

Profiles of people who gave their lives for the Civil Rights Movement

“The Civil Rights Memorial (in Montgomery, Alabama) honors the achievements and memory of **those who died** during the Civil Rights Movement, a period framed by the momentous *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954 and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968.”

Find out about the individuals whose names are listed on the memorial. Let’s interpret the data to discern patterns.

Source: Bullard, Sarah, ed. *Free at Last*. Washington, D.C.: Teaching Tolerance (Southern Poverty Law Center,) 2004.

Also see: <http://www.splcenter.org/civil-rights-memorial/civil-rights-martyrs> for photos and brief notes.

For the update, Wikipedia is a good source.

Name /When	Race & age at death	Who was the murderer?	How murdered?	Why murdered?	Anything special about the investigation? Has the case been revisited?
1. Rev. George Lee 7 May 1955 Born & raised in Mississippi; preacher Owned a grocery store	Black, 52, male	2 members of a segregation group, white. (This was not admitted until 2000.)	Hit by gunfire from a passing car as he was driving home. He was hit right in the face.	He was a leader in the community & was encouraging people to register to vote. The white group didn’t want blacks to get voting rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sheriff tried to say it was just a traffic accident. • The US Justice Dept. & FBI involved. • Medgar Evers tried to keep interest up. • Witnesses were afraid to talk & no charges were ever brought.
2. Lamar Smith 13 August 1955 farmer & organizer	Black, 63, Male	A white did it in front of several silent white bystanders.	He was shot with a .38 caliber gun at close range on the courthouse lawn.	He organized to make everybody able to vote; he was convincing, carpooling and organizing everybody.	The murder was considered political and none of the murderers were seen as guilty. No witnesses ever came forward.

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<p>3. Emmett Till 28 August 1955</p> <p>African American, from Chicago, visiting relatives in the South</p>	<p>Race 14, Black, Male.</p>	<p>Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, white. They admitted that they kidnapped and beat him but denied killing him and said they left him alive.</p>	<p>He was beaten, shot in the head, and then dumped into the Tallahatchie River. His body was found three days later, his eyes gouged out, and his head crushed on one side.</p>	<p>He whistled at a white woman, Mrs. Bryant, in the south while at a local store. There were a few versions of the story at the time. Some people said he asked the woman for a date and some said he just whistled at her.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His mother had the funeral with an open casket so that the world could see what they did to him. Thousands went to the funeral. • The killers had murder charges. The all white jury said, the murderers were not guilty. • In 2017, Mrs. Bryant admitted that she had lied. At this point, she is not so sure what happened, but she knows he did not touch her.
<p>4. John Earl Reese 22 Oct. 1955</p> <p>kid, dancing in a cafe.</p>	<p>16, Black, Male</p>	<p>22 year old Dean Ross and Joe Simpson, also in his 20s. Both white. They were members of a group like the KKK.</p>	<p>He was dancing in a small cafe, then there was a sudden gunfire. 9 bullets went through the cafe and one killed John.</p>	<p>Blacks had managed to get better school conditions after years of fighting and whites were against this, so they went through the town shooting at cafes, homes and the property of blacks. John was killed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The police protected the two white men and arrested two black men. The investigation was then closed; the case came up a 2nd time but the pattern of harassment was ignored. • Murderers arrested, but not jailed. The prosecutor said it was “a case of two irresponsible boys attempting to have some fun by scaring Negroes”.
<p>5. Willie Edwards 23 Jan. 1957</p> <p>truck driver, husband & father</p>	<p>25, black male,</p>	<p>4 white Klansmen (KKK), Alabama.</p>	<p>He was being harassed & beaten until almost being paralyzed with fear and then they told him to jump into the river so he did, and died in the river.</p>	<p>Klansmen confused him with someone dating a white woman; this man had called in “sick” to work. Willie was called to substitute; on his way to work the Klansmen found him thinking he was the other man, and killed him.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fisherman found his body decomposed in the river 3 months after the murder. • 1976--case reopened, & even with a confession, no one was punished. • Reopened 1997-1999, but no charges brought.

