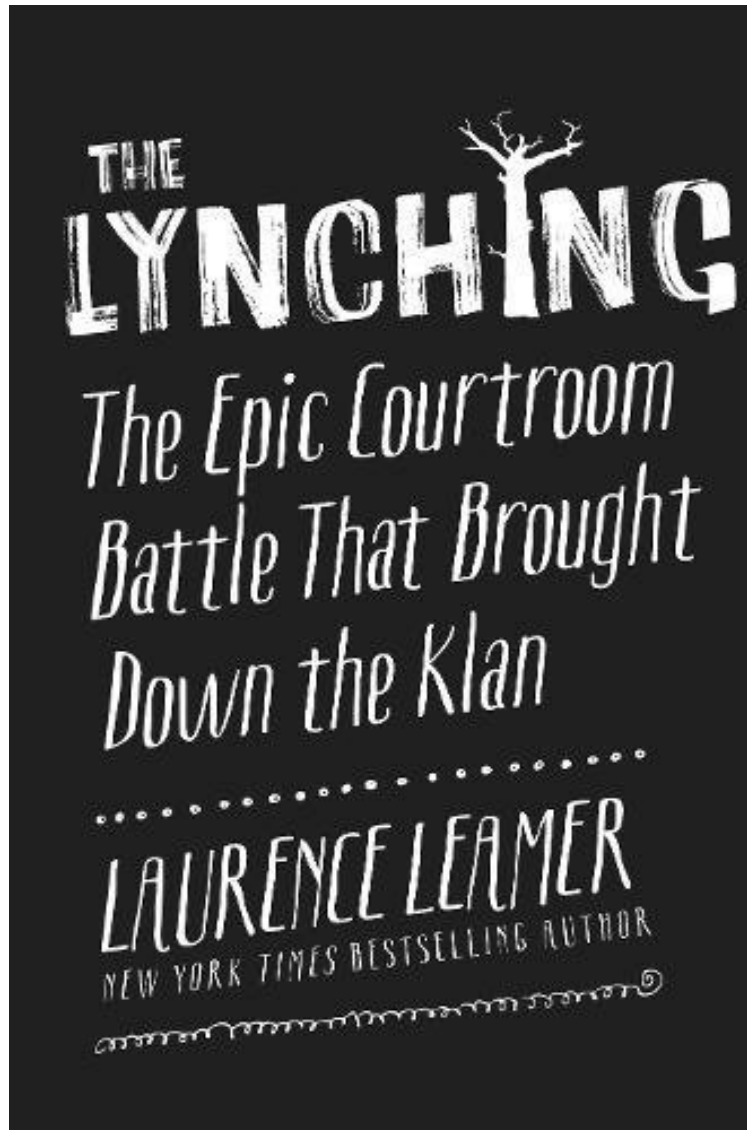


[Download pdf ebook] The Lynching: The Epic Courtroom Battle That Brought Down the Klan

The Lynching: The Epic Courtroom Battle That Brought Down the Klan

Laurence Leamer

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Laurence Leamer : The Lynching: The Epic Courtroom Battle That Brought Down the Klan before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Lynching: The Epic Courtroom Battle That Brought Down the Klan:

51 of 52 people found the following review helpful. Clever Legal Strategy - but Would it Work? By BassocantorTHE

