

# The Link between Emmett Till and “Black Lives Matter”

By Dr. Clenora Hudson-Weems

Considered a cause célèbre, news of Emmett Till's lynching was spreading like wild fire worldwide. On October 22, the American Jewish Committee responded with a call to Congress to escalate Federal Civil Rights legislation, quoting outrage from European newspapers following the infamous “Not Guilty” verdict: German's *Freies Volk*—“The Life of a Negro Isn't Worth a Whistle.” Belgium's *Le Drapeau Rouge* (the Red Flag)—“Killing a black person isn't a crime in the home of the Yankees.” France's *Le Figaro*—“The Shame of the Sumner Jury.” [And] A British inquirer asked an American, “Are you from the land where the boy was killed?” (Hudson, *Emmett—Legacy, Redemption and Forgiveness*, 2015, p. 37).

Clearly the sentiments in 1955, as presented in the above quotation, following the senseless, brutal lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till of Chicago for whistling at 21-year-old Carolyn Bryant of Money, MS, and the subsequent mock trial, strongly anticipate the Till Continuum, represented in the national on-going escalating unresolved violence against Blacks today. Challenging the violation of the personhood of a naive child resonates today, for like Till, the victimization of Blacks today remain a noose around the necks of our society. This age-old problem, not new—Blacks being denied our birthright to human rights—“All Men Are Created Equal”—is the focus of the student demonstration at MU. Racial Dominance is not to be confused with any other focus of unrest on other campuses. In defining our movement—and we have the

right to do so—let us not get it twisted! We want to resolve this lingering historical nemesis Now—“Black Lives Matter!”

Nine months after completing the PhD from U of Iowa in 1988, I spoke on my Ford Dissertation, “Emmett Till: The Impetus of the Modern Civil Rights Movement,” (published in 1994 as *Emmett Till: The Sacrificial Lamb of the Civil Rights Movement*) at the U of Utah for Black History Month. While there, I was interviewed by *Mid-Day News*, which was the 1st televised coverage of Till as Catalyst of the Movement. Later, at the program, a reporter asked, “Why Emmett Till today? That was a long time ago.” My response was that given the growing racial tension on college and university campuses across the country today, the lessons of the Till Murder Case are ever present. Indeed, that urgency yet lives, as evidenced by the current national news of the plight and predicament of Black students (and faculty and staff, too) at the U of Missouri-Columbia. In fact, some of those same concerns, brought forth in 2002 by Black faculty and staff, including Black faculty, staff and student retention, yet exist. As Michael Middleton, Interim President of the University of Missouri System, who vows to address racism, so aptly stated in his Acceptance Speech, calling for “Liberty and Justice for All.”

“We are faced with a problem that every university in America is faced with . . . the historical wrongs that have not been remedied. Until we address these problems, they will continue to haunt us.”

Indeed, the laxity in addressing the racist hostile environment for Blacks is

## Residents reject Will Burns' . . .

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he received earlier this month, Burns has seemingly backed down for now.

“A number of community residents voiced concerns about the zoning change and the proposed use of the building. Given the issues that were raised, I will not call for the Committee on Zoning to hear or pass the introduced zoning amendment at its November 17th meeting,” Burns wrote to his constituents.



Will Burns

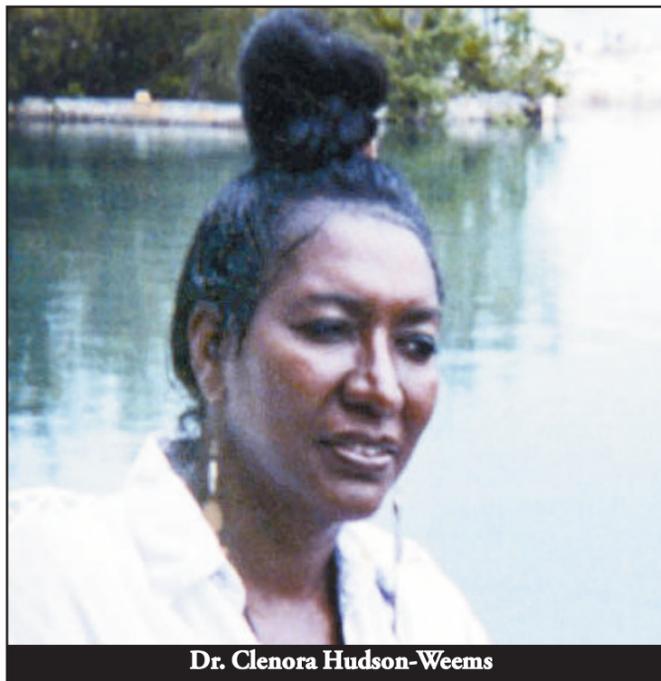
Jackson said while the alderman did the right thing in not bringing the measure up in the zoning meeting, the residents have felt disrespected by the alderman, which is a separate issue.

“I think the thing he said that shocked us all the most was when he told us at the meeting, ‘I didn't think it was that big of a deal,’” according to Jackson. “He does not have a connection with the constituents, and we are seeing this not just in our block, but in places throughout the ward.”

Jackson said what made the situation so perplexing for residents is that there is a commercial business area a block away that is in need of tenants. He also said there are commercial properties nearby in which the alderman has planned to rezone as residential.

