

# BOOK CLUB KIT

“Pringle’s fast-paced book is a master class in investigative journalism...”  
— *The New York Times*

# BAD CITY

**PERIL AND POWER**

**IN THE CITY OF ANGELS**

# PAUL PRINGLE

**WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE**



## AN INTERVIEW

with Paul Pringle

PAUL PRINGLE is a *Los Angeles Times* reporter who specializes in investigating corruption. In 2019, he and two colleagues won the Pulitzer Prize in Investigative Reporting for their work uncovering the widespread sexual abuse by Dr. George Tyndall at the University of Southern California, an inquiry that grew out of their reporting the year before on Dr. Carmen Puliafito, dean of USC's medical school. Pringle was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 2009 and a member of reporting teams that won Pulitzer Prizes in 2004 and 2011. Pringle won the George Polk Award in 2008, the same year the Society of Professional Journalists of Greater Los Angeles honored him as a distinguished journalist. Along with several colleagues, he shared in Harvard University's 2011 Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Reporting. Pringle and a *Times* colleague won the California Newspaper Publishers Association's Freedom of Information Award in 2014 and the University of Florida's Joseph L. Brechner Freedom of Information Award in 2015. Pringle lives in Glendale, California.

**In 2016, you started investigating a drug overdose connected to University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine Dean Dr. Carmen Puliafito. That tip led you to unearth massive coverups within the university, one of which led to your Pulitzer Prize win in 2019. When did you realize the initial story went deeper than it appeared?**

It became clear to me fairly early in my reporting that the story went much deeper than an embarrassing episode involving Puliafito and drugs. That was because of the walls of silence I encountered at Pasadena City Hall and USC. The story thereafter became as much about institutional corruption as the overdose itself. Despite overwhelming evidence of criminal conduct, and despite the harm Puliafito was inflicting on desperate young people, the Pasadena police quietly let him off the hook (as the district attorney would later) and thwarted my initial inquiries. The police chief refused to speak to me, and I was denied access to records that are public under the law. Similarly, no one in authority at USC would grant me an interview or even acknowledge my requests for information. Instead, they sought to impede my reporting through their connections at the *Los Angeles Times*. My colleagues and I would learn that the school's administrators were engaged in the same type of coverup to bury the monstrous actions of George Tyndall, the campus gynecologist accused of sexually assaulting his student patients.

## **What was the most difficult challenge you faced in investigating the crimes of these two prominent doctors, Dr. Puliafito and gynecologist Dr. George Tyndall?**

Unfortunately, the biggest obstacle in the Puliafito reporting was the leadership of my own newsroom. The top editors killed my initial story and then delayed and diluted the piece that finally was published. In the Tyndall matter, the major challenge my colleagues and I faced was persuading his victims and the brave USC employees who tried to stop him to speak to us, given their legitimate fears of retaliation.

## **Why did you decide to turn your experiences of reporting on these pieces into a book? And how did it feel to tell the full story in hindsight?**

So much of the story could only be told on the broader canvas of a book. That was especially true in terms of not just my personal experiences but, more importantly, those of the victims of the two doctors and the whistleblowers who risked all to expose them. It was very gratifying to tell their stories in greater detail. And I believed it important to reveal the trouble my colleagues and I had in getting the Puliafito story published.

## ***Bad City* takes place largely in Los Angeles, but the alleged crimes you uncovered speak to a nationwide reckoning over men in positions of power harming young women. What lessons would you like readers to take away from the events that unfold in the book?**

One lesson is difficult and enduring: You can't always count on the institutions charged with protecting you to do their job, and sometimes their leaders will even be complicit in the harm. But that doesn't mean there aren't other ways of stopping these men and dragging them and those who shield them into the light — starting with investigative journalism. That's the uplifting lesson in this story: When all else failed, the whistleblowers and their supporters turned to journalists for help. They reached out to us, we convinced them they could trust us, they armed us with the truth — and, together, we brought the bad guys down.

## **You worked with some incredible young journalists on this story. How have they impacted your view of the future of journalism?**

My young colleagues put their jobs and careers on the line to do the right thing. They brought honor to their profession, and they deepened my belief that fearless investigative journalism has a bright future, particularly as a means of obtaining justice when justice is otherwise denied.