LYNCHING is a fascinating story of a determined lawyer bankrupting the Klan. This book is not actually about the criminal trial; rather, it's how attorney Morris Dees used a novel legal approach in a CIVIL trial to completely destroy the organization: "Dees hoped the amount would be so large that it would dramatically announce that the Klan could no longer commit violent acts against black people." As a side benefit of the civil trial, further criminal charges were later filed. The terrible story begins in 1981, with the beating/strangulation, then lynching of an innocent young black man, Michael Donald. Klan members Henry Hays and James Knowles were looking for someone black--almost anyone--to use as an example. After the two young ne'er do wells committed the deed, they publicly displayed the body as a horrific example: They "knew the body had to hang high up so everyone could see it." The two men were convicted, but Dees wanted to go beyond just convicting these two--he wanted to topple the entire Klan organization that had encouraged the violence: "Dees was convinced that the UKA could be sued directly for its role in the murder." In this case, the Klan was officially the "United Klans of America." The ensuing civil trial, which set a powerful legal precedent, is officially known as, "Beulah Mae Donald, as Executor of the Estate of Michael Donald, Deceased v. United Klans of America." The trial tested an important concept: Can an organization be held accountable for criminal acts of its members? To succeed at court, Dees would have to cross several legal hurdles. For one thing, "Dees would have to show a pattern of violence involving the United Klans of America. In other words, he had to show a PATTERN of violence "instigated by prominent officials in the hierarchy." So that's what Dees argued in the trial. He persuaded the jury that the Klan didn't merely dislike black people--it was a lot more than that: "We have a piece of evidence, I think, that's going to convince you that this national organization did more than just espouse a racial philosophy; they actually encouraged their members to kill and lynch black people." Dees' opponents in the trial argued persuasively that one couldn't hold an organization responsible for just THINKING certain things. That's not the way the system is supposed to work, they told the jury: "In this country we don't punish organizations. We don't punish thought. It would be bad if we did." With these two different theories of the law, it was not obvious how the trial would end. In an astonishing turn, one of the defendants--one of the original two murderers--appealed to the jury during final arguments. A repentant Knowles pleaded for the jury to find against himself! And also make the Klan responsible: "Whatever judgment you decide, I do hope you decide a judgment against me and everyone else involved. Because you people need to understand this can't happen. I do hope that you find a judgment against me and everyone involved. Because we are guilty." Knowles also publicly apologized to the mother of the slain man: "If could trade places with him, I would." Amazingly, Mrs. Donald graciously accepted Knowles plea: "I forgive you. From the day I found out who you all was, I asked God to take care of y'all, and He has." When the trial came to a close, the jury awarded plaintiff's damages of seven million dollars. Of course, this award financially wiped out the organization--the Klan had nowhere near that sum. More than that, however, this trial set a precedent for legal strategy against other hate groups. This same strategy was "used by SPLC lawyers to cripple and destroy a dozen racist organizations, from the White Aryan Resistance in 1990 to the Imperial Klans of America in 2008." All in all, I found THE LYNCHING to be an insightful look back into a dark era in American history. The events described here are a sad, but important part of our history. The outcome of this trial figured prominently in future cases against hate groups. I was not aware of the legal strategy used against the Klan by Mr. Dees. Advance Review Copy courtesy of Edelweiss

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Timely and Gripping
By ROBERT H BLUMBERG
This is a well written, fast moving history of the civil rights movement from the 1950's through the 1980's. It's starting place is the lynching of Michael Donald in Mobile, Alabama in 1981. The volume is also a biography of Morris Dees, the co-founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center. While recounting the extraordinary success of the SPLC against the Klan and other hate groups, it offers balanced critical insight into Dees, the man. Lerner manages to bring to vivid life Dees' brilliant strategy in the civil trial that ultimately destroyed the Klan without getting bogged down in legal minutia. Given the alarming racism underlying today's headlines, the book is particularly relevant and enlightening. It would make a great movie.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Lynching: The Facts and Fallout
By Kim Adair
The lynching was a tragic and gross error resulting from blind prejudice and conviction of their impunity and membership in the main stream that surely agreed with their "principles." But it inspired a reformer, Morris Dees, to pursue the Klan and its arch leader-villain. The author gave me a different and rounded view of Morris Dees, an exemplary foe of racists and their infamous deeds. His dashing side along with his relentless pursuit of justice meant surprises along the way to victory and a focus as well as tone of the book different from my expectations. The Klan leader emerged from the court battle all but broke, or should I say the Klan emerged nearly broke. I didn't come closer to comprehending the intense racial hatred that possessed Klan members (and still inspires hate groups), but it did reveal the tenuous ties some of the members had to the philosophy of the Klan and their willingness to abandon the group once its real troubles brought it low. The book avoided high drama, preferring facts that spoke for themselves. I expected drama and found the results and aftermath of the trial to be lacking in emotion. This isn't an attack on the book; it is merely a reversal of my expectations. The facts matter! Readers were reintroduced to the ghastly words and deeds of George Wallace who was partially redeemed when broken by age and infirmity he feared going to hell because he'd caused the deaths of innocent people. But only partially. For an account of a time in our history and an exploration of some major players, I recommend this book.

The New York Times bestselling author of *The Kennedy Women* chronicles the powerful and spellbinding true story of a brutal race-based killing in 1981 and subsequent trials that undid one of the most pernicious organizations in American history—the Ku Klux Klan. On a Friday night in March 1981 Henry Hays and James Knowles scoured the streets of Mobile in their car, hunting for a black man. The young men were members of Klavern 900 of the United Klans of America. They were seeking to retaliate after a largely black jury could not reach a verdict in a trial involving a black man accused of the murder of a white man. The two Klansmen found nineteen-year-old Michael Donald walking home alone. Hays and Knowles abducted him, beat him, cut his throat, and left his body hanging from a tree branch in a racially mixed residential neighborhood. Arrested, charged, and convicted, Hays was sentenced to death—the first time in more than half a century that the state of Alabama sentenced a white man to death for killing a black man. On behalf of Michael’s grieving mother, Morris Dees, the legendary civil rights lawyer and cofounder of the Southern Poverty Law Center, filed a civil suit against the members of the local Klan unit involved and the UKA, the largest Klan organization. Charging them with conspiracy, Dees put the Klan on trial, resulting in a verdict that would level a deadly blow to its organization. Based on numerous interviews and extensive archival research, *The Lynching* brings to life two dramatic trials, during which the Alabama Klan’s motives and philosophy were exposed for the evil they represent. In addition to telling a gripping and consequential story, Laurence Leamer chronicles the KKK and its activities in the second half the twentieth century, and illuminates its lingering effect on race relations in America today. *The Lynching* includes sixteen pages of black-and-white photographs.

