Goodman Theatre
Student Subscription Series
2007/2008 Season

Student Guide

The Ballad of Emmett Till
By Ifa Bayeza
Directed by Oz Scott

This student guide is written by
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And published by
The Education and Community Programs Department at Goodman Theatre

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Welcome to the Study Guide
a useful key for what’s inside

All of the pages have a title and subtitle. Not all of them rhyme (we’re not that clever), but they’ll give you a general idea of what type of information is on the page.

Whenever you see a black box with white text, read it before anything else! It contains the background information you need to understand the rest of the material on that page. You won’t see one of these on every page, but keep an eye out for them.

Text in bold throughout the guide highlights key words, phrases and ideas. Make sure you read it!

A happy computer symbol means the content on that page is expanded upon or included in full on our Knowledge Nucleus at goodmaneacp.typepad.com. Video clips, the full text of articles, interviews and activities will be posted there along with other educational resources.

Think About It:
(Topic)
Dashed circles surround questions for you to consider as you discuss the play and other related topics. Rather than focusing directly on the text, most questions will encourage you to relate ideas from the play to your personal experiences.

Activity
(Name of activity)
Stars like this are activities for you and your classmates: everything from group contests to individual acting exercises.

All quotations are in cursive. The quote below doesn’t have anything to do with the rest of the guide—it’s just Elizabeth’s favorite. However, all other quotes will relate to the topics of the pages on which they appear.

Dream as though you’ll live forever;
live as though you’ll die today.

- James Dean
Dear Students,

Those of you who have been with us for awhile will notice something very different about this study guide. Although we have included the usual information about our production and its historical context, most of this guide is committed to giving voice to the people who lived through — and were deeply affected by — Emmett’s story.

The murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till resonated around the world but nowhere did it have as much impact, perhaps, as it did here in Chicago. And so we asked writers from across the city to contribute their thoughts and memories of that turbulent time. These quotes, included in the “Reflections on Emmett” section of the guide and the longer essays on the Blog, are the works of authors published in the *Journal of Ordinary Thought (JOT)*. Created in 1991 by Hal Adams, JOT publishes reflections people make on their personal histories and everyday experiences. Founded on the proposition that every person is a philosopher, the *Journal* is dedicated to bringing out the unheard voices and stories of Chicago. Many of the writers in JOT groups are marginalized from traditional mainstream literary circles because of class, race, physical isolation, or other issues. JOT believes expressing one’s thoughts fosters creativity and change, and taking control of life requires people to think about the world and communicate their thoughts to others. As you will see from the writings, JOT strives to be a vehicle for reflection, communication, and change.

The *Journal* is an outgrowth of workshops run by the Neighborhood Writing Alliance which offers writing workshops for adults in neighborhood libraries, community centers and social service agencies.

It is our hope that these writings will inspire you to reflect on issues in your own lives, your own communities — because each of you has a voice that should be heard.

Sincerely,

Willa J. Taylor
Director of Education & Community Programs
Goodman Theatre

Check out the Knowledge Nucleus for the full poems, essays and thoughts contributed by JOT authors!
Our Production
Tanya Palmer: Can you tell me why you decided to write about Emmett Till?

I was working on the second episode of my serial theater piece, Homer G and the Rhapsodies. The character of Prime, who was based on the Greek character of Prium, was walking down the streets and his footsteps were labored and hollow. So I asked myself, ‘What’s in his footsteps?’ And it came to me that he was a witness who had not come forward in the Emmett Till trial.

Like many people, I knew the basic blueprint of Emmett’s story, and I was profoundly affected by it as a youth. I had been on the front line of racial integration, and so I looked at his death as a symbol of the peril that many of us felt.

I went to the library to do some research and I found William Bradford Huie’s article in *Look* magazine. Something struck me as odd: in one section of the article, Huie describes Emmett as having “…bragged about his white girl. He showed the boys a picture of a white girl in his wallet, and to their jeers of disbelief, he boasted of success with her.” Later, when describing the encounter in the store with Carolyn Bryant, Huie repeats Carolyn’s testimony in court, stating that Till “squeezed her hand and said, ‘How about a date, baby?’” This made me wonder where Emmett was from.

I went to the library to do some research and I found William Bradford Huie’s article in *Look* magazine. Something struck me as odd: in one section of the article, Huie describes Emmett as having “…bragged about his white girl. He showed the boys a picture of a white girl in his wallet, and to their jeers of disbelief, he boasted of success with her.” Later, when describing the encounter in the store with Carolyn Bryant, Huie repeats Carolyn’s testimony in court, stating that Till “squeezed her hand and said, ‘How about a date, baby?’” This made me wonder where Emmett was from.

I found out where he lived: St. Lawrence Avenue. I didn’t know Chicago well at the time, but I figured out that St. Lawrence Avenue was on the South Side. I asked myself, was this an integrated neighborhood? What was his experience with white folks? I began to see holes in the documentation that is considered “definitive.” I also ran across some articles in which Till’s uncle, Moses Wright, said that when Milam and Bryant came to the house to abduct Emmett, someone standing behind them “seemed like a colored fella.” So I thought, ‘Oh! That’s my character!’ I got really excited about my play and wrote it using Huie’s article as the basis for understanding Emmett and what happened in the store.

I finished the piece and sent it out to a few colleagues, one of them being Nena St. Louis, a wonderful performance artist who has always encouraged me. She sent it back with her writing in red pen on the first page. It said, in her typical forceful style, “This play is not interesting until Emmett Till comes in.” I got very angry at the red pen, and at Nena, and at the play. I didn’t speak to Nena or look at the play for a really long time. But once I’d calmed down, I went to the Emmett Till section and started to pull out all of his lines and all of his mother Mamie’s lines. I turned those lines into a one-act play because I thought, ‘Well, maybe Nena’s onto something. This is powerful stuff.’

Around the same time, I received a fellowship from the Arna Bontemps African American Museum in Louisiana. I did a reading at a seniors’ center there, and one of the seniors came up to me afterward and said, “You have to finish this right away because I want to read it before I die.” I also read it at a high school and found that the students were very engaged because the focus was on Emmett Till and on youth. But one of their teachers confronted me and said, “Aren’t you going to tell them about his mother leaving the casket open?”

At that point, I realized that I had shifted the focus of my play from the plight of Emmett’s murderers and the trials of his mother to Emmett Till, himself. I was asking the question: Who was Emmett Till? In all of the research I had done, there was very little about Emmett. And there was such a difference between the way that he was characterized in Huie’s article—in which Carolyn Bryant describes him as a predatory, sexually aggressive thug—and the way his mother spoke of how he whistled because he stuttered. I thought that there was a real mystery play between those two worlds.

In all of the research I had done, there was very little about Emmett.
IB: In 2004, Elmo Terry-Morgan, the artistic director of Rites & Reason Theatre at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, got me a fellowship to continue my work on the play. Then in 2005, the 50th anniversary of Emmett Till’s murder, a lot of things happened at once. I suddenly won an honorary mention from the Georgia Literary Review and the play was included in the Juneteenth Festival of New Plays at Actors Theatre in Louisville, Kentucky. The play became enlivened again, and as I looked at the one-act, I realized that it wasn’t a one-act at all. It was the beginning of a new play. The one-act became Movement One of The Ballad of Emmett Till, the day before Emmett leaves for his trip to Mississippi. And now I had to take him on his journey. Still following his footsteps, I was also taken on a journey.

TP: How did the one-act develop into the full-length play, The Ballad of Emmett Till?

