

## **Grace From the Rubble Review:**

*Grace from the Rubble* encapsulates the essence of restorative justice. Author Jeanne Bishop invites readers to relate to and empathize with characters experiencing challenge, grief, loss, anger, and even hope. She skillfully narrates the tale of three tragedies, the loss of a daughter, a son, and her own sister.

Jeanne Bishop was a young attorney practicing corporate law when her younger sister Nancy was murdered. *Grace from the Rubble* touches on Jeanne's personal experiences of faith, loss, and her own extension of compassion and forgiveness to the man who was once the teenager who shot a bullet into her sister's pregnant belly. Since Nancy's murder, Jeanne serves as a powerful advocate for defendants – individuals perhaps similarly situated to her sister's killer - as a prominent public defender and advocate for restorative justice practices.

Jeanne shows her own vulnerability in reflecting on how the stories of loss she shares in this work resonate with her own experience. However, Jeanne's personal loss is peripheral to this story's focus on the loss and subsequent connection created between two fathers. Both fathers suffered the loss of their children, due to the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. Bud Welch lost his only daughter and Bill McVeigh lost his only son.

Julie Welch was a bright-eyed twenty-three-year-old who dedicated her time to helping others, through both work and volunteering. Julie had ambitions to become a Spanish teacher and build a life together with a loving fiancé. Working as an interpreter, Julie was killed instantly by the bomb while she was assisting Spanish-speaking social security applicants.

Timothy McVeigh served in the United States armed forces, receiving multiple service awards. He witnessed death, trauma, and returned state-side from service in the Gulf War with altered perceptions, including increasingly radicalized beliefs. Four years after an honorable discharge, Timothy orchestrated a targeted attack, the Oklahoma City bombing, killing Julie and 167 others. He was executed for his crime by the federal government two years later despite Bud Welch's advocacy against Timothy's death.

*Grace from the Rubble* is not a call to action addressing the systemic failings and inadequacies of the current penal system of retribution in the United States. It is something much more powerful. It is a call to love. Instead of focusing on large impersonal and imperfect systems, Bishop centers her work in the heart of conflict's meaning and impact, that is, people and human relationships.

Bishop calls her readers to connect, to empathize, to seek and give forgiveness, to be present in discomfort, absence, and loss. It is a call to honor what is sacred and private in grief and prayer, and nonetheless to sit together in the weight of silence when words unsaid carry more weight than those spoken. It is a story of an unlikely friendship of two fathers who "should" have been enemies.

Bishop emphasizes not only the experience of two fathers, but the interconnected nature of harm and healing. She draws upon the stories of victims, survivors, first responders, entire communities, family members of both perpetrator and victims, and paints a powerful image of the ripple effect and peripheral experiences of every-day people in response to tragedy.

Her work emphasizes individuals and communities in their experience of loss and tragedy rather than utilizing tragedies to advocate for an agenda. And yet, undulating beneath her story of those impacted by the Oklahoma City bombing, Bishop challenges the adequacy of the current justice system.

For example, Jeanne Bishop shares Timothy McVeigh's statements prior to his execution, "Death penalty' is . . . would you call it an oxymoron? Death is not a penalty; it's an escape. They treat me like a trophy, like they've got me, they've won? They didn't win. In the crudest terms, one hundred sixty-eight to one."

In the end, Timothy McVeigh wanted death. Victims wants were unique to each victim, some wanting retribution, revenge, or a sense of justice. Bud Welch sought remorse from a perpetrator who remained steadfast in his indifference. Bud Welch hoped for the opportunity to forgive. Our criminal justice system delivered death to Timothy McVeigh. It failed to provide supports or an infrastructure for remorse, apology, or recovery. Jeanne reflects and questions whether the interests of any harmed or affiliated parties were truly served. Her question is quiet, yet haunting.

Jeanne Bishop challenges readers to honor the human experience of pain and suffering and to strive for justice with love, justice with an opportunity to seek understanding and forgiveness. *Grace from the Rubble* offers insight into the heart and soul of restorative practice and serves as a subtle critique of a criminal justice system ill equipped to meet the needs that arise from individual, family, and community experiences of harm and healing. Regardless of the motive of the reader, this work is helpful to ground our understanding of one another, our adversaries, and our current justice system. More importantly, this work serves as a beacon of hope for how we strive to achieve justice from love.