



Madera's Journey from JIM CROW to CIVIL RIGHTS

Avenging the Blood of Emmet Till A COURTROOM SAGA

**SCOTT GANDY & EASTIN-ARCOLA 8TH GRADE CLASS
SAMUEL COLUNGA & LA VINA 8TH GRADE CLASS
MADERA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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Emmett Till, 1955

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Foreword: The Rich and Fertile Ground of Doing History

Exciting things are happening in California. History is being made in Madera. Eighth Graders at Eastin-Arcola School and La Vina School are doing history—and doing it very well, thank you.

In August 2021, Scott Gandy's class at Eastin-Arcola School and Samuel Colunga's class at La Vina School began Jim Crow Project Number Two. It is a sequel to the Jim Crow project that had been completed the previous year in the same schools. Piqued by the earlier project, these students wanted to dig a little deeper. They wanted to study Jim Crow, not only in Madera, but in the entire nation.

Their study revealed examples of Jim Crow culture across the country. They learned about separate schools, transportation, eating facilities, and de jure and de facto segregation in general. Then they discovered Jim Crow in the extreme—the inevitable result of authorized racism—violence. They discovered scores of lynchings, especially across the South. This of course led them to Money, Mississippi in August 1955 and the murder of Emmett Till.

At first the students were gripped by the fact that Emmett was only 14 years old—their age. Then they were appalled by the fact that Emmett Till's killers were tried and found “not guilty.” They were further enraged when they learned that the murderers later openly confessed to the crime in a magazine article for which they were paid.

Faced with this injustice, the young historians embraced a plan of action. They would hold a trial and prosecute the killers in absentia (both men were deceased).

On February 28, the students held a march to protest the murder of Emmett and to announce their plans to hold the trial.

On March 30, the young historians went to court. Superior Court Judge Ernie LiCalsi presided over the trial, and Sheriff Tyson Pogue served as bailiff. The students prosecuted the case. The jury, which was composed of members of the Madera chapter of the NAACP, rendered a guilty verdict.

The story of the Emmett Till Project was then prepared for publication under the title *Avenging the Blood of Emmett Till: A Courtroom Saga*. The students and their teachers are proud to present their collaborative effort in the present volume.

—William Coate, Madera Method Coordinator

Who was Emmett Till?

Not many people know that his story is the main reason for the Civil Rights Movement.

Emmett was a 14-year-old African-American boy who was brutally tortured and murdered by two white men. He was accused of flirting and whistling at a white woman, Carolyn Bryant. In September, 1955, an all-white jury found Emmett's killers, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, not guilty of the murder of Emmett Till. Protected against double jeopardy, the two men publicly confessed in a *Look Magazine* article in 1956, that they did kidnap and murder Emmett Till. In the minds of many, Carolyn Bryant, Roy Bryant, and J.W. Milam will always remain the trio who got away with murder, and until they all die, the murderers will forever live with the guilt of taking an innocent life. (Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam are deceased—Carolyn Bryant is still living).

This tragic story inspired famous civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks to start the Civil Rights Movement. Emmett's story opened the minds of many people, and they realized how cruel the world of racism and segregation is. The idea that sometimes people have to die for justice to occur is absurd and sickening. Emmett Till was a boy who lost his life because of racism.

This project is important because we let everyone know what happened on August 28th, 1955, when the life of an innocent boy was taken away. Eastin Arcola Elementary School and La Vina Elementary School worked on this project to bring Emmett the justice he never received and to let his story be known. We opened the eyes of

many people, making them realize how cruel racism and segregation is, especially when people die because of their skin color.

To this day, racism is still occurring all over the world. Emmett Till's murder was a spark in the upsurge of activism and resistance that became known as the Civil Rights Movement. The sight of his brutalized body pushed many directly into the fight who had been content to stay on the sidelines. The tragedy of Emmett's murder had an immense impact on American society, and it drew attention to the brutality of racial violence.

Our schools worked hard to get justice for Emmett Till. We researched his murder. We marched to avenge his blood. We held a trial to bring him justice. This is the story of that trial.

—*Gueorgina Bojorquez*

Carolyn Bryant's Testimony

In 1955, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam stood trial for the murder of Emmett Till. Carolyn Bryant, wife of Roy Bryant, testified at that trial, but the jury did not hear her testimony. The judge ordered the jurors out of the courtroom while she was on the stand.

Carolyn Bryant went ahead and told the Court that Emmett had grabbed her, used vulgar language, and propositioned her while he was in her store on August 24, 1955. Most observers agree that individuals who heard her testimony relayed to the jury what she had told the Court (the jury was not sequestered). Both Milam and Bryant were found not guilty.

What follows is a verbatim transcription of her courtroom testimony.

Direct examination of Carolyn Bryant by Caleb Carlton, one of five defense attorneys representing Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam at their murder trial.

Q: What is your name, please, ma'am?

A: Mrs. Roy Bryant.

Q: You are the wife of one of the defendants in this case, the defendant Roy Bryant, is that right?

A: Yes, Sir.

Q: How old are you, Mrs. Bryant?

A: Twenty-one.

Q: And how tall are you?

A: Five feet, two inches.

Q: How much do you weigh, Mrs. Bryant?

A: One hundred and three pounds.

Q: Do you have any children?

A: Yes.

Q: What are those children's names?

A: Roy Bryant, Jr., and Thomas Lamar Bryant.

Q: And they are both boys, I believe?

A: Yes.

Q: What is Roy, Jr.'s age?

A: He is three.

Q: And how old is Thomas Lamar?

A: Two.

Q: How old is your husband, Mrs. Bryant?

A: Twenty-four.

Q: When were you all married?

A: April 25th, 1951.

Q: Did Roy serve in the Armed Forces?

A: Yes.

Q: When did he enlist in the Armed Forces?

MR. SMITH: We object, Your Honor. That is incompetent, immaterial and irrelevant.

THE COURT: The objection is overruled.

Q: When did he enlist in the Armed Forces?

A: In June of 1950.

Q: That was about ten months, I believe, before you married?

A: Yes.

Q: How long did he stay in the service?

A: Three years.

Q: Did he get out in about June of 1953 then?

A: Yes.

Q: Now Mrs. Bryant, I direct your attention to Wednesday night, on the 24th day of August. On that evening, who was in the store with you?

MR. SMITH: If the Court please, we object to anything that happened on Wednesday evening unless it is connected up.

MR. BRELAND: We will connect it.

THE COURT: Will the jury please retire to the jury room.

The jury retired to the jury room, and the proceedings continued in the absence of the jury.

THE COURT: You may now proceed.

Q: Mrs. Bryant, on Wednesday evening or Wednesday night, the 24th day of August, 1955, did anyone—who was in the store with you that night?

A: No one.

Q: You were alone in the store at the time?

A: Yes.

Q: Was there anyone in the living quarters at the rear of the store?

A: Yes.

Q: Who was back there?

A: Mrs. Milam and her two children and also our two children.

Q: Did any incident occur in that store on that evening which made an impression on you?

A: Yes.

Q: And what time of the evening was that?

A: About eight o'clock.

Q: Was that before or after dark?

A: After dark.

Q: Just tell the Court what happened there at that time, please, ma'am.

A: This nigger man came in the store and he stopped there at the candy case.

Q: And in the store, where is the candy case located?

A: At the front of the store.

Q: And on which side is it?

A: It is on the left side as you go in.

Q: And that is the first counter there, is that right?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Now, is the store, with reference to that candy counter, is there anything back of the candy counter towards the wall of the store?

A: No.

Q: Is there any place to walk there or anything of that sort?

A: Yes, an aisle.

Q: When this negro man came in the store, where were you in the store?

A: I was farther back in the store, behind the counter.

Q: Where were you in the store when this man came in?

A: I was farther back behind the counter.

Q: Were you on the same side or on the other side?

A: The same side.

Q: And when he came in, I believe you said he stopped in front of the candy counter, is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: And what did you do then?

A: I walked up to the candy counter.

Q: And what transpired up there at the candy counter?

A: I asked him what he wanted.

Q: And did he tell you?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know what it was he asked for?

A: No.

Q: And did you then get the merchandise for him?

