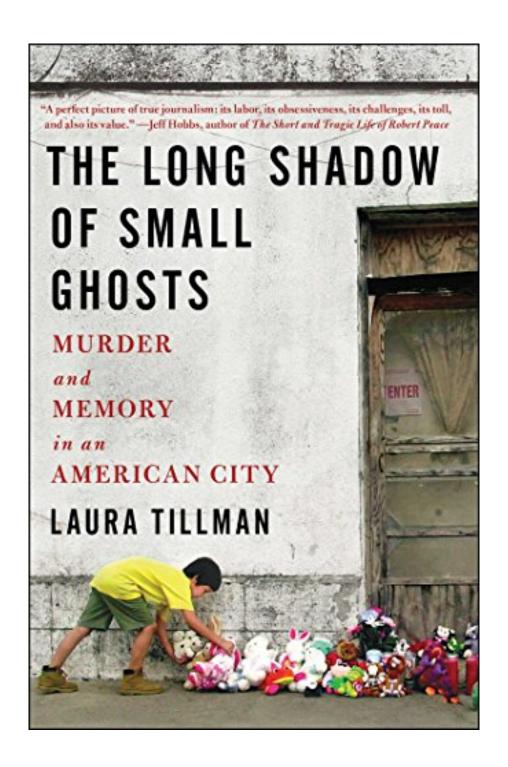


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On March 11, 2003, in Brownsville, Texas—one of America's poorest cities—John Allen Rubio and Angela Camacho murdered their three young children. The apartment building in which the brutal crimes took place was already run down, and in their aftermath a consensus developed in the community that it should be destroyed.

In 2008, journalist Laura Tillman covered the story for The Brownsville Herald. The questions it raised haunted her and set her on a six-year inquiry into the larger significance of such acts, ones so difficult to imagine or explain that their perpetrators are often dismissed as monsters alien to humanity. Tillman spoke with the lawyers who tried the case, the family's neighbors and relatives and teachers, even one of the murderers: John Allen Rubio himself, whom she corresponded with for years and ultimately met in person. Her investigation is "a dogged attempt to understand what happened, a review of the psychological, sociological and spiritual explanations for the crime...a meditation on the death penalty and on the city of Brownsville" Star Tribune (Minneapolis).

The result is a brilliant exploration of some of our age's most important social issues and a beautiful, profound meditation on the truly human forces that drive them. "This thought-provoking...book exemplifies provocative long-form journalism that does not settle for easy answers" (Publishers Weekly, starred review).

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### Features

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Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

A Highly Worthwhile and Enlightening Read

By Anna Lizer

This is a beautifully written book about a very disturbing topic. The author takes the reader on a journey to understand the brutal murders through the exploration of the background of Brownsville prior to the crime, the psyche and influences on the primary perpetrator, the impact and varying viewpoints of those who live in the town, and the effect of the building remaining or being destroyed. And the author raises many questions about the many gray areas surrounding this ---- questions and not answers ---- that trigger the reader to examine his/her own beliefs about these things given new perspectives to consider tough topics. What is unique about this book is that it devotes the majority of chapters to giving the reader a large framework to consider the crime and aftermath, rather than the crime itself. Further, it gives the reader much insight into the tireless work and dedication of an investigative journalist. I highly recommend this read, and look forward to more books from this talented young author.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Not just a murder story

By Tony

An intriguing story of a horrendous crime which concentrates not on gory details (except for one clearly marked chapter), but instead explores the effects of the events on the city and its people. A vivid portrait of a Texas town. An intricate and intimate telling of a tragedy.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

**Brilliant and Brave** 

By Michael D'Antonio

Unblinking, compassionate, honest, and haunting, The Long Shadow of Small Ghosts will immerse you in a community, a family, and a tragedy that deserve serious consideration. Tillman uses her heart as her compass and the result is not just a genuine story but a true picture of a journalist confronting realities the rest of us would deny. Brilliant and brave, Tillman's writing will stay with you long after you have turned the last page.

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