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<p>6. Mack Charles Parker 25 April 1959 truck driver Accused of rape, but victim wasn't sure it was him. He said he was innocent.</p>	<p>Black, 23, Male</p>	<p>A white lynch mob of 8, including a Baptist preacher a former sheriff and a jailer.</p>	<p>The mob dragged him out of his jail cell and beat him, shot him and lynched him. Then they threw his body into the river.</p>	<p>He was accused of raping a white woman but was never found innocent or guilty. The mob did not believe that Parker deserved a trial and took matters into their own hands, because they thought that the government would not punish Parker.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FBI investigated. Some people in the mob admitted to killing Parker, but the judge refused to try the murderers. • A black newspaper said that the rape victim made up the story because she was cheating on her husband. • Some thought Parker was guilty. Others thought he was involved with her, but it was consensual. • To this day he has not been proven guilty or innocent; the ones who lynched him are now dead.
<p>7. Herbert Lee 25 Sept. 1961 Owned a cotton farm and dairy in Mississippi</p>	<p>Black, 50, Male</p>	<p>Mississippi State Representative E.H. Hurst (white)</p>	<p>E.H. Hurst shot him after shouting at him to get out of his truck.</p>	<p>Because he has been organizing people to vote. He was helping the Freedom Riders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of his companions in the NAACP was pressured & lied and told the court, that Hurst shot in self defense. • He later told the other NAACP members, the FBI and US Commission on Civil Rights the truth. • E.H Hurst was cleared of all charges and never put in jail.
<p>8. Louis Allen 31 Jan. 1964 father, logger, Civil Rights worker</p>	<p>Black male, 45</p>	<p>Two white men</p>	<p>He was shot with two loads of buckshot in the face.</p>	<p>He tried to register for a vote once and he saw a white man kill a black man, Herbert Lee (case 7) He was telling the truth about Hurst, & they wanted to shut him up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinvestigated in the 1990s by FBI & likely murderers were identified, but nothing happened. • Journalists tried again in 2011, but nothing happened.

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<p>9. Roman Ducksworth 9 April 1962 military policeman, riding a bus, to get to pregnant wife</p>	<p>Black,28, Male</p>	<p>A white policeman killed him, Officer Kelly.</p>	<p>He was killed by a gunshot right in the heart.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officer Kelly said he was just defending himself as Ducksworth attacked him. • Some say Ducksworth was protecting himself • Some say that Kelly thought Ducksworth was a freedom rider & targeted him. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ducksworth's death was ruled a justifiable homicide and no charges were brought against Officer Kelly. • The case has not been reopened or prosecuted since.
<p>10. Paul Guihard 30 Sept. 1962 French journalist in Mississippi as the university was being integrated</p>	<p>White, Male, 30</p>	<p>His case was closed and they never found out who the murderer was. Believed to be a random white in a mob.</p>	<p>He was shot in the back near the Lyceum building, in the University of Mississippi. Some students heard him screaming and, thought he was having a heart attack. He died before help arrived.</p>	<p>Paul Guihard was covering the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. He was documenting the violence & was seen as sympathetic to the Blacks.</p>	<p>Guihard's case was closed without success and never re-investigated.</p>
<p>11. William Lewis Moore 23 April 1963 postal worker, student, working for Civil Rights</p>	<p>Male, White, 36</p>	<p>The gun which killed Moore was owned by Floyd Simpson, who had argued with Moore earlier that day. Simpson was a white man.</p>	<p>He was killed by close range with a .22-caliber rifle</p>	<p>He got killed because he worked for the Congress of Racial Equality & was marching from Tennessee to Mississippi to show solidarity & to deliver a message to the governor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The owner of the .22-caliber rifle was Floyd Simpson. But he was never accused for murder. • In 2008, Governor Haley Barbour was still not accepting Moore's original message