IB: Around the time of the Juneteenth reading, the Till case was re-opened and Keith Beauchamp’s documentary, The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till, was released. His documentary clearly demonstrates the participation of many more people than were accused. I knew that from the research I’d already done, but I was still working in a fictive mode and making up possibilities instead of looking for what was really out there. I decided that in the same way that Keith Beauchamp was asking questions about the murder, I needed to ask questions about Emmett. So I drove out to the church that he attended in Argo, Illinois, thinking, ‘Okay, this is where I’ll start.’

TP: Was this when you started meeting and interviewing Emmett’s friends and family members?

IB: No. But when I drove out to the church, I saw on the masthead that the pastor was Emmett’s cousin, Wheeler Parker, Jr. Through Wheeler, I also met Emmett’s uncle, Simeon Wright. They were both eyewitnesses to the incident at the store, the abduction and Emmett’s last seven days on earth.

Wheeler was very generous and open. I did an extensive interview with him that was the basis for all the subsequent interviews that I conducted. I asked him about Emmett: his personality, his physical makeup, his eccentricities and any anecdotes he might remember. I also asked about their cultural environment: the music they liked, whether they were dancing yet and the difference between Emmett when he moved to Chicago and when he still lived in Argo. It was a very textured interview.

Simeon was a little bit harder. He’s an elder at the church in Argo, and he initially was not interested in speaking with me. But he finally agreed, and he opened up once I started asking him questions about this person whom he really loved. We must have talked for about three hours. We talked about the South, and he gave me invaluable information about the specifics of those critical days that allowed me to start putting flesh and bone and muscle on this armature that I’d started to build of Emmett.

TP: What was the most surprising thing you discovered about Emmett?

IB: All of it was surprising. The fact that he stuttered was new information. In her testimony, Carolyn Bryant said, “He said this, and he said that,” but then the people who really knew Emmett said that he sometimes stuttered so badly that he couldn’t get a sentence out. So that automatically sent up red flags. What was equally surprising was that his friends didn’t care about his stutter. He was such a magnetic, charismatic person that nobody got irritated and nobody teased him about it. They would all wait for him to say what he had to say, because it was always going to be interesting. They perceived him as a leader and as the focal point of their group.

TP: You also traveled to Mississippi to continue your research. Was it different than you had imagined?

IB: It was very different. My relationship with Mississippi was based on concept instead of actuality. I have mixed emotions about Mississippi because I’m still working through the history and sorrow and anger in this piece—all the stages of grief I go through living with this story. At the same time, both the white and black communities in Mississippi have been so gracious and welcoming and so enthusiastic about my work.

There is real interest in bringing resolution and closure to this story. Tallahatchie County, where the murder trial was held, has created The Tallahatchie Till Commission, which made a public statement of atonement and apology to Emmett’s family this past October. They are trying to raise funds to restore the Sumner courthouse and to create a museum that will focus not only on Emmett Till, but also on black history.

Out of this tragedy has emerged a real effort toward making some good things happen. That said, I am still anxious when I’m out there by myself ready to do an interview and my cell phone doesn’t work. There’s still a sense of peril.

TP: This is a Chicago story, and one that, at least on the surface, many people are familiar with. What do you hope that Chicago audiences will take away from your interpretation of the Emmett Till story?

IB: For me, it’s a dialogue. I present my work to audiences in order to see what dialogue comes back from them. My hope is that my work stirs them. But I am more interested in seeing how my work impacts audiences than projecting how I would like it to impact them. I don’t write with that intent. I write with as much earnestness and compassion and clarity and innovation as I can in the hope that my work will enliven my audiences—and then their reaction fuels and informs me.

What has been amazing from that very first encounter with the elderly in Louisiana is that this play does something. People sit up and they want to talk about it. When the piece was in its early stages, people wanted to know more. And as it came closer to completion, it started to provoke a very profound and prolonged conversation among people who have different perspectives on the issues of race, our racial history, our racial future and our future as a nation. It also propels youth to think about youth activism and the value of their lives. This story, despite being a tragedy, is uplifting, because it is a story of resurrection.
What is expressionism?

As expressed in Ifa’s quote to the right, *The Ballad of Emmett Till* includes un-naturalistic moments where past and present collide, where the living and the dead co-exist. The combination of these expressionist elements with factual events tells a story that is both thought-provoking and vivid. **Expressionism is a style of art in which the artist attempts to convey their emotional sensibility to an audience through abstract elements such as visual objects, sounds or movement.** Contemporary expressionist artists often fuse multiple art forms — like jazz and theatre — in order to achieve the most effective artistic outcome. Unlike naturalistic or realistic plays (*The Trip to Bountiful* and *The Cook*), *The Ballad of Emmett Till* is a blend of both real and mystical moments.

**Activity**

**Express It Yourself**

**VISUAL OBJECTS:** The Setting... reflects the inner workings of a cotton gin, the driving power of the South — twisted tubes of metal, chains, straps, giant double-blade fans, saw-blades with jagged teeth.

**SOUNDS:** Emmett stutters, his stammer is one of rapid-fire and repetition... For dramatic purposes... the actor playing Emmett should try to read these lines verbatim. For instance, "I-I-I-I" should be read "Eye Eye Eye Eye" like a drum in four-four time...

**MOVEMENT:** The Shed: A final dance of death — underwater.

Below are stage directions from the play. **What does each direction say about the world of the play? What emotions or feelings are conveyed by each?** If you were the director, set designer or actor how would you use the stage directions to inform your creative choices?

**Think About It:**

**Comparing Plays and Styles**

How does the style of *The Ballad of Emmett Till* compare to *The Trip to Bountiful*, *Passion Play* or other plays you have seen? Which do you prefer? Are there any expressionist elements in the other plays you’ve seen?

Artists are usually understood by the category or genre in which they belong. Artistically speaking, when is it helpful to belong to a category? When is it not?

**Expressionism in Art and Film**

Vincent Van Gogh’s *The Starry Night,* probably one of the most well-known images in Western art, depicts not only a chapel back-dropped by evening sky, but the artist’s own emotional response to the scene. Rather than showing the viewer the scene in its most realistic form, Van Gogh uses thick-swirling brushstrokes to convey an experience rooted in imagination and feeling.

Director Tim Burton pays homage to German expression-ist films like *Nosferatau* (an adaptation of *Dracula*) with his dark, often foreboding visual style. Expressionist film emerged in Germany as a response to the loss experienced during World War I. Today, Burton’s films like *Edward Scissorhands* and *Sweeney Todd* evoke the same sense of distorted reality.
Getting to Know Oz Scott

The director of The Ballad of Emmett Till

Oz Scott’s name may not be familiar to you, but you have probably seen more of his work than any other Goodman director! **Scott is an accomplished and award-winning television, theatrical and motion picture director.** "I've directed hundreds of television episodes along with dozens of stage productions, made-for-TV movies and motion pictures," says Scott. In 2002, Scott directed one of VH1's highest-rated programs, the original motion picture *Play'd: A Hip Hop Story,* starring Toni Braxton, Merlin Santana, Freedom and Faison Love.