A: Yes. I got it and put it on top of the candy case.

Q: And what did you do then?

A: I held my hand out for his money.

Q: Which hand did you hold out?

A: My right hand.

Q: Will you show the Court how you held your hand out?

A: I held out my hand like this

Demonstrating by holding out her hand.

Q: Which hand was that?

A: My right hand.

Q: And will you show the Court how you did that?

A: Like this.

Demonstrating by holding out her hand.

Q: And did he give you the money?

A: No.

Q: What did he do?

A: He caught my hand.

Q: Will you show the Court just how he grasped your hand?

A: Like this.

Demonstrating with her hand.

Q: By what you have shown us, he held your hand by grasping all the fingers in the palm of his hand, is that it?

A: Yes.

Q: And was that a strong grip or a light grip that he had when he held your hand?

A: A strong grip.

Q: And will you show the Court what you did? How did you get loose?

A: Well, I just jerked it loose, like this.

Demonstrating.

Q: It was about that difficult to get loose, was it?

A: Yes.

Q: And it was with that much difficulty that you got your hand loose?

A: Yes.

Q: Just what did he say when he grabbed your hand?

A: He said, "How about a date, baby?"

Q: When you freed yourself, what happened then?

- A: I turned around and started back to the back of the store.
- Q: You did what?
- A: I turned to get to the back of the store.
- Q: Did you do anything further then?
- A: Yes. He came on down that way and he caught me at the cash register.
- Q: You say he caught you?
- A: Yes.
- Q: How did he catch you?
- A: Well, he put his left hand on my waist, and he put his other hand over on the other side.
- Q: How were you going down along the counter there? Did he approach you from the front, or from the rear or how?
- A: From the side.
- Q: Now, Mrs. Bryant, will you stand up and put my hands just where he grasped you? Will you show the Court?
- A: It was like this.
Demonstrating by putting Mr. Carlton's hands on her body.
- Q: He grabbed you like that, did he?
- A: Yes.
- Q: In other words, with his left arm around your back?
- A: Yes.
- Q: And his left hand on your left hip?
- A: Yes.
- Q: And he had his right hand on your right hip?

A: Yes.

Q: Did he say anything to you then at the time he grabbed you there by the cash register?

A: Yes.

Q: What did he say?

A: He said, "What's the matter, baby? Can't you take it?"

Q: He said, "What's the matter, baby? Can't you take it?"

A: Yes.

Q: Did you then try to free yourself?

A: Yes.

Q: Was it difficult? Did you succeed in freeing yourself?

A: Yes.

Q: Did he say anything further to you at that time?

A: Yes.

Q: What did he say?

A: He said, "You needn't be afraid of me."

Q: And did he then use language that you don't use?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell the Court just what that word begins with, what letter it begins with?

The witness did not answer verbally, but shook her head negatively.

Q: In other words, it is an unprintable word?

A: Yes.

Q: Did he say anything after that one unprintable word?

A: Yes.

Q: And what was that?

A: Well, he said—well—”with white women before.”

Q: When you were able to free yourself from him, what did you do then?

A: Then this other nigger came in the store and got him by the arm.

Q: And what happened then?

A: And then he told him to come on and let’s go.

Q: Did he leave the store willingly or unwillingly?

A: Unwillingly.

Q: How did the other negro get out of the store then? How did they leave?

A: He had him by the arm and led him out.

Q: Were there any white men in the store at the time this occurred?

A: No.

Q: Were there any other negro men in the store at the time?

A: No.

Q: Were there any other persons outside the store?

A: Yes.

Q: Were they white men or colored men?

A: Colored.

Q: Were there a number of them out there? How many of them were out there?

A: Oh, about eight or nine.

- Q: When he went out the door, did he say anything further after he had made these obscene remarks?
- A: Yes. He turned around and said, "Good-bye."
- Q: And when he got out the door, what did you do?
- A: I called to Mrs. Milam to watch me and then I ran out the door to go to the car.
- Q: Which car did you go to?
- A: Mrs. Milam's.
- Q: What did you go to the car for?
- A: For my pistol.
- Q: Where was your pistol in the car?
- A: Under the seat.
- Q: It was under which seat?
- A: The driver's seat.
- Q: As you went out the door and went to the car, did you see this man again?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Where was he then? Where was he standing?
- A: He was standing by one of the posts on the front porch.
- Q: Your store has a front porch to it?
- A: Yes.
- Q: And these posts are on the front porch?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Did he say or do anything at that time?
- A: He whistled and then came out in the road.

Q: Can you give a sound something like the whistle that he made there? Was it something like this?

Mr. Carlton demonstrated by giving two low whistles.

A: Yes.

Q: When you got your pistol, Mrs. Bryant, where was this boy then? Or I should say where was this man?

A: When I turned around, he was getting in a car down the road.

Q: Did you rush back in the store then?

A: Yes.

Q: Had you ever seen that man before?

A: No.

Q: Have you ever seen him since?

A: No.

Q: Tell us what size man he was. Describe about how tall he was.

A: He was about five feet, six inches tall.

Q: And that is about four inches taller than you are, is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: And how much would you say that he weighed?

A: Around one hundred and fifty pounds.

Q: Did he walk with any defect?

A: No.

Q: Did he have any speech defect?

A: No.

Q: Did you have any trouble understanding him?

A: No.

Q: What sort of impression did this occurrence make on you?

A: I was just scared to death.

Q: Mrs. Bryant, do you generally know the negroes in that community around Money?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of store is it that you run there?

A: It is just a general store.

Q: Are most of your customers negroes or white people?

A: Most of them are negroes.

Q: And of course, you come in contact with most of the negroes around there in that way?

A: Yes.

Q: And you know most of them around there, do you?

A: Yes.

Q: And was this man one of those?

A: No.

Q: Did he talk with a southern or northern brogue?

A: The northern brogue.

Q: Did you have any difficulty understanding him?

A: No.

Q: Did you have any white men anywhere around there to protect you that night?

A: No.

Q: Was your husband out of town?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know where he was?

A: He was in Brownsville.

Q: What was his purpose in being away from home then?

A: He had carried a load of shrimp there.

Q: Where had he started out with that load of shrimp?

A: From New Orleans.

Q: When did you expect him home?

A: I didn't know.

Q: What was the reason for Mrs. Milam and the children being there with you?

A: So that I wouldn't be alone.

MR. CARLTON: Now, we submit, Your Honor, that the testimony here is competent on the basis of the testimony which was introduced by the State to show that there was some talk in Money, and to remove from the minds of the jury the impression that nothing but talk had occurred there.

THE COURT: The Court has already ruled, and it is the opinion of the Court that this evidence is not admissible.

The jury returned to the courtroom, and the proceedings continued with the jury present.

MR. CARLTON: We have no further questions, Your Honor.



The Trial

March 30, 2022—The students, the jury, and the audience are seated. Madera County Sheriff Tyson Pogue is serving as bailiff.

Sheriff

All rise. This Court of Historical Inquiry is now in session—the Honorable Superior Court Judge Ernest LiCalsi presiding.

Judge LiCalsi enters the court from his chambers and takes his seat at the bench.

Judge LiCalsi

Please be seated.

This Court of Historical Inquiry has been convened at the request of the 8th grade history classes of Eastin-Arcola and La Vina Schools. The students have charged Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, both deceased, with the 1955 murder of Emmett Till.

The students will prosecute the case using witness depositions that have been composed from recorded interviews, published articles, and the actual transcript of the trial of the defendants that was conducted in September, 1955.

Today's jury is composed of 12 registered voters from Madera County who were summoned by this Court and served by Sheriff Tyson Pogue.

Who represents the defendants in this case?

William Coate

I do, Your Honor, William Coate.

Judge LiCalsi

Who from Eastin-Arcola School represents the prosecution in this case?

Sarah Guglielmana

I do Your Honor, Sarah Guglielmana.

Judge LiCalsi

Who from La Vina School represents the prosecution in this case?

Hasani Heard

I do, Your Honor, Hasani Heard.

Judge LiCalsi

Very well. Please proceed.

William Coate

Your Honor, the defense objects. This trial is a clear case of double jeopardy, which is prohibited by the United States Constitution.

