

INTRODUCTION

ON OCTOBER 28, 1962, AMERICANS WERE STUNNED WHEN broadcasters interrupted scheduled programming to report the unthinkable. The world was careening toward a nuclear confrontation. Just six days before, President John F. Kennedy had addressed the nation, warning that aerial surveillance of Cuba, the Caribbean island just ninety miles from Florida, confirmed the presence of a Soviet nuclear strike capability.¹ The United States, he announced, had issued an ultimatum to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to remove those missiles. After days of back-channel talks, UN Security Council sessions, and Cuban anti-aircraft downing a U-2 aircraft, the Cold War confrontation was about to climax.

As US warships raced to intercept Soviet vessels heading for Cuban waters, Americans perched on couches and kitchen chairs, watching the crisis unfold on television and listening to radio updates. Schoolchildren practiced “duck and cover” drills and the nation’s armed forces mobilized. When ABC broke into programming with updates on the standoff, there was a new face on the screen and a new voice on the radio. A tall, distinguished-looking African American

called Mal Goode calmly delivered one report after another with the United Nations building looming behind him. Never before had the world come so close to nuclear warfare, and never before had a Black man conveyed breaking news for a national network. The threat of war soon faded, but Mal Goode wasn't going anywhere.

Goode made history that day, and the television and radio spots he delivered during the Cuban Missile Crisis were a prologue to his television career, not a one-off. A fixture on ABC News for the next decade, he chipped away at one of media's most stubbornly segregated formats by interpreting the news for a national audience. Goode's sense of mission was clear: to explain the racial currents of a nation in turmoil, inject an African American perspective into the conversation, serve his profession, and address all TV viewers.

But Goode's dramatic career launch was inadvertent. ABC's decision in the summer of 1962 was simply to hire a Black correspondent. Network executives had not thought through what a barrier-breaking national correspondent would do on ABC, much less how and why his presence would matter. The hire was no guarantee that Goode would be on air. His assignment to the United Nations, where most correspondents remained tucked away on what was considered one of the least interesting beats for the TV audience, meant that viewers might not catch a glimpse of the historic hire. However, the United Nations was central during the confrontation over Cuba for thirteen harrowing days in October 1962. With tensions rising, ABC news director Jim Hagerty was unable to reach the network's vacationing chief UN correspondent John MacVane. Hagerty did not anticipate that Mal Goode, on the job for less than two months, would easily slide into the role played by MacVane, a legendary foreign correspondent. But Goode did, delivering seventeen on-air reports. He charted the contours of the crisis and the relief of resolution to a weary audience with a calm cool-headed delivery.

ABC, then lagging behind CBS and NBC in the ratings, had gambled that Goode, the grandson of enslaved people, could attract an African American audience without alienating white viewers. His success was all the more extraordinary given his personal saga.

Before Mal Goode's parents met, they came north separately from two different parts of Virginia during the Great Migration. Mal was born in Virginia and the family frequently traveled between there and Pittsburgh, but he had lived in Pittsburgh from the age of eight and worked there until 1962. From a radio studio on the city's Hill District, which Claude McKay had dubbed the crossroads of the world, Goode's basso profundo voice resonated throughout western Pennsylvania. Challenging segregation wherever he saw it and contradicting police accounts of Black men who died in custody, Goode became Black Pittsburgh's paladin. He celebrated the victories of those who broke through by roaring "And the walls came tumbling down!" But Goode chafed at his own inability to break into television until his friend Jackie Robinson dared ABC to give him a chance.

Goode's career, first in Pittsburgh and then with a national network, put him center stage as the civil rights campaign to dismantle segregation reached a tipping point during the 1950s and 1960s. His coverage was tough but fair. Willing to confront the likes of Alabama governor George Wallace and leaders of the American Nazi Party, Goode broke ground in broadcast journalism. He was on the street during the urban rebellions of the 1960s, after Malcolm X's assassination, and during Martin Luther King Jr.'s final campaign. Whether covering African independence struggles, national political conventions, or Atlanta, Georgia, which he profiled in a 1969 documentary as a city "too busy to hate," he brought his take on the struggle for equality to a national audience.