**Scott has directed multiple episodes for ABC’s The Practice and Wonderland; NBC’s American Dreams and Ed; CBS’ C.S.I. New York, The Guardian, Family Law, The District, JAG and American Gothic; and FOX’s Ally McBeal and Party of Five.** Oz’s magical touch extends into the cable universe as well, having helmed several episodes of *Soul Food* (Showtime), *Any Day Now* (Lifetime) and the 2003 movie *The Cheetah Girls* on The Disney Channel. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Oz’s directorial talents enhanced the success of popular prime-time shows such as *The Cosby Show,* *LA Law* and many others. In the 1970’s, he contributed his writing talents to *The Jeffersons.*

A graduate of New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, Scott began his professional theatrical career at Washington, D.C.’s Arena Stage, where he managed The Living Stage, an improvisational touring company. Soon afterwards, Scott found himself working in New York for **Joseph Papp,** where he stage managed Edgar White’s *La Gente* and *Crucificado,* Ed Bullins’ *Taking of Miss Janie,* Miguel Pinero’s *The Sun Always Shines for the Cool,* and Ruby Dee’s *Twin Bit Gardens.* Scott’s New York stage career then moved into the director’s realm. **He eventually staged and took to Broadway the widely acclaimed, for colored girls who considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf by Ntozake Shange, the sister of Till playwright Ifa Bayeza.** Scott has also participated in The Eugene O’Neill Playwrights Conference for the past dozen years. Traveling to Russia with *The Old Settler* for the *O'Neill,* Scott directed both an American cast as well as a Russian cast in a translation.

Recognized for his contributions to the community, Oz has received an NAACP Image Award, the Drama Desk Award, and an OBIE Award for Off-Broadway, Genesis Award, and the Nancy Susan Reynolds Award. **And he has just been named Associated Artistic Director of the storied Negro Ensemble Company in New York.**

**Production History**

*The Ballad of Emmett Till* has had its own journey coming to the stage. The four-movement play that will have its world premiere at the Goodman actually began its odyssey as a one-act script over ten years ago.

Excerpts of *Till* were first presented at the Arna Bontemps African American Museum in Louisiana in 1998. By June 2005, playwright Ifa Bayeza had developed Movement One and it received its first public staged reading at Actors Theatre of Louisville. The play was then presented as part of the Juneteenth Legacy New Plays Festival, and in September 2005, Bayeza read Movement One in a solo presentation at the Stillman College conference “The Murder of Emmett Till and the Civil Rights Struggle” in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The Fountain Theatre of Los Angeles also hosted a staged reading of it directed by John Wesley who appears as Moses Wright in the Goodman production. *Till* was then selected as the inaugural project for RPM Mainstage—a new play development partnership between Brown University’s Rites and Reason Theatre and the Providence Black Repertory Company. Bayeza then began a six-month residency to develop the full-length *Till,* culminating in the first staged reading of all four movements at Providence Black Repertory Theatre in March 2006. That July, Bayeza directed a reading of *Till* at New Federal Theatre in New York City and in September, *Till* was included in Goodman Theatre’s New Stages Series. In summer 2007, *Till* was named one of eight plays included in the National Playwrights Conference at The Eugene O’Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut, where Bayeza spent a month-long residency and the play enjoyed two script-in-hand readings.

In her script notes, Ifa Bayeza describes her play, *The Ballad of Emmett Till* as written "in the footsteps of an old man; a memory; a mystery; myth; a deconstructed, reconstructed jazz play." Through countless interviews over the past decade with Emmett’s family, classmates and eye-witnesses—and through the arduous creative process—Bayeza has crafted a new dramatic work of factual accounts and creative interpolation that is part history, part mystery, and a wholly unique look at a tragic event in the history of our country.
Straight from the Play

The following words can be found in the text of The Ballad of Emmett Till and this Student Guide. How a word is used in the text—its context—can often help you figure out what the word means, even if you don’t know its exact definition. Hint: familiar words and phrases near the unknown word in a sentence can help!

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpolation</th>
<th>Arduous</th>
<th>Breech birth</th>
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<td>Sweet grass</td>
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<td>Hung-jury</td>
<td>Obscured</td>
<td>Philistine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Words, words, words.”
- Hamlet Act II scene ii

Activity
The Dictionary Game

Instructions
◆ Break into several groups with your classmates.
◆ Your teacher selects a word from the list to the left.
◆ Each group writes its own made-up definition of the word, making it sound like a “real” dictionary definition. (Hint: try to sound as “professional” as you can.) Don’t let the other groups see!
◆ Turn your definitions in to your teacher, who also has a copy of the actual definition. S/he reads all of the definitions aloud once so everyone can hear them, then on the second reading each group votes on which definition is actually from the dictionary. (This is why you want your definition to sound “real,” even if you don’t know what the word really means.)
◆ Your group scores one point for every group that votes for your definition, and two points if your group chooses the actual dictionary definition.
◆ The group with the most points at the end of several rounds wins!

Think About It:
Word Imaging

Read some of the vocabulary words aloud. Do their sounds add to their definitions? Why or why not?

Choose one word and draw how it sounds on a piece of paper. What images do you think of when you hear the word? What emotions? Share your “word imaging” with your classmates, then look up the actual definition to see if your picture fits.
The History
Emmett Till’s murder sparked a series of events that forever transformed our understanding of race and racism in the United States. This timeline offers insight into critical events both leading up to and following the murder, as well as provides a glimpse into the crucial role African Americans played in the development of Chicago.

1866 The Ku Klux Klan is formed in Pulaski, Tennessee, by a group of Confederate Army veterans.

1905 The Chicago Defender publishes its first issue, becoming the second black newspaper in the U.S. Unlike Chicago’s first black newspaper, Conservator, the Defender is widely circulated across the country.

1909 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is founded.

1941 On July 25, Emmett Louis Till is born at Chicago’s Cook County Hospital to Mamie and Louis Till.

1954 The Supreme Court orders public schools desegregated in Brown v. Board of Education. Southern segregationists vow to oppose the ruling and label this day Black Monday.

1955 On Aug. 20, Mamie E. Bradley puts her son Emmett Till on a train from Chicago to visit family in Mississippi. A few days after his arrival, Emmett supposedly "wolf-whistles" at Carolyn Bryant, a white woman, at her store. On Aug. 28, Emmett is brutally murdered. From Sep 3- Sep 6, ~50,000 attend his open-casket funeral in Chicago, and on Sep. 15 Jet publishes a photo of Emmett’s mutilated body. On Sep 19, the kidnapping and murder trial of Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam opens; six days later, both men are acquitted after the jury deliberates for just 66 minutes.

1955 (cont.) On December 1, Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to a white male on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, precipitating the Montgomery Bus Boy-
1957 The Little Rock Nine integrate the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

1957 Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine, was greeted by an angry mob at Central High School on her first day of class.¹

1957 The Little Rock Nine integrate the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

1963 Hundreds of thousands participate in the March on Washington and hear Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Mississippi’s NAACP field secretary, 37-year-old Medgar Evers, is murdered outside his home by Byron De La Beckwith. Beckwith is tried twice in 1964, but both trials result in hung juries.

1964 President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964; in Mississippi, three civil rights workers (two white, one black) are murdered by the Ku Klux Klan.

1965 Malcolm X is assassinated in New York City; Voting Rights Act of 1965 is passed and President Johnson issues Executive Order 11246, which enforces affirmative action for the first time.

1968 Martin Luther King, Jr., is assassinated in Memphis.

1968 Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech to hundreds of thousands of people in 1963.²

1973 Maynard Jackson (Atlanta), first black elected mayor of a major Southern U.S. city.


1979 Gen. Colin Powell becomes first African American to serve as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Douglas Wilder of Virginia becomes the nation’s first African American to be elected state governor.

1989 Maynard Jackson (Atlanta), first black elected mayor of a major Southern U.S. city.

1989 Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech to hundreds of thousands of people in 1963.²

1993 Byron De La Beckwith is tried for the third time and convicted of the 1963 murder of Medgar Evers.

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2003 Mamie Till Bradley dies at age 81.