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<p>12. Medgar Evers 12 June 1963</p> <p>WWII veteran, NAACP Civil Rights leader married, with children</p>	<p>Black male 38</p>	<p>Byron De La Beckwith a White Citizens Council member (racist group, like the KKK)</p>	<p>He was shot by a high power rifle, in his driveway. He died one hour later.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was a powerful civil rights leader and was killed after Kennedy's speech talking about the problems with the racial separation. • He was collecting info used in court. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case brought to trial twice, but all white male jury could not reach verdict. • Case was reopened & retried; in 1994 Beckwith convicted of murder & died in prison in 2001.
<p>13-16. Addie Collins, Denise McNair, Caroline Robertson, Cynthia Wesley 15 Sept. 1963</p> <p>They were too young to be civil rights activists. 4 girls at church.</p>	<p>4 black girls, ages 11 and 14.</p> <p>They were attending religious services, 2 girls were in the choir and 2 were ushers.</p>	<p>Four white Klansmen planted a bomb.</p>	<p>A dynamite bomb had been planted 8 hours earlier beneath a stone staircase along the outside wall of the church. It exploded at 10:22, and all four girls died instantly.</p>	<p>It was designed to stop the black struggle for equality. This bomb was planted especially in response of the new school desegregation order.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At that time, no one was charged with the crime. • In 1977, case reopened; a 73-year-old Klansmen named Robert Chambliss was charged with first degree murder and found guilty and sent to jail. • Later US Attorney Doug Jones prosecuted Thomas Blanton in May 2001 and Bobby Cherry in May 2002. Both were sentenced to life in prison.
<p>17. Virgil Lamar Ware 15 Sept. 1963</p> <p>Just riding his bike, Ala.</p>	<p>Black male, 14 years old.</p>	<p>Michael Lee Farley and Larry Joe Sims, white, both 16. Boy Scouts, church goers, racists</p>	<p>They shot him in his chest as he was riding his bike in a black suburb of Birmingham, Alabama.</p>	<p>The boys had just come from a segregationist rally after the church bombing.</p>	<p>Farley & Sims charged with murder & found guilty of manslaughter, but were only given probation for their "lapse". Both apologized decades later to Virgil's family.</p>

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<p>18. Johnny Robinson 15 Sept. 1963</p> <p>Throwing rocks at whites who were taunting him, after the church bombing.</p>	<p>black male; 16.</p>	<p>A white policeman murdered him.</p>	<p>Police were using shotguns against him and other black youths who were throwing rocks. He was killed by a load of buckshot. He was shot in the back as he ran away.</p>	<p>He was killed because he was throwing rocks at white gangs and the group he was part of set fire to white businesses because of their outrage that they still did not have civil rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local grand jury declined to prosecute the white officer. • The same thing happened with a federal grand jury, a year later. • About a decade ago the FBI revisited the case. It was only a then that the Robinsons really truly knew what happened to Johnny, because the FBI gave them a picture of the incident. Source: npg.org
<p>19. Bruce Klunder 7 April 1964</p> <p>From Oregon, far from realities of racism. Minister, worked for Civil Rights with CORE</p>	<p>A 27 year old white man. married, with kids</p>	<p>A building site worker, John White, 33 (white)</p>	<p>They were trying to build segregated school and he and other protesters lay down on the ground blocking the bulldozer, 3 lay in front and he behind. As the bulldozer tried to get away from the others, he crushed Bruce. (Accident?)</p>	<p>He was blocking the way for the bulldozer.</p>	<p>The black community where he lived was going to start rioting, but then his wife told everyone to stop and that his death had been noble and that she hoped that someday their kids would grow up and know that his death did something, to make things better.</p>
<p>20.-21. Charles Eddie Moore Henry Dee 2 May 1964</p>	<p>Moore, 20, Dee 19. Both Black, Males</p>	<p>Both murdered by a clan called the White Knights . (Whites)</p>	<p>Both taken by truck and tied to trees, beaten until unconscious, heavy weights tied to their legs & thrown into the Mississippi River</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accused of being black Muslims, starting uprising • Helped black school kids learn rights & heritage. • Coached adults through the voting process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judge and sheriff part of the Klan that killed the boy • Killers confessed to the murder but were declared innocent on 'good clean fun scaring negroes' • Journalists pushed to reopen case 2007, one murderer now in prison.