Goode crossed racial divides but also traversed fault lines within Black America. In Homestead, the Monongahela River steel town where he grew up, Goode straddled the rift between Hilltop, an integrated neighborhood where better-off African Americans resided, and the Ward, the crowded, fetid tenements in the shadow of the steel mill that became home to migrants from the Deep South. At Clark Memorial Church, he absorbed the social gospel of racial uplift that many established women and men embraced. But he was just as comfortable in storefront churches in the Ward that ministered to recent migrants from the Black Belt. At ease on the streets of the Hill District

he roamed as a juvenile probation officer, he was also sure of himself at the posh Loendi Club or at board meetings at the Centre Avenue YMCA and the city's Housing Authority.

Goode's composure and confidence were shaped by his upbringing. His educated and commanding mother, Mary, ran a strict and loving home that was intended to imbue the six children with Christian morals and strategies for advancement. His father Bill's admonition: "You're no better than anyone else and no one is any better than you. Now go out and prove it," was his marching order. He took those words to heart, moving easily from ghetto streets to the mayor's office, never turning his back on those who struggled. Deeply empathetic, he gave voice to their grievances and hopes. Mal Goode saw himself as their advocate and stood his ground when they were treated as less than equal. Nor did he quietly accept personal affront.

While regarded as "the dean of African American broadcast journalism," Mal Goode was already fifty-four years old when he made prime time.³ The half century he lived in Pittsburgh as well as his family's roots in slavery and the Great Migration are critical to his story. They shaped his perspective and demeanor. Goode grew up in the wake of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. He came of age during the 1920s when the New Negro, the Harlem Renaissance, Black women's club movement, and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association showcased northern communities in the wake of the migration. He worked at the *Pittsburgh Courier* and on the radio during the late 1940s and 1950s before joining ABC in 1962. Well known in civil rights circles, he assumed a greater profile in the movement as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and the Black Panthers roiled the waters. Mal was a familiar face and was trusted by most factions, especially King and Malcolm. First exposed to Africa as a youth attending films and talks at Homestead's Clark Memorial Church, he learned more about the continent while at the *Courier*. Soon after joining ABC, the State Department asked him to conduct seminars for the media in Ethiopia, Tanganyika, and Nigeria. Encountering Pan Africanism and the turmoil of post-independence politics, Goode maintained a focus on Africa during his tenure at

ABC and the United Nations. It's possible that no other African American spoke to more people about Africa than he did during the years he was based at the United Nations. Africa was far from the only part of the world Goode spoke about. In addition to his television and radio work, he addressed a range of audiences almost weekly for forty years. His activism and visibility at ABC prompted the slow integration of network news; it also showcased a presence never before seen or heard on a national network.

Goode's family, church, community, the University of Pittsburgh, and his experience on the job, especially twelve years on night turn at the Homestead Steelworks, molded his character and deepened his commitment to social justice. So did the racial obstacles he faced at school, at work, and in daily life. But adversity did not define or limit him. His upbringing reflected a world that Black Pittsburghers created on their own during segregation. Goode saw their grace and capability at church, in the Negro Leagues where some of his neighbors played, on the pages of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and at the Crawford Grill, a mecca for jazz. He became a fierce advocate for people otherwise ignored. Part of his personal mandate was to connect them to the larger world, especially Africa.

Goode began working night turns at the Homestead Steelworks during high school and continued to work there while at Pitt. He joined Alpha Phi Alpha, the nation's oldest Black fraternity, and graduated from the university in 1931 as hard times were getting harder. With the economy tanking, he held on to his job at the mill, working a couple of shifts a week until 1936. Goode's plans for law school were shattered by the Depression and so he pivoted. He worked as a juvenile probation officer, mentored youth at the Centre Avenue YMCA, and managed two of the nation's largest integrated public housing projects. In each of these positions, he battled discrimination directed at him personally and on behalf of those he served.