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2005 In an effort to recover DNA evidence and indict the living participants in the murder, Till’s body is exhumed.

2005 In an effort to recover DNA evidence and indict the living participants in the murder, Till’s body is exhumed.

2006 The Justice Department closes its investigation without pressing charges and the case is turned over to Mississippi prosecutors. Rosa Parks dies at age 92.
In October of 1942, two fourteen-year-old African Americans – Charles Lang and Ernest Green – were taken from their jail cells in Mississippi and quietly lynched. As their bodies dangled over the Chickasawhay River, they became two of the over 3000 African Americans who were lynched in the United States between 1882 and 1951. Their tragedy might have shocked the nation, if the nation had been informed of it. But these grotesque murders -- like so many before them -- caused no ripple in the mainstream press. African Americans were only mainstream news when they committed a crime. But in the Black Press, lynchings were front page material.

Despite its inception in the Northeast, the majority of Negro papers were published in the south, often on the presses of African American churches. After the Civil War, the Black Press became integral in the unification and stabilization of southern African American communities. When Reconstruction ended in 1876, however, these publications had to be wary of the harsh atmosphere of Jim Crow South. The truth was often censored, and often violently. In 1892, for example, Ida B. Wells denounced the lynching of three friends in her paper, The Memphis Free Speech. In reaction, a lynch mob destroyed her offices and would have killed her had she not been in New York.

In 1905, however, a Chicago printer named Robert Abbot founded the Chicago Defender, which would not be silenced in the South or anywhere. Abbot produced the first issue of the Defender on his landlady’s diningroom table; he circulated a modest three hundred copies of this edition. But with its tradition of sensationalism, sarcastic wit and biting rhetoric, the self-proclaimed "World’s Greatest Weekly" quickly blossomed in Chicago. Reporters became heroes of the black community. Through their writings, they established a separate world which liberated African Americans from mainstream depictions of their inferiority.

Having found success in the Midwest, Abbott did the unthinkable: he sent the Defender into the segregated South. From the safety of Chicago, Abbott could make the bold protests that Southern writers could not voice without fear of retribution. By the 1920s, the Defender had a circulation of over 150,000, and even this number, though impressive, is misleading. Each copy passed through the hands of at least five readers. Every crime against African Americans was publicized in bold black ink on the front page of this now national publication.

But even as the Chicago Defender and other Negro newspapers like The Pittsburgh Courier and Amsterdam News became a fundamental cornerstone of African American community, the mainstream press refused to take the Black Press seriously. The plight of Black America remained shamefully invisible to the majority of the white population, until the death of Emmett Till. The first news story about the abduction and lynching of a fourteen year old from Chicago, who was in Mississippi visiting his mother’s home-town, broke on August 29, 1955. This pithy piece said little other than that Till was missing, but as the heinous facts of the case unfolded, Emmett became the beaten and bruised face of Jim Crow South not only nationally, but internationally as well. He became famous, and the racism of the South, infamous.

The world would learn that two white men had dragged Emmett from his uncle’s home, beat him, shot him and dumped his body in the Tallahatchie river with a metal fan wrapped around his neck with barbed wire. Despite the authority’s hasty attempt to bury the body in Mississippi, Emmett’s disfigured corpse was returned to Chicago on the condition that his casket would remain closed. But Emmett’s mother, Mamie Bradley, wanted to see her son. And once she had seen him, she wanted the world to see what had been done to her son: "Let the people see what they did to my boy." An open-casket funeral service was held for Emmett, and for three days thousands flocked to Roberts Temple Church of God to witness the wrath of Jim Crow.

Weeks later, Jet magazine published photographs of Emmett’s corpse to “let the world experience man’s inhumanity to man,” and the Chicago Defender circulated the same images. America was traumatized. The world was aghast. Horrified editors came out of Germany, France, and Belgium. From Italy, William Faulkner -- Mississippi’s most famous son -- issued a statement:

*If we in America have reached that point in our desperate culture when we must murder children, no matter for what reason or what color, we don’t deserve to survive, and probably won’t.*

Article continues on the next page...
The nation and the world attentively followed the proceedings; everyone knew when Emmett Till’s murderers were set free by an all white, all male, jury...

For the first time, American mainstream media took interest in the murder of an African American in the south. At least 50 reporters and photographers filled the small courthouse for the first day of the trial. Life, Look, The New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Sun-Times, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and The Detroit News were represented among others. The events surrounding Emmett’s murder were also among the first of the Civil Rights Movement to be covered by the emerging medium of the television. The nation and the world attentively followed the proceedings; everyone knew when Emmett Till’s murderers were set free by an all white, all male, jury after four days of testimony and only an hour and five minutes of deliberation.

Although the murderers of Emmett Till were never punished, their trial established that the African American condition deserved and required mainstream attention. Because of Emmett Till, America would be prepared for the events that would erupt in Montgomery, Alabama later that year. Mainstream publications would cover the bus boycott of Rosa Parks and the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement’s new young leader, Martin Luther King, Jr.. The Black Press would be there as well, but as the African American narrative became America’s narrative, the Black Press began losing its monopoly over the African American stories, African American journalists and African American readership. The Black Press publications helped desegregate America, and, to a certain extent, their purpose became ironically anachronistic in the healthier world they created. Whereas the powerhouses like the Chicago Defender and Jet were able to adapt, most of the smaller publications sheathed their swords and faded out of circulation. But they, like Emmett, will never fade from history.

Think About It: Silencing Free Speech

Why do you think people in the segregated South fought so hard against the distribution of Black publications? What might have led “mainstream” publications like the Chicago Tribune and New York Times to cover the Emmett Till trial, whereas in the past they had never covered such an event? Are there any publications or other forms of free speech today that people actively try to silence? Why or why not?

Fighting back against a racist White Press

Newspapers have been a cornerstone of American society since the beginning of the 1700s, but just as the country was dominated by Caucasians, so too was the media. African American stories were rarely if ever featured. Renowned African American journalist Vernon Jarrett noted, "We didn't exist...We were neither born, we didn't get married, we didn't die. We didn't fight in any wars...we were truly invisible unless we committed a crime." Starting in 1827, however, Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm brought African American issues to print in Freedom’s Journal. Circulating the streets of New York City, the Journal was the first African American owned, operated, and oriented weekly publication. On the front page of the first edition boldly read, "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us"; and with this proclamation, the Black Press was born. Over the next 125 years, 2700 Negro papers would come and go as voices for a disenfranchised people and warriors in the widespread war against racial persecution. Phyl Garland, a current African American journalist, asserts that "the black press never pretended to be objective because it didn’t see the white press being objective and it often took a position, it had an attitude. This was a press of advocacy.” Witnessing countless injustices towards its constituents, the Black Press refused to detach itself from the emotion that vibrated the African American population. As America closed the door on the ugliness of 19th Century -- with its inhumane slavery, brutal Civil War and frightening establishment of Southern Jim Crow laws -- it greeted the 20th Century with the hope for renewal. But the country was far from whole. Segregation engulfed the country: in the South by law and in the North by neighborhood and socioeconomic stratification. The Black Press covered this, of course; black journalists became local heroes for keeping their communities informed and unified. Yet, the mainstream media did not recognize racism in America as a story, and the white public remained astonishingly ignorant. All this changed, though, in 1955 when the story of Emmett Till’s death broke through the media’s color barrier and brought the truth of America’s inequality to the front page of every newspaper, black and white.

