

US History

An Age of Civil Disobedience

Learning Target:

I can analyze how the Emmett Till incident helped to spark the Civil Rights Movement.

4. Civil Rights – The Murder of Emmett Till

Location –

- Money, Mississippi – 1955
- Visiting great uncle Mose Wright

People Involved –

- Emmett Till – 14 year old from Chicago
- Wheeler Parker Jr. – Emmett’s cousin
- Mose Wright – Granduncle of Emmett Till
- Roy Bryant – Owner of local store
- Carolyn Bryant – Wife of Roy Bryant
- J.W. Miliam – Carolyn Bryant’s brother-in-law

The Event –

- Emmett had been warned by mother to mind his manners around white people
- Emmett did not realize how different race relations in the south

- Emmett and Wheeler along with some friends were in Bryant’s local store
- While leaving Till either whistled or said something to Carolyn Bryant
- Boys ran away worried and thinking Emmett was crazy to have done that

The Murder –

- Three days later Roy and J.W. came to Emmett’s great-uncle’s home in the middle of the night
- They beat the boy to death and through his body in the Tallahatchie River
- Body recovered with one eye gauged out, his skull crushed, and a bullet in it
- Body unrecognizable except for a ring given to Emmett by his father

The Funeral –

- Funeral in Chicago was open casket by the request of the mother
- She said she wanted all to see what they did to her son
- Pictures ran in Jet Magazine and shocked the nation

The Trial –

- Court case moved to Sumner, Mississippi
- Prosecution had trouble finding witnesses but found several
- Great uncle testified they took Emmett and a farmer said he saw the truck with Emmett in it and heard cries similar to a beating moments later
- The jury deliberated for 67 minutes and took a soda break to make it last longer

The Aftermath –

- The verdict shocked the nation
- The trial helped to spark the Civil Rights Movement
- Roy and J.W. would later admit since double jeopardy protected them