Mal Goode's greatest accomplishment in these early years, by his own testimony, was his marriage to Mary Lavelle. They met when Mal was a student at the University of Pittsburgh. He was instantly smitten but in no position to offer Mary a secure life. Mary was

magnetic, wise, and stunning. She attracted multiple suitors—some were his friends—but much to Mal’s relief she waited for him. They married in 1936 and shared a devoted and respectful fifty-nine-year partnership that provided the foundation for and gave meaning to Mal’s life and work. They had seven children, one who died in infancy. Their marriage was defined by traditional gender roles; Mary took care of the home and children while Mal set out to change the world. He could not have pursued the latter if she were not maintaining the former and serving as a partner in their shared quest for racial justice. Mal made no professional move without Mary’s counsel, and his love for her and his family sustained him.

In 1948, Mal Goode joined the *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the nation’s leading Black papers. Its emissary to the South, he boosted circulation in Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi, and beyond. He met people there who became lifelong friends and sources. When returning to the South as an ABC correspondent to cover the fight for civil rights, these contacts briefed him on the backstory to local protests and made sure he gained access. Though never trained as a broadcaster, Goode initiated a radio broadcast on Pittsburgh’s KQV, “*The Courier Speaks*,” becoming the only African American on a mainstream Pittsburgh station. By then his sister Mary Dee had crashed radio’s gender line to become the nation’s first Black female DJ. Mixing gospel with R&B, she blossomed on WHOD, an innovative station in Homestead that appealed to the European immigrants, Black migrants, and their descendants who made up much of greater Pittsburgh. In 1950, Mary Dee and Mal became a brother and sister radio team for WHOD and drove conversations about the city, race, and deindustrialization’s early onslaught in the region. Mal’s news reports, interviews, and penetrating commentaries attracted a growing audience. African American voices delivering news summaries and editorials were rare. So was what he said and how he said it. Arrested several times after castigating the police for incidents of brutality, he sometimes stashed himself in the trunk of a car to escape harassment as he was driven around the city. But Goode was undeterred. Before long, African Americans applauded Goode for his willingness to fight for them despite the threats he endured.

Goode had a special kinship with athletes. The Veney brothers, who founded the Homestead Grays, lived across the street and worked with his father at the steelworks. Another neighbor, Cumberland Posey Jr., took the Grays to the heights of the Negro Leagues and kept them there for decades. Posey remains the only person inducted into both baseball's and basketball's hall of fame. Mal often brought athletes on to his radio show, including Hall of Famers Jackie Robinson and Henry Aaron, whom he knew from their visits to Pittsburgh when they played in the Negro Leagues and later the major leagues. On one of those visits, he took Aaron to his first meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an event that was the genesis of a lifelong commitment to civil rights. Robinson, Aaron, Willie Mays, Roberto Clemente, and almost every ballplayer of color who passed through Pittsburgh wound up at the Goodes' home, feasting on Mary Goode's cooking and seeking Mal's counsel on politics. He channeled their celebrity and dollars into support for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and bail money for activists arrested during Freedom Summer. When the Milwaukee Braves went to the World Series in 1958, the Black players on the team brought Mal to Milwaukee as their guest.

An indefatigable letter writer, Mal counseled a diverse mix of people who sought his advice on the civil rights movement, politics, and personal quandaries. A shapeshifting speaker, he could preach to congregations with the cadence and fervor of a minister but mellow his delivery when addressing primarily white audiences about "the race question." On the air, he came across with the crisp diction and pointed commentary that correspondents like Edward R. Murrow and Eric Sevareid favored. "As a journalist," veteran broadcaster Bernard Shaw said, "he had the calmness of a church deacon and the probing mind of a Marine drill instructor. This man was a journalistic patriot and an American patriot. His challenge was always to live up to your principles and to your claims."³

After ABC hired Goode, the family moved to Teaneck, New Jersey, where they bought the home of New York Yankee star Elston Howard, another friend from the Negro Leagues. In Teaneck, a town lauded as "America's Model Community" for its efforts to integrate, Mal contin-

ued to rail against racial inequality as he had in Pittsburgh. He insisted that Teaneck live up to its rhetorical commitments and showed his support to a younger generation of activists who counted on his counsel, experience, and dogged pursuit of racial justice in public and private forums. Goode was a regular attendee at city council meetings, exposing truths while nervous Teaneck leaders quaked. As in Pittsburgh, everyone knew Mal. The Goodes were esteemed members of the community for the three decades they resided in the New Jersey suburb.