Judge LiCalsi

The objection of the defense is overruled. Since both defendants are deceased, double jeopardy is not in play here. The question is, will history officially find them guilty of murder?

The students will be permitted to argue the case against Bryant and Milam in an effort to achieve an official verdict of their guilt in this Court of Historical Inquiry.

By the same token, the Court has provided the defendants with counsel.

The prosecution will now proceed.

Hasani Heard

Opening statement.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, we come before you today asking you to correct a tragic wrong that was committed 67 years ago. We are asking you to finally render justice in the case of Emmett Till. We are asking you to find Emmett's killers, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, guilty of his murder.

Ladies and Gentlemen, 14-year-old Emmett, an African-American lad, was brutally tortured and murdered in August, 1955 because he whistled at Carolyn Bryant, a white woman. He had left his home in Chicago to visit relatives in Money, Mississippi. Four days after he arrived, he and his cousins visited Bryant's store in Money to buy some candy and gum. It was while he was at Bryant's that night that he whistled at Mrs. Bryant.

Four nights later, Roy Bryant, Mrs. Bryant's husband, and his half-brother, J.W. Milam, kidnapped Emmett, murdered him, and threw his body in the Tallahatchie River.

A few days later, Bryant and Milam were arrested and tried for murder. The jury, which was composed of 12 white men, took 67 minutes to find them "not guilty."

Four months later, they sold their story to *Look Magazine* and told in horrible detail how they had indeed murdered Emmett.

With that background, ladies and gentlemen, we are now going to bring you incontrovertible evidence of the guilt of Bryant and Milam. You are going to hear the testimony of witnesses who had personal knowledge of the Emmett Till case and the guilt of the accused.

The testimony you will hear will be in the form of depositions composed from interviews completed and recorded years ago. The actual transcript of the original trial was also consulted, as was the Look Magazine article in which Bryant and Milam confessed.

The prosecution now calls Nicole Cuadras to present the deposition of Mose Wright.

Nicole Cuadras

This is the deposition of Mose Wright.

My name is Mose Wright. Emmett Till was my grand-nephew. Actually he was my wife Elizabeth's grand-nephew. His mother, Mamie Till Mobley, was my wife's niece.

Emmett lived in Chicago and came to his death while he was a guest in my home in Money, Mississippi.

In August, 1955, I went to Chicago to preach a funeral for a friend of mine. I had been a minister in the Church of God in Christ. When I got ready to return to Mississippi, my grandson Wheeler Parker asked to go with me for a visit. When I told him yes, Emmett asked if he could come along too. Wheeler was 16 years old, and Emmett was 14.

Emmett's mother reluctantly said yes, so on Saturday, August 20, 1955, we boarded the train for Mississippi. We arrived in Money,

Mississippi on Sunday, August 21, and I took the boys to my home on Dark Fear Road. When we got there, we found another grandson, Curtis Jones, waiting for us. He lived in Chicago and decided that he wanted to come to Mississippi to visit too.

We had four bedrooms in our home. Elizabeth and I slept in one, and we put Emmett with my 12-year-old son Simeon in another. Wheeler slept with my 16-year-old son, Maurice, Curtis with my son, Robert.

The next day, Monday, we went to work picking cotton. That's how we earned our living, and the whole family helped. Emmett had never picked cotton but he joined us in the field anyway. However, by noontime he went back to the house. He told Elizabeth that he couldn't take the heat, so she let him stay with her while the rest of us stayed in the field picking cotton.

So that's how Emmett Till came to be in Mississippi in August, 1955. As things turned out, he would never see Chicago or his mother again.

Hasani Heard

The prosecution now calls Junior Diaz to present the deposition of Simeon Wright.

Junior Diaz

This is the deposition of Simeon Wright.

My Name is Simeon Wright. I was only 12 when Emmett came to visit us; he was my cousin.

We all liked Emmett. He was funny and made us laugh a lot. Papa put him to sleep with me in my bed while he was with us.

I never will forget the evening of Wednesday, August 24. That's when we decided to go to Bryant's store to buy some candy. We took Papa's car; my brother Maurice drove. Besides Emmett and me, Maurice, my cousin Wheeler, and our friend Roosevelt Crawford were in the car.

When we got to the store, Wheeler went in by himself. A couple of minutes later, Emmett went in, and Wheeler came out. My brother Maurice told me to go in and make sure that Emmett was all right. Mrs. Bryant, who owned the store, was behind the counter.

We were only in the store a few minutes. Emmett bought some candy, and then we left. Mrs. Bryant said later that Emmett grabbed her and asked her for a date. That was a lie; he never touched her or said anything to her. He just paid for his things, and we left.

When we left the store, we were standing on the wooden walkway, and Mrs. Bryant came out and headed for her car. Before she got there, Emmett gave her a wolf-whistle. She kept walking, and we all ran for the car. We were all afraid, and that made Emmett afraid, although he wasn't sure why.

When we were all in the car, Maurice took off. When we had gone about two miles, we saw some headlights coming up behind us. We thought it was Mr. Bryant coming after us, so Maurice pulled over, and everyone but me got

out and ran and hid in a cotton field. I don't know why I didn't go with them; maybe I was just too scared.

When the car went on by, we knew it wasn't anybody looking for us, so the others got back in the car. We took Roosevelt home, and then we went home. Emmett begged us not to tell Papa. He was afraid he would send him home, so we didn't say anything; I sure wished we had.

Hasani Heard

The prosecution now calls Oliver Buchanan to present the deposition of Wheeler Parker.

Oliver Buchanan

This is the deposition of Wheeler Parker.

My name is Wheeler Parker. Emmett Till was my cousin.

In 1955, I lived in Chicago. In August of that year, my grandfather, Mose Wright, who lived in Mississippi, came to Chicago to preach a funeral. When he returned to Mississippi, Emmett and I went with him. We planned to stay a couple of weeks with our relatives in Money, Mississippi. A few days later, another cousin, Curtis Jones, who also lived in Chicago, joined us at my grandparents' house in Money.

During that week from August 21 to August 24, we all had a good time. We worked together picking cotton (all except Emmett—he couldn't take the heat). We went swimming and just had fun until that Wednesday evening when we decided to go to Bryant's Store in Money.

Mrs. Bryant was tending the store when we went in to buy some candy and gum. When we paid for our things and left, Mrs. Bryant followed us out and headed for her car. That's when Emmett whistled at her. When he did that, we all hopped in the car and took off.

We got about two miles from the store on Dark Fear Road, when we saw a car coming up behind us. We thought it was someone chasing us, so we pulled over and ran and hid in a cotton field.

When the car went on by, we got back in the car and went home. By Thursday, we forgot all about it.

We picked cotton on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. By Saturday evening we were ready to have some fun, so we went to Greenwood. Going to Greenwood on Saturday night was like having Christmas in August. We went to the movies, ate foot-long hot dogs, and talked with the girls. We all had a great time, but the party ended at midnight because all the stores closed up, so we came home and went to bed.

About two hours later—about 2:30 in the morning—two men came to the house and wanted to see Emmett. One of them was Mr. J.W. Milam. He had a pistol in one hand and a flashlight in the other. Papa took them to where Emmett was sleeping, and they made him get up and get dressed. Then they took him outside and put him in the back of a pickup truck and drove away. I never saw him alive again.

Hasani Heard

The prosecution now calls Alvaro Ruiz to present the deposition of Elizabeth Wright.

Alvaro Ruiz

This is the deposition of Elizabeth Wright.

My name is Elizabeth Wright. Rev. Mose Wright was my husband. I remember very well that night when two white men kidnapped my great-nephew, Emmett Till, from our house.

It was about 2:30 in the morning on August 24, 1955, when we heard someone call out, "Preacher. Hey, preacher." My husband Mose hollered out, "Who's there?"

"Mr. Bryant," he said, "We want to see that fat Negro from Chicago."

Mose got up and, let them in, and took them to where Emmett was sleeping. I got a good look at them, and so did my husband. One was J.W. Milam. He had a gun in one hand and a flashlight in the other. The second was his half-brother, Roy Bryant. When they made Emmett get up and get dressed, I knew they were going to take him away. I offered to give them all the money we had if they would just leave him be, but they weren't interested.

