anti-busing riots in Southie made national headlines) and their deep denial of the organized crime and entrenched drug culture that was destroying the youth and social fabric. MacDonald's account is filled with vivid episodes: of his brother Davey's horrific incarceration in Mass Mental and ultimate suicide; of the time Helen took her older kids to the hospital, where her current lover was a patient, to beat him up after he denied he was the father of the child she was carrying; of the murder of his brother Frankie by his compatriots after the police shot him in an armored-car robbery. But perhaps most shocking is the accusation that the FBI was paying Southie's leading gangster, Whitey Bulger, as an informant although they knew he was the neighborhood kingpin. MacDonald, who now works on multiracial social projects in Boston, does not excuse Southie's racism, but he paints a frightening portrait of a community under intense economic and social stress, issuing a forceful plea for understanding and justice. Agent, Palmer and Dodge. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"The best place in the world." That's what South Boston people --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

All Souls: A Family Story from Southie Having grown up in a small town in the Heartland of America, I cannot even imagine what it would have been like to grow up in a violent place like South Boston in the 1970's. In my town, the only people of color were attending the local college, so there was no such thing as racial tension; no such thing as police corruption. We considered the police to be the "good guys". I still do. I find it very sad that the kids growing up in the Southie culture considered it "normal" for teenagers to use drugs & alcohol, to steal clothing so that they might fit in, and to lose siblings and friends to suicide and murder. It is unfathomable to me that anyone could consider "Southie as the best place to live", even though there seemed to be a feeling of community/family togetherness among the residents. That Michael MacDonald could lose four of his eleven siblings and see his generation decimated by this poverty, crime, addiction, and incarceration, and still turn his own loss into the strong desire to change the Southie he still loves is amazing. This is an eye opening look at what the other side of life can be like...a life I never want to experience!

This deeply moving biographical novel succinctly captures the eternal and historical struggle of the integrated relationship between racism and classicism in America. The trials and tribulations of a poor, large, White Irish family living in a Boston housing project clearly reflect the exact same life experiences of other poor ethnic/racial groups trying to make it and survive in this land of promised opportunity. Although the South Boston Bulger gangster phenomenon serves as a Greek chorus to the times, this passionate family story itself totally overshadows that scourge and underscores the unending challenges, desperation, and heartache of living poor in America. Adjust the color lens and, historically, you witness how political "saviors" prey on the vulnerabilities of the innocent and uninformed...all in the name of making America great again. All Souls takes place in the late 70's when the issue of busing and desegregation dominated Boston as well as national headlines. The reputation of the "hub of the educational universe", as an overtly racist enclave, intensified greatly at that time and still lingers today. This worthwhile novel, itself, is actually timeless in its themes of family crisis, intervention, and survival. All Souls is an excellent vehicle to use in high school and college classrooms to encourage discussions on the impact of racism and classicism in today's America and the future implications of its continued course. Definitely a thumbs up selection!

The true story of growing up in South Boston during the infamous busing riots of the 1970's. But this story is really much more than the busing riots. Yes, there is racism. But this story is really about the culture of corruption that not only kept neighborhoods in grinding poverty but also contributed to the

massive amounts of drugs and gun violence. A culture of corruption that kept people in those circumstances. For those of us who came from tough beginnings, this story will resonate. For those of us who came from easier beginnings, the story may well be an eye opener. What struck me most in this book is the stories of distrust of the police. I kept thinking of every time I've read people talk about how *there's just no respect for police anymore!* I realize that those who say this, those who think this, have been able to grow up in places and situations that **allowed** them to trust the police. This was not the case in South Boston. The author doesn't just throw accusations around. He backs up claims of corruption with ensuing arrests and with facts. Two striking things about this story are: 1. How the corruption of elected officials encouraged racism and strife. Conquer and divide comes to mind. 2. The overwhelming sadness of how many people died. Suicides, overdoses, murders. And cases were not even investigated which encouraged "street justice". I encourage people to read the kindle sample of this book. When I started reading the sample I wasn't sure I would like it. I don't normally read non-fiction. But the sample was so powerful that I had to read more. Ultimately, I ended up reading this book in just over a day (I am a voracious reader).

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