



0. EMMETT TILL VISITS MISSISSIPPI - Story Preface

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Emmett Till in a photo his mother took on Christmas Day, 1954. At the time, he was in 7th grade. Image online via Wikimedia Commons.

In August of 1955, an African-American boy named Emmett Till wanted to visit relatives in Mississippi. Fourteen years old, Emmett was an only child who lived with his mother in Chicago. They were very close, especially after his father - a U.S. soldier - was executed in Italy (for "misconduct") during World War II.

Not everyone agreed that Emmett (also known as "Bobo" and/or "Bo") should make the trip. Would he be safe? Although he would stay with his great-uncle, Mose Wright (also known as the "Preacher"), young Till was not used to living under Jim-Crow conditions.

Concluding a 16-hour train trip, beginning on the 20th of August, Emmett and his traveling companions (a 16-year-old cousin, Wheeler Parker, and Uncle Mose) arrived at their destination in Clarksdale. Bo was looking forward to a fun time with his family (who lived nearby, in a small town called Money).

After a day of picking cotton, young African-Americans liked to hang out at a local store - called Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market - where they could play games and buy candy or refreshments. Till was part of such a group when he arrived in Mississippi.

Big for his age, at around 140 pounds, Emmet already looked like a young man. According to some accounts, he liked to brag about his prowess with girls. Not everyone believed him, but it was fun for his friends to hear Bo talk.

On the 24th of August, Till and his pals were at Bryant's. Something happened inside the store, when the visitor from Chicago bought two-cents-worth of bubble gum, although factual accounts vary. Whatever Till said, or did, upset the owner's wife - Carolyn Bryant, a white woman - who was running the cash register that day.

Following Bo out of the store, Carolyn reportedly got a gun from her car. Not waiting for her next move, Till and his friends left the area - after Emmett "wolf-whistled" at Bryant.

Fearing her husband's reaction to the events, Carolyn did not tell him about her encounter with Emmet Till (nor did the young people initially tell Mose Wright). Word about the whistle reached Roy Bryant days later, after he returned from an out-of-state business trip. He, and his half-brother - J.W. Milam - decided to teach the lad from Chicago a lesson.

Around 2 o'clock in the morning, on August 28th, Bryant and Milam went to the Preacher's cabin. Pounding on the door, they demanded to see Wright's visiting great-nephew. Never intending just to talk with Emmet, the two men abducted him.

We know what happened thereafter because Bryant and Milam sold their story to Look magazine (where it was reported in detail). What the two men did to Emmett Till - and how his mother responded - produced a spark which lit America's civil-rights movement.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/EMMETT-TILL-VISITS-MISSISSIPPI-The-Help)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/EMMETT-TILL-VISITS-MISSISSIPPI-The-Help)

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Questions 2 Ponder

What Happens When an Overblown Reaction Starts to “Feed On Itself?”

What must it have been like to live in a place where a teenager could be threatened for whistling at a woman?

Do you think that an overblown reaction to an event can “feed on itself,” leading to an ever-worsening situation? If so, what can be done to stop it before someone gets hurt?

Have you ever been in a situation like that? Does it take courage to speak-out against an overreaction? Why, or why not?

Media Stream



Emmett Till

Photo of Emmett Till, taken by his mother Mamie Till-Mobley. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Emmett-Till>



Mamie Till-Mobley

Photo online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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Miss. Paper Says Till Father Executed For Rape

The father of 14-year-old Chicago schoolboy, Emmett Till, who was kidnaped and murdered in Mississippi, was executed for “murder and rape” in Italy during World War II instead of being “killed in action,” according to the Jackson (Miss.) Daily News. The paper said that war records show that Louis Till, 24, was executed July 2, 1945 in Italy. The boy’s mother, Mrs. Mamie Bradley, who admitted in Chicago that she had received a War Department telegram and a letter concerning her husband’s death, said: “I received the letter and it said that cause of death was ‘wilful misconduct.’”