1 Used with permission of the Chicago Historical Society.
Chicago Connections
Standing in front of the church where Emmett Till was memorialized, alongside rows of boarded-up businesses, dilapidated buildings and overgrown vacant lots, it is difficult to imagine that the South Side of Chicago was once considered the Black Metropolis, the capital of African American life and culture in the United States.

But leading African American historian and author Timuel Black remembers the South Side’s glory days. Although born in Birmingham, Alabama, Black moved with his family to Chicago when he was eight months old. He built his life here, first as a social worker, then as a teacher—and always as a chronicler of the world in which he lives.

Professor Emeritus of Social Science at the City Colleges of Chicago, Black is the author of two volumes of interviews with South Siders that narrate the impact of the Great Migration on Chicago’s black history: *Bridges of Memory: Chicago’s First Wave of Black Migration* (2003) and *Bridges of Memory 2* (2006). While the second volume explores the second generation of African Americans in Chicago, the first concentrates on those who left the social, political and economic oppression of the South for what they expected to be the Promised Land, only to find new forms of segregation and prejudice. This first wave of Southern immigrants settled in the stockyards and steel mills of Chicago and started small businesses in what came to be known as the “Black Belt” on the South Side. They brought forth the jazz, blues and gospel music for which the city is now renowned.

Long before this influx of Southern immigrants, there existed an ancestry of blacks in Chicago, beginning with Jean-Baptiste Pointe Du Sable—a Haitian trader who established the first permanent settlement at the mouth of the Chicago River in the 1780s—and continuing with the escaped slaves and freedmen who founded the city’s first communities in the 1840s. By 1890, the black population had reached 15,000.

Concentrated on the South Side by restrictive covenants and de jure segregation, the black community developed its own class system and social strata. Domestics and laborers lived in close proximity to a small but growing middle class of business owners, doctors, lawyers and other professionals. In 1878, attorney Ferdinand Barnett established Chicago’s first black newspaper, the *Conservative*, which advocated militant protest and racial solidarity. His wife, Ida B. Wells, brought her anti-lynching campaign from the South, joined the women’s suffrage movement and was one of the founders of the NAACP in 1900.

The first wave of migration continued into the 1900s, and by 1910 Chicago’s black population had risen to 40,000. With the growing community came the establishment of institutions like Provident Hospital, the Wabash Avenue YMCA (the first African American-focused Y in the country), the Chicago Urban League and additional newspapers including the *Chicago Defender*. The political clout of these institutions paved the way for black politicians like Oscar De Priest, who became the first African American elected to Congress since the Reconstruction.

By 1910, 78 percent of Chicago’s black population lived south of the Loop between 22nd and 31st Streets, with State Street to the east and Wentworth Avenue to the west. But as the population grew with the continued migration, the “Black Belt” extended south of 39th Street toward Garfield Boulevard, Grand Boulevard and Washington Park, and east across State Street to Cottage Grove. The race riots of 1919 were the result of encroaching integration and the economic pressure for jobs.

The racial makeup of Chicago shifted greatly as a result of the Great Migration. As shown here, Chicago’s black population rose from 3% to nearly 25% in a few years.

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The 1920s brought the explosion of the “Black Metropolis,” better known as Bronzeville. Concentrated between the intersections of 37th and State and 47th and Grand Boulevard (now King Drive), Bronzeville became the epicenter of black Chicago life. Large black churches like Quinn Chapel AME and Pilgrim Baptist Church drew thousands of worshippers each Sunday, and jazz and blues clubs helped to establish Chicago’s place in the musical pantheon.

The Great Depression undercut much of this progress and, by 1939, blacks constituted 40 percent of relief rolls and half of all black families relied on some government aid. Direct-action campaigns targeted white merchants who wouldn’t hire blacks. The Depression, however, also led to a wave of black literary and artistic expression. Inspired by the Harlem Renaissance, artists like Richard Wright, Willard Motley, William Attaway, Frank Davis and Margaret Burroughs offered nuanced impressions of black urban life, while Gwendolyn Brooks gave poetic voice to everyday black Chicagoans.

The second wave of migration began with the creation of new jobs to support the World War II effort. By 1950, Chicago’s black population escalated to more than 500,000. This new wave of Southern blacks encountered a bifurcated Chicago. On one hand, Chicago was the mecca of black life in the United States; it was home to the most famous black man at that time, heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, and the most widely read black newspaper, the Chicago Defender. Blacks had secured hard-won advancements in the steel and meatpacking industries, creating a stable black working class. And members of the black middle class continued to thrive as the owners of movie houses, hotels, restaurants, real estate, banks, insurance companies, department stores and shopping districts.

On the other hand, there was still widespread discrimination. Stores outside the Black Belt refused to hire African Americans, so black workers were limited to servicing only the black community. The already-overcrowded, slum-like conditions were aggravated by the exorbitant rent that landlords charged for what they called “kitchenettes” and “basement apartments.” To ease the housing crunch, the Chicago Housing Authority proposed new public housing projects, but they were restricted to African American neighborhoods, making already overcrowded neighborhoods even more congested.

“"This is the world, the society, that Emmett Till was born into,” Timuel Black explains. "It's important to understand that Emmett was poor, but he was not poverty-stricken. He lived in a vibrant, thriving community that had doctors, lawyers and the first 12 black certified public accountants in the country. Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong strolled these streets and played in the clubs here.”

Standing before A.A. Rainer and Sons Funeral Home, where Emmett’s body was taken after it arrived in Chicago, Black describes the scene: “This was still a segregated neighborhood. The Rainers had pioneered here; they were the first in the community. People filled the streets for days, waiting to get inside.”

It was A.A. Rainer Sr. who took charge of Emmett’s body at Mamie Till’s request. "They had a reputation of care in the community," says Black. "They treated everyone who came here as if they were family, and I think that is what Mamie wanted. She wanted Emmett treated right.”

Emmett’s body was moved to the Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ for the service. Standing now before this massive building on 40th Street, it is difficult to believe that this decimated area was once part of the thriving center of the Black Metropolis. The clubs where Ella Fitzgerald and Joe Williams performed are now gone. The public housing that Ida B. Wells championed has been bulldozed. Many of the black-owned businesses that supported the community are either boarded up or torn down. Although there are signs of gentrification, the Black Metropolis is no more.

1 Used with permission of The Chicago Defender. July 1941. John Vachon, Photographer; Gelatin-silver print. FSA-OWI Collection, Prints and Photographs Division (124).
Memories of the **South Side**

A conversation with Chuck Smith

Born in the same hospital and only a few years apart, Goodman Resident Director Chuck Smith says that he has always felt a connection to Emmett Till. "If someone would say, 'I wonder what Emmett Till would be doing if he was still alive,' you could look at Chuck Smith," he explains. "We lived in the same neighborhood and went through the same experiences." In a recent conversation with Goodman Literary Manager Tanya Palmer, Smith recalls some of his experiences growing up on Chicago’s South Side in the 1940s and '50s.

Chuck Smith: My family all grew up on 32nd Street and Vernon. I look back now, and those were some of the happiest days of my life. It was a true village. I felt very safe in my neighborhood. I walked to Douglas Grade School, and I was safe as long as I stayed within two or three blocks of my house.