Just before they left, they asked Mose how old he was. Mose said he was 64. Mr. Milam told him that if he ever told anyone about what had happened, he would never see 65.

They put Emmett in the back of a truck and drove away. Mose followed them outside and just stood there looking at them go down the road with poor Emmett in the back of the truck, scared to death.

After that happened, I never went back into that house. Mose took me to my brother's house in Sumner, and I stayed there.

Hasani Heard

The prosecution now calls Gueorgina Bojorquez to present the deposition of Ruthie Mae Crawford.

Gueorgina Bojorquez

This is the deposition of Ruthie Mae Crawford.

My name is Ruthie Mae Crawford. Our family lived near Preacher Wright and his family in 1955. We were good friends. My brother Roosevelt was with Emmett and the others the night they went to Bryant's Store. When he got home, he told me about Emmett whistling at Mrs. Bryant. I knew that this was going to mean trouble. I knew the Bryants would never let this go. When morning came, I walked over and told the Wrights that they had not heard the last of this. Mr. Bryant and his half-brothers were known to be strong segregationists.

Carolyn and Roy Bryant operated a little store at Money. They didn't have much money. They didn't have a car or a TV. They lived in the back of the store, which Roy's brothers had helped him get started after he got out of the army. They sold "snuff-and-fatback" to Negro field hands on credit.

For extra money, Roy drove a truck for one of his brothers while Carolyn tended the store. Roy had three brothers named Bryant and five half-brothers named Milam. The Bryant and Milam brothers all stuck together, and their main goal was to keep the black people in their place. They were determined to resist the attempts of colored men to escape white rule, even if it meant killing.

On that Wednesday evening, August 24, 1955, Roy was in Texas hauling shrimp with a brother's truck. Carolyn was alone in the store. But back in the living quarters was her sister-in-law Juanita Milam, 27, with her two small sons and Carolyn's two boys.

When her husband was away, Carolyn Bryant never slept in the store and never stayed there alone after dark. In Money, no white woman ever traveled on the country roads after dark unless she had a white man with her.

That's how things were on August 24, 1955, in Money, Mississippi, and that's why I knew that Emmett Till was in trouble.

Hasani Heard

The prosecution now calls Angel Paramo to present the deposition of Willie Reed.

Angel Paramo

This is the deposition of Willie Reed.

My name is Willie Reed. I was 18 years old when Emmett Till was murdered. At the time, I was living with my grandfather, Add Reed, on Mr. Clint Sheridan's place.

On the morning of August 28, 1955, I got up between six and seven to go to Mr. Glen Patterson's store at Drew to buy stuff for breakfast. In going to the store, I had to pass by Mr. Leslie Milam's place. It had a barn on it.

As I was walking to the store, a green and white 1955 Chevrolet pickup truck passed me. As it went by, I saw four white men in the cab and three colored men in the back. And I saw someone else sitting down in the back. It was a colored boy.

Not long after the truck passed me, I came to the barn on the Milam place. That's when I heard someone getting a whipping. The truck was setting in front of the barn. About that time, Mr. J.W. Milam came out and went to the well to get a drink of water. He had a pistol on his belt. After he got his drink, he asked me if I had heard anything. I told him "no." Then I went on to the store. I didn't see Mr. Milam again until his trial. I testified at the trial and then left Mississippi.

Hasani Heard

The prosecution now calls Chris Tornero to present the deposition of B.L. Mims.

Chris Tornero

This is the deposition of B.L. Mims.

My name is B.L. Mims. I live on the banks of the Tallahatchie River. I recall the occasion that took place on August 31st, 1955, when a body was found in the river near where I live.

I was at home that morning when some boys came to the house and told me they had seen a body in the river. I got a couple of friends and we took two boats to go see what they had found. I used my outboard motor boat. We went down to the river, and we found him. I was in my boat and my friends were in the other boat. What we found was a person who was upside down in the water. Only the legs from the knees on were sticking out of the water. The body was hung up on something in the water. We could tell by looking at it that it was a colored person.

We decided that we were going to have to have a rope in order to get the body loose, so we sent one of the boats back after a line. When they got back, we tied the rope around the ankles and then pulled the body loose from the bottom. We towed it downstream and then pulled the body out.

When we did that, we saw that there was a gin fan tied around the neck with barbed wire. We dragged the body and the gin fan out of the water and put it in the second boat. When we reached the bank, we pulled the body and the gin fan onto the land.

The body was in bad condition. Some of the skin was gone, and the fingernails were gone from the left hand. There was a ring on the right hand. There was a small hole about one inch above the right ear and two or three gashes on the head. I cut a stick about the size of a pencil and tried to find if the hole penetrated through the skull or not. I was unable to find if it penetrated.

The tongue was sticking out about two and a half or three inches. The left eyeball was almost out of its socket, and the right eye was about three-quarters of an inch out.

Directly the sheriff brought Mose Wright to where we were. He identified the body as that of Emmett Till, his nephew.

After awhile, the funeral man came and took the body away.

Hasani Heard

The prosecution now calls Kevin Camarillo-Chavez to present the deposition of Simeon Booker.

Kevin Camarillo-Chavez

This is the deposition of Simeon Booker.

The murder trial of Roy Bryant and his half-brother J.W. Milam opened in Sumner, Mississippi, on September 19, 1955. It lasted five days, ending on September 23.

Many whites from the area resented the influx of Northerners in town to cover the trial and filled the courtroom in support of the defendants. Every lawyer in the county donated their services, and \$10,000 was collected from local businessmen in support of the defense.

Presiding over the scene was Tallahatchie County Sheriff Clarence Strider. Sheriff Strider was a big, fat, plain-talking, obscene-talking sheriff you would expect to find in the South. His actions at the trial were not, I think, to seek justice, but to be sure that his courtroom was totally segregated.

Black spectators sat in the back of the courtroom, and black reporters were relegated to a card table off to the side. When the black Detroit Congressman Charles Diggs arrived to watch the proceedings, Strider at first refused him entry until the presiding judge told him he had to let in a U.S. Congressman. In turn, Strider relegated Diggs to the black press table.

Every morning, Strider would pass the group with a cheery, "Hello, negroes."

Hasani Heard

The prosecution now calls Quinten Priessman to present the deposition of Clytee Murdoc.

Quinten Priessman

This is the deposition of Clytee Murdoc.

The most dramatic testimony came from some unlikely heroes, two sharecroppers who were threatened with death if they testified. Mose Wright, Emmett's great uncle, was the prosecution's best eyewitness. He stood up in court and pointed out Milam and Bryant as the men who came to his home and took Emmett at gunpoint.

Willie Reed, an 18-year-old sharecropper, testified that he heard beatings and screaming coming from the Milam family shed. He also said J.W. Milam had come out of the shed, donning a .45 pistol on his hip, and asked Reed whether he had heard anything. Reed told him no.

Emmett's mother testified that the body pulled from the Tallahatchie River was indeed her son, and wept when attorneys showed her photographs of his brutally beaten body. Carolyn Bryant testified outside the presence of the jury and said Emmett walked into the store, purchased two cents' worth of bubble gum, and made "ugly remarks" to her. Then, she said, he whistled. Milam and Bryant never took the stand.

For his closing summation, defense attorney Sidney Carlton told the all-white, all-male jury that if they didn't free Milam and Bryant, "Your ancestors will turn over in their grave, and I'm sure every last Anglo-Saxon one of you has the courage to free these men." After deliberating for only 67 minutes, the jury returned a verdict: "Not Guilty." Milam and Bryant lit up cigars and kissed their wives right in front of everyone.

Hasani Heard

The prosecution now calls Sarah Guglielmana to present the deposition of William Bradford Huie.

Sarah Guglielmana

This is the deposition of William Bradford Huie.

My name is William Bradford Huie. I am a writer. In 1955, I wrote an article about the killing of Emmett Till, and on January 24, 1956, it was published in Look Magazine. The title was "The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi."

The sources for my article were J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, the two half-brothers who were charged with killing Till and who stood trial. They were found “not guilty.” A few weeks later, they agreed to “confess” to the crime, since they could not be charged again for the murder. I paid them a total of \$3,150 for an interview. The story they told me was very different from anything I had heard before.