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<p>22-24. James Chaney Andrew Goodman Michael Schwerner 21 June 1964 Civil rights workers for CORE</p>	<p>Chaney: Black Male, 21 Goodman: White Male, 21 Schwerner: White Male, 25</p>	<p>KKK, including the sheriff & the preacher (all white)</p>	<p>Trapped, abducted, tortured & shot. Bodies hidden beneath an earthen dam.</p> <p>Chaney tortured more than the white men.</p>	<p>Schwerner, a civil rights worker was endangering the KKK because of his action. He was the target. They also targeted him because he was Jewish. Chaney was targeted because he was helping them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st trial: Sheriff Cecil Price convicted, others set free. • Case reopened with help from journalists & HS teacher & students. • 2005, Preacher Edgar Ray Killen found guilty of manslaughter, but not for murder. Died in prison, January 2018.
<p>25. Lemuel Penn 11 July 1964</p> <p>Educator, Army veteran; Not involved in the Civil Rights movement.</p>	<p>Black, male 48 years old</p>	<p>Killed by Klansmen , 3 white guys</p>	<p>Murdered while driving north. He was being followed by a station wagon with three white men in it. Two loads of buckshot blasted through the side windows. One entire load hit Penn in the neck and head, killing him instantly.</p>	<p>The 3 white guys said they followed Penn because they heard Martin Luther King might make Georgia testing ground for the Civil Rights bill, which they did not like.</p> <p>They thought that the black officer must be "one of President Johnson's boys." (I.e., working for civil rights)</p>	<p>The local government would not prosecute, but the US government did. The men were found guilty of violating the new Civil Rights Act of 1968. They served 6 years in prison.</p> <p>One of his murderers is still alive.</p>
<p>26. Jimmie Lee Jackson, 26 Feb.1965 Civil Rights marcher</p>	<p>Black, male, 24</p>	<p>Killed by white state trooper, James Fowler Marion, Ala</p>	<p>State trooper shot & beat him to death</p>	<p>Because he demanded that his family could register to vote; he was protecting his grandfather when they were attacked after a night meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand jury did not bring charges against the state trooper. • 2007, Fowler charged with murder, pled guilty to manslaughter & only served 6 months in jail.

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<p>27. James Reeb 11 March 1965 minister from Massachusetts, married with 4 kids</p>	white, male 38	4 white men	killed with a massive skull fracture and blood clot from a big hit around the head—hit in the head with a baseball bat	He marched hand in hand with a black man in Selma, Alabama. He was protesting for Black Civil Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1965, 3 white men prosecuted but were set free. • This murder received far more attention than Jimmie Lee Jackson's death. Also the president spoke about it. Went world-wide. • Case reopened 2007, no result
<p>28. Viola Gregg Liuzzo 25 March 1965 Mother of 5 kids, from Detroit.</p>	39, female, white A medical lab technician.	4 white Klansmen: Eugene Thomas, Orville Eaton, Collie LeRoy Wilkins Jr., and Gary Thomas	She was killed by being shot in the head by a pistol.	Because she was helping the black people get from town to town during the Selma march. She was like a taxi for the civil rights workers.	The jury decided that the Klansmen were not guilty in under two hours. After that a federal jury found all the men guilty and the district judge gave them the maximum prison sentence.
<p>29. Oneal Moore 2 June 1965 Black deputy.</p>	Black, male, 34.	Alleged members of the Ku Klux Klan (night riders) in a drive-by shooting. (Whites)	He & a passenger were heading home when their car was hit by a volley of gunfire, Moore died instantly	He had become a deputy, a job always given to white men. He wanted to protect law-abiding citizens from violence and crime.	The murder was never caught but police arrested a suspect, Ernest Ray Mcelveen, The case was reopened in 1990 and dropped again in 2001.
<p>30. Willie Brewster 18 July 1965</p>	Black, male, 39; factory worker with 3 children and a pregnant	three white men; Hubert Damon Strange, Johnny Ira Defries and Lewis Blevins	He was shot when he was driving home from work. The bullet got into his spine, and he slumped over the wheel.	The three white men belonged to the NSRP, a racist organization, and the minister of this organization urged its members to kill black people. They killed Willie Brewster, just because he is	It was the first time during the civil rights era that a white person was convicted of killing a black person in the state of Alabama.

