

Mississippi Civil Rights Martyrs

1955

REV. GEORGE LEE, one of the first black people registered to vote in Humphreys County, used his pulpit and his printing press to urge others to vote. White officials offered Lee protection on the condition he end his voter registration efforts, but Lee refused and was murdered.

MAY 7, 1955 -- Belzoni, Miss.

LAMAR SMITH was shot dead on the courthouse lawn by a white man in broad daylight while dozens of people watched. The killer was never indicted because no one would admit they saw a white man shoot a black man.

Smith had organized blacks to vote in a recent election.

AUGUST 13, 1955 -- Brookhaven, Miss.

EMMETT LOUIS TILL, a 14-year-old boy on vacation from Chicago, reportedly flirted with a white woman in a store. A few nights later, two men took Till from his bed, beat him, shot him, and dumped his body in the Tallahatchie River. An all-white jury found the men innocent of murder.

AUGUST 28, 1955 -- Money, Miss.

J.E. Evanston was a teacher in the local elementary school. His body was fished out of Long Lake on Christmas Eve.

DECEMBER 24, 1955 - Long Lake, Miss.

1956

JESSIE (OLLIE) SHELBY,²³ was fatally wounded by a police officer who alleged that he shot and killed Shelby because he resisted arrest.

JANUARY 20, 1956 - Yazoo City, Miss.

CLINTON MELTON was killed by Elmer Otis Kimbrell. Kimbrell claimed Melton fired at him three times before he returned fire with a shotgun. No gun was found in Melton's car or on his body. The white employer of Melton testified that Melton did not have a gun. Kimbrell was cleared in Melton's death. Kimbrell was a close friend of one of the murderers of Emmett Till.

1956 - Sumner, Miss.

1957

CHARLES BROWN-A white man shot Brown, who was visiting the suspect's sister. The Justice Department handed the case over to the state.

JUNE 25, 1957 - Yazoo City, Miss.

1958

GEORGE LOVE was killed in a gun battle with police who believed he was responsible for a murder and arson. He was later cleared of any connection to the murder.

JANUARY 8, 1958 - Indianola, Miss.

ED SMITH was shot in his yard in front of his wife.

L.D. Clark, the white man who shot Smith, later reportedly bragged about the killing.

APRIL 27, 1958 - State Line, Miss.

WOODROW WILSON DANIELS was beaten to death in jail. Four witnesses identified Sheriff Buster Treloar as the man who beat Daniels. An all-white jury freed the sheriff in 23 minutes. The sheriff said after the trial,

"Now I can get back to rounding up bootleggers and damn niggers."

JULY 1, 1958 - Water Valley, Miss.

C. H. PICKETT was killed by an 80-year old white farmer with a prison record for manslaughter. The white farmer claimed Pickett was giving his sister too much attention.

1958 - Yazoo City, Miss.

1959

MACK CHARLES PARKER, 23, was accused of raping a white woman. Three days before his case was set for trial, a masked mob took him from his jail cell, beat him, shot him, and threw him in the Pearl River. The community generally approved of the lynching, and the men were never convicted.

APRIL 25, 1959 -- Poplarville, Miss.

SAM O'QUINN, was ambushed and killed. Mr. O'Quinn was derided by some local whites for being uppity. He was shot after joining the NAACP.

AUGUST 14, 1959 -- Centreville, Miss.

BOOKER T. MIXON was found lying on the side of road, completely nude. Police claimed it was hit-and-run, though family members cited his naked body and the extensive amount of flesh torn from his body as evidence otherwise.

OCTOBER 23, 1959 - Clarksdale, Miss.

LUTHER JACKSON was killed by then Philadelphia, Mississippi policeman Lawrence Rainey. Rainey would later become Neshoba County Sheriff and be tried on federal charges of conspiracy to deny civil rights in the 1964 murders of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. Rainey shot Luther Jackson after he and his girlfriend were founding talking in their car, which was stalled in a ditch. The police claimed Jackson attacked them.

OCTOBER 30, 1959 - Philadelphia, Miss.

WILLIAM ROY PRATHER, 15, was killed in an anti-black Halloween prank. One of eight youth involved was indicted on manslaughter charges.

NOVEMBER 1, 1959 - Corinth, Miss.

