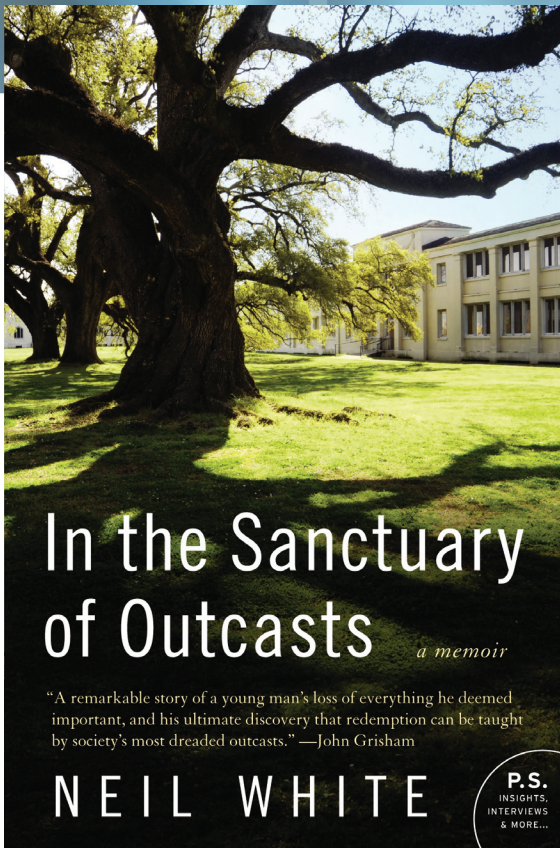


Read the book. Join the conversation.

SO KY READS!

A Community "One Book" Reading Project



Fall 2012 Program Guide

"Neil White's memoir, *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts*, is a remarkable story of a young man's loss of everything he deemed important, his imprisonment in a place that would terrify anyone, and his ultimate discovery that redemption can be taught by society's most dreaded outcasts."

—JOHN GRISHAM

..... A Project of the Southern Kentucky BookFest Partners



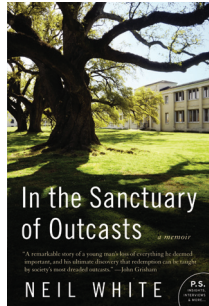
www.sokybookfest.org

About the Book

Neil White, a journalist and magazine publisher, wanted the best for those he loved—nice cars, beautiful homes, luxurious clothing. He loaned money to family and friends, gave generously to his church, and invested in his community—but his bank account couldn't keep up. Soon Neil began moving money from one account to another to avoid bouncing checks. His world fell apart when the FBI discovered his scheme and a judge sentenced him to eighteen months in federal prison.

But it was no ordinary prison. The isolated, beautiful colony in Carville, Louisiana was also home to the last people in the continental United States disfigured by leprosy. Hidden away for decades, this small circle of outcasts forged a tenacious, clandestine community, a fortress to repel the cruelty of the outside world. It is here, in a place rich with history, where the Mississippi River briefly runs north, amidst an unlikely mix of leprosy patients, nuns, and criminals, that Neil's strange and compelling journey begins. He finds a new best friend in Ella Bounds, an eighty-year-old, African-American, double amputee who had contracted leprosy as a child. She and the other secret people, along with a wacky troop of inmates, help Neil re-discover the value of simplicity, friendship and gratitude.

Funny and poignant, *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts* is an uplifting memoir that reminds us all what matters most.



BOOK GIVEAWAYS

Free copies of *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts* will be distributed at these community events while supplies last:

Thursday, August 9, 6 p.m.

Warren County Public Library—Main Library,
1225 State Street

Thursday, August 16, 2–2:30 p.m.

Bowling Green Technical College,
Main Campus, Building F Conference Room

Free books are made possible due to the generous support of the Alive Center.

Author Events

Saturday, August 25, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Writing Workshop with Lee Martin
WCPL Main Library—1225 State Street

Award-winning author Lee Martin will lead participants in a two-hour workshop that will focus on retrieving family memories, crafting them into scenes, and utilizing other techniques common to writing memoir. *No registration is necessary and the workshop is open to the public.*

Thursday, September 6, 3–5 p.m.

Writing Workshop with Neil White
Knicely Conference Center, Room 112

Neil White will cover a variety of writing topics during this session including Creating Vivid Scenes, The Art vs. The Craft of Creative Writing, and What's Good for Your Life is Bad for Your Writing. No registration is necessary and the workshop is open to the public. If you have any questions, please contact Kristie Lowry at kristie.lowry@wku.edu or 270-745-4502. *Free parking is available in the conference center lot. The easiest access to the workshop will be the East Lobby entrance off Nashville Rd.*

Thursday, September 6, 6 p.m.

Book Signing and Presentation by Neil White
WCPL Main Library—1225 State Street

Bring your book, meet the author, and hear his story.

Book Discussions

Tuesday, August 28, 6 p.m.

WCPL Bob Kirby Branch—175 Iron Skillet Ct.

Thursday, August 30, 2–3 p.m.

Bowling Green Technical College,
Main Campus, Building C Library

Wednesday, September 12, 3–4 p.m.

