



THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL
FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

The Monument at the Peace and Justice Memorial Center

PEACE AND JUSTICE MEMORIAL CENTER

WILLIE VICENT
April 19, 1916
Lumberton, North Carolina

WILLIARD BROOKS
August 15, 1929
Orangeburg, South Carolina

MELVIN WOMACK
March 28, 1911
Vero Beach, Florida

JOSEPH MANN
May 25, 1925
Norfolk, Virginia

SAMUEL SHEPHERD
November 8, 1924
Tomball, Texas

HARRY MOORE
November 14, 1927
Wiley, Florida

HARRIETTE POORH
November 29, 1924
Wheat, Florida

RUSSELL CHARLEY
April 7, 1924
Wardlawville, Alabama

ISADORE BANKS
April 6, 1924
Mantoloking, New Jersey

GEORGE W. LEE
May 7, 1923
Burland, Mississippi

LAMAR D. SMITH
August 13, 1924
Buckhannon, West Virginia

EMMETT TELL
August 28, 1922
Wiley, Florida

JOHN EARL REESE
October 23, 1928
Langston, Texas

HOWARD BROMLEY
November 8, 1928
Nashville, Virginia

CLINTON MELTON
December 2, 1929
Grenada, Mississippi

JAMES EDWARD EVANGTON
December 26, 1929
Tahleulah, Mississippi

THOMAS BREWER
February 15, 1926
Cuthbert, Georgia

WILLIE EDWARDS, JR.
January 15, 1927
Waukegan, Illinois

WILLIE JOE SANFORD
February 2, 1922
Northridge, Georgia

CHARLES BROWN
June 18, 1927
Benton, Mississippi

ROGERS HAMILTON
October 22, 1927
Lanett, Alabama

RICHARD LILLARD
July 25, 1928
Nashville, Tennessee

MACK CHARLES PARKER
April 25, 1928
Pepperell, Mississippi

WILLIAM PERSON
April 12, 1928
Waukegan, Illinois



Introduction

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice documents the most active era of racial terror lynchings between 1877 and 1950. However, racially motivated violence and lynchings continued after 1950, often targeting early movement leaders and black people whose success challenged white supremacy. The 24 names on the Monument represent men and women lynched or killed in racially motivated attacks during the 1950s. Their deaths sparked protests and activism that fueled more than a decade of social change. We remember them for their leadership, their humanity, and their role in a long and continuing struggle.

Hilliard Brooks Jr.

August 13, 1950 | Montgomery, Alabama

In the years before the famed Montgomery Bus Boycott, city buses in the capital city were governed by strict racial segregation laws that subjected black men, women, and children to abusive treatment by bus drivers and the risk of violence at the hands of local police. On August 13, 1950, a 22-year-old black man named Hilliard Brooks Jr. was accused of “creating a disturbance” on a Montgomery bus. According to some reports, Mr. Brooks merely paid his fare, entered through the front door, and refused the bus driver’s order to exit and enter through the rear of the bus as was Jim Crow custom. Whatever the cause of the conflict, the driver called a white police officer who fatally shot the unarmed black man and wounded two other bystanders. Mr. Brooks left behind a pregnant wife and two young children. Though several eyewitnesses reported that the shooting was unnecessary, the officer faced no charges. The death of Hilliard Brooks Jr. and other incidents of racist violence on Montgomery buses helped set the stage for the organized boycott that would transform America later that decade.

Rev. Joseph Mann

May 26, 1951 | Norfolk, Virginia

On May 26, 1951, Rev. Joseph Mann, 38, was kidnapped and set on fire in Norfolk, Virginia, suffering severe burns on his face and over most of his body. Before he died three days later, Rev. Mann reported that his assailants had been two white men who told him they were sick of black people moving into white neighborhoods, and also attempted to burn down the home of a local black family. Rev. Mann pastored Congregational Christian churches in the communities of Norfolk and Holland; according to some reports, he had preached a sermon denouncing racial segregation shortly before his death. No one was ever prosecuted for his murder.

Willie Vincent

April 9, 1950 | Oakland, Florida

Melvin Womack

March 28, 1951 | Winter Garden, Florida

On April 9, 1950, a black man named Willie Vincent was abducted by three white men in a vehicle. Soon after, he was found dead on the side of an Oakland, Florida, highway with a fractured skull. Less than one year later, on March 28, 1951, four white men abducted a 27-year-old black man named Melvin Womack from his Oakland, Florida, home. The men beat Mr. Womack severely, shot him multiple times and left him for dead in the nearby community of Winter Garden; he died of his injuries on March 31st. Later investigations indicated that Mr. Vincent, Mr. Womack, and others were likely victims of the local Ku Klux Klan, which had fueled a surge in racist violence in the area during the early 1950s. No one was ever convicted for the deaths of Mr. Womack or Mr. Vincent.

