

1  **Emmett Till**

2  **Timeline of Emmett Till**

- Emmett Till's murder in 1955 would come a year after the Brown v. Board of Education decision
- Months before 2 African American activists in Mississippi murdered
 - NAACP Reverend George Lee shot and killed after trying to vote
 - Lamar Smith shot and killed in front of courthouse after casting vote
 - Many eyewitnesses, no one arrested
- 100 days after the death of Emmett Till on December 5, 1955 Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus

3  **How did this happen?**

- Emmett Till was 14
- Emmett Till lived in Chicago but had relatives in Mississippi who he wanted to visit
- In 1955 Emmett Till went to visit his relatives in Mississippi
- Mother gave him a stern warning before he left, she said, “Be careful. If you have to get down on your knees and bow when a white person goes past, do it willingly.”

4  **How did this happen?**

- Emmett was out front of a local grocery store playing and showed a picture of a white girl from Chicago
- Till said that this was his girlfriend
- Somebody suggested he go inside and talk to the white women behind the register
- Till did and there are conflicting reports about what was said
- Supposedly Till as he was leaving said, ‘Bye Baby’ and maybe whistled at her

5  **What happened**

- A couple days later Ron Bryant whose wife was the woman behind the register and J.W. Milam his half brother found Emmett Till
- They came in the middle of the night and took him from his uncle's house
- Next, Bryant and Milam beat Till to death and shot him in the head

- After the two had killed Till they tied him to a cotton gin fan and dumped him into the Tallahatchie River near Money, Mississippi

6 7 **Aftermath**

- Till was so badly beaten that the only way his uncle could identify him was by an initialed ring he was wearing
- One eye was gouged out and his head was crushed in with a bullet hole thru it
- Till's mom, Mamie Till held an open casket funeral so everyone could see what had been done to her son
- Thousands of people came and saw the body

8 **Trial**


- Bryant and Milam were arrested and brought to trial for the murder of Emmett Till
- Prosecution was having a tough time finding witnesses because at this point in time it was unheard of for an African American to accuse a white of committing a crime
- It was not until Till's uncle Mose Wright stepped to the stand and very bravely and boldly gave his testimony

9 **Trial**

- In his testimony he was asked if he could point out who had taken his nephew that summer night
- Wright stood up and pointed at Bryant and Milam and said, "Dar he" "There he is"
- After this many more African Americans came to testify against the two men
- These witnesses were all hurried out of the state quickly after their testimony

10 **Decision**

- Jury consisted of 12 white men
- The jury deliberated for only an hour
- Returned with the verdict of "not guilty"
- Verdict delivered on September 23rd, 1955 the 166th anniversary of the signing of the Bill of Rights

- Months after the trial is over Bryant and Milam do an article for *Look Magazine* in which they confess to the crime
- 11  **Impact of Emmett Till**
- Helped to unite Northern and Southern African Americans
 - Membership in the NAACP soared
 - Till's murder was a spark that caused a surge in the activism and resistance of the civil rights movement
 - The picture of Till's brutalized body pushed many into the fight for civil rights who had been content to sit on the side