Meanwhile, as Goode's ABC stint propelled him to national prominence, he used that platform and spoke to more than a thousand church, school, community, NAACP, and Alpha Phi Alpha audiences. A rare mix of fiery engagement and journalistic gravitas, Goode sustained his activism after he stopped working as a full-time ABC correspondent. He remained at the United Nations as an ABC consultant and joined the National Black Network as a reporter and pundit. His contacts with African nations during the continent's age of independence were exceptional, making him a go-to journalist as colonies on the continent achieved independence. He kept a focus on postcolonial Africa and the struggle against apartheid. His tough talk was often tempered by his favorite ending to his speeches, an impish statement to the audience: "Don't think you're getting out of here without hearing about my kids."³

Mal and Mary Goode returned to Pittsburgh in 1993. They both longed to spend their twilight years surrounded by family and in the city that would always be their home. Mal's death in 1995 was mourned by countless people who were inspired, challenged, and chided by him. ABC's *World News Tonight's* anchor Peter Jennings announced Goode's death at the end of his newscast. Jennings later wrote to Mary: "I am pleased that I was able to say, on the air, and for several print reporters, how warmly I felt about Mal. He was a wonderful guide to me in the early days. He will be remembered with honor."⁵ Mary followed Mal in death three years later.

This book is about Mal Goode's path-breaking journey set against the contours and currents of a nation emerging from legalized segregation. It also addresses his role in challenging the cautious leaders of

television media to expand the visibility and representation of diverse American voices and people. The timing was propitious, particularly since coverage of the Civil Rights movement was forcing journalism, as a profession, to reconsider its guiding tenets.

In the fall of 1962, Mal was thrust into broadcast television news—a media format that was a work in progress. By then, the ugly realities of racism and white supremacy had challenged journalism’s hallowed principle of objectivity. Emmett Till’s murder in 1955, the Montgomery Bus Boycott that began a few months later, the struggle to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957, and the protests, police riots, and murders that came in their wake precipitated a battle between established white journalists and network chiefs over the coverage of civil rights and racial violence. The journalists wanted to report the messy truths of what they were witnessing—maintaining what they believed was their journalistic mission and responsibility. Network chiefs, however, feared the ire of southern affiliates and the loss of advertising. Television news allowed viewers to see events in real time, making them bystanders to history as it unfolded. They were shown and not just told what was happening, a feature that made TV journalism strikingly different from other formats. Mal debuted amid these conflicts between on-the-ground correspondents and network executives that shaped television news as it became a staple in American households.

It was hard enough for an esteemed white journalist such as Howard K. Smith to negotiate this territory. Smith, who earned his credentials as one of the Murrow Boys, the intrepid journalists Edward R. Murrow led during World War II, was fired by CBS president William Paley in 1961 after his controversial and revelatory documentary “Who Speaks for Birmingham?” aired that spring. Smith’s reporting exposed the connection between police commissioner Bull Conner and the Ku Klux Klan in the attacks on Freedom Riders and Black people in Birmingham. Smith planned to conclude the documentary by quoting the eighteenth-century British philosopher Edmund

Burke: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”⁶ CBS lawyers flagged that as editorializing, a direct violation of Smith’s contractual obligation to maintain neutrality. Smith recounts the heated exchange with Paley who accused the correspondent of breaking the cardinal rule of journalism. “The rules are impossible to follow in this case,” Smith stated. He was shown the door.⁷

Smith was fired for his beliefs but was in a privileged position, his credentials as a top journalist allowed him to take a principled stand and still find another job. It was more difficult for Black journalists who faced relentless scrutiny and accusations of “advocacy reporting” as civil rights struggles and challenges to white supremacy agitated the country. Network leadership faced unprecedented quandaries. Racial confrontations made for dramatic TV, but who should tell the story and how could it be told without alienating southern affiliates, as had the airing of “Who Speaks for Birmingham?” And how to answer the charges that television was exploiting these upheavals, encouraging flamboyant acts of defiance to boost ratings? How would Goode, an African American, navigate Scylla and Charybdis—between neutrality in covering the civil rights movement and the often violent reaction the movement provoked from those opposed to racial equality, and the moral and democratic imperatives that civil rights demanded.