Samuel Shepherd

November 6, 1951 | Umatilla, Florida

Samuel Shepherd was one of the “Groveland Four”—a group of young black men wrongfully accused of raping a white woman in Lake County, Florida, in 1949. One of the four, Ernest Thomas, was lynched before trial. Despite ample evidence of innocence, Mr. Shepherd, Walter Irvin, and Charles Greenlee were convicted in a racially biased trial where all jurors were white and their lawyer—NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall—faced repeated threats of lynching. When Mr. Marshall and his staff were successful in winning a new trial for Mr. Irvin and Mr. Shepherd, notorious Lake County Sheriff Willis McCall volunteered to transport the two black men back to county jail. On the way, McCall shot both men near Umatilla, Florida, on November 6, 1951, killing 22-year-old Samuel Shepherd. Walter Irvin was severely injured but survived; he later reported that McCall had ordered the men out of the car to change a tire and then shot them both without provocation. McCall claimed self-defense, faced no charges, and remained in office for several more terms.

Harry and Harriette Moore

December 25, 1951 | Mims, Florida

Harry and Harriette Moore, influential voting rights activists and courageous leaders in the local NAACP, were killed on the night of December 25, 1951, when a bomb exploded underneath their home in Mims, Florida. Historians have credited Harry Moore with single-handedly helping to register more than 3,000 black voters in his community, and he was an outspoken advocate against injustice in the legal system, including the notorious case of the Groveland Four. Mr. Moore was killed instantly in the bombing while Mrs. Moore suffered severe injuries and died nine days later. "We did what we could," she reportedly said before her death, "others will have to carry on." No one was ever prosecuted for their deaths.



Russell Charley

May 7, 1954 | Vredenbunrg, Alabama

A black man named Russell Charley was found murdered in Vredenbunrg, Alabama, in May 1954. Mr. Charley, an employee of the Vredenbunrg Lumber Company, was widely believed to be a victim of lynching. According to reporting by the Pittsburgh Courier black newspaper, however, local law enforcement did little to investigate and local black residents were afraid to discuss the matter. The NAACP requested a full investigation by federal, state, and county authorities, but no one was ever arrested or charged for the killing.

Isadore Banks

June 5, 1954 | Marion, Arkansas

On June 5, 1954, Isadore Banks—a black man and WWI veteran who owned almost 1,000 acres of land in Crittenden County, Arkansas—went missing. A few days later, his remains were found in the woods, chained to a tree and badly burned. Mr. Banks was likely targeted for racial violence because of his economic success or perhaps due to rumors of an interracial romance—but there is little question that his murder was racially motivated. No one was ever charged or prosecuted for the crime.

Rev. George W. Lee

May 7, 1955 | Belzoni, Mississippi

On May 7, 1955, Rev. George Lee was shot and killed while driving home in Belzoni, Mississippi. Rev. Lee was a local NAACP leader and actively involved in voter registration activities in his community. After becoming the first black person to register in Humphreys County since Reconstruction, he was threatened with violence but refused to remove his name from the voter rolls. When NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers arrived to investigate Rev. Lee's death, the county sheriff claimed he had died in a car accident and that lead bullets found in Rev. Lee's jaw were dental fillings. No one was ever prosecuted for Rev. Lee's death.

Lamar D. Smith

August 13, 1955 | Brookhaven, Mississippi

Lamar Smith was shot and killed on the courthouse lawn in Brookhaven, Mississippi, on August 13, 1955. A 63-year-old African American farmer and veteran of WWI, Mr. Smith worked with the Regional Council of Negro Leadership to register black voters. Mr. Smith had been threatened with harm if he did not stop trying to organize African American voters, and he was killed while encouraging local black men and women to participate in an upcoming election. Though dozens of people reportedly witnessed Mr. Smith's murder, charges against three white men arrested for the crime were later dismissed and no one was ever punished.

Emmett Till

August 28, 1955 | Money, Mississippi

At just 14 years old, Chicago teen Emmett Till was kidnapped and murdered by two white men on August 28, 1955, while in Mississippi visiting family. Emmett had been accused of whistling at a young white woman and was murdered for that alleged violation of the Southern racial hierarchy still brutally enforced in the mid-20th century. Young Emmett was severely beaten, shot, mutilated, and thrown into the Tallahatchie River where his remains were found days later. Because Emmett's courageous mother, Mrs. Mamie Till-Bradley, insisted on holding an open-casket funeral and permitted media to publish photos of her son's body, the tragic image of his disfigured corpse confronted the entire nation with the reality of racial violence and sparked protests and activism that helped fuel the civil rights movement. The two white men responsible for killing Emmett, acquitted by an all-white jury, later confessed to the crime in a magazine interview.