“America’s unaddressed history of lynching and racial violence has left this nation vulnerable to horrific hate crimes, none more devastating than what is documented in this compelling book. We ignore Laurence Leamer’s account at our peril.” (Bryan Stevenson, author of the New York Times bestseller *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*) “Gripping and relevant.” (People) “Stirring.” (O, the Oprah Magazine) “Powerful... engrossing... and a pertinent reminder of the consequences of organized hatred.” (Kirkus’s (starred review)) “Leamer infuses his tale with the drama of a popular novel.” (Washington Post) “For decades, Morris Dees has fearlessly demolished White Supremacist hate groups with his legal cunning. Laurence Leamer does a wonderful job in *The Lynching* describing how Dees put the KKK out of business. This legal thriller is destined to become a major motion picture. Highly recommended.” (Douglas Brinkley, author of *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*) “Leamer has deftly told the tragic story of the 1981 lynching of Michael Donald and the long campaign of civil rights activist Morris Dees to use unprecedented legal tactics to cripple the modern Ku Klux Klan. A narrative as powerful as any novelist could imagine.” (Dan T. Carter, author of *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism and the Transformation of American Politics*) “A deftly researched history of the civil rights movement. ... Today, the Klan still exists. *The Lynching* reminds us why that matters.” (BookPage) “Leamer deftly translates the historical record into a tense courtroom drama.” (Atlanta Journal-Constitution) “*The Lynching* reveals truths that few people know and everyone should. The extraordinary story of Morris Dees, a uniquely American hero, fighting for and winning vengeance and justice in the courts.” (Arthur Bryant, Chairman, Public Justice) “This well-written, suspense-filled book vividly evokes themes from the ugly, not-so-distant past.” (Publishers Weekly) “Leamer brings... a sharp eye for tragedy... to his new book on the Michael Donald murder and its ramifications. ... Leamer does a truly remarkable job of humanizing Donald and his family, and of depicting the Mobile of the era.” (Al.com) “It is endearing to read about those willing to fight injustice with more than just thoughts and prayers but with heroic action and personal risk. In these difficult times, it is an uplifting and inspiring story.” (Bookreporter.com) “Leamer’s themes have become especially relevant today.” (The Crime Report) “Urgent and necessary.” (The Oklahoman) “Necessary reading. ... *The Lynching*, while of great cultural importance, reads like a courtroom drama. ... An important book.” (Under the Radar) “Laurence Leamer writes with the skill of a born storyteller. ... [A] gripping book.” (Finger Lakes Times) From the Back Cover *The Lynching* is the powerful, spellbinding true story of a brutal race-based killing in 1981 and the dramatic two trials during which the United Klans of America, the largest and most dangerous Klan organization in America, is exposed for the evil it represents. New York Times bestselling author Laurence Leamer tells a gripping story, weaving in such figures as legendary civil rights lawyer Morris Dees, Alabama governor George Wallace, and Klan Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton, and describes the Klan’s lingering effect on race relations in America today. The story begins in March 1981, when Henry Hays and James Knowles, members of Klavern 900 of the UKA, picked up nineteen-year-old Michael Donald on the streets of Mobile, Alabama. They were seeking to retaliate after a largely black jury failed to convict a black man accused of murdering a white policeman. Hays and Knowles beat Donald, cut his throat, and left his body hanging from a tree branch in a racially mixed residential neighborhood. Arrested, charged, and convicted, Hays was sentenced to death—the first time in more than half a century that the state of Alabama had given that penalty to a white man for killing a black man. Morris Dees, the cofounder of the Southern Poverty Law Center, saw the case as an opportunity to file a lawsuit against the UKA. His colleagues told him that his lawsuit was impossible to win and a folly. But Dees had heard that before. On behalf of Michael’s grieving mother, Mrs. Beulah Donald, Dees filed a first-of-its-kind civil suit and charged the Klan organization and its leaders with conspiracy. He proceeded to put the Klan leaders on trial, which produced some of

the most audacious testimony of any civil rights trial—as well as a stunning and precedent-setting verdict. Dees destroyed the UKA and created a weapon that the SPLC used time and again against other racist organizations. *The Lynching* is a suspenseful true story that takes us into the heart of darkness, but in the end shows that Michael Donald and other civil rights martyrs did not die in vain. About the Author Laurence Leamer is the New York Times bestselling author of more than a dozen books, including *The Kennedy Women* and *The Price of Justice*. He has worked in a French factory and a West Virginia coal mine, and was a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal. His play, *Rose*, was produced off Broadway last year. He lives in Palm Beach, Florida, and Washington, D.C., with his wife, Vesna Obradovic Leamer.