



## The King of Colored Town

*Darryl Wimberley*

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## **The King of Colored Town** Darryl Wimberley

There are good people and bad on both sides of the tracks that divide Laureate from 'Colored Town'. This is the story of two African-American teens as they endure the backlash resulting from the integration of their segregated school with the all-white Lafayette County.

## **The King of Colored Town Details**

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Author : Darryl Wimberley

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## From Reader Review The King of Colored Town for online ebook

### Dorothy says

I'm not really sure why I chose this as my Amazon Prime Kindle Lending Library selection. I recall reading in the description a brief mention of northern Florida and mid-1960s. Having been born and raised in that area, during the 60s, those two facts were enough to pique my interest.

A few pages into the story, I had to put it down and stop reading. The language was rough. I'm not a prude and certainly give authors license to use language to tell their story, as long as it isn't gratuitous, which it wasn't. However, on that particular night, I simply didn't want to read it.

A week later I picked it up again and began reading. Soon, I was hooked. I was transported to a time and place that was all so familiar. While I wasn't a teenager during the early/mid-1960s I was a young child and remember it well. There were things that we did or said, which I know now as being racist, but back then it was just how it was. Eventually just accepting things to be "just how it is/was" is no longer good enough. There needs to be a change. This story is about change and enduring it.

Cilla Handsom is a teenage girl living in an area of town known as Colored Town. This is the section of the town that was designated for the local African Americans. The housing was in poor condition, with no running water. The children attended a school, for "blacks only". It was a time when African Americans, children or adults, walked the streets with their heads hung low in order to not provoke confrontation or worse.

While a portion of the book addresses civil rights and desegregation, there is so much more to it. We follow Cilla as she cares for her autistic mother. The young girl meets a charming young man known as Joe Billy King. Also, we watch as Cilla's special gifts in music develop and take her places beyond her dreams. The road to those places are not exactly paved in gold and come with a price, a high price.

Overall, I really enjoyed the book. The author's style appeals to me. I could feel the humidity that he described, which may be because I still live in the area. I recall what life was like when I was a child. My elementary school was, not long before I started attending, a "blacks only" high school. There are instances of crude language and scenes (violence and sexual nature), perhaps too strong for those who may be sensitive to such. Be advised.

I'm a little confused about the ending. It will be difficult to explain why without adding spoilers. I'm confused as to why her friends were cold to her with Mrs. Chandler explaining how Cilla didn't trust them. I'm not really sure why one would assume that those friends and Mrs. Chandler knew the truth. Why would they? I can understand them being cold due to her distance but not for dishonesty. I don't see them assuming the truth out of what was told to them.

At any rate, *The King of Colored Town* by Darryl Wimberley is a very good read. If one is interested about the mid-60s in the south, especially in Florida, this would be a good book. It covers the Civil Rights, desegregation, discrimination, love, family, struggles, triumphs, defeats, sacrifice, mystery, violence, and most of all the reason why there needed to be change. The characters are strong, and the author develops them well. If I could award half stars, this one would be four and one-half.

### **Yofish says**

Read mostly on the plane from Italy. Excellent beginning, setting the scene and the characters. (I could have lived without the framing aspect of her attending a funeral--that lets us know she's a successful musician before I wanted to know. I actually read a few chapters before I noticed the Prologue. Sorta wished I hadn't noticed.) 1960's Florida. Main character is hitting puberty, and for her Senior year part of the first class at the newly integrated school. Last third turns far too plot-driven, with weird courtroom 'reveal' of who actually raped her, and of her paternity (which actually had nothing to do with the trial in question). Long epilogue of her college years, musical career, discovery of her lesbian tendencies just didn't ring true.

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### **Deborah Ledford says**

My first love is reading literary novels and King of Colored Town ranks amongst my all time favorites. Darryl Wimberley presents a most engaging journey of a young black girl finding her way in world rife with challenges. The music elements are first-rate and composed as flawlessly as a maestro's composition.

This is a must read for those of you who enjoy any genre.

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### **jan says**

really compelling story, juicy to read (esp if you're from the rural south). made me cringe, cry, and laugh. there were a couple of questionable literary strategies, but those were overshadowed by entertainment value.

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### **Jool says**

I enjoyed this book and recommend it. Based in the south in the early 1960s, and about people on the wrong side of the tracks - in 'Colored Town' - it shows what life was like for them and some rise above it, some fight it, and some simply keep their heads down and accept it. A well told story.

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### **Jamie says**

This book is amazing. I am astonished that it, first, is written by a man and second, that he is white. This book draws you in from the prologue and will linger with you well after you've read the last page. The book gives you a good (albeit terrible) look at the civil rights situation the rural south in the 60's. The story has many aspects: racism, integration, poverty, voter registration, "good-ole boy" politics, all written in a very authentic dialect. It is very honest, there is violence and vulgarity. I especially enjoyed the aspect of Cilla's gift for music and composition. Very well played out in the story. The end even has a little bit of a twist!

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## Mocha Girl says

I pre-ordered *The King of Colored Town* by Darryl Wimberley back in January after a friend passed me a two-line, positive blurb about the book. By the time it arrived, I did not have any more insight about the author or the story, so I cracked the cover hoping not to be disappointed. This book turned out to be a true literary delight and one of my favorites so far for 2007!