John Earl Reese

October 23, 1955 | Longview, Texas

John Earl Reese, a 16-year-old black boy, was dancing in a café in the black community of Longview, Texas, on October 23, 1955, when white men drove by and fired gunshots into several area buildings—killing John and wounding several others. The attack was motivated by recent progress toward school desegregation in Longview, including a recent grant black residents had received to build a new school. Two white men were later arrested and convicted of the shooting, but received reduced and suspended sentences.

Howard Bromley

November 5, 1955 | Heathsville, Virginia

In Heathsville, Virginia, on November 5, 1955, a white store-owner shot a black man named Howard Bromley four times, including three times in the back. Mr. Bromley, 23 years old, died of his injuries. The store-owner later claimed that he had ordered Mr. Bromley to leave the store, pulled a gun when the young man refused, and shot him as they struggled over the weapon; two witnesses contradicted this account and claimed that Mr. Bromley was several feet away from the white man when shot. An all-white jury acquitted the man of all charges after less than 30 minutes of deliberations and no one was ever convicted of the killing.

Clinton Melton

December 3, 1955 | Glendora, Mississippi

On December 3, 1955, shortly after the two accused killers of Emmett Till were acquitted and freed, a white man who was close friends with one of Till's killers shot and killed Clinton Melton in Glendora, Mississippi. Mr. Melton, a 33-year-old black man and veteran of WWII, was the father of five children and working as a gas station attendant. Reports indicate the shooter became angry at something Mr. Melton said, then became angrier when the station owner refused to fire him. The owner testified that the white man left and later returned with a gun; that Mr. Melton was unarmed the night he was killed; and that the fatal shots were fired into the windshield of Mr. Melton's car while he was inside preparing to drive home. Despite evidence and multiple witness accounts, the white man was acquitted by an all-white jury in the same courthouse where Emmett Till's killers were freed. No one was ever convicted for the death of Clinton Melton.

James Edward Evanston

December 24, 1955 | Tallahatchie, Mississippi

On December 24, 1955, the body of James Edward Evanston, a 52-year-old African American educator, was found drowned in Long Lake, a few miles outside of Drew, Mississippi. Relatives had last seen Mr. Evanston three days earlier when he left home. His car was found near the lake with an apparent suicide note inside—but his last name was spelled incorrectly. Mr. Evanston had attended the trial of the two white men accused of killing Emmett Till, and NAACP Field Secretary Medgar Evers investigated his death as a murder. Despite compelling evidence that Mr. Evanston was a victim of racial violence, no official local or state investigation was conducted.

Dr. Thomas Brewer

February 18, 1956 | Columbus, Georgia

On February 18, 1956, Dr. Thomas Brewer, a 72-year-old physician and black community leader in Columbus, Georgia, was shot seven times by a white store-owner who claimed to have acted in self defense. Dr. Brewer was a vocal voting rights activist and organizer who helped to spearhead the fight for racial equality in Georgia and was at the forefront of efforts to integrate local public schools when killed. His murder was a severe blow to the Columbus black community, and the grand jury's refusal to indict the man who killed him sparked outrage. Many black residents of Columbus, including Dr. Brewer's family, left the area following his death.



Willie Edwards Jr.

January 23, 1957 | Montgomery, Alabama

Willie Edwards Jr. was working as a truck driver in Alabama when, on January 23rd, his truck was found near Montgomery. Mr. Edwards was missing. His family ran news ads seeking information, but Mr. Edwards's fate remained a mystery until April 23rd—when a fisherman found his dead body in the Alabama River ten miles from Montgomery. Local police claimed the body was in too poor condition to determine the cause of death and conducted no further investigation; Mr. Edwards's wife, Sarah Jean, left Montgomery with their children in 1961 and never returned. Decades later, in 1993, a white woman reported that her recently-deceased husband had confessed on his deathbed to participating in Mr. Edwards's lynching. According to that confession, four white Klansmen abducted Mr. Edwards at gunpoint from his truck in 1957 and, after wrongly accusing him of bothering a local white woman, forced Mr. Edwards to jump from a bridge to his death. Despite this information, the case remained unsolved and no one was ever prosecuted for the murder of Willie Edwards Jr.

Willie Joe Sanford

February 2, 1957 | Hawkinsville, Georgia

A black man named Willie Joe Sanford was found dead in Limestone Creek near Hawkinsville, Georgia, on March 1, 1957. Mr. Sanford, a sawmill worker from the town of Cochran, had been missing since February 2nd. His body showed evidence of extreme violence, including multiple stab wounds, and the corpse was wired to undergrowth at the creek bottom. "Certainly it did not take a brave man or men to accomplish this execution," a local circuit judge remarked during the grand jury investigation, "only a frenzied mob could have accomplished it." No one was ever prosecuted or convicted for the killing.