	wife			black.	
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31. Jonathan Daniels 20 August 1965 minister studied at Harvard	26 years old, male, White	Tom Coleman a white deputy sheriff. Declared not guilty by the white jury of the courthouse, who shook his hand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shot by a shotgun in the stomach while he entering in a grocery store with friends. The deputy told them to leave or he would blow their brains out. 	Because he was defending and helping black people. And he was helping black voter registration. He protected a 17 year old from getting shot	Coleman never faced any further prosecution
32. Samuel Younge, Jr. 3 January 1966 From Tuskegee, Ala.. After he left Navy he worked as an organizer for civil rights.	22 years old black Male, His skin color was light enough to see as a white man.	Marvin Segrest killed him by shooting him. 67 year old, white man	He went to the gas station to use the bathroom, and was sent to colored bathroom and he refused to use it. When he walked away he got shot twice and he died from the second shot.	He was an organizer for civil rights and he was shot after having arguments using the colored bathroom. Marvin Segrest said, He shot Yonge in self-defense after the argument. (In fact there wasn't any segregated bathrooms in the gas station.)	He was the first black college student to be killed from the civil rights era.
33. Vernon Dahmer 10 Jan. 1966 A very wealthy and successful businessman in Mississippi	Black Male, 58	14 white men, mostly KKK all 14 were eventually charged with arson and murder. 3 convicted, 2 freed.	Woke to gunfire & firebombs. Inhaled a lot of smoke and was severely burned. Died the next day.	He also encouraged people to vote and white and black people liked him. He paid taxes for the blacks who couldn't afford to pay.	Case reopened 1998 & another man sentenced.

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34. Ben Chester White 10 June 1966	67, black, male	3 white klansmen. Found not guilty	The three Klansmen lured him, saying that they are looking for a dog. They shot Ben Chester White, and after, those men dumped his body in a creek and burned the car.	Klansmen thought that they could get attention from a civil rights march by killing a black person.	Before Ben Chester White died, he said that those murderers were never convicted and that the jury could not reach a verdict. In 2003, one found guilty & sentenced to life in prison.
35. Wharlest Jackson 27 February 1967	Black, 37 Man	never identified but suspected KKK (whites)	set up a bomb under his car .	He was killed because he accepted a promotion for his job and normally it was only for white people .	After he died more than 2000 black people came to the company he was working for and said "You will need to kill us too!" No one has ever been punished.
36. Clarence Triggs 30 July 1966 Worked in the army. Forced to work as a brick worker. Moved to Bogalusa hoping for a better life.	Black, 24, male	Nightriders (KKK) White.	Found dead by the roadside, shot in the head	Triggs marched for civil rights.. He was demonstrating. The next day he was found dead	The murder is still a mystery. Probably no one is going to find out what happened to him. Two men were arrested, one was found innocent. The other one was never tried.

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37. Benjamin Brown 12 May 1967 Civil Rights worker, not active after his marriage.	22, black, male	A police officer. white	An officer fired his shotgun while Ben Brown was walking with his friend in 1967.	There was a protest near Ben's apartment. Ben wasn't part of that violent protest. Then one officer was hit by a piece of glass and fired his shotgun into the air. Ben was shot by the officer by the second gunshot.	The officer who shot Ben Brown was never identified. People wouldn't let any one help. Case reopened in 1998, but no one punished.
38-40. Samuel Hammon, Delano Middleton. Henry Smith 8 February 1968	SH Black male, 18 DM Black male, 17 HS Black male, 19 College students	9 Patrolmen, white	They were shot and killed by the patrolmen's weapons; they all died in the highway.	Because they were black protesting for their rights.	The patrolmen were never convicted of murdering these 3 boys. The gym is named in there memory, and there used to be a statue to commemorate the event but it was taken down, you can still see the sign from the street though.
41. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 4 April 1968	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black, male, 39 • recognized leader of movement • Minister • Nobel Peace Prize winner 	James Earl Ray, in his 30s. Member of the KKK, white	Killed by a bullet fired from a Remington 760 Gamemaster rifle when he was standing on the balcony in the motel. Died in the hospital.	Because he was an activist and a leader who fought for civil rights. His preaching could set a congregation on fire.	After his death, the black people were frustrated and there were many violent riots. Ray was convicted, but later said he only pled guilty to avoid the death penalty. The King family doubted his guilt. Ray died in 1998.