**TP:** Were there a lot of kids on your street?

**CS:** Oh, yeah, tons of kids. And we all played in the street because there were very few cars. I remember that two of my friends had cars. They were sort of well-to-do. The beautiful thing about the old neighborhood was that all the black people lived together. The two guys who had cars on my block were a real-estate guy and a doctor. And then the people next door to me were on welfare. But all the kids played together. What happened to the neighborhood was integration. Once they were able to leave the neighborhood, the people with money were gone. They left, they cut out. They started thinking they could live wherever they wanted to, and then they left everybody else — people with low incomes were all there because they couldn't go anywhere. But at the time, we were all there together.

[...But then] we moved from the black community to a predominantly white community. It was a Jewish neighborhood — and I never had an ounce of trouble from day one. Now, I was lucky, because most of my friends who went to other white neighborhoods had horror stories. I mean horror stories. They were followed home from school. I felt sorry for them because I was embraced, you know. I was never called the n-word. I never had any trouble making friends. I was lucky. And that's all I can say, I was just lucky because a lot of kids landed in some really bad situations. And I landed in a pretty good one. I ended up graduating vice-president of my grade school class, and I was the only black guy in the whole class. It got crazy when I went to high school, though. I attended Hyde Park High School for a year and experienced reverse racism because the black kids didn’t like that I you mind your business, you won't have any trouble." But when Emmett Till was murdered, it scared me. And I said, "I ain't never goin' down South."

Everybody knew about Mississippi. If you had to go down South, you'd be best going to Louisiana, someplace like that. But Mississippi was a scary place — had always been sort of a scary place. And when Emmett Till was killed, everybody in my age group said, "That could have been me." Plus, we were from Chicago. Whatever he did, if I went down there, I probably would have done the same thing.

**TP:** Did you feel like the same kind of thing could happen in Chicago?

**CS:** It did happen in Chicago. If you went into a white neighborhood by yourself, you could get seriously hurt. There were boundaries. To this day when someone says "Cicero," I back away, because in Cicero, black kids were getting beaten with baseball bats. It was the same with Mayor Daley's old neighborhood, Bridgeport. You didn't want to be messing around in Bridgeport. You know, today, I still don't feel comfortable in Bridgeport. [...] You just learned to live with it. You knew where to go, where not to go.

And when Emmett Till was killed, everybody in my age group said, “That could have been me.”

had white friends. They would always say, "Hey man, how come you always eatin' lunch with those guys," and I'd say, "I tell you what, why don't you all come over here? They're cool. They're all right." They'd say, "Naw, we're not eatin' over there. You got to come over here with us." So next thing you know, I'm getting in fights with black guys because of my white friends.

**TP:** Do you remember hearing about what happened to Emmett Till?

**CS:** Yeah. See, once upon a time, in the old neighborhood, when kids would get in trouble, their parents would send them to their family down South to get away from gangs. It was a normal thing. [...] Everyone would go down South for the summer. I had never heard horror stories about the South other than, “You better watch your Ps and Qs, because it’s different down there. But if you
Emmett Till
By Radmila Lunic
(translated from the Serbian at right)

Emmett,
you were born in
a young democratic society,
in a time of New Inquisition
when society’s customs
predestined ethnic positions.

(”The one who rules doesn’t
suffer trials.” — Ancient Serbian saying)

Written law is:
"Equal human rights for all."
But in reality,
the manners of the unhealthy
privileged were unwritten law.

Majority watched silently,
not thinking of
the last moments
of the sufferer, or
that the truth
would find a way out
with big eruption.

Emmett
By Susan Garza
Dream of a world ruled by justice. Fight for civil rights. Attempt to end the horror of violence and injustice.
Emmett Till’s brutal murder is just one of many incomprehensible events. His life, sacrificed, inspired many to work
for greater justice for all. We should live in gentle harmony. Progress has been made, but there is work to be done.
May we all find gentle strength to grow and help others. Peace.
**Where the Sunflower Doesn’t Grow**  
By Derrick Spradley

On a visit to the delta, where rich green crops and sunflowers grow. There is a dark chapter in American history there too, matching the dark, black muck of the Mississippi. It’s where hatred of our fellows ran ahead of our respect for human life, and where *Emmett Till’s dark brown, radiant face, much like the dark brown and radiant face of a sunflower, should have grown and blossomed* on a hot August day — but didn’t.

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**August 1955 to Now**  
By Emily A. Dunn

I think about the sex crimes committed on black women by white men over the years. *No one gave them a first thought.* It was a normal thing to do.

But this young black boy was not only killed. He was humiliated, tortured, then killed, all in the name of protecting a white woman’s honor. He did not even try to touch her.

My rage has grown from that day on, and it has become a part of me.

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**Emmett Till**  
By Margo Coulter

I walked beside my mother, angry because my plans had been disrupted by someone I didn’t know, and frightened because I was afraid of dead bodies. *When we got into the church, I peered at what looked like an animal’s head, resting somehow in a dark suit and tie.* You could see the stitches used to close the separation of his neck. His swollen, misshapen face had heavy layers of powder on it, to cover the discolored waterlogged tissue. *I can still see his face in my mind, and feel the tremendous fear, rage and anger from the crowd on that awful day.*

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**A Prayer for Emmett Till**  
By John Kastholm

*I heard the church bells ringing And thought of Emmett Till*  
*I saw the crosses burning*  
*His open casket lying still*  
*Fifty-odd years later The year of our Lord 2008*  
*Photos of his battered, bloody body Still live amid Prophecies of hate*  
*Beneath a crown of thistle*  
*I hear a young man whistle*  
*While gazing at the altar*  
*I wonder why*  
*Innocents must die*  
*True sinners never wonder why*  
*I see the crosses burning, burning, burning*  
*Burning out*
Emmett’s Legacy
I can make you a hero by the end of this essay.

I’m not going to tell you the secret of superhuman speed or the ability to fly. I cannot offer you x-ray vision, invisibility, invincibility, spidey-powers, psychic powers, a golden lasso, a green power ring, adamantium claws, telekinesis or the ability to walk through walls. I can’t even promise to give you more smarts. What I can give you is permission.

Superheroes are a thing of fiction. They always have been if you believe folklore to be fictitious. The first superheroes live in the archaic mythologies of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Ancient Greece. These powerful beings were often some lower level of divinity, or their powers were bestowed on them by the gods. They possessed impossible powers, much as our comic book characters do today. Gilgamesh fought epic battles with demons and monsters. Cassandra could foresee the future (though nobody would believe her). The pharaohs, it was said, were bestowed with supernatural powers at their coronation. We have been enthralled by superheroes for thousands of years.

I cannot make you a superhero. No one can, because no one can downgrade you to a fantastical existence. You’ll have to wait for Halloween. Or, if you were so inclined, you could try to get on the reality television show Who Wants to Be a Superhero. (Warning: It isn’t a very good show.)

But heroes are real. We hear about them all the time. We think of heroes as those ordinary men and women who do extraordinary things. And there is no age requirement:

♦ The 11-year-old in Cleveland who gained control of his bus when it started rolling downhill while the driver was inside the gas station.
♦ The 14-year-old in Philadelphia who thwarted a classmate’s attempt to execute a school attack similar to that of Columbine High School in 1999.
♦ The 15-year-old in Beaufort, MO, who helped police find his kidnapped classmate.
♦ The teenage soldier in Afghanistan who threw himself on top of a grenade to save the lives of his comrades.

There is an old saying that goes something like this: "We only need heroics when things have not gone as planned." When someone loses control of a vehicle, or when someone commits a crime. When we’re at war. These are the times when we think we need heroes because we read of these happenings in the paper or online. These heroes are glamorous because they make great news, news that is a blissful departure from the sorrow and hardships that we more often find on the front page. They prove to us that tragedy has a silver lining. But it is a mistake to think we only need heroes in times of crisis — and maybe it is because we wait for these moments that they happen all too frequently. What if a hero had stepped in earlier and encouraged the student planning the school attacks to take a different path? Everyday life requires everyday heroics.