“He has a habit of flip-flopping the zoning code to fit his particular need,” Jackson said. “And he's doing this without talking to the people who live here first.”

The **Crusader** will continue to monitor this situation as it develops.



Dr. Clenora Hudson-Weems

plaguering us here and worldwide, as well as Blacks in general both inside and outside the Academy. Sadly, victimization continues to follow us indiscriminately everywhere.

Within the last 3 years alone, many highly visible racial hate crimes have occurred, the supreme paradigm of Till Continuums, including the murder of 17-year-old Travon Martin of Florida, 18-year-old Michael Brown of Ferguson, MO, and 28-year-old Sandra Bland of Chicago, to name a few. But the legal handling of these cases and others makes an important commentary on the urgent popular Movement today—“Black Lives Matter.” While Blacks, for the most part are the primary victims, Whites, too, could ultimately suffer, for no one is truly safe and secure until all are fairly and justly treated. In short, the empowered can and do oftentimes become the victim of others' helplessness and hopelessness. And

thus, it behooves each and every one of us to stop the racism and violence NOW!

In driving “the historical wrongs” and contemporary injustices home, let us consider the vision and the legacy. Since President Middleton has identified the *raison d'être* and the effects of the continuous underlying problem—RACISM, it is possible, then, that an opportunity to be responsive to students at the UMC could very well provide a framework for colleges and universities around the country as well. Possible strategies for correcting systemic institutionalized racism, which plagues the very setting and foundation of our intellectual nurturing domicile, could bring this ugly American tragedy/nightmare, indeed, as ugly as the bloated face of Emmett Till, to a halt. To be sure, the ultimate betterment of ourselves, our children, and our future generations would be a God

send, not only for the victims of racism, but for all humankind, as our destinies everywhere—our misfortunes and victories—are, indeed, interconnected. Let us work, then, to bring this American Dream to fruition! Surely somewhere a fair common ground exists—“Black Lives Matter, Too,” contrary to what is sadly denoted and connoted—“Black Lives Don't Matter!” And so, in the final analysis, the ultimate historical goal, “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness,” could be the end result, indeed, the birthright of God's children worldwide.

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NOTE: Emmett Till Expert is author of *The Till Trilogy* and the first to establish the lynching of Emmett Louis “Bobo” Till as catalyst of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) in her 1988 Ford Doctoral Dissertation (U of Iowa), “Emmett Till: The Impetus of the Modern CRM,” later published as *Emmett Till: The Sacrificial Lamb of the CRM* (1994). Her recent Till book, *Emmett—Legacy, Redemption & Forgiveness* (2015), gives an added new twist to the Till Story, the Spirit of Redemption. Responding to the challenge of the controversial nature of the groundbreaking Till work, dating back nearly 30 years when Hudson's dissertation committee at the U of Iowa warned her that the thesis would be virtually impossible to defend, she asserted, “If I can't defend my dissertation, then I don't get the PhD and I am willing to take that chance.” Later she accepted a small press, as large presses shied away. Today, Till has become a household name.

## Did Corey Morgan execute Tyshawn Lee in a string of retaliations between gangs?

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Doty are important to the Lee investigation because sources tell the **Crusader** the murder weapon used in Lee's killing was a .40-caliber, semi-automatic handgun. Ballistic tests are currently being performed on both weapons to see if there is a link to the Lee murder, stated community activist Andrew Holmes, who works closely with police.

Morgan wobbled and had to be held up by a court deputy when his bail was announced at \$1 million. He gazed into the court galley with a look of bewilderment as he was led away by two deputies. His attorney unsuccessfully attempted to argue Morgan was not a violent person or a flight risk.

“You don't consider illegal possession of a weapon by a felon violent, Mr. Kent?” Bourgeois asked. “I do.”

Morgan has been picked up for violating conditions of his parole twice

before. He has also failed to appear in court five times, according to court records that were read at his bond hearing. His attorney said he works in construction demolition. Doty works in construction as well, but prosecutors did not say how the pair knew one another.

Morgan's address, in the 7800 block of South Hoyne, is five blocks away from where 19-year-old Brianna Jenkins was shot and killed as she sat in a car on Oct. 18 with another man, who police say was a gang member. Morgan's brother, Tracey, was shot and killed; his mother injured just days before on Oct. 13 in the 8200 block of South Lafayette. They were attacked just minutes after Tracey left a gang “call-in” meeting, which is a tool used by police to try to prevent gang violence. His attorney said his client has nothing to do with any murders, but is grieving the loss of his brother.

“[Morgan] maintained his innocence when police questioned him a couple of weeks ago and maintains his innocence now,” Kent said in a statement released on Morgan's behalf. “His family is supporting him through this ordeal. He says he had nothing to do with Tyshawn Lee's execution. The entire city wants the person who did this caught, but it's not Corey.”

The **Crusader** reported last week that family members of Morgan attended Scott Joplin School; the same school Lee attended and may have been involved in identifying the young boy to his eventual killers. Chicago Police released a statement after Morgan's latest arrest that read in part:

“CPD will continue to use every legal resource to build the strongest prosecution possible and hold Tyshawn's killers accountable to answer for their barbaric crimes against this innocent child.”