



WARNING: THIS IMAGE DEPICTS THE REMAINS OF EMMETT TILL AFTER HE WAS BEATEN, SHOT AND THROWN INTO THE TALLAHATCHIE RIVER. PROCEED WITH CAUTION.

When Mamie Till-Bradley (also known as Mamie Till-Mobley) saw the disfigured body of her son, she ordered the funeral director to put a glass top over the remains but to keep the coffin open. She wanted everyone to see what had happened to Emmett during his Mississippi visit.

Years later, while attending the dedication of a civil rights memorial in Montgomery, Alabama - on November 5, 1989 - Mamie said:

We cannot afford the luxury of self-pity. Our top priority now is to get on with the building process. My personal peace has come through helping boys and girls reach beyond the ordinary and strive for the extraordinary.

We must teach our children to weather the hurricanes of life, pick up the pieces, and rebuild. We must impress upon our children that even when troubles rise to seven-point-one on life's Richter scale, they must be anchored so deeply that, though they sway, they will not topple.

Emmett's mother followed her own advice. Faced with the shocking, needless loss of her son, she made sure he did not die in vain.

Hundreds of eloquent speeches could never have had the impact that viewing Emmett's body had. People who saw his remains no longer believed that racially motivated crimes, in the Jim-Crow South, would exempt children. That especially hit home after the trial of the two men involved in killing young Emmett. They were found "not guilty."

Credits:

Photograph originally published in *Chicago Defender*.

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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INTRODUCTION

BELOW: EMMETT TILL IN HIS CASKET. MATHEW'S
FUNERAL PARLOR, CHICAGO, SEPTEMBER 1955.
CHICAGO DEFENDER



Emmett Till - Mother Ignites Civil-Rights Movement

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