Author photo by Joanna Pringle

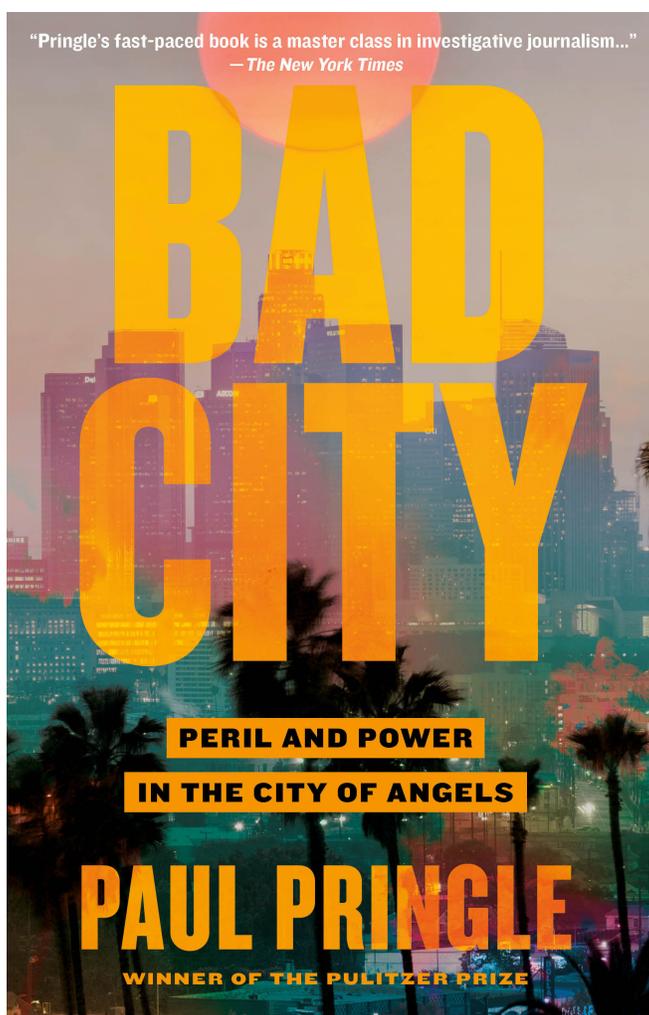
# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. By the end of *Bad City*, some characters have seen consequences for their actions, while others have not. Do you think justice has been served? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think Pringle and his team were able to expose the crimes committed at USC when others hadn't been able to?
3. Were you aware of this case before you picked up *Bad City*? If so, how did the book change your understanding of the case?
4. While *Bad City* is in many ways a testament to the courage and perseverance of journalists, it is Sarah's bravery that Pringle highlights in the end. Who do you think are the heroes of this story?
5. Conversely, who do you think are the main villains? *Bad City* exposes an intricate web of power and corruption—who do you think is most responsible?
6. In *Bad City*, Pringle walks the reader through the many steps of investigating a story and bringing it to print. Did you learn anything about the journalistic process reading the book? Did anything surprise you about how Pringle approached the story?
7. Although *Bad City* is a true story, many of the scenes are so gripping that they read like a novel. At what moment in the book were you most on the edge of your seat?
8. *Bad City* reminds us of the importance of investigative journalists and the work they do. Are there other pieces of investigative journalism that have been important in your life? Maybe one that changed your point of view or one that you feel exposed an important injustice?
9. Los Angeles is so central to *Bad City*, it almost feels like its own character. If you've spent time in Los Angeles, did Pringle's description of the city feel familiar? What impression does *Bad City* give of Los Angeles and how it works?
10. In *Bad City*, Pringle and his team go up against not only USC, but also the power structure at their workplace, the *Los Angeles Times*. Are there times when you've stood up to power? Times when you wish you had?

If you decide to adopt *Bad City* for your book club, we would love to hear about it! Please let us know by emailing us at [reader@celadonbooks.com](mailto:reader@celadonbooks.com) or post on social media using the hashtags **#CeladonBookClub** and **#BadCity**.

Thank you for your consideration.

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