1961

HERBERT LEE, who worked with civil rights leader Bob Moses to help register black voters, was killed by a state legislator E. H. Hurst who claimed self-defense and was never arrested. Louis Allen, a black man who witnessed the murder, was later also killed.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1961 -- Liberty, Miss.

1962

CPL. ROMAN DUCKSWORTH JR., a military police officer stationed in Maryland, was on leave to visit his sick wife when he was ordered off a bus by a police officer and shot dead. The police officer may have mistaken Ducksworth for a "freedom rider" who was testing bus desegregation laws.

APRIL 9, 1962 -- Taylorsville, Miss.

PAUL GUIHARD, a reporter for a French news service, was killed by gunfire from a white mob during protests over the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1962 -- Oxford, Miss.

1963

SYLVESTER MAXWELL castrated and mutilated body was found by his brother-in-law less than 500 yards from the home of a white family.

JANUARY 17, 1963 - Canton, Miss.

MEDGAR EVERS, who directed NAACP operations in Mississippi, was leading a campaign for integration in Jackson when he was shot and killed by a sniper at his home.

JUNE 12, 1963 -- Jackson, Miss.

1964

LOUIS ALLEN, who witnessed the murder of civil rights activist Herbert Lee, endured years of threats, jailings and harassment. He was making final arrangements to move North on the day he was killed.

JANUARY 31, 1964 - Liberty, Miss.

CLIFTON WALKER was killed by a shotgun blast at close range. The result of a federal investigation is unknown.

FEBRUARY 28, 1964 - Natchez, Miss.

SILAS (ERNEST) CASTON-Caston was shot by a local police officer. CORE and NAACP filed a civil suit against Deputy Sheriff Herbert Sullivan. The result of that suit is unknown.

FEBRUARY 29, 1964 - Jackson, Miss.

HENRY HEZEKIAH DEE and CHARLES EDDIE MOORE were killed by Klansmen who believed the two were part of a plot to arm blacks in the area. (There was no such plot.) Their bodies were found during a massive search for the missing civil rights workers Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner. In 2007, one man, James Ford Seale was convicted of federal charges in the deaths of Henry Dee and Charles Moore. Many others, in addition to Ford, were complicit in the murders.

MAY 2, 1964 -- Meadville, Miss.

JAMES EARL CHANEY, ANDREW GOODMAN, and MICHAEL HENRY SCHWERNER, young civil rights workers, were arrested by a deputy sheriff and then released into the hands of Klansmen who had plotted their murders. They were shot, and their bodies were buried in an earthen dam. Eight white men were convicted on federal charges of conspiracy to deny civil rights in 1967. In 2005, Edgar Ray "Preacher" Killen was convicted on state manslaughter charges. Eight others who were arrested on federal charges in the 1960s are still living and have never been charged by the state of Mississippi.

JUNE 21, 1964 -- Philadelphia, Miss.

ISAIAH TAYLOR was shot by a police officer after allegedly lunging at him with a knife. The shooting was ruled a justifiable homicide.

JUNE 26, 1964 - Ruleville, Miss.

JASPER GREENWOOD was found shot to death near his car on a rural road. Police said the slaying was not racially motivated.

JULY 10, 1964 - Vicksburg, Miss.

WAYNE YANCY, a civil rights worker, died after being denied admission to white hospital.

AUGUST 1, 1964 - Holly Springs, Miss.

NEIMIAH MONTGOMERY, 60, was shot by police after allegedly refusing to pay for gas. Police were acquitted, and the shooting was called justifiable homicide.

AUGUST 10, 1964 - Cleveland, Miss.

HUBERT ORSBY, 14, was found in the Black River near Highway 51 in Canton. He was wearing a t-shirt with "CORE," written on it, representing the Congress of Racial Equality.

1964 - Canton, Miss.

PHELD EVANS was identified by the Mississippi NAACP as having been killed under mysterious circumstances.

1964 - Canton, Miss.

ERNEST JELLS was accused of stealing a banana from a grocery and pointing a rifle at pursuing police officers. The officers were exonerated.

1964 - Clarksdale Miss.

1965

JESSIE BROWN - The 1965 NAACP annual report claimed white farmer R.M. Gibson killed Brown.
JANUARY 13, 1965 - Winona, Miss.