They told me that after they kidnapped Emmett, they tried to scare him, but he wasn't afraid. Milam and Bryant took Emmett to a barn that belonged to their brother, Leslie Bryant. They said their intention was to “just whip him ... and scare some sense into him, but it didn't work,” so they beat him and then decided to take him to “the scariest place in the Delta.”

Milam had come upon it the previous year hunting wild geese. Over close to Rosedale, the Tallahatchie river bends around under a bluff. Milam told Bryant, “Brother, she's a 100-foot sheer drop, and she's a 100 feet deep after you hit.” Milam's idea was to stand Emmett up there on that bluff, “whip” him with the .45, and then shine the light down toward the water and make him think they were going to knock him in. They tried several dirt and gravel roads and drove along the levee. Finally, they gave up; in the darkness, Milam couldn't find his bluff.

”Well, what else could we do?” Milam asked. “He was hopeless. I'm no bully; I never hurt a Negro in my life. I like Negroes—in their

place—I know how to work 'em. But I just decided it was time a few people got put on notice. I just made up my mind.”

“Chicago boy,” I said, “I’m tired of 'em sending your kind down here to stir up trouble. I’m going to make an example of you, just so everybody can know how me and my folks stand.”

So Milam decided to act, but he needed a weight. Then he remembered a gin, which had discarded a cotton fan, so they went after it. They made Emmett load the 75-pound fan.

They drove back to the river where the bank was steep. The truck stopped 30 yards from the water. Milam said “Take off your clothes.”

Slowly, Emmett pulled off his shoes and socks. He stood up, unbuttoned his shirt, dropped his pants, his shorts. He stood there naked and bleeding.

Milam put that big .45 pistol to Emmett’s head. It jumped in his hand. Emmett turned and caught the bullet at his right ear. He dropped.

They barb-wired the gin fan to his neck, rolled him into 20 feet of water. Seventy-two hours later—eight miles downstream—some boys were fishing. They saw feet sticking out of the water. It was Emmett.

Hasani Heard

Closing statement.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have now reached the moment of decision, and we ask you to reflect on what you have seen and heard.

We have given you evidence that 14-year-old Emmett Till left his home in Chicago to visit his relatives in Money, Mississippi, and we have laid out for you the details of his horrific murder at the hands of Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam. The following facts have been presented and they are indisputable.

- Emmett left Chicago on Saturday, August 20, 1955.
- On Sunday, he arrived in Money, Mississippi to stay in the home of Mose Wright.
- He remained with the Wrights on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.
- On Wednesday evening, Emmett and his cousins visited Bryant's Store.
- While there, he whistled at Mrs. Carolyn Bryant.
- On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, Emmett remained with the Wrights.
- Early on Sunday morning, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam kidnapped Emmett from the Wright home.
- They took him to a barn on the Leslie Wright place and tortured him—gouging out his eyes, knocking out his teeth, ripping off an ear, and finally shooting him in the head with a .45 pistol.
- Bryant and Milam tied a gin fan to Emmett's neck and threw his body into the Tallahatchie River.
- You have seen that Bryant and Milam were arrested and tried for Emmett's murder.
- The jury made up of 12 white men found them not guilty.

- Three months later, the killers, knowing they could not be tried again, bragged about how they tortured and murdered Emmett Till.

Ladies and Gentlemen, 66 years have passed since that unthinkable miscarriage of justice, but it doesn't have to stay that way. Today you can render justice for Emmett Till by finding Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam guilty of the murder of Emmett Till.

We are confident you will do your duty.

Thank you.



Photos Presented To The Jury



Emmett Till and Mamie Till, his mother



Bryant's store



Simeon Wright sitting on the bed he was sharing with Emmett Till when he was kidnapped



Mose Wright holding Emmett Till's clothing



Mamie Till at Emmett's casket



Mose Wright and Mamie Till



The Tallahatchie River



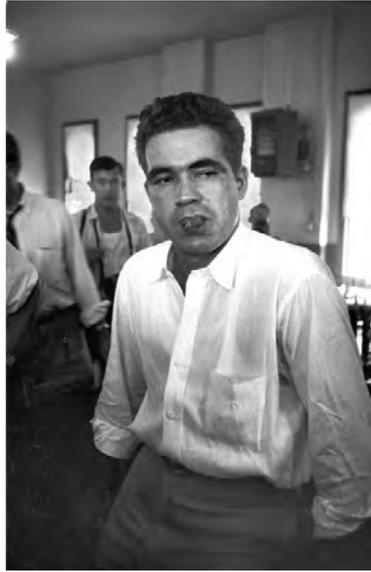
The fan that was tied around Emmett's neck

Avenging the Blood of Emmett Till: A Courtroom Saga



The jury who set the killers free

Madera's Journey from Jim Crow to Civil Rights



(L-R) J.M. Milam and Roy Bryant



The killers celebrate their court victory with their wives

The Verdict

Judge

The Sheriff will now escort the members of the jury to their chambers. After you have chosen a jury foreperson, you will deliberate until you find Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam either guilty or not guilty of the murder of Emmett Till. When you have reached a verdict, you will notify the sheriff and he will return you to the courtroom.

At the conclusion of deliberations the sheriff returns the jury to the courtroom.

Judge LiCalsi

Has the jury reached a verdict?

Foreperson

We have, Your Honor. We find the defendants, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, guilty of the murder of Emmett Till.

Judge LiCalsi

Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, having been found guilty of the murder of Emmett Till on this day, March 30, 2022, by a jury duly chosen and sworn—it is the judgment of this Court that the “not guilty” verdict rendered in their trial held in September 1955 was erroneous and contrary to the facts of the case.

It is, therefore, the judgment of this Court that an egregious miscarriage of justice has been rectified. Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam have been found guilty of

the murder of Emmett Till. Today's trial now becomes an official part of history. Notice of this verdict will be transmitted to the American Historical Association, the oldest professional association of historians in the United States. A transcript of this trial will also be forwarded to the California Secretary of State for inclusion into the State Archives.

The Court commends the students of Eastin-Arcola and La Vina Schools for their energetic and determined prosecution of this case.

The jury is excused with gratitude, and the Court is adjourned.



Carolyn Bryant's Recantation

In 2007, Duke University senior research scholar Timothy Tyson revealed that Carolyn confessed that she had fabricated the most sensational part of her testimony. "That part's not true," she told Tyson, about her claim that Till had made verbal and physical advances on her. As for the rest of what happened that evening in the country store, she said she couldn't remember.

Tyson published Carolyn Bryant's confession in his book, *The Blood of Emmett Till*.



Who's Who In The Emmett Till Case

Abbey, Richard Huntington (1891–1986) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Adams, Olive Arnold (1912–2016) was the author of an investigative work titled *Time Bomb: Mississippi Exposed and the Full Story of Emmett Till*, published within two weeks of the article in Look Magazine that featured an account of Till's murder.

Allison, Lee Russell (1915–1964) lived in Glendora, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, and was one of the character witnesses for J.W. Milam in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Armstrong, Howard (1919–1993) served on the jury in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Bell, Charles (1927–1984) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Billingsley, Walter (c. 1923–?) was slated as a witness for the prosecution in the Milam-Bryant murder trial but was not called to testify. He was a milkman on the Sturdivant plantation near Drew, Sunflower County, Mississippi, and heard the sounds of the beating in the barn on the morning after Emmett Till was kidnapped in Money.

Black, Herbert (1914–1988) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Black, Joseph (1925–1976) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Booker, Simeon S. (1918–2017) was a correspondent for *Jet Magazine* from 1955 until his retirement in 2007. He covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for that publication and soon after published his “Negro Reporter at the Till Trial” in the *Nieman Reports*.

Boyack, James E. (1902–1966) was a white journalist who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

Boyce, Louis W. (1903–1956) lived in Glendora, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, and was one of the character witnesses for J.W. Milam in the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He was a local planter.

Bradley, Amanda (c. 1905–?) lived on the Sturdivant plantation near Drew, Sunflower County, Mississippi at the time of the Emmett Till murder. She testified at the murder trial that she saw four white men entering and exiting a barn on the plantation the morning after Emmett was abducted. She also saw a truck outside of the barn.

