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Emmett Till case

Emmett Till case was a 1955 murder case that helped launch the civil rights movement in the United States. Till, a black teenager from Chicago, was kidnapped, beaten, and killed while visiting relatives in Mississippi. Two white men were charged with the murder, but an all-white jury acquitted them. The men later admitted to the crime. The Emmett Till case sparked widespread outrage and led to increased support for the civil rights movement. Numerous activists—including Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks—subsequently cited the case as an example of the racially motivated violence and injustice faced by African Americans.



Picture
Emmett Till

Emmett Till was 14 years old when he was killed. On Aug. 24, 1955, he and several other black teenagers visited a country store in Money, Mississippi. A white couple, Roy and Carolyn Bryant, owned the store. Witnesses reported that Till spoke to Carolyn Bryant and may have whistled at her. On August 28, two men kidnapped Till from his great-uncle's home. His body was found in the Tallahatchie River three days later. He had been badly beaten and shot in the head. A metal fan had been fastened to his neck with barbed wire, apparently to weigh the body down.

At Till's funeral in Chicago, his mother, Mamie Till, insisted that her son's coffin be left open. She said, "Let the world see what I have seen." The funeral attracted thousands of mourners. Newspapers and magazines aimed at African American readers published photographs of the funeral.

Hint: "acquitted" means found not guilty



Picture
Emmett Till's
funeral

A Mississippi grand jury charged Roy Bryant and his half-brother J. W. Milam with Till's murder. The two men had reportedly targeted Till because they objected to the way the boy spoke to Bryant's wife. The murder trial began on Sept. 19, 1955, in Sumner, Mississippi. Several days later, a jury of 12 white males acquitted Bryant and Milam. In 1956, Milam admitted in a magazine interview that he and Bryant had killed Till. However, neither man faced further prosecution. Milam died in 1980, and Bryant in 1990.

In 2004, the U.S. Department of Justice opened a new investigation into Till's murder. The department sought to determine whether other people may have assisted Bryant and Milam with the crime. In 2005, officials *exhumed* (removed from burial) Till's body for examination. The body was reburied following an autopsy. The federal investigation concluded in 2006, and no new charges were filed. In 2007, a Mississippi grand jury found insufficient evidence to indict, and the case was closed.

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