In the late summer of 1955, it seemed as though all the ugliness and brutality of America’s past manifested itself in one tragic event that horrified and sickened the nation and the world: a 14-year-old boy was taken from his family, tortured and murdered. It might seem like there aren’t any heroes in this story. Nobody jumped down on the tracks or steered the car to safety. Emmett Till’s cries for help were not answered by a superhero with superhearing who could fly to his rescue at superspeed. His cries were not answered by anyone.

The heroes of Emmett Till were not present the night of his death: they are the men and women who refused to let his death be in vain. The relative who refused to let Emmett’s mangled body be hidden away by Mississippi authorities. The mother who, despite great personal pain, demanded that her son’s casket be open for the funeral so that the world would know what atrocities Jim Crow South sanctioned. The black uncle who — putting his life and the well-being of his family in jeopardy — stood up in a white courtroom in front of an all-white jury and pointed out the two white men who had stolen his black nephew. The white prosecutor who demanded justice from a society of bigotry. The white judge...
who ordered a fair trial in an environment where the rights of blacks were scoffed at. The interracial team of journalists who weren't satisfied with the sheriff's meager investigation and went out and found witnesses and evidence for the prosecution. These are men and women who put themselves in difficult situations not because it benefitted them, but because it was the right thing to do. These are some of the first heroes of the Civil Rights movement.

Out of tragedy must come heroes. While this is probably true, it is limiting to think that heroes can only arrive in times of danger and despair. It is limiting and, I think, maybe a little lazy: by saving our heroics for times of imminent doom we allow ourselves to sit back and watch the lesser ills of our world continue unobstructed.

But I am guessing you don't do that.

I am guessing that on occasion you have been a hero.

A hero can be defined simply as one who possesses noble qualities. A hero is someone who acts selflessly to help others. Carrying groceries for your mom is heroic. Holding the door open for a stranger is heroic. Helping your classmate with his homework is heroic. A hero is someone who witnesses injustice around them, and does something to fix it. Standing up for a student others pick on is heroic. Helping a friend through a hard time is heroic. A hero is an individual who does not follow others blindly. A hero makes her own decisions. Saying no can be heroic, especially when all your friends are saying yes.

There are heroes that the media ignores because their feats are not dazzling, but this does not make them any less heroic. You've been such a hero before. Maybe even today. Maybe you were a hero right before you started reading this essay to find out how I could make you a hero. You know how. You just need to give yourself permission to continue to be one.

Activity
Using Your Superpowers

What are your "superpowers"? What strengths do you have that you could use to help other people? Are you good at gardening? Housework? Math? Are you a good listener? A supportive friend? List some of your strengths here:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What do you think would happen if you used your "superpowers" more often to help others? What would happen if more people at your school did this?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Next, use one of the strengths you listed to help someone else: a friend, family member, neighbor or anyone you encounter. After you use your "superpowers" to save the day, answer these questions:

How did using these "superpowers" make you feel?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

There are many heroes in the Emmett Till story, ordinary people who decided to do the right thing regardless of the personal cost. This bravery, this courage is part of the legacy of Emmett and Mamie Till.

Help us keep their legacy alive. Read through the contract below and sign it. This is NOT a classroom assignment; you do not have to turn it in to your teacher or to us. It is a pledge, a promise to yourself to do something everyday that keeps the spirit of Emmett, Mamie, Moses, and the dozens of others who still remain nameless, alive in your heart.

When you sign a contract, you might notice that your palms get a little sweaty, that you find it hard to commit even to yourself. The simple act of signing the contract is huge and it symbolically represents change. If you find yourself struggling to do this, ask yourself how life will look when you complete the contract. Is it exciting, does it fill you with passion and joy? If so, you are simply signing a contract to achieve those feelings. Acknowledge yourself for being willing to take this huge step towards your dreams and goals.

Keeping the Spirit Alive

I, _____________________________, hereby make the following promise to myself:

I am smart. I am unique. I love who I am, and I pledge each day to try to be the best person I can be. Every day I will write down at least one thing about myself that makes me special.

I realize that every life has something unique to offer and it is my job to honor and affirm that.

I will use my time to learn all I can, and to respect those who are willing to pass their wisdom and experience on to me.

I will remember the sacrifices of the people who came before me to make it possible for me to be who I am and I will honor them by being the best person I can be.

I will remember that I am a hero, not because I am unafraid but because I choose to act in spite of my fears.

__________________________________________
Signature

______________ Day of ________________ 200____
Hate Crimes Statistics

- There were 5,449 hate crime offenses classified as crimes against persons in 2006.
- There were 7,720 bias incidents against individuals reported in 2006.
- Of the 7,730 incidents reported 51.8 percent were motivated by a racial bias, 18.9 percent were motivated by a religious bias, 15.5 percent were triggered by a sexual-orientation bias, and 12.7 percent of the incidents were motivated by an ethnicity/national origin bias. One percent involved bias against a disability.
- The majority (31.0 percent) of hate crime incidents in 2006 occurred in or near residences or homes; followed by 18.0 percent on highways, roads, alleys, or streets; 12.2 percent at colleges or schools; 6.1 percent in parking lots or garages; and 3.9 percent at churches, synagogues, or temples. The remaining 28.8 percent of hate crime incidents occurred at other specified locations, multiple locations, or other and unknown locations.


Edward Norton played a skinhead in the film American History X.

Crimes motivated by hate like the murder of Emmett Till have existed throughout human history. It is only in recent years, however, that the term “Hate Crime” has been adopted to describe these cruel acts of violence. Hate crimes are identity-based. They are motivated by bias, negative opinions or attitudes toward a group of people who possess common characteristics like skin color, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation or age.

Federal law defines a hate crime as a criminal act committed against someone because of that person’s race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, or disability. Hate crimes can include assault, vandalism of property, threats and harassment. Not only do they cause emotional and psychological harm, but they also can exacerbate racial, religious or ethnic tensions in the community. Enacting legislation to address hate crimes can allay community members’ fears and put in place ways communities can prevent hate crimes. Federal legislation to combat hate crimes prohibits specific intimidating actions and general behavior motivated by bias, and enhances penalties for criminal acts motivated by bias. Some states and communities have elaborated on the federal hate crime definition in order to protect and support more minority groups.

Think About It: World of Hate

What hate crimes have occurred during your lifetime? What made them hate crimes? What are some of the non-violent ways that hate can manifest itself in everyday life?

Why do you think it is that only 31 states consider sexual-orientation or gender-based crimes as hate crimes?

Can hate be institutionalized? Do you know of any examples of large groups or organizations that either enforce prejudice or ignore it?

Have you or anyone you know been a victim of a hate crime? What happened? What can you do personally to affect change and stop hate in your community?

HATE INSPIRES ART & CHANGE

In 1998 writer-director Moises Kauffman created The Laramie Project, a play and later HBO film, inspired by the murder of Matthew Shepard. Shepard was the victim a hate crime, brutally beaten and killed, for being gay. The docu-drama focuses on the real-life testimonies of people living in the town where this tragedy occurred, and illustrates both human intolerance and compassion. Much like Emmett Till, Matthew Shepard’s death has had a powerful legacy, leading to The Matthew Shepard Act a bill calling for strengthened federal legislation of sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity–related hate crimes. Adding crimes of this nature to already-existing federal laws, would lead to harsher penalties for those who commit them. Currently Illinois and 30 other states include sexual-orientation and gender-based crimes as hate crimes.

