

Maximum Vantage: New Selected Columns

Bill Maxwell

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A collection of *Tampa Bay Times* columnist and English professor Bill Maxwell's columns, *Maximum Vantage* tackles weighty issues, including racism, civil rights, censorship, worker exploitation, environmental preservation, and carrying on the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

Drawing from personal experiences to shine a light on structural flaws in society, this curated selection represents columns written between 2000 and 2019. Many are more timeless than topical. They are analytical in dealing with subjects like housing discrimination, inequality in education, and political disempowerment, peeling back layers with thorough reporting. Some are poignant, relaying personal experiences as when Maxwell, acting as a civil rights activist, traveled to a Mississippi town where the Ku Klux Klan had decapitated one Black man and dismembered another. He also shares that he couldn't hitchhike after his car broke down in the Deep South for fear of calling attention to himself. Maxwell attains resonance when writing about mourning an acquaintance: "Amuel Murph's death is yet another statistic in the bloody tapestry of black life in America, I take his loss personally. I am angry."

The columns are grouped by subject, including farm workers, education, and favorites. They are arranged in chronological order in each section. They represent a blend of intellectual rigor, punchy directness, and poetic flourishes. Their work ends with a powerful account of Maxwell's first violent racial encounter: a white boy broke his nose with a belt after screaming racial epithets at him outside of a convenience store when he was ten years old, and then apologized after tracking him down at a public reading 49 years later.

A retrospective of stellar journalism, the impactful collection *Maximum Vantage* tackles some of society's biggest issues with insight and incisiveness.

JOSEPH S. PETE (November / December 2022)

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