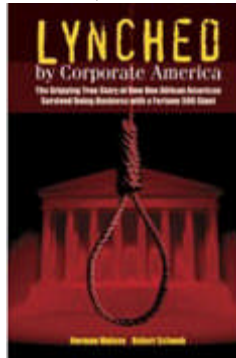




by Kam Williams

Lynched by Corporate America: The Gripping True Story of How One African American Survived Doing Business with a Fortune 500 Giant, Herman Malone and Robert Schwab, HM-RS Publishing, Hardcover, \$19.95, 112 pages, ISBN: 0978509439.

“My intention in writing this book from the outset has been to illustrate what happens... when one of the world’s largest companies rules the courtroom with impunity while a judge in black robes sits on the bench giving his or her stamp of approval to what the justice system calls fair and equal treatment.



And what happens when jurors who hear the cases are oftentimes oblivious to their own complicity in assuring that Corporate America always wins. At the turn of this 21st century, one company, Qwest Communications International Inc., formerly U. S. West Communications Inc., was able to use its powerful influence to extract the results it desired from our nation’s federal court system, all in the name of justice.”

-- Excerpted from the Preface

In 1969, shortly after being honorably discharged by the Air Force, Herman Malone returned to his hometown of Camden, Arkansas. One evening that fall, the 21-year-old Black man was picked up for no reason by two white cops who took him for a ride during which they warned that he might find himself floating dead in the swamp if he didn’t leave town immediately. They told him that he should be grateful they were even letting him go, because there “were a lot of other niggers not so lucky whose bodies were

rotting under the surface of the watery graveyard.”

That’s how Herman ended up in Denver. He told his flabbergasted and heartbroken mother to forward his final military check, and headed straightaway to Colorado where a military buddy offered to help him out till he could find a job. In spite of the indignity he suffered just after serving his country, Malone persevered, and eventually started a communications company called RMES Communications, Inc.



By 1990, RMES was flourishing, generating about \$10 million in annual sales as an approved vendor for US West, a regional telephone company and one of the seven Baby Bells. At this juncture, it looked like happily-ever-after for Herman and his family. But unfortunately, their version of the American Dream soon turned into a neverending nightmare when a new CEO took control of US West a couple of years later.

According to Malone, the new chairman systematically began backing out of its established agreements with any Black-owned businesses. The suddenly disenfranchised African Americans filed a class action suit alleging racial discrimination against the Fortune 500 mega-corp, and it is that frustrating, drawn-out legal battle which is oh-so-eloquently chronicled in *Lynched by Corporate America*.

As an attorney, I found this cautionary tale about the justice system rather riveting. Filled with copious quotes ostensibly recounted from court transcripts, co-authors Herman Malone and Robert Schwab make a very convincing argument that a combination of racism and a judicial kowtowing to corporate interests played a significant role in the resolution of the case.

While discouraging, this should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the age-old legal maxim well-known to lawyers, “In the halls of justice, the only justice is in the halls.”