To learn more about The Laramie Project, Matthew Shepard, and Hate-Crime Legislation visit The Knowledge Nucleus.

2 [http://www.time.com/time/](http://www.time.com/time/)
The 4th Floor
Although Ferris is referring to skipping class in the above quote, he is ultimately speaking to both the power of observation and the ability to seize the day. These skills are essential when making important life choices such as, "What am I going to do with my life?" or "I know what I want to do, but where do I start?"

While internships certainly promise challenging work, often for little money, they offer an invaluable opportunity for aspiring theatre professionals to become the next generation of great theatre minds—provided you are willing to seize that opportunity.

The Goodman Internship Program, considered among the best in the nation, offers a chance to learn the inner workings of one of the most reputable theatres in the country. This unique program is geared towards anyone interested in pursuing a career in theatre, regardless of age, and offers mentorship in the areas of Casting, Production, Marketing, Literary Management, Dramaturgy, Education, Stage Management, Costumes, Props and Sound. Goodman provides interns with the hands-on experience needed to become a fierce competitor in a demanding industry.

Intern, Actor, Playwright

Working as an administrative intern doesn’t mean you shouldn’t also pursue writing or acting, Nambi E. Kelley does it all.

Like you, Nambi, who plays Ruthie May in The Ballad of Emmett Till, began her relationship with Goodman through the Student Subscription Series.

A student of Ellen O’Keefe at Von Steuban High School, Nambi was encouraged in her drama class to pursue her dreams of acting and writing for the stage. After graduating from the playwriting program at the Theatre School at DePaul University, Nambi applied and was accepted as the Education and Community Programs Intern at Goodman. Today Nambi is an established actor and playwright who has worked with many of Chicago’s most prominent theatres including Victory Gardens Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre and — of course — Goodman Theatre.

Interested in learning more? Nambi’s personal website is www.nambikelley.com.

Did you know...?

Besides The Ballad of Emmett Till, Nambi has performed in several other plays at Goodman:

- Crumbs from the Table of Joy (Ernestine)
- Drowning Crow (Mary)
- Mirror of the Invisible World (Ensemble, u/s)

Also, Nambi’s Jeff-nominated* play MILK was directed by Goodman Theatre Artistic Associate Chuck Smith at MPAACT Theatre Company.

* Jeff Awards are given to Chicago theatre artists who show excellence in a specific category such as playwriting, acting or directing.

To find out more about Goodman’s internships and read Nambi’s blog, check out the Knowledge Nucleus.

1 http://www.scoutj.com/category/scout-is-random/
Where do I sit?
Reading your ticket

Now that we are ticketing each student matinee, **it is important where you sit.** Although in the past you could sit in any seat open in the theater, as long as you stayed in your school group, now **all seats are ASSIGNED.** The ticket your teacher gives you indicates exactly what seat is yours.

Below is a seating chart – a map of all the seats in the Albert Theater – and an explanation of how to read your ticket. **If you have any problems, ask an usher for help.** They’re here for you!

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This will guide you to the lobby door closest to your seat — aisle numbers are on plaques that hang above the doors to the theater

**The section of the theatre you will be sitting in:** Main Floor or Mezzanine

**This is your seat number,** located on the edge of the bottom seat cushion

The row where your seat is located, noted in a letter on the side of the end seat of each row

**Day and date of performance**

**Curtain time**

**Goodman’s Albert Theatre**

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**Reading your ticket**

1. **Goodman’s Albert Theatre**
2. **Albert Ivar Goodman Theatre—Main Floor**
3. **Albert Ivar Goodman Theatre—Mezzanine**
Writing Your Response Letter

After you have seen the show and discussed your responses in the classroom, it’s time to let us know what you thought! Your response letter plays an important role at Goodman Theatre. All of the letters we receive are forwarded to our artists, and you may get a response!

Pick one of the artists involved with *The Ballad of Emmett Till* whose work was particularly memorable to you—an actor, designer or the director—and write that artist a letter describing your experience at the show and your feedback about his or her work. Be honest and ask any questions that are on your mind.

Your teacher will send us your letter, and we’ll forward it on to that artist!

Important information to include:
♦ Your name, age and grade
♦ Your teacher’s name, school and the school’s address

Including these things will make it easier for our artists to respond!

Send your letters to:
Education and Community Programs
Goodman Theatre
170 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60601

Here are two great student letters we received in response to *Passion Play: a cycle in three parts*:

**Dear Ms. Noonan, (Village Idiot and Violet)**

The Passion Play was one of the most fascinating, and brilliant plays I’ve ever attended in my life. It was full of action and drama that allowed me as an audience member to engage myself within the play and become one with the characters. The character that I was most intrigued by was the village idiot played by Polly Noonan. In my opinion the village idiot had the biggest role and really took a lot of courage and focus in not only one’s self but also the character in order to bring the character to life.

I was able to develop not only a very strong claim but also gather a very powerful message from the Passion Play. The claim is that the passions you have within your life inevitably shape your religious beliefs. If you believe in pre-marital sex and feel that abortions should be legal chances are that your religious beliefs will be branched far away from the views of Christianity. Pontius Pilate is a good example of this claim. Pontius believed in killing and gutting the bellies of fish and he also believe din pre-marital sex. He felt as though he needed nothing or no one to help him find what he believed in religiously. He killed fish because he feels as though fish are Christ leading him into the direction of Christian views.

The village idiot in this play seems to be the character that everyone is afraid of hearing out because she speaks the truth that no one is ready to hear. She carries along with her this jack in the box that seems to talk to her and almost gives her direction on how she should properly live her life. This jack in the box to me represents religion because before taking even the slightest step forward the village idiot consults with the jack in the box for direction. The village idiot was the most cunning and cultivating character throughout the Passion.

[...] Overall this was a great play. The cast really worked hard on bringing the characters to life and pulling the audience in along for the journey throughout the Passion.

A student from North Lawndale College Prep

**Dear Allen Moyer, (Set Designer)**

I must say, when I walked into Goodman Theatre I was very surprised by the set. Most of the theatres I have been to had elaborate sets, with detailed props and complicated environments. However, upon seeing the simple design on the stage, I became very curious as to how the show would go, concerning the set. I must say, my doubts were very short-lived.

I really loved the way the simple design worked with the play. The actors were able to interact with it easily and efficiently. For instance, in Act 1, there was a lot of running and jumping around, and I think if it weren’t for the design this would not have been possible.

Despite the fact that I enjoyed the set’s initial design, I also liked when it started to become more and more elaborate without becoming tacky. Sometimes a show has way too many things in one scene that it confuses and distracts the audience, and I liked how you avoided that.

One thing I wasn’t sure about was that period after Act 2 when a lot of the actual walls of the theatre were visible. I was wondering if it weren’t for the design this would not have been possible.

The village idiot in this play seems to be the character that everyone is afraid of hearing out because she speaks the truth that no one is ready to hear. She carries along with her this jack in the box that seems to talk to her and almost gives her direction on how she should properly live her life. This jack in the box to me represents religion because before taking even the slightest step forward the village idiot consults with the jack in the box for direction. The village idiot was the most cunning and cultivating character throughout the Passion.

[...] Overall this was a great play. The cast really worked hard on bringing the characters to life and pulling the audience in along for the journey throughout the Passion.

A student from Whitney Young H.S.