SALEAM TRIGGS - The body of Ms. Triggs was found mysteriously burned to death.

JANUARY 23, 1965 - Hattiesburg, Miss.

WILLIE HENRY LEE was found beaten on a country road. He was known to have attended civil rights meetings. An autopsy revealed he died by strangulation from gas.

FEBRUARY 25, 1965 - Rankin County, Miss.

DONALD RASBERRY was shot to death by his
plantation boss.

FEBURARY 1965 - Okolona, Miss.

JOHN LEE - Mr. Lee's body was found beaten on a
country road.

FEBRUARY 1965 - Goshen Springs, Miss.

JOHN QUEEN - A white off-duty constable was named
in the pistol slaying of John Queen. The shooting was
not connected to any arrest.

AUGUST 8, 1965 - Fayette, Miss.

FREDDIE LEE THOMAS - Federal investigators looked
into the death of Freddie Lee Thomas who was 16.
Thomas' brother believed he was murdered as a warning
against black voter registration. The result of the
investigation is unknown.

AUGUST 16, 1965 - Batesville, Miss.

JIMMIE LEE GRIFFIN - Mr. Griffin was killed in a hit-and-run accident. A coroner's report revealed Mr. Griffin was run over at least twice.

SEPTEMBER 24, 1965 - Sturgis, Miss.

ROBERT McNAIR - Mr. McNair was killed by a town constable.

NOVEMBER 6, 1965 - Pelahatchie, Miss.

1966

VERNON FERDINAND DAHMER, a wealthy businessman, offered to pay poll taxes for those who couldn't afford the fee required to vote. The night after a radio station broadcasted Dahmer's offer, his home was firebombed. Dahmer died later from severe burns.

JANUARY 10, 1966 -- Hattiesburg, Miss.

BIRDIA KEGLAR and **ADLENA HAMLETT**, two civil rights activists, deaths were officially cited as resulting from an "auto accident." No investigative reports exist. Ms. Keglars was found decapitated and Ms. Hamletts' arms had been "cleanly" severed.

JANUARY 11, 1966 - Tallahatchie County, Miss.

BEN CHESTER WHITE, who had worked most of his life as a caretaker on a plantation, had no involvement in civil rights work. He was murdered by Klansmen who thought they could divert attention from a civil rights march by killing a black person.

JUNE 10, 1966 -- Natchez, Miss.

EDDIE JAMES STEWART was reportedly beaten and shot while in police custody. Police claimed that he was shot while trying to escape.

JULY 9, 1966 - Jackson, Miss.

VINCENT DAHMON, 65, was shot in the head around the time of a march in support of James Meredith.

1966 -- Natchez, Miss.

1967

WHARLEST JACKSON, the treasurer of his local NAACP chapter, was one of many blacks who received threatening Klan notices at his job. After Jackson was promoted to a position previously reserved for whites, a bomb was planted in his car. It exploded minutes after he left work one day, killing him instantly.

FEBRUARY 27, 1967 -- Natchez, Miss.

BENJAMIN BROWN, a former civil rights organizer, was watching a student protest from the sidelines when he was hit by gunshots from police who fired into the crowd.

MAY 12, 1967 -- Jackson, Miss.

1970

On May 14 and 15, 1970 students at Jackson State College in Jackson, Mississippi, protested discrimination and the historical racial intimidation and harassment by white motorists traveling Lynch Street, a major thoroughfare that divided the campus and linked west Jackson to downtown. The students were also protesting against the Vietnam War and the May 4, 1970 tragedy at Kent State University in Ohio. Jackson city police and Mississippi State troopers had ordered the demonstration, taking place in front of a women's dorm, to disperse. When students started to scatter and run into the dorm, the police opened up a barrage of fire lasting 28 seconds. They fired thirty-five shotguns, five military carbines and anything else they could get their hands on. Two students were killed and twelve wounded.

Phillip Gibbs, a twenty year old junior, and **James Earl Green**, a Jackson High school student were slain.

May 15, 1970 -- Jackson, Mississippi

JOHN THOMAS, the father of 11 children and a long time fighter for civil rights was shot down by Seth Stanley, a white man in the parking lot of Southern Grocery on Highway 50 on a Saturday afternoon. A few months later Stanley was acquitted by an all-white jury.

AUGUST 14, 1970 - West Point, Miss.