Bradley, Mamie Elizabeth Carthan Till (1921–2003) was the mother of Emmett Louis Till.

Breland, Jesse Josiah (1888–1969) was one of five defense attorneys representing Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam in their murder trial.

Broadway, William Henry, Jr. (1907–1957) was the foreman of the grand jury that met in Greenwood, Mississippi in November, 1955 to consider kidnap charges against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant. The grand jury returned a finding of “no true bill,” and therefore all charges against Milam and Bryant were dropped.

Brownell, Herbert, Jr. (1904–1996) was United States attorney general at the time of the Emmett Till murder.

Bryant, Carolyn (1934–) was the target of the “wolf whistle” by Emmett Till while she was running the counter at the Bryant Grocery and Meat Market on August 24, 1955, in Money, Leflore County, Mississippi. She testified during the murder trial that on the occasion of the whistle, “a Negro man” entered the store, grabbed her, asked her for a date, and used various obscenities.

Bryant, Roy (1931–1994) was one of the accused killers of Emmett Till.

Caldwell, James Hamilton, Jr. (1898–1962) was one of three members of the prosecuting team representing the state of Mississippi at the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Caldwell, Nathan T. (1902–1986) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Campbell, Maybelle (c. 1903–?) was Emmett Till's school teacher at McCosh Elementary School in Chicago and spoke at his funeral on September 3, 1955. She called him "a fine upstanding pupil."

Campbell, Melvin L. (1925–1972) was a brother-in-law to J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, and, according to the recent FBI investigation, was with Milam and Bryant when Emmett Till was kidnapped and murdered.

Carey, Archibald (1908–1981) was a speaker at the Emmett Till funeral.

Carlton, Caleb Sidney (1915–1966) was one of five defense attorneys representing Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam at their murder trial.

Carter, Hodding (1907–1972) was a journalist who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the Delta-Democrat Times, which he founded by merger in 1938.

Carthan, Wiley Nash "John" (1902–1969) was the father of Mamie Till-Mobley and grandfather of Emmett Till.

Chancellor, John (1927–1996) was a journalist who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial as a national reporter for NBC.

Chatham, Gerald (1906–1956) was the district attorney who prosecuted J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant in their murder trial.

Clark, Hubert (1920–1972) was alleged to have been involved in the murder and kidnapping of Emmett Till.

Coleman, James Plemon (1914–1991) was Mississippi Governor-Elect at the time of the Milam-Bryant murder trial and assigned his own special agent, Robert Smith, to aid the prosecution.

Collins, Levy “Too Tight” (1935–1992) has been tied to the murder of Emmett Till by various witnesses.

Cothran, John Ed (1914–2008) was Deputy Sheriff to Leflore County Sheriff George Smith. He arrested J.W. Milam on charges of kidnapping Emmett Till and was a witness for the prosecution at the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Crawford, John (1933–) was one of several youths who were with Emmett Till in the evening before his kidnapping. He is the brother of Roosevelt Crawford and uncle of Ruth Crawford, two of the local teenagers who witnessed the incident at the Bryant Grocery and Meat Market. He currently lives in Detroit, Michigan.

Crawford, Roosevelt (1939–2018) was one of several youths with Emmett Till who went to Bryant’s Grocery and Meat Market on August 25, 1955, when the incident between Emmett and Carolyn Bryant occurred. He maintains that Till did not whistle at Bryant but that Till was responding to a bad move made by a checker player on the porch. He was the brother of John Crawford, who was with Till on the day he was kidnapped, and uncle of Ruth Crawford, who was also present at the store when Till whistled.

Crawford, Ruth Mae (1937–2021) was one of several youths with Emmett Till who went to Bryant’s Grocery and Meat Market on August 25, 1955, when the incident between Emmett and Carolyn Bryant occurred. Speaking publicly for the first time in Keith Beauchamp’s film, *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till*, she says she watched Till through a window and that all Till did to upset Bryant while in the store was place

his money in her hand, rather than on the counter. She is the niece of Roosevelt Crawford, who was also present that evening, and John Crawford.

Daley, Richard J. (1902–1976) was the mayor of Chicago at the time of the Emmett Till murder, and spoke out publicly against the killing. He sent a telegram to President Dwight D. Eisenhower asking that “all the facilities of the federal government be immediately utilized so that the ends of justice may be served.”

Desmond, James (1908–1968) was a journalist who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the New York Daily News.

Devaney, Ed (1881–1957) served on the jury in the Milam-Bryant murder trial. At 74, he was the oldest member of the jury. He lived in Charleston, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, and was a retired carpenter.

Diggs, Charles, Jr. (1922–1998) was the African-American congressman from Michigan who attended the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Dogan, Harry H. (1895–1959) was Tallahatchie County Sheriff-Elect at the time of the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He served from 1956–1960. He allegedly helped pick jurors for the trial who would likely favor an acquittal of the accused. According to one of the defense attorneys, Dogan sent word to the jurors while they were deliberating to stall the verdict in order to make it “look good.”

Duke, Grover (1924–1982) lived in Money, Leflore County, Mississippi, and was one of the character witnesses for Roy Bryant in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Dyess, Claude Vernon "C. V." (1923–1965) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. (1890–1969) was President of the United States at the time of the Emmett Till murder. He received several telegrams after the murder encouraging him to intervene to assure that justice would prevail in the case. He made no public statements regarding the case and failed to respond to the telegram of Mamie Bradley, Emmett's mother.

Evers, Medgar (1925–1963) was field secretary for the Mississippi chapter of the NAACP at the time of the Emmett Till murder. He, with other NAACP officials, helped to seek out witnesses for the trial.

Falls, Jerry (1905–1979) was the foreman of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Featherston, James Shoaf (1923–2000) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the Jackson Daily News.

Fedric, Eugene C. (1917–2005) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Ford, Louis Henry (1914–1995) was the bishop who preached Emmett Till's funeral sermon.

Frasier, John, Jr. (1925–) was a Leflore County prosecutor who worked on the kidnapping case against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant. The kidnapping occurred in Leflore County.

Garrett, Simon (1924–2007) was a funeral home assistant to Chester Miller at the Century Burial Association and assisted in bringing the body of Emmett Till to Greenwood after it was retrieved from the Tallahatchie River. He pulled a ring off of Till's finger that was later used to identify the body.

Gunter, John (?–?) was a journalist who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the Memphis Commercial Appeal.

Halberstam, David (1934–2007) was a journalist who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the West Point Daily Times Leader while a reporter living in Mississippi.

Hall, Robert F. (1906–1993) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the Communist Daily Worker.

Havens, Willie D. (1904–1998) served as the alternate juror in the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He married Mamie Glover in Charleston, Tallahatchie County in 1929. As an alternate, he was dismissed from the jury by Judge Curtis Swango before it retired to the jury room to deliberate.

Haynes, Goldie (1913–1989) was an evangelist who sang a solo, "I Don't Know Why I Have to Cry Sometimes," at the Emmett Till funeral.

Henderson, Robert Harvey (1921–2007) was one of five defense attorneys representing J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant in their murder trial. At 34, he was the youngest of the legal team.

Henry, Aaron E. (1922–1997) was an NAACP official at the time of the Emmett Till murder, and helped find witnesses willing to talk by disguising himself as a sharecropper and going into the fields.

Herbers, John (1923–2017) is a journalist who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for United Press International.

Hicks, James L. (1915–1986) was a reporter who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial. His investigation into the murder was published in several installments in the Baltimore Afro-American, the Cleveland Call and Post, and the Atlanta Daily World, soon after the trial.

Hodges, Robert (1937–2019) was the young fisherman who discovered Emmett Till's body in the Tallahatchie River at a spot called Pecan Point, near Philipp, on August 31, 1955. He was a witness for the prosecution at the murder trial.

Holland, George (1913–1982) served as a juror in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Howard, Theodore Roosevelt Mason "T.R.M." (1908–1976) was a doctor, entrepreneur, and fraternal leader in the all-black town of Mound Bayou in the Mississippi Delta. During the Milam-Bryant murder trial, Dr. Howard searched for witnesses and other evidence to secure a conviction as well as to prove a broader conspiracy. Mamie Bradley stayed in Dr. Howard's house during the trial, as did many black reporters.

