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WHERE IS MY LAND HELPS ROOSEVELT DYE AND HIS FAMILY FIGHT AGAINST JUDICIAL CORRUPTION AND A BILLIONAIRE TIMBER COMPANY'S THEFT OF HIS LAND

“There’s not a relationship between corporations and townspeople. If a company decides a location is no longer profitable for them, they will relocate, not thinking about the impact on that town. Whereas, a local landowner is connected to the town and the people and feels the impact of their decisions. For a local landowner to lose their land, it impacts the individual, the family, and the community,” says Jay, the son of Roosevelt Dye.

Roosevelt Dye was born in Kelso, Arkansas in 1952. As a teen, he met James “HF” Marshall, a Black man who worked as a land leveler. After Mr. Marshall had a stroke in the late 1980s, Roosevelt became his caregiver. Eventually, Mr. Marshall moved into Roosevelt’s family home. Roosevelt cared for Mr. Marshall until he died in 2000.

In appreciation for Roosevelt’s many years of caregiving, Mr. Marshall left Roosevelt all of his property outlined in his will and named Roosevelt the executor of his estate. Roosevelt discovered that when Mr. Marshall had been incapacitated, due to his stroke, as well as due to an error by the tax assessor, delinquent taxes had accrued on the land. Roosevelt paid the back taxes and did everything required of him to settle the estate. No person or entity came forward with a claim against Mr. Marshall’s estate or to claim the land. The court approved the settlement of the estate and ordered that Roosevelt was the rightful and legal owner of the land conveyed to him in Mr. Marshall’s will.

As the lawful owner, Roosevelt hired an individual to survey the property. The surveyor was threatened with arrest by a national timber company that set up operations on the land without a permit from Mr. Marshall. The company claimed ownership of the property but didn’t have any proof of ownership and had never paid taxes on the property.

For several years, Roosevelt fought in courts to prove his ownership of the land that he legally inherited from Mr. Marshall. The timber company presented multiple theories and arguments to the court as to why it should own the land, it eventually succeeded in persuading the court to declare the timber company as the legal owner. In fact, the judicial corruption was so blatant, the judge declared the property wasn’t even in the county where Mr. Dye had paid taxes. To add insult to injury, the judge removed Roosevelt’s inherited land from the tax records of that county (where it had been listed for almost 100 years) and transferred it to another county without having a routine survey conducted.

The timber company that schemed to steal Mr. Dye’s land has a reputation for stealing timber-rich land from private landowners. Roosevelt’s land is in a close-knit community where it is widely known the land belongs to Roosevelt. The timber company continues to harvest the timber from Roosevelt’s land and issue hunting licenses. One clearly unbiased judge, from one of Roosevelt’s court cases with the county, applied for and received a license to hunt on the land from the timber company before hearing Roosevelt’s case. That was just the tip of the iceberg of the collusion between the timber company and the judicial system against Roosevelt, the rightful owner of 200 acres.

Unsuccessful in his battle, Roosevelt decided to take a step back to spend more time with his family and focus on his health and faith. Following this reprieve, Roosevelt contacted *Where Is My Land* seeking our assistance for reparative and restorative justice and full restitution. *“For the last couple of decades, Mr. Roosevelt Dye has spent his life fighting for what was rightfully his. Mr. Dye deserves a life of restoration, free of theft, discrimination, and intimidation, and must be granted reclamation of his estate and the prospect of his generational wealth,”* says Dreisen Heath, Advocacy and Policy Lead for Where Is My Land.

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