The Black press and radio had long advocated for the “race” and addressed the struggle for equality in ways that discomforted network bosses and newspaper publishers. Grounded in the Black press and radio, Mal Goode now charted a course on television, an industry that had been off-limits to African Americans. He drew strength from the power and influence of Black media but recognized that integration was damaging the Black press. Black media declined after integration, and there was little effort to bring Black journalists into the mainstream of broadcasting and print journalism.

Leaving his comfort zone in a mostly autonomous, Black-controlled arena, Goode became a lone figure seeking to bring about social change in a strange, new terrain. Although his breakthrough

in national network news was celebrated mightily by those who knew him, and countless others were gratified to finally see an African American before the camera, his career did not make him a household name. ABC's apprehension about crossing the color line meant that Goode was often overlooked and the perspective he brought to the network summarily dismissed. Though preternaturally dignified and able to control his displeasure, he scrapped like hell to change how the news was covered, especially the news regarding African Americans.

Fifty-four years old when he arrived at ABC, Mal Goode knew he didn't have much time to fulfill his chosen mandate. While savoring recognition as a barrier-breaker, he embraced the responsibility that came with a national profile. Realizing that he would be held to stiffer standards, he doggedly researched stories and rehearsed his remarks before going on the air. In a departure from how the media had approached the Black community, Goode insisted that not only a few prominent African Americans be heard. He pushed to include the voices of the sharecroppers, steelworkers, and middle-class professionals who were often invisible on national television and radio. He chafed when the networks ignored Martin Luther King Jr., caricatured Malcolm X, or paid attention to Black neighborhoods only when burning. He crafted his own approach, holding Malcolm in high regard and demanding that the network treat King with respect. That became ever more important as his professional and personal relationships with both of them deepened. Goode made sure that his coverage of King's funeral placed the civil rights icon in the river of Black culture and history. So did his coverage of New York City's upheavals in the summer of 1964, the 1967 Black Power Conference in Newark, and his documentary about Atlanta, which showed just how much progress had been made in a city he saw as a model demonstrating both how to bring constructive change and how much was yet to come.

Refusing to be confined to particular stories or to remain silent when coverage was slanted, Goode pressed his bosses and coworkers at ABC to change how they reported on Black America. He contended that they were ignoring stories that merited attention. Instead, he

wanted them to focus on efforts to build social capital within Black communities and explain their complex inner workings. Mal Goode's own sense of mission, if not his ABC job description, was to interpret the racial dynamics of a nation reckoning with the realities exposed by the civil rights and Black power movements. He did that from Harlem streets, aboard a mule train from the Mississippi Delta, and on the muddy grounds of Resurrection City during the Poor People's Campaign after King's assassination. As the first African American to fill this role on a network platform, he modeled journalistic integrity while giving voice to African American grievances and expectations. Rather than shy away from difficult stories, he presented Black America in its intricacies, replete with class and internal tensions, rather than as a homogenous monolith. In the vanguard of a small number of Black network correspondents who would be hired in his wake, Goode's success helped solidify an African American presence on media's national stage.

Splitting his time between "the race beat" and the United Nations, Goode established his professional bona fides while pushing ABC to adjust and expand its coverage of civil rights, urban protest, and the internal workings of Black communities. Goode was uncompromising in his belief that network news needed Black voices and perspectives if it were to authentically reflect a diverse country's complexities. Other Black journalists would join Goode in white mainstream media and confront challenges as they circulated among local and national newspapers, magazines, radio, television. Breakthroughs were made in print journalism, but progress was slow and broadcast news as white as a field of snow. A few journalists—Simeon Booker, Dorothy Butler Gilliam, and Nancy Hicks Maynard—had debuted at the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* in the 1950s and 1960s, but they were solitary figures.