Charles Brown

June 18, 1957 | Benton, Mississippi

On June 18, 1957, a white man shot a black man named Charles Brown to death in Yazoo County, Mississippi. Mr. Brown, a member of the U.S. Air Force, was on a 30-day leave. He was reportedly killed for being "too friendly" with the white man's sister, and was in her home visiting when shot. Though the white man had a prior conviction for manslaughter, confessed to the shooting, and gave no other explanation for killing Airman Charles Brown, a local grand jury refused to return an indictment and no one was ever prosecuted for the murder.

Rogers Hamilton

October 22, 1957 | Lowndesboro, Alabama

On October 22, 1957, a 19-year-old black man named Rogers Hamilton was abducted from his home and fatally shot in Lowndesboro, Alabama. Mr. Hamilton's mother later reported that two white men had forced her son into their truck and later killed him, and it was believed the men targeted Mr. Hamilton for murder because he was dating a young black woman the men wanted for themselves. The local sheriff condemned reports that Mr. Hamilton had been "lynched," but no one was ever punished for his death.

Richard Lillard

July 20, 1958 | Nashville, Tennessee

On July 20, 1958, a 30-year-old black man named Richard Lillard, who was being held in a padded cell in the Nashville City Workhouse, was beaten to death by three white officers in the facility. The officers admitted to beating Mr. Lillard to death, but said that they had to do it because he had "gone berserk." Other incarcerated individuals testified that Mr. Lillard had, instead, been begging for his life as they beat him. All three men were tried for murder and acquitted by an all-white jury after less than one hour of deliberations. The case sparked protests in Nashville but no one was ever punished for Mr. Lillard's death.

Mack Charles Parker

April 25, 1959 | Poplarville, Mississippi

Mack Charles Parker, a young black man in his early 20s, was brutally murdered in Poplarville, Mississippi, on April 25, 1959, after he was accused of assaulting a white woman. Though Mr. Parker denied the allegations, and statements from local community members suggested that the alleged victim had fabricated the claim to hide a consensual affair with a white man, a white mob gathered intent on lynching the black man before investigation or trial. After seizing him from the Pearl River County Jail, the mob beat Mr. Parker severely, shot him twice in the chest, bound his body in chains and dumped his corpse into the Pearl River. Mack Charles Parker's remains were retrieved from the river more than a week later, and no one was ever charged in his death.

William Person

June 13, 1959 | Wake Forest, North Carolina

William Person, a black man, was shot and killed in Wake Forest, North Carolina, on June 13, 1959. A white man had arranged with Mr. Person's employer for Mr. Person to work for him for a day. When Mr. Person objected and fled, the white man reportedly remarked that he would run faster if someone was shooting at him—then shot Mr. Person twice with a rifle. The shooter later claimed he was just "horse playing" and was released without charges. He was later indicted but, in a plea agreement, received a suspended sentence and was ordered to pay Mr. Person's widow less than \$3,000.

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April 9, 1950
Oakland, Florida

HILLIARD BROOKS, JR.
August 13, 1950
Montgomery, Alabama

MELVIN WOMACK
March 28, 1951
Winter Garden, Florida

JOSEPH MANN
May 26, 1951
Norfolk, Virginia

SAMUEL SHEPHERD
November 6, 1951
Umatilla, Florida

HARRY MOORE
December 23, 1951
Miami, Florida

HARRIETTE MOORE
December 25, 1951
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RUSSELL CHARLEY
May 7, 1954
Vestalburgh, Alabama

ISADORE BANKS
June 5, 1954
Marion, Arkansas

GEORGE W. LEE
May 7, 1955
Belzoni, Mississippi

LAMAR D. SMITH
August 13, 1955
Brookhaven, Mississippi

EMMETT TILL
August 28, 1955
Montgomery, Mississippi

JOHN EARL REESE
October 23, 1955
Longview, Texas

HOWARD BROMLEY
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Heathsville, Virginia

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Wake Forest, North Carolina

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice is the nation's first memorial dedicated to the legacy of enslaved black people, people terrorized by lynching, African Americans humiliated by racial segregation and Jim Crow, and people of color burdened with contemporary presumptions of guilt and police violence. It was conceived with the hope of creating a sober, meaningful site where people can gather and reflect on America's history of racial inequality.

The Peace and Justice Memorial Center is an extension of this space where visitors can continue to learn about the United States' history of racial inequality, explore the work of the Equal Justice Initiative, and engage with artists and thought leaders on these issues.

For more information, visit:

eji.org

museumandmemorial.eji.org

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Images of Harry and Harriette Moore, Emmett Till, and Dr. Thomas Brewer sourced from Getty Images.