Hubbard, Joe Willie (c. 1928–?) was alleged by T.R.M. Howard to have been with J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant in the murder of Emmett Till.

Huff, William Henry (1888–1963) was an NAACP attorney who represented Mamie Bradley after Emmett Till was murdered.

Huie, William Bradford (1910–1986) was the reporter who paid J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant \$3,150 to tell their story after their acquittal. Their confession appeared in an article by Huie in *Look Magazine* in 1956.

Hurley, Ruby (1913–1980) was southeastern director of the NAACP who, with Amzie Moore and Medgar Evers, helped seek out witnesses for the prosecution in the Milam-Bryant murder trial. To do so, she disguised herself as a field worker.

Jackson, David (1922–1966) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial as a photographer for *Ebony Magazine* and *Jet Magazine*. He took the famous photo of Emmett Till on the slab at the A.A. Rayner & Sons Funeral Home, published in *Jet*, which shocked the nation.

Jackson, Woodrow “Champ” (1923–2008) is said to have embalmed the body of Emmett Till in Tutwiler, Mississippi before it was shipped to Chicago.

Johnson, Otha, Jr. (1934–2002) was, according to his son, with Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam on the night they kidnapped and murdered Emmett Till, as stated in the FBI report of its 2004–2006 investigation.

Jones, Curtis (1938–2000) was a cousin of Emmett Till. He traveled from Illinois to Mississippi to spend time with Mose Wright’s family shortly after Emmett and Wheeler Parker had left, and was in the Wright home the night Emmett was abducted.

Jones, Willie Mae Wright (1917–?) is the oldest child of Moses and Lucinda Larry Wright. She was the mother of Curtis Jones, a cousin of Emmett Till who traveled from Chicago to Mississippi shortly after Emmett and Wheeler Parker left, and was in the Wright home the night Emmett was abducted. It was Willie Mae's phone call on Sunday morning, August 28, 1955, that notified Mamie Bradley that Emmett had been kidnapped from her father's home.

Kellum, Joseph W. (1911–1996) was one of five defense attorneys representing J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant in their murder trial.

Kempton, Murray (1917–1997) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the New York Post.

Kilgallen, James (1888–1982) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for INS. He was the father of Dorothy Kilgallen, a regular panelist on the TV game show, "What's My Line?"

Kimbell, Elmer O. (1922–1985) was a friend of J.W. Milam, and according to Carolyn Bryant, in her testimony before the FBI in its 2004–2006 investigation, he was present with Milam and Roy Bryant on the night Emmett Till was kidnapped.

King, Joe J. (1918–1988) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Kinnard, Roy (1899–1987) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Lance, Frank (1931–1981) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Loggins, Henry Lee (1923–2009) is believed to have been with J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant during the kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till. He was employed by J.W. Milam at the time of the murder and went missing shortly thereafter. During the trial, it was rumored that he and another possible accomplice named Leroy Collins were placed in the county jail at Charleston, Mississippi under false names in order to keep them from testifying, but this was never substantially proven.

McCool, Noel L. (1907–1976) was a Deputy Sheriff in Leflore County who aided in the kidnap and murder investigation of Emmett Till. His phone call sent Leflore County officials to the Tallahatchie River after Emmett Till's body was found there.

McGarrh, Lee (1920–2002) was one of the character witnesses for J.W. Milam in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

McMahon, Franklin (1921–2012) was a sketch artist who attended the Milam-Bryant murder trial. His sketches from the trial appeared in Life Magazine and were the only glimpses into how witnesses appeared on the stand, since photography was not allowed while court was in session.

Malone, Harry D. (1920–1993) worked for white and black funeral homes in Tutlwiler, Mississippi at the time of the Emmett Till murder. His testimony stated that he

believed the body had been in the river for at least ten days, aiding the defense argument that the body was not that of Emmett Till.

Matthews, Bishop G. (1909–1973) served as a juror in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Melnick, Curtis (1915–1984) was the principal of McCosh Elementary School in Chicago, where Emmett Till attended. He spoke to reporters after the murder, describing Emmett as an average student who never got into trouble.

Melton, Garland (1907–1962) was Deputy Sheriff of Tallahatchie County who arrived at the scene at the Tallahatchie River when Emmett Till's body was found.

Milam, John William "J.W." (1919–1980) was one of the accused murderers of Emmett Till. Soon after the trial and acquittal, he and Roy Bryant sold their story confessing to the murder of Emmett Till to reporter William Bradford Huie for \$3,150, and it was published in *Look Magazine*.

Milam, Mary Juanita Thompson (1927–2014) married John W. Milam on December 11, 1949, in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi. She was at the back of the Bryant Grocery and Meat Market, in the apartment, when the incident between Emmett Till and Carolyn Bryant occurred, and was a witness for the defense at the trial.

Milam, Leslie F. (1925–1974) was the brother of J.W. Milam and half-brother to Roy Bryant, accused murderers of Emmett Till. According to witnesses, Emmett Till was beaten and shot in a tool shed at the Sturdivant plantation that Leslie Milam managed, and they saw Milam present.

Miller, Chester A. (1903–1986) managed the Century Burial Association in Greenwood, Mississippi, which received Emmett Till's body after its discovery in the Tallahatchie River.

Mims, Benjamin "B.L." (1925–2001) was in the boat with Garland Melton when Emmett Till's body was pulled from the Tallahatchie River on August 31, 1955. He served as a witness for the prosecution and testified to the condition of Emmett's body.

Minor, Wilson Floyd "Bill" (1922–2017) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the New Orleans Times-Picayune.

Minyard, Ralph W. (1912–1976) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Mobley, Gennie (1923–2000) married Mamie Till Bradley two years after Emmett Till's death, and had several children from a previous marriage.

Moore, Amzie (1912–1982) was an NAACP official in Mississippi who attended the Milam-Bryant murder trial and helped find witnesses for the prosecution.

Mooty, Rayfield (1907–1990) was a cousin by marriage to Mamie Till-Mobley. He traveled to Mississippi with Mamie and her father, Nash "John" Carthan, for the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Mullen, Claude (1907–1990) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Murdock, Clotye (1928–2009) reported on the Milam-Bryant murder trial for *Ebony Magazine*.

Murff, Randall E. (1919–2020) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Nelson, Chester F. “Chick” (1903–1978) was the mayor of Tutwiler, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, whose funeral home embalmed and prepared Emmett Till’s body for shipment back to Chicago. He served as a witness for the defense at the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Newson, Moses J. (1927–) is a journalist who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He accompanied Ruby Hurley onto plantations where potential witnesses were working, in order to warn them and bring them to T.R.M. Howard’s house in Mound Bayou.

Newton, A.C. (1914–1998) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Newton, William Davis (1917–1984) served as a juror in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Otken, Luther “L.B.” (1889–1969) was a physician living in Greenwood, Leflore County, Mississippi who testified at the Milam-Bryant murder trial on behalf of the defense.

Parker, Thelton “Pete” (c. 1938–) was one of the local youths who was with Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi the evening of the incident between Emmett Till and Carolyn Bryant at Bryant’s Grocery and Meat Market.

Parker, Wheeler (1939–) is a cousin by marriage of Emmett Till who accompanied Till to Mississippi from Chicago to visit relatives. He was with Emmett at the Bryant Grocery and Meat Market the night that Emmett whistled at Carolyn Bryant. He was in the home of Moses and Elizabeth Wright the night that Emmett was abducted.

Pennington, James Green (1918–1994) served as a juror in the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He was a farmer living in Webb, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi.

Popham, John (1910–1999) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the New York Times, where he was its first southern correspondent.

Porteous, Clark (1910–1997) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the Memphis Press-Scimitar, where he worked for 47 years.

Price, Lee L. (1888–1985) served on the jury in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Ramsey, Augustus "Gus" (1907–1962) served as a juror in the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He was a farmer living in Enid, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi.

Ratcliffe, Robert M. (1911–1984) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the Pittsburgh Courier, where he worked for 16 years.