As the number of households with television sets exploded during the 1950s, broadcast television newscasts with exclusively white male on-air casts experimented with their approach. Predictably, executives focused on attracting an audience and soliciting advertising dollars. Those in charge understood they were reporting the news

on a commercially driven entertainment medium, and that, unlike radio, television could not hide a Black reporter. White people might read a Black journalist's article without knowing the reporter's race, watching a Black reporter deliver a story was different, and television news directors and producers feared the consequences. Mal Goode's story underscored these tensions. He was hired by ABC but stationed at the United Nations where he would remain, many at the network assumed, less noticed by white viewers. ABC had made a bold move to integrate, but executives had no intention of unduly risking the cultural and financial backlash that showcasing a Black reporter might trigger. They had not anticipated the Cuban Missile Crisis, which occurred just weeks after Goode was hired. His posting to the United Nations unexpectedly placed him front and center in ABC's coverage of the crisis.

Black reporters felt that they were repeatedly sent to cover dangerous situations so as to minimize the danger to white reporters, only to have their reporting deemed slanted and biased. They fought with editors to expand coverage of Black communities beyond stories that played into stereotypes about crime, violence, and poverty. Norma Quarles, a television reporter and anchor who debuted on NBC's New York affiliate after Goode joined ABC, told of being assigned a story about women on welfare. After she profiled a white woman, her miffed editor scolded that he assumed she understood that the report should focus on Black women.⁸ That was more the norm than the exception. Pigeonholed by ABC and angry about similar assignments, Mal Goode finally dug his heels in and refused to cover another riot.

Producers also denied Black journalists the opportunities to report on major stories that would have given them greater visibility and enhanced their professional status. When Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April 1968, the news director assigning funeral coverage overlooked Goode. He erupted. Confronting the news director and a room full of higher-ups, Goode made clear that he would be in Atlanta at King's funeral with or without ABC credentials. His uncharacteristic ire made the news director realize the foolishness of not sending the reporter closest to King to cover the funeral. When

Mal appeared on the streets outside the funeral service, key figures abandoned white reporters to talk instead with someone they trusted and respected. His reporting gave Martin Luther King Jr. his due and allowed a range of Black voices—from Gordon Parks and Ralph Bunche to Dick Gregory and African American women and men, young and old, standing along the route of the funeral cortege—to honor their fallen leader. Mal hardly endeared himself to ABC’s leadership, but they learned something from his defiance. Peter Jennings, ABC *World News Tonight*’s anchor, saw Goode as a mentor and captured his colleague’s defiance. “Mal could have very sharp elbows. If he was on a civil rights story and anyone even appeared to give him any grief because he was Black, he made it more than clear that this was now a free country.”⁹

Mal Goode’s experiences as the first Black reporter on national TV helps unscramble these knotty histories, themes, and tensions. He felt responsible to share his experiences with other journalists who faced similar frustrations and obstacles. He helped those hired after him to expand and deepen their professional network, even while building his own late-breaking career. The National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) was established in 1975, two years after Goode retired from ABC. It had the potential to be one of most influential Black professional organizations because its members had the skills to influence, enlighten, and move the public into action.¹⁰ Mal Goode was among the first class inducted into its Hall of Fame in 1990, a testament to his role in advancing Black media figures in the mainstream press. Unlike many of their white counterparts, these television reporters fought their battles not just for themselves but for the dignity and welfare of their communities.

There were acts of solidarity as well as episodes of tension and jealousy among African Americans seeking their chance in the industry. Bob Teague, a star college football player who turned down National Football League (NFL) offers to pursue a career in journalism, was hired by NBC in 1963 for what became a thirty-year career. His 1982 autobiography claimed that it was he who broke the color line in the medium when he debuted on the air. Teague acknowledged that

“WABC-TV had put Mal Goode on the air a year or so earlier, but Goode’s hair was so straight and his skin was so white that his arrival had been virtually unnoticed.” But nobody who listened to Goode and what he had to say could deny his Blackness. Consequently, despite his role as a trailblazer, lifelong activist, mentor, and inspiration, ABC remained ambivalent about showcasing Goode.¹¹

