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Till's Life Mattered, and Still