

Naseem Rakha

Geologist, naturalist, teacher, journalist and author and mother, Naseem lives in a small town in Oregon's lush and beautiful Willamette Valley. Whether writing fiction or non-fiction, she likes to write stories that make people think and feel. Her debut novel *The Crying Tree* deals with the subjects of the death penalty and forgiveness. It was chosen for the PNBA Book Award and is an international bestseller. The subject was drawn from her experience covering an execution as a reporter for Public Radio, and in subsequent interviews she's done with death row inmates, Sister Helen Prejean (author of *Dead Man Walking*,) and victims of violent crime. Her stories have been heard on NPR's *All Things Considered*, *Morning Edition*, *Living On Earth* and *Marketplace Radio*. Since writing *The Crying Tree*, she has been working with prisoners interested in finding ways to make amends for their crimes, and is actively working to abolish the death penalty in the state of Oregon.

From my web site www.naseemrakha.com

The murder of a child dredges up the most painful emotions. There is no justice in it, no justification, and no way to find solace. Remorse and vengeance become inseparable from the souls of the people left behind. Yet, somehow there are inspirational stories of those who have come to forgiveness.

I found this baffling situation as a reporter covering an execution for public radio and then later in interviews with the parents of murder victims. I wanted to understand how an individual can move from one place to another – hate to forgiveness, despondency to hope – what that road looks like, and what toll it must exact.

The Crying Tree is that story, told through the lives of two main characters: Irene Stanley, the mother of slain 15-year-old Steven Joseph Stanley, and Tab Mason, the stoic and determined superintendent of the Oregon State Penitentiary who is preparing to execute the boy's murderer. Powerful and touching, this book provides insight into how murder, death row, capital punishment, and enduring these experiences deeply impact victims' families.

The Crying Tree is a story of things not being what they seem, family secrets and how they reverberate through lives, and being submerged in loss, yet finding ways to go on. It's a story of forgiveness and redemption and of the difficult decisions that lead people through life and that ultimately give life meaning.