

## **THE AUTHORS SHOW – Government/Politics**

**Author: Mikael Carlson**

We live in a binary world. It's more than just the ones and zeros that our laptops and smartphones process to stream videos, craft spreadsheets, or send text messages. It's emblematic of the opposing sides of a great rift that divides our culture, politics, and us from one another. You must now choose one side or the other. It's that chasm that I endeavor to bridge in my novels.

From MAGA to the Resistance, there is little discernible middle ground in America. Those voices have been drowned out by the legions on both sides. Polarization, a concept bantered about by political pundits across the country each night on cable news, is binary. Society forces us to be staunchly for something or unabashedly against it. There is no room for consensus building or compromise. You are part of the problem if the outrage at those who disagree with you isn't real. There is no room for civil discourse or debate.

I chose to shatter those perceptions in fiction. The beginning of my journey as a writer sought to marry a compelling story with something as unsexy as the American electoral process. It was intended to be fun, light-hearted, educational, and devoid of the contentious issues that plague America today. My goal was to write for a broad audience of all ideologies and political affiliations.

Political fiction is difficult to make captivating without turning to the sex, violence, and scandals omnipresent in this genre. Moreover, I wanted to elevate the conversation using more than bland narration. My novels are written in a first-person perspective that rotates through several key characters, immersing readers in the story by making them feel a part of the action. To add to the tension of the moment, scenes are all written in the present tense instead of as a retelling of the past. It's an unconventional writing style, and a difficult to do well.

How my first novel would be received because of that approach terrified me. Although a confident person, I've always found it difficult subjecting myself to public criticism. Many of the reviews were good. Other were not. Regardless of how many stars I received, more important

was the idea that I was reaching people. Readers understood the message and found it relatable. It was an exhilarating feeling, and I continued writing.

The three sequels that followed my debut novel tackled parts of the political process that most Americans find unsettling: partisan politics, the influence of money, and egotism in Washington. Regardless of political affiliation, they are subjects that unite most Americans. By continuing the journey of likable characters, and mixing shady antagonists into a dramatic story line, I intended to create a fusion between fact and fiction to illustrate how business is conducted in Washington.

The novels of the Michael Bennit Series became cautionary tales about the future of American politics. They expose the pervasiveness of social media, inescapable presence of lobbyists and special interests in our system, and the escalating rhetoric and violence directed at elected officials. The series serves as a reminder that the stark divisions that separate us now were not always how the world was, and not how most of us want it to be.

People paint with a broad brush today. They color our perceptions of politicians, the media, Millennials, and government using generalities. We may decry stereotypes, yet still manage to fall victim to them. I write to challenge those preconceptions in a fun and entertaining way that allows readers to do the same. It is not enough for me to write a remarkable story. I want what's written on the pages to be thought-provoking and inspirational, not divisive.

In my second series, the Black Swan Saga, I sought to bring the reading experience to another level. Inspired by sagas like Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and George Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, I explore modern politics in a futuristic setting where governments were replaced by corporations following a global economic collapse. The "corporatism" system that arises is a utopia...or a dystopia, depending on one's point of view. War, poverty, homelessness, inequality, and racism have been wiped from existence. So have antiquated concepts like freedom and liberty. Is it a trade that should be made? I leave that to the reader to decide.

The characters in this saga are more complex than any I have ever written. They are not all good or all bad. They make decisions someone may agree with or not. The lack of clear

protagonists and antagonists is a departure from how most stories are formatted. It was a risk to write the novels that way, but it also makes them feel more real.

The journey in these books explores what has propelled many human endeavors since the beginning of time: the quest for power. It's the underlining motivation in all politics that I wanted to probe that in a unique way by building a world different from today's society while keeping it relevant to our modern lives.

And that is why I write. There are many great authors who use their works to entertain, and I read many of them. I choose to use my voice to do more than just simply tell a story. My goal is to inform, educate, and challenge readers because I want to be different.

Whether it is the struggle of the common man laboring in our political system in the Michael Bennet Series, or the complex struggle between liberty and tyranny in The Black Swan Saga, my novels are meant to enlighten as much as entertain. Far from being preachy or cluttering minds with my own opinions, these novels challenge readers to draw their own conclusions about what they are reading.

It's not about book sales for me. I use those statistics only as a measure of the number of readers I reach. I want to engage people in a story that leaves them taking something away from it when the last page is finished. I encourage people to open their minds to different ideas. I strive to challenge preconceived notions and personal biases to make the world a little less binary. I want to introduce the world to Politics as Unusual.