The reader is transported to 1963 in the racially-charged Florida Panhandle region amid the Civil Rights movement. A teenaged dreamer, Joe Billy King, finds himself in the wrong place at the wrong time and is implicated in a church bombing. He flees Tallahassee to the backwoods of Laureate, FL where he meets Cilla Handsom. Opposites attract and the charms of Joe Billy, an outspoken, city boy, attract Cilla, the shy, bashful country girl who is struggling with a mentally ill mother and living in overt poverty. Their love affair is strained by the inevitable limitations of deep-rooted racism and local "good ole boy" politics. It is ultimately crushed in a brutal and savage act of cowardice and betrayal. A man is killed, a trial ensues, secrets are revealed, and their paths diverge forever. Cilla escapes and becomes a classically trained musician while Joe Billy languishes in a penitentiary for the rest of his life.

To reveal more would ruin the plot; but I will say there is much, much more to the story than what I summarized here! I found myself immersed from the beginning and it appealed to me on many levels. One being that it was centered in a region of Florida that I am intimately familiar; I actually have (distant) relatives in the same geographical area. Another is that the novel's historical fiction aspects were rooted in realism. The school integration scenes and voter registration issues so heavily prevalent in the rural, segregated South were written with depth, passion, and clarity. The author really captured and communicated the mindset (fears, pride, frustrations) and differing points of views among the African Americans on these two very (at the time) controversial topics. Last, I found Wimberley to be a wonderful storyteller -- he set the scenarios perfectly, the characters were rich and full-bodied, the plot was clever and well-paced, the lyrical prose and dialogue were authentic and on point. It is highly recommended for those who enjoy literary drama and Civil Rights era pieces with a bit of mystery/suspense.

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## Jean says

One thing that I can say for sure is that this book is very believable. Believable plot, situations, and characters. It takes place in Florida in the early 1960s when prejudice is very openly displayed and blacks find rough-going everywhere. Wimberley depicts an intelligent, gifted young lady and her community as they struggle through integrating the schools, an unfair court system, and white people who despise them and hold them back at every turn. I tear up when reading from time to time, however this one is a tear jerker in places.

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## Melissa says

At first I had some struggles reading this book. The language used and the writing style challenged me, and

initially made it difficult to get into this book. Once I actually had time to sit down and get onto this book, I was absolutely captivated.

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### **Laura Cushing says**

This book marks a milestone for me- the very first read on my Kindle Fire, and the first borrowed through Amazon's kindle lending library. I'm so very glad I picked it up - my decision was based on the title and the cover of the book, as I just wanted to pick anything to try out the service.

What a pick! The story of Celia and Joe Billy is very moving. Set primarily in the turbulent south of 1960s, on the cusp of civil rights - it's a very touching story about the lives of two very talented and lovely people to whom terrible things happen due to the ignorance and hatred of their community.

It made me cry because while this is a work of fiction, it could have very well happened and similar things have happened (and in some cases continue to happen) because of man's inhumanity to man.

Will definitely check out more by this author.

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### **Jen Woolsey says**

**Rich, tragic, real.**

I read with a nearly insatiable appetite. Sometimes, I finish a book and am full, but not satisfied such as when you do not have time to make a lovely sandwich for lunch and instead you settle for a Lunchable.

Sustenance, sure, but nothing to write home about. The King of Colored Town was a cup of homemade soup paired with a savory BLT on fresh,thick sourdough. Cilla and Joe Billy, their love, their plight and the all too common betrayal of fate had me wishing my lunch break would extend way beyond dinner. This was a wonderful meal.

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### **Ron says**

Outstanding novel that depicts the heartbreaking racial segregation and hatred endured by blacks living in the south during the 1950's and 1960's. The story of a young teenage black girl, a musical genius, breaking through terrible life experiences in the Florida panhandle to become an internationally known musician and composer. A great book well worth reading.

Kindle book.

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### **Gretchen Matsuda says**

This book made me want to join a book club. There are so many layers of plot, loyalty and betrayal, human weakness and strength that I want to be able to hash it out with someone. Set primarily in 1963/64, this book tells the story of Celli, a poor African American teen living in a shack in Colored Town, a desolate branch of

Laureate Florida. Celli is a musical savant whose life changes dramatically after being caught stealing classical sheet music from the band room at the all white high school. That fall, integration comes to Laureate and Celli finds herself at the center of racial tensions because of her musical gift and intelligence. The story becomes a stew of courage, bigotry, opportunity, unthinkable cruelty, hope, sacrifice and betrayal. The true heroes of this story take a backseat to Celli's gift, and a horrific sacrifice is made so she can escape from Colored Town forever.

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### **Kris says**

Just WOW! I got this on my e-reader with an Amazon Local deal. True to historical fiction. Similar to The Help, but grittier, shocking, and a late twist. There is great character development and scene descriptions. I got to use my e-reader word lookup several times. This is a great thought provoker and an excellent book for a book club, but if you need a fairytale ending, this isn't your read; it left me a "hot mess".

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### **Jamie Martinez says**

I have mixed feelings about this one. The story was so raw and selfish. You wish for the happy ending where everyone does the right thing and you don't get it. As much as I'm ticked at that, I can't say I'm not impressed. It was refreshingly different than the usual format I've encountered. Any author that leaves me either crying, angry, brooding or feeling any emotion over their story has potential in my mind. I will most likely read another of Darryl Wimberley's books.

Two areas that most piqued me were; The plot twist and the Billy Joe's development.

The plot twist just didn't sit right with me, it felt forced. As though the author wanted a good explanation for the split between the two characters but in my opinion that was already developed throughout the entire story.

Billy Joe, I didn't really care much one way or the other about him. he just wasn't developed enough for me. The plot twist did nothing to help. My only real emotion for him was my anger at Cilla.

I'm not a professional reviewer (if there is such a thing). These are my opinions only. I rarely ever made reviews of the books I've read. I didn't feel I COULD literally write reviews, so this year I decided to do it anyway. Failure is the refusal to even try.

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