Louis Till - News Report of His Execution

Page image from the October 27, 1955 issue of *Jet* Magazine. Online, courtesy publisher and Google Books. Included here, as fair use, for educational purposes. Copyright *Jet* Magazine, all rights reserved.

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Mose Wright with Mamie Till Bradley

Photo of Moses Wright and Mamie Till-Bradley (also known as Mamie Till-Mobley), published by LIFE and maintained at the Library of Congress. Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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Clarksdale, Mississippi

Map Locator of Clarksdale, Mississippi - online, courtesy Epodunk.

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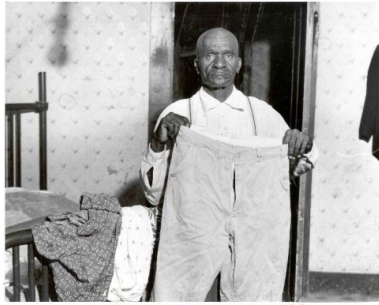


Bryant's Grocery as It Appeared in 1955

Photo of Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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Moses Wright Holding Emmett Till's Pants

Photo of Moses Wright, holding Emmett Till's clothing, courtesy Special Collections, University of Memphis Library.

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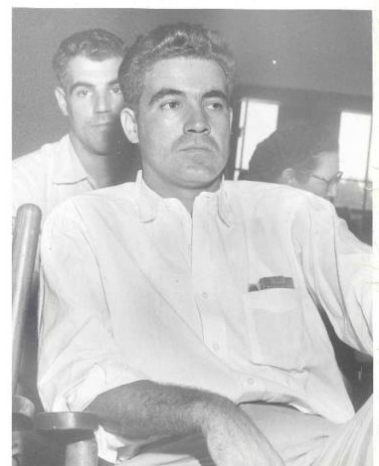
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Carolyn Bryant

Photograph of Carolyn Bryant, online courtesy Library of Congress.

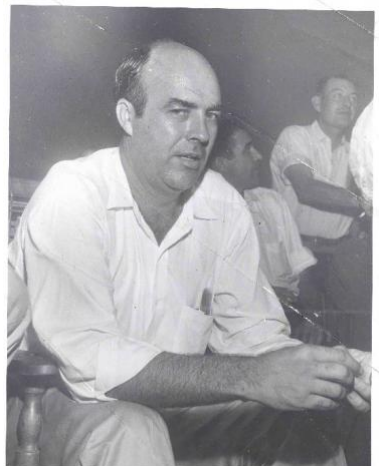
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Roy Bryant

Photo of Roy Bryant, online courtesy University of Memphis Library, Special Collections.

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J.W. Milam

Photo of J.W. Milam, online courtesy University of Memphis Library, Special Collections.

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Home of Moses Wright

Photo of Moses Wright's home, online courtesy University of Memphis Library, Special Collections.

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EMMETT TILL VISITS MISSISSIPPI

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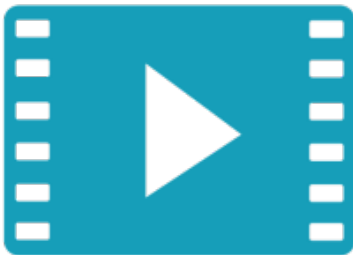
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Sounds of a Wolf Whistle

Video of parrots at Iguazu Falls Bird Park, online courtesy Lornaforde's Channel at YouTube.

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Emmett Till Described by His Mother

Clip from "[Emmett Till - The Untold Story](#)," a 2005 documentary by Keith Beauchamp which incorporates historical footage and interviews with Mamie Till-Mobley and other family members. Copyright, [THINKFilm Company, Inc.](#), all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

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Emmett Till - Abduction by Bryant and Milam

Clip from "[Emmett Till - The Untold Story](#)," a 2005 documentary by Keith Beauchamp which incorporates historical footage and interviews with Mamie Till-Mobley and other family members. Copyright, [THINKFilm Company, Inc.](#), all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

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