After Mal Goode’s historic hire, Black reporters slowly began to appear on national network news. But a decade later, there were still very few. In 1971 Goode was inducted as the first Black member of the national Radio-Television News Directors Association. Max Robinson began anchoring ABC News in 1978, and Carole Simpson took the anchor’s chair on the NBC evening news in 1988. In 1992 she became the first Black woman to moderate a presidential debate. By then, Charlayne Hunter-Gault had joined PBS’s MacNeil/Lehrer report and Ed Bradley was emerging as one of the television’s most celebrated journalists, a weekly presence on CBS’s *60 Minutes* from 1981 until his sudden death in 2006. And in 2015, after decades at CBS, MSNBC, and NBC, Lester Holt became NBC’s evening news anchor. But the growing visibility of Black journalists was not supported by structural change within the industry.

Mal Goode was committed to racial representation, equality, and dignity, and not just in broadcasting. He fought for these goals his entire life, and unsurprisingly, his critique of broadcast journalism sharpened while he was at ABC and even more after his retirement. During the NAACP National Convention in 1983, Goode voiced his frustration with the profession and its lack of inclusion. He lamented that many of the still negligible number of Black reporters and correspondents were “under the illusion that all is well but it’s not, because every day something comes up on your job that reminds you that you are Black.” Goode detailed the salaries of prominent television journalists, “friends of mine,” like Ted Koppel, Harry Reasoner, and Walter Cronkite, who were earning over a million dollars a year. “How many Blacks are earning that kind of money?” he asked. Answering his own question, he speculated that only Max Robinson, Ed Bradley, and Carole Simpson earned above five hundred thousand

dollars a year. After pausing, he corrected himself, doubting that Simpson was earning that much.¹² Goode was making an important distinction between Black correspondents' value to the industry and how that industry valued them. Aware that he never made as much as other ABC correspondents, he was tuned into pay disparities across the board. They reflected a stubborn white leadership that allowed African Americans on the air but had yet to acknowledge their worth. This disparity would only be reconciled when Black journalists took their place in the highest ranks of the industry. Only then would network news reflect America's complex truths and diversity.

Mal Goode was the tip of the spear, leading the vanguard of African American correspondents who slowly gained purchase in network news during the 1960s and 1970s. As the first to break the national networks' color line, he showed America, including Black journalists who followed him into the mainstream media, that it could be done. His distinctive rich voice and trademark self-possession contributed to his appeal and served to cover his frustration as he navigated his way through insults, racist attacks, and institutional blindness. A consummate professional, Goode did not hesitate to confront a superior after an indignity, then he calmly returned to work. Quitting was never an option, but the chip he had on his shoulder was a prerequisite to standing up to the pettiness and racism in the industry.

Nearly sixty years after Mal Goode walked into ABC News headquarters at 7 West 66th Street in Manhattan, its president, James Goldston, announced he was stepping down in 2021. During the six decades between Mal Goode's debut and Goldston's departure, African Americans struggled to establish their footing in the industry, savoring each advance but chafing at the roadblocks they encountered. And though television news changed greatly during those years, some of the very issues Mal Goode confronted were still apparent. The networks continued to suffer from a scarcity of Black executive leadership.

The connection between Goode and Goldston was not lost on those fighting for Black representation in broadcast journalism. Ken Lemon, vice president of the NABJ, seized the moment of Goldston's

retirement to push the network to put an African American in charge. It would make sense for ABC to break this barrier, he reasoned. “In 1962, ABC hired Mal Goode as the first network news correspondent, and in 1978, NABJ co-founder Max Robinson was named the first Black network evening news anchor.” Goode and Robinson had made it possible for African Americans to take the next step and establish a presence in the industry. “While progress has been made in front of the camera,” Lemon declared, “it’s time for Black advancement in the executive suites.”³ He called for ABC to prove its pluck again and step forward. The network did just that, naming Kimberly Godwin the president of ABC News in April 2021, making her the first African American to run a major broadcast news network. ABC’s decision to hire Godwin to head broadcast news made history, as the network had in 1962. ABC made the move, but Goode made the history, playing a leading role in recasting how the news should be covered, and by whom.

This is his story, and that of the family, community, and movement that shaped him.