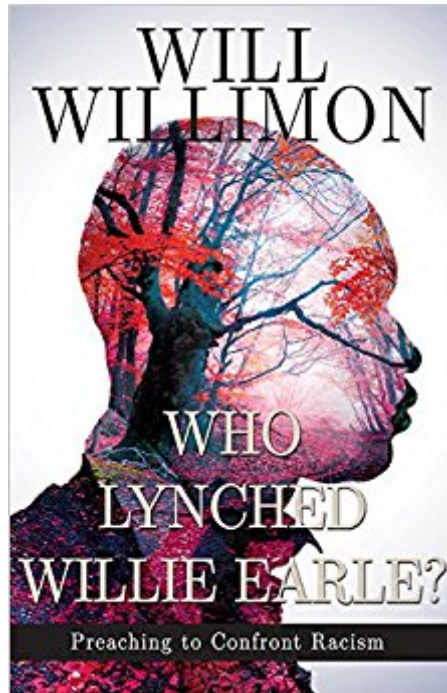


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# Who Lynched Willie Earle?: Preaching To Confront Racism



## Synopsis

Pastors and leaders long to speak an effective biblical word into the contemporary social crisis of racial violence and black pain. They need a no-nonsense strategy rooted in actual ecclesial life, illuminated in this fine book by a trustworthy guide, Will Willimon, who uses the true story of pastor Hawley Lynn's March of 1947 sermon, "Who Lynched Willie Earle?" as an opportunity to respond to the last lynching in Greenville, South Carolina and its implications for a more faithful proclamation of the Gospel today. By hearing black pain, naming white complicity, critiquing American exceptionalism/civil religion, inviting/challenging the church to respond, and attending to the voices of African American pastors and leaders, this book helps pastors of white, mainline Protestant churches preach effectively in situations of racial violence and dis-ease.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Feeling most at home behind a pulpit, Will Willimon's deepest calling is to be a preacher and truth-teller of Jesus Christ. He is Professor of the Practice of Christian Ministry at Duke University Divinity School and retired Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of The United Methodist Church, after serving for 20 years as faculty member and Dean of the Chapel at Duke University. He lives in Durham, North Carolina. Will Willimon has published many books, including his preaching subscription service on MinistryMatters.com, Pulpit Resource, and *Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love*, both published by Abingdon Press.

From the book; Preaching that confronts racism: *Will Willimon* Speaks up and speaks out. *Will Willimon* Sees American racism as an opportunity for Christians honestly to name our sin and to engage in acts of detoxification, renovation, and reparation. *Will Willimon* Is convinced that the deepest, most revolutionary response to the evil of racism is Jesus Christ, the one who demonstrates God for us and enables us to be for God. *Will Willimon* Reclaims the church as a place of truth-telling, truth-embodiment, and truth enactment. *Will Willimon* Allows the preacher to confess personal complicity in and to model continuing repentance for racism. *Will Willimon* Brings the good news that Jesus Christ loves sinners, only sinners. *Will Willimon* Enjoys the transformative power of God's grace. *Will Willimon* Listens to and learns from the best sociological, psychological, economic, artistic, and political insights on race in America, especially those generated by African Americans. *Will Willimon* Celebrates the work in us and in our culture of a relentlessly salvific, redemptive Savior. *Will Willimon* Uses the peculiar speech of scripture in judging and defeating the idea of white supremacy. *Will Willimon* Is careful in its usage of color-oriented language and metaphors that may disparage blackness (like *Will Willimon* "washed my sins white as snow," or *Will Willimon* "in him there is no darkness at all"). *Will Willimon* Narrates contemporary Christians into the drama of salvation in Jesus Christ and thereby rescues them from the sinful narratives of American white supremacy. *Will Willimon* Is not silenced because talk about race makes white Christians uncomfortable. *Will Willimon* Refuses despair because of an abiding faith that God is able and that God will get the people and the world that God wants.

I came to the Will Willimon reading party late. His latest book, *Who Lynched Willie Earle?* is convicting, vulnerable, challenging, and instructive. It has given me insight into my own privilege and racism, and shown me where the Holy Spirit is working in me and in my preaching and teaching.

Superb insights by white minister into the sin of white racism and what white churches need to do to confront and redeem it.

Great read from great writer!

Excellent reading! Good content and keeps you interested.

As a licensed non-denominational minister, I really wanted to read this text. And I was not

disappointed. I read it once straight through. Then I re-read it, making sure I fully understood the writer's intent and purpose. Willie Earle was a black man, who in 1947 sat locked in a jail cell in Pickens, South Carolina. He had been accused of knifing a Greenville cab driver. A mob of righteous, Christian, white men confronted the jailer, who literally turned the keys over to them. Willie Earle was dragged from his cell. He was beaten so badly that he was not recognizable. He was dragged behind a car. And he was hung. The mob choose to be the judge, jury and prosecutor all rolled into one. Willie Earle was dead. His family so torn apart and mad with grief and rage, yet, feeling that they could not express themselves in the southern, white-ruled town, kept silent. In steps a minister. So emotionally charged by the lynching, and the fact that so-called Christian men could do such a thing to any man, no matter the color, decided he had to do something. He tried a town meeting. Which got him nowhere. Two weeks after the event, and many hours spent in prayer for the right words to use, and how to deliver them, Hawley Lynn delivered a sermon to his congregation that is as needed today as it was back in 1947. It has become such a sermon that ministers still study it today. But as most will recognize, it is the kind of sermon that is rarely delivered. Was it Christ-like (the word Christian literally means "Christ-like") to lynch Willie Earle? And although racism is deeply rooted in the south, is it not nearly as prevalent in the north as it is the south? If you answer no, you would be wrong. It is there. Lurking behind the eyes of the man who states "I have black friends!", and is insistent he is not racist. It is there behind the eyes of the woman who tells her daughter "It's okay to have black friends, but you're not going to date one". It is there in the individual who says "Black Americans are lazy", or "They get all the free government hand outs, why don't they just get a job!" Or, "They are all gangsters". I know you can come up with more. So, are all white Americans guilty of racism? I can't answer that. But Hawley pointed out the need for Christians to be "Christ-like". He pointed out that God has no color preference. In His eyes, we are all simply people. Bishop Willimon brings out the point that we have now graduated into calling black individuals "African-Americans" just to be politically correct. As an example, I come from English, French, Irish and Scot ancestry. So would I be called an "Anglo-American"? Or some variety of "English-French-Irish-Scot-American"? Of course not. We don't ever hear someone say something like that. Why do we not simply say an American? Or a person? Or a man? Or a woman? Instead of qualifying that they are in some way black? I give this book five stars, (I would give it 10 if I could!) I give a BIG thumbs up, and I HIGHLY recommend it for reading and study. You can find this book on .com. It is available in paperback for \$11.96 or in Kindle version for \$9.99, plus shipping and handling for the paperback. \*\*\*\*DISCLAIMER: This book was provided by Vine in exchange for a fair and impartial review.

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