Java City at Helm Library, WKU Main Campus

Thursday, September 13, 2–3 p.m.

Bowling Green Technical College,
Main Campus, Building C Library

To learn more about Neil White and *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts*, visit his website at www.neilwhite.com.



BOOK CLUBS: WIN LUNCH WITH THE AUTHOR!



If your book club plans to read *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts* as part of this community reading project and would like to meet Neil White, please contact Lisa Rice at lisar@warrenpl.org. Respondents will be entered into a drawing to win a catered lunch with the author Thursday, September 6 at noon. You can also register your club online at doiop.com/winlunch.

Discussion Guide

1. Before you read *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts*, what did you think of when you heard the word “leper”? Did the book change your impressions?
2. When he was in the cafeteria, White would eavesdrop on the patients. He heard them call themselves “secret people.” Why did they call themselves this? Did the name fit them?
3. From the time he was a young boy, White’s mother told him “you were put here to do great things. Don’t ever forget that.” How did his mother’s attitude shape the man White was both before and after Carville?
4. White began his publishing career fighting for underdogs and the disadvantaged. What happened to those initial hopes? How can someone else escape the “success” trap that ensnared White and so many others?
5. “For as long as my children could remember, I had ignored fences and boundaries and rules. Nothing much had prevented me from getting what I wanted, and I made my children know it,” White admits. How did this attitude land him in Carville? Do you see a correlation between White’s attitude and that of our wider society? How did the two reinforce each other? How did White eventually break free from this kind of thinking?
6. White came into contact with a variety of diverse characters during his year Carville, including Ella, Link, Doc, Jimmy Hoffa’s lawyer, Frank Ragano, Jimmy Harris, Steve Read. Talk about some of these people. What role did they play in White’s life while he was there? What did he learn from each of them?
7. White looked forward to seeing another leprosy patient, Sister Teresa Pazosas. Though the disease had ravaged her nose and fingers, “just being in her presence made me feel light and peaceful,” White writes. “I didn’t fully understand why she had that effect on me, but I was beginning to feel certain about one thing. Carville was a sacred space.” What made Carville a sacred place? Why was White able to see what many of the other inmates could not?
8. Why was White so drawn to Ella? What was the importance of the Coke bottle story?
9. How did someone like White who’d “spent my life surrounding myself with beautiful people,” find such solace among the disfigured at Carville?
10. How did White’s view of his father change after he was at Carville?
11. What lessons did prison teach White? There were a number of turning points in his transformation. Map the arc of events that led to his metamorphosis.
12. While in high school, Neil White took a hard stand on the treatment of inmates. “When I was debating the merits of drug testing on prisoners, I never dreamed that I might someday be one.” Why does experience tend to change our opinions or open our minds? Why aren’t many people able to empathize with others until they have been in their place, as White discovered in prison?
13. Before he arrived at the prison, White writes, “I had no idea of the absurdity, complexity, tragedy, and magic that was Carville.” Explain how each fits this place, using examples from the memoir.
14. How did George Plimpton inspire White’s ambition to chronicle his time at Carville?
15. White tried to help the leprosy patients “rebrand” themselves. What suggestions might you have to help them change public perception?

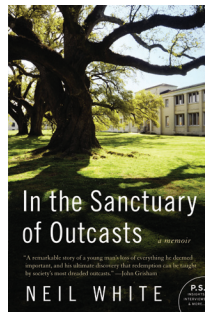
Read the book. Join the conversation.

Neil White has been a newspaper editor, magazine publisher, advertising executive and federal prisoner. He lives in Oxford, Mississippi, where he operates a small publishing company, writes plays and essays, and teaches memoir writing.

Neil has served as editor of *The Oxford Times* newspaper, *Coast* magazine, *Coast Business Journal*, as well as publisher of *New Orleans* magazine and *Louisiana Life* magazine. He also publishes *Samir Husni's Guide to New Magazines*, an annual review of magazine launches. He edited the anthology *Ten-Minute Plays* from Oxford. His essay "A Journey



in Journalism: From Idealism to Bankruptcy" was published in Joe Atkins's book *The Mission: Journalism, Ethics and the World*.



His memoir, *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts* was released in June of 2009. The book was described by *Publisher's Weekly* as "Brisk, ironic, perceptive... White's introspective memoir puts a magnifying glass to a flawed life, revealing that all of life is to be savored and respected." Pulitzer Prize winner

Robert Olen Butler added, "At once surreal and grittily naturalistic, funny and poignant, White's tale is fascinating and full of universal resonance."

In the Sanctuary of Outcasts was an Indie NEXT Great Reads Selection. The book was a finalist in the Books for a Better Life Award. *Sanctuary* was one of three national finalists for the 2009 Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award. The book was a finalist for the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance Book of the Year award. And in 2010, the Southeastern Library Association named Mr. White Outstanding Author of the Year. Foreign language translations have been published in Germany, Croatia, and the Netherlands.



Persons with disabilities are encouraged to participate in this program. If you need any type of accommodation, please contact Kristie Lowry at 745-4502 or kristie.lowry@wku.edu.

This program is funded in part by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and The Kentucky Arts Council.

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