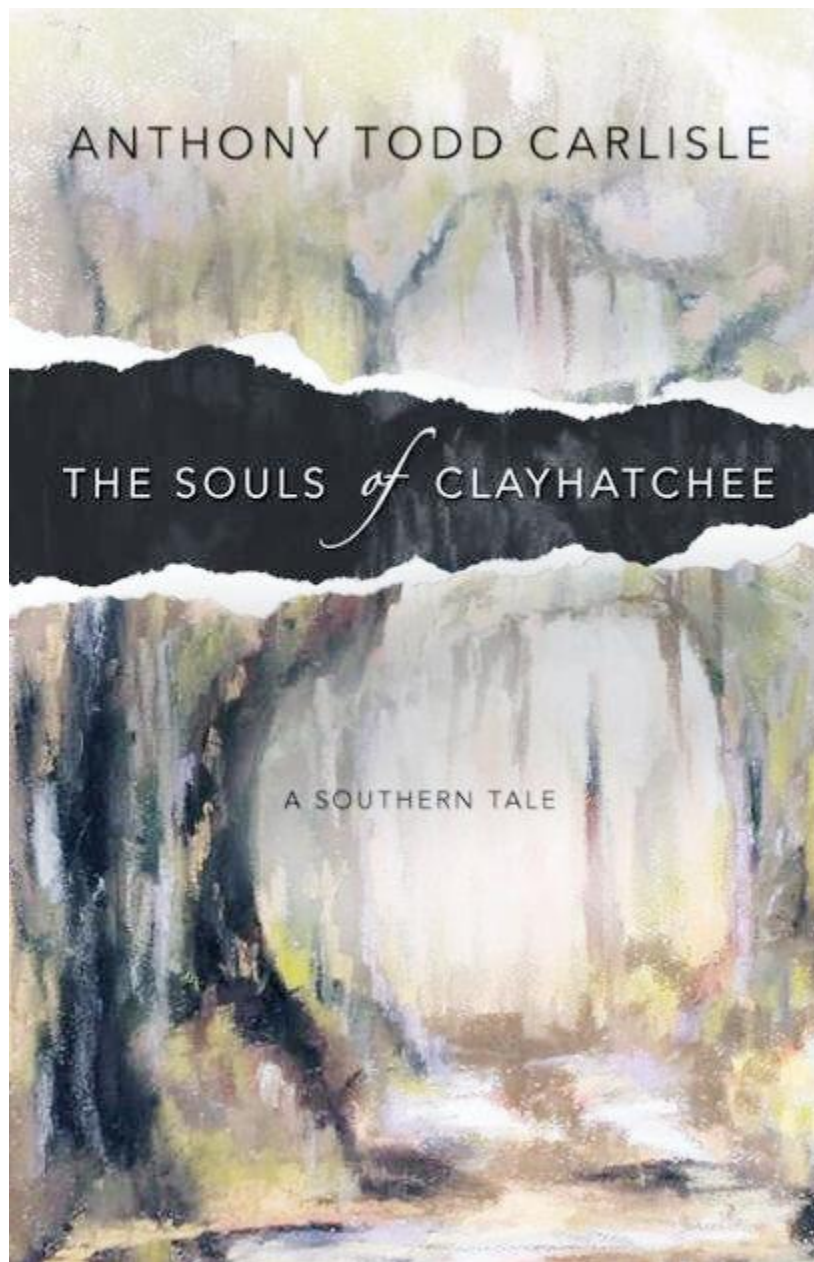


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Cal U professor releasing mystery novel in May

Apr 29, 2021 By Holly Hendershot hhendershot@heraldstandard.Com *3 min read*



"The Souls of Clayhatchee," available May 4, was written by California University of Pennsylvania journalism and English professor Dr. Anthony Todd Carlisle.

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A journalism professor hopes his forthcoming novel will spark conversations about race and how people view family.

"The Souls of Clayhatchee," written by Dr. Anthony Todd Carlisle follows the fictional character James Kingsman as he travels to the South to fulfill his mother's dying wish to be buried in her hometown of Clayhatchee, Alabama. While there, James discovers secrets about his family steeped in racism and rage.

Carlisle, a professor at California University of Pennsylvania, said he's hopeful that the book will prompt introspection and discussions about race because themes in the book relate to what is happening in our country today.

"A lot of the evils and a lot of the hurt that happened as a result of slavery, Jim Crow, institutionalized racism and discrimination, we haven't addressed, so every so often they rear their ugly heads," he said.

Carlisle, of Monroeville, started writing the book in 2004, while he was in the Army on deployment in Kuwait for Operation Iraqi Freedom. He served as a supply officer and military journalist in the U.S. Army Reserve for 14 years.

"You have a lot of downtime when you're deployed, so I was reading everything I could get my hands on," Carlisle said.

Inspired by one books he read, "I thought I could write something like that," he said. "I think the next day I flipped open my laptop and started my book."

The plot developed as he wrote, but Carlisle said he knew he wanted to tell a story about historic racism.

"It's so prevalent. It's been prevalent in my life, but even more so with what's been going on in this country with some of the racial issues that are going on," he said. "Even subconsciously, I couldn't help to write about it because we're dealing with these things on an ongoing basis."

The result, he said, is a book that tells a story of love and family through the lens of a mystery, while addressing thought-provoking topics.

"It is a good, heartfelt story of love and hope," he said.

A former journalist, Carlisle worked for several different papers in the region, covering beats ranging from government to religion. He used the skills he learned in journalism to craft the details used in his book, and said he used skills from his time in the Army to keep him focused and disciplined to finish the novel.

“I have always wanted to write fiction, and I expected I would one day after my career as a newspaper reporter.”

Now working as an English and journalism professor at Cal U, Carlisle said he’d like to continue writing books – perhaps even using the same characters as “The Souls of Clayhatchee.”

He said writing those characters was a joy and he hopes people connect with them and receive the book well.

“This is a dream come true,” he said. “I always wanted to do this type of writing and through the grace of God, opportunities like being able to teach at Cal U gave me time to do other things and gave me the opportunity to fulfil a lifelong dream.”

“The Souls of Clayhatchee” will be released May 4. It is available for purchase at a number of outlets, including Amazon, Apple iBooks, Barnes & Noble and Google Play.