Emmett Till: The Sacrificial Lamb of the Civil Rights Movement

CLENORA HUDSON-WEEEMS, Ph.D. (University of Iowa), Professor of English at the University of Missouri, received a certificate of French Studies from L'Universite de Dijon, France. She is author of *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves, Africana Womanist Literary Theory*, *The Definitive Emmett Till: Passion and Battle of a Woman for Truth and Intellectual Justice, Contemporary Africana Theory, Thought and Action: A Guide to Africana Studies* (editor) and *Toni Morrison* (co-author).

This book, a publication of the 1988 Ford Doctoral Dissertation, "Emmett Till: The Impetus of the Modern Civil Rights Movement," was the first full length study of the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till as the true catalyst of the Civil Rights Movement, which set the stage for the Montgomery bus boycott.

Hudson-Weems has dug relentlessly into Southern justice, revealing the stench and ugliness of race hatred, American style. She has captured the essence of Emmett, a "sacrificial lamb" whose death has provided an escape to life for millions who were trapped in a web of hate.

In *Africana Womanism*, Hudson-Weems sent unaccustomed shock waves through the domain of popular thinking about feminism and established herself as a careful independent thinker, unafraid to unsettle settled opinion. In *Emmett Till*, she drops the other shoe and challenges the most sacred shibboleths of the origins of the Civil Rights Movement. Not everyone will want to agree with what she has to say. But few will lay the book down before she has had her say. And she says a lot America needs to hear again right now.

I found *Emmett Till* to be an unusually revealing and exciting narration of an important twentieth century event, crucial in the origins of the Civil Rights Movement. When you really think about it, Hudson-Weems is absolutely right. We historians missed it.

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Mamie Till-Mobley
Mother of Emmett Till

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C. Eric Lincoln, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus
Duke University

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