Rayner, Ahmed A., Sr. (1893–1989) was the funeral director who received Emmett Till's body after its arrival in Chicago on September 2, 1955. He defied orders from Mississippi to keep the casket sealed and allowed Mamie Bradley to examine the remains of her son.

Reed, Add (1879–1977) was one of the surprise witnesses at the Milam-Bryant murder trial, who testified that the morning after Emmett was abducted, he walked past the barn at the Shurden plantation and saw Leslie Milam and another white man. He was the grandfather of Willie Reed, who also testified.

Reed, Willie (1937–2013) was one of the surprise witnesses at the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He lived next door to the plantation managed by Leslie Milam and testified that he heard beating and yelling coming from a tool shed near the barn on the plantation. He also saw J.W. Milam leave the shed and get a drink of water.

Roberts, Isaiah (1912–1989) was the pastor of the Robert's Temple Church of God in Argo, Illinois, and the host pastor for Emmett Till's funeral.

Robinson, Whitfield M. (1915–1990) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Sanders, James (c. 1911–?) lived in Money, Leflore County, Mississippi, and was one of the character witnesses for Roy Bryant in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Sanders, Stanny (1919–1971) of Indianola, Leflore County, was a district prosecutor who worked on the kidnapping case against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant.

Selby, Ben (1911–1985) was a Deputy Sheriff in Tallahatchie County who aided in the courthouse at the time of the Emmett Till murder trial. He is seen in many photographs performing a weapons search on spectators and journalists who entered the courtroom.

Shanks, Walter. A. (1904–1991) was part of the Leflore County, Mississippi Sheriff's Office and helped to investigate the kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till.

Shaw, James "J.A.", Jr. (1924–1979) served on the jury in the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He was a farmer living in Webb, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi.

Shoemaker, W.C. "Dub" (1931–2019) helped cover the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the Jackson, Mississippi Daily News and helped the prosecution locate witnesses in Sunflower County.

Singleton, Ronald (1923–2016) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the London Express.

Smith, Crosby (1908–1993) was an uncle to Mamie Till Bradley and brother of her mother, Alma Spearman. Through his efforts, Emmett Till's body was released from the state of Mississippi after attempts were made to bury it in Money. He accompanied it on the train back to Chicago.

Smith, Franklin (c. 1918–?) lived in Money, Leflore County, Mississippi, and was one of the character witnesses for Roy Bryant in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Smith, George Wilson (1902–1975) was Sheriff of Leflore County at the time of the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He arrested and booked Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam on kidnapping charges and was the one who received the initial confession of Bryant that he had kidnapped Emmett Till. He testified at the trial and later at the grand jury hearing seeking an indictment of Milam and Bryant on kidnapping charges.

Smith, Robert Bruce, III (1914–1967) served on the prosecution team in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Somerville, William G. (1905–1976) served on the Leflore County grand jury that considered kidnap charges against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant.

Spearman, Alma Smith Carthan Gaines (1902–1981) was the mother of Mamie Bradley and grandmother of Emmett Till.

Stratten, William G. (1914–2001) was the governor of Illinois at the time of the Emmett Till murder.

Strickland, Charles Alvin “C.A.” (1904–1994) was an identification officer who worked for the Greenwood, Mississippi Police Department and served as a witness for the prosecution in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Strider, Henry Clarence “H.C.” (1904–1970) was Sheriff of Tallahatchie County from 1951–1955. He was a witness for the defense at the Milam-Bryant murder trial, and his actions behind the scenes bore out his support for them.

Swango, Curtis M. (1908–1968) presided as judge at the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Terry, Harold E. (1923–2013) lived in Money, Leflore County, Mississippi, and was one of the character witnesses for Roy Bryant in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Thomas, Travis W. (1907–1991) served as a juror in the Milam-Bryant murder trial. He married Lillie Mae Sullivan in 1928 and was a farmer living in Murfreesboro, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi.

Toole, James A., Jr. (1911–1979) served as a juror in the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Tribble, Ray (1926–1998) served as a juror in the Emmett Till murder trial.

Trout, Nathan Z. (1901–1976) was the Chief of Police of Charleston, Tallahatchie County, Mississippi in 1955 and was deputized by County Sheriff H. C. Strider to assist with the trial.

Turner, Arnold (1916–?) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Turner, Nannie Mitchell (1888–1975) was a journalist who covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial.

Wakefield, Dan (1932–) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for *The Nation*.

Washington, Johnny B. (1928–1980) was a black male who worked for Roy Bryant and, according to the 2004–2006 FBI investigation, was alleged to have assisted in the kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till. He may have been the “third man” who appeared on Moses Wright’s porch and remained outside when Milam and Bryant entered Wright’s home and abducted Till.

Weber, Ed was a Deputy Sheriff in Tallahatchie County at the time of the Emmett Till murder and assisted when Till’s body was discovered in the river.

White, Hugh Lawson (1881–1965) was Governor of Mississippi at the time of the Emmett Till murder.

Whitten, John W. (1919–2003) was one of five defense attorneys representing Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam in their murder trial.

Wilkins, Roy (1901–1981) was elected executive director of the NAACP in 1955 and spoke out publicly against Mississippi and the Emmett Till slaying, polarizing many residents and officials in that state.

Wilson, L. Alex (1908–1960) covered the Milam-Bryant murder trial for the Tri-State Defender.

Winters, Francis B. (1913–1999) was a member of the 18-man Tallahatchie County grand jury that handed down indictments of murder and kidnapping against J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant on September 6, 1955.

Withers, Ernest C. (1922–2007) was the photographer who defied Judge Swango's orders and captured a photograph while court was in session during the Milam-Bryant murder trial. The photo was that of Moses Wright standing at the witness stand, pointing out J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant as the men who kidnapped Emmett Till from his home.

Wright, Elizabeth Smith (1900–1970) was the wife of Moses Wright, sister of Alma Spearman, and great aunt of Emmett Till. She was present the night Emmett was abducted from her home, and she offered J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant money if they would leave Till alone.

Wright, Maurice (1939–1991) was one of several youths who accompanied Emmett Till to Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market on August 25, 1955 and witnessed the incident between Emmett and Carolyn Bryant. He was a son of Moses and Elizabeth Smith Wright.

Wright, Moses (1892–1977) was the great-uncle of Emmett Till, who visited Chicago in August 1955 and brought Emmett and Wheeler Parker to Mississippi. He identified J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant in court as the men who came to his home the morning of August 28, 1955 and kidnapped Emmett Till.

Wright, Robert (1940–) is a son of Moses and Elizabeth Wright and was in the house, sleeping in the bed with Curtis Jones in a nearby room, on the night Emmett Till was kidnapped.

Wright, Simeon Brown (1942–2017) is the son of Moses and Elizabeth Smith Wright. He lived with his family near Money Mississippi and was in the bed with Emmett Till at the time of Till's abduction on August 28, 1955.

Young, Frank (c. 1920–?) was a field worker who volunteered names of accomplices of J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant in the kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till to Dr. T.R.M. Howard, as well as leads to possible witnesses. It was intended that he testify on behalf of the prosecution at the Milam-Bryant murder trial, but for whatever reason, he left the courthouse and did not testify.





**Madera's Journey
from JIM CROW
to CIVIL RIGHTS**

**Avenging
the Blood
of Emmet Till
A COURTROOM SAGA**

Motivated by the miscarriage of justice in the 1955 Emmett Till murder trial, 8th grade history students from Eastin-Arcola School and La Vina School in Madera, California, went to court in 2022 to make right this egregious wrong.

Till, a 14-year-old from Chicago, was tortured and murdered by Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam for whistling at Bryant's wife.

The two men were arrested and charged with murder. An all-white, all-male jury found them not guilty.

A few months later, they admitted their guilt in a magazine interview for which they were paid several thousand dollars.

Armed with first person testimony, the students prosecuted Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam in a Court of Historical Inquiry in a Madera, California courtroom. Superior Court Judge Ernie LiCalsi presided, and Madera County Sheriff Tyson Pogue served as bailiff. The jury, composed of members of the Madera chapter of the NAACP, found the pair guilty.

This book gives an account of the trial and how the students "avenged the blood of Emmett Till."