

Justice and family loyalty in montana 1948 by larry watson

[Law](#), [Justice](#)



The famous novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn once said “ Justice is conscience, not a personal conscience but conscience of the whole humanity.” Justice is one of the most dominant themes in the book of Montana 1948 by Larry Watson. In the story, Wesley is a sheriff of Bentrock Montana, when his brother Frank is accused of taking advantage of his patients. He is forced to choose between justice and family loyalty.

In the beginning of the novel, Wesley values family loyalty more than justice, but after he finds out what his brother has done. He decides that justice is more important. Throughout part one, Wesley believes in supporting Frank. After Gail tells Wesley about what Frank does to young Native Americans girls. He responds by saying, “ I wish you wouldn’t have told the sheriff”(48). Wesley wishes that Gail should have never told him about the accusation because as a sheriff, he has the power to arrest and investigate, but he’s saying he doesn’t have the desire to do that. He’s supporting Frank here because he doesn’t want to investigate the information Gail told him about Frank. Instead of doing what should be done, he intercepts it. A few moments later, Wesley and Gail continue the conversation. Wesley says, “ She’s Indian, why would she tell you the truth”(54). Wesley is making Marie sound like a liar because he doesn’t want to do his job and investigate his brother. And he’s trying to make Gail question herself. Wes shows family loyalty is important to him than justice because he tries to deny the truth that his brother sexually abuses and rapes his Native American female patients. Later on, the family is eating dinner, and Gail asks him why he never said he doesn’t believe Marie. David narrates, “ He didn’t say a word”(54). Gail questions why Wesley never said he doesn’t believe her nor

Marie. He just replied with silence. This shows that Wesley knows that Frank is guilty, but he's trying to cover it up for him. This means he's being loyal to his brother over justice for Marie. Finally, throughout part one, Wesley believes in supporting Frank.

Throughout part two, Wesley alters his mind a lot but finally shows that he believes that justice is more important than family loyalty. As he identifies the wrong of his brother, he interrogates Marie. David explains, "The next day my father began investigating the accusation Marie had made against his brother"(37). After Wesley discovers the accusation Marie had made against Frank. He starts to investigate the problem by seeking help from Ollie Young Bear, who's known as a successful Native American. Wesley takes the role of investigating his brother's accusation. He knew from that start it wasn't going to be simple. He realizes that it's going to be challenging for him and is now in the situation and cannot get out until the problem is solved. This shows that Wes values justice over loyalty because he realizes that he has to do what is right and that is investigating his brother. Later in part two, Wesley talks to Frank about the accusation and made a deal. As long Frank quits what he's doing to Native Americans, then Wesley won't investigate. After they make the deal, the family is on their way home. Wes says to Gail, "I think the problem been taken care of. Frank said he's going to cut it out" (85). Wesley's action of making a deal with Frank shows loyalty to his brother over justice. If he valued justice, he would still be investigating the problem instead of talking Frank out of his problems. At the end of part two, David tells Wesley what he witnessed

about Frank. Before the death of Marie, David witnesses something suspicious about Frank and finally tells Wesley about it. Wesley says, " If Len knows, he'll keep his mouth shut if I ask him. Or if dad asks him. But he'll know. There he'll be after day. With that look. I'm not going to live with that look"(100). Wesley doesn't want to live with the fact that Len knows he's covering up a crime. This shows that Wesley values justice over loyalty, but he seems to want justice for the wrong reason. He doesn't want to go to work every day knowing that Len knows he's covering up a crime for Frank. Finally, throughout part two Wesley changes his mind a lot, but finally shows that he believes that justice is important.

By the end of the novel, Wesley changes completely and now values justice over loyalty. When Gail comes home from work, she is mystified as to why Wesley was looking nervous. Wesley says to Gail, " My brother-your uncle- has run afoul of the law. I had to arrest him. You understand that don't you? That I had no choice"(110). Wesley felt like he has to do the right thing which is arresting Frank, but Frank wants to keep it quiet because he doesn't want to be locked in jail. Wesley locking Frank in the basement shows that he's starting to favor justice over loyalty. Later in part three, Julian goes to Wesley's house with anger and argues with Wesley about Frank. Wesley says to Julian, " This isn't about family, this is legal right" (116). Julian argues why Wesley locked his beloved son Frank in the basement. Even while battling with his family members, he still chooses to do the rational thing. He stands for what is right and goes against his father's desire. He disobeys his father's order and goes on pursuing justice because it's not about family anymore,

it's about doing what is legal. By the end of part three, Wesley is full of fatigue and is talking to David about Frank. Wes says to David, " David I believe that in this world, people must pay for their crimes. It doesn't matter who you are or who your relations are; if you do wrong, you pay. I believe that. I have to" (156). Wesley explains to David that Frank has committed a crime and needs to pay for it. Wesley finally knows what to do with Frank, He stands up for what is legal and upholds justice. He does what most people can't do which is turning over their family. It was hard for him, but he finally understands that people must pay for their crimes and it doesn't matter who you are or who your relations are. Finally, by the end of the novel Wesley changes completely and now values justice over loyalty.

At the start of the novel, Wesley thinks family is more prominent than justice, but after he perceives what Frank has done, he realizes that justice is more important. Wesley is a sheriff of Bantrock whom his brother Frank is accused of taking advantage of his patients. Wesley is forced to choose between justice and family loyalty. Montana 1948 reminds us that justice is more important than loyalty. It also enlightens us that a person needs to get punished for the crimes they have committed and it doesn't matter who they are or who their relations are.