



## In the Sanctuary of Outcasts: A Memoir (P.S.)

By Neil White

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"A remarkable story of a young man's loss of everything he deemed important, and his ultimate discovery that redemption can be taught by society's most dreaded outcasts." —John Grisham

"Hilarious, astonishing, and deeply moving." —John Berendt, author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*

The emotional, incredible true story of Neil White, a man who discovers the secret to happiness, leading a fulfilling life, and the importance of fatherhood in the most unlikely of places—the last leper colony in the continental United States. In the words of Pulitzer Prize winner Robert Olen Butler (*A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*), White is “a splendid writer,” and *In the Sanctuary of Outcasts* “a book that will endure.”

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## In the Sanctuary of Outcasts: A Memoir (P.S.) By Neil White Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

Following conviction for bank fraud, White spent a year in a minimum-security prison in Carville, La., housed in the last leper colony in mainland America. His fascinating memoir reflects on the sizable group of lepers living alongside the prisoners, social outcasts among the motley inmate crew of drug dealers, mob types and killers. Narrating in colorful, entertaining snapshots, White introduces the reader to an excellent supporting cast in his imprisonment: Father Reynolds, the peerless spiritual monk; Mr. Flowers, the no-nonsense case manager; Anne, the sorrowful mother with leprosy whose baby was taken from her arms; and Ella the Earth Mother, with wisdom to spare. Brisk, ironic and perceptive, White's introspective memoir puts a magnifying glass to a flawed life, revealing that all of life is to be savored and respected. (*June*)

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#### From Booklist

\*Starred Review\* White was a successful magazine publisher in 1993 when he was convicted of fraud and check kiting and sentenced to prison in Carville, Louisiana. He knew he was facing 18 months without his wife and two young children; he knew his enormous ego and ambition had landed him in prison; he knew he had to figure out a way to save his marriage and somehow rebound financially. What he didn't know was that the isolated 100-year-old facility at Carville was home to a leper colony of 130 patients. He learned that the patients (some severely disfigured and disabled) and the 250 inmates eyed each other suspiciously across the corridors and breezeway, each thinking the other was the scourge of the earth. Because his work detail brought him into frequent contact with the patients, White developed strong relationships with them. His favorite was Ella, a dignified and beatific elderly black woman, who had lived at Carville for more than 50 years. Among the inmates, White encountered counterfeiters and tax evaders along with drug traffickers and carjackers. When the Bureau of Prisons decided to evict the leprosy patients, tensions built on both sides. White, near the end of his sentence and struggling to come to grips with the consequences of his crime, is caught in the middle. He offers a memoir of personal transformation and a thoroughly engaging look at the social, economic, racial, and other barriers that separate individuals that harden, dissolve, and reconfigure themselves when people are involuntarily thrust together over long periods. --Vanessa Bush

#### Review

“A surprisingly gentle, sometimes hilarious memoir.” (USA Today)

“A moving story of growth and transformation. Among the lost, [White] found humility, beauty, courage—and himself.” (Dallas Morning News)

“Vibrant and readable.” (Harper's Magazine)

“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 wonderfully bizarre and entertaining memoir of jailhouse redemption—by turns hilarious, astonishing, and, when all is said and done, deeply moving.” (John Berendt, author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*)

“Neil White in his luminous memoir IN THE SANCTUARY OF OUTCASTS explicates his own path to

redemption. White brings to life a wacky bunch of characters who help him remember what is best about himself. His story is unique and deeply felt: I enjoyed this book immensely!" (Darcey Steinke author of *Easter Everywhere* and *Milk*)

"[Neil White] offers a memoir of personal transformation and a thoroughly engaging look at the social, economic, racial, and other barriers that separate individuals that harden, dissolve, and reconfigure themselves when people are involuntarily thrust together over long periods." (Booklist (starred review))

"Brisk, ironic and perceptive, White's introspective memoir puts a magnifying glass to a flawed life, revealing that all of life is to be savored and respected." (Publishers Weekly)

"White's memoir continues to surprise as it presents a witty, well-rendered narrative of redemption and enlightenment. Readers who enjoy clever, off-beat memoirs will devour this in one sitting." (Library Journal)

"An impressively detailed and unsentimental memoir...funny and straightforward." (Memphis Commercial Appeal)

"An earnest chronicle written with equal parts enlightenment and atonement." (Kirkus Reviews)

"IN THE SANCTUARY OF OUTCASTS is more than a memoir. It's most importantly a testament to the patients at Carville and the life lessons they gave and White took." (Memphis Flyer)

"This memoir represents an atonement persuasively made in an unlikely setting by an accomplished and engaging writer. " (Richmond Times-Dispatch)

"Leprosy and white collar crime in one dynamic book? Neil White, a writer with a multiple mission, knits two fascinating and unfortunate stories into one powerful narrative that is informative, heart-breaking and highly compelling. White writes with clarity, sensitivity and unforgettable passion." (Lee Gutkind, Editor, *Creative Nonfiction* magazine and author, *Almost Human: Making Robots Think*)

"A meaningful look at the trajectory of one man's life and his chance to change its direction. Worth reading and discussing...a particularly intriguing choice for reading groups." (The Mississippi Episcopalian)

IN THE SANCTUARY OF OUTCASTS was a rare treat for me as I not only learned about this extraordinary place, only whispered about when I was a child, but, even better, was reminded again of what really matters in this life." (Robert Hicks, author of *The Widow of the South*)

"At once surreal and grittily naturalistic, funny and poignant, White's tale is fascinating and full of universal resonance. And, not incidentally, White is a splendid writer, adept at both creating a scene and illuminating the human heart. This is a book that will endure." (Pulitzer Prize-winner Robert Olen Butler)

"Narrated in an engaging, affable voice with self-deprecating humor, IN THE SANCTUARY OF OUTCASTS is a great American story of personal transformation that leaves White -- and ourselves -- forever changed." (Tom Franklin, author of *Smونk*)

"White wastes no time getting to the hurt, and once he takes you there, you'll be riveted. A searing tale of trouble, it's also about finding a time and a place in which to lay the groundwork for a new life. A fine memoir and one I highly recommend." (Steve Yarbrough, James and Coke Hallowell Professor of Creative Writing Coordinator of the MFA Program English Department California State University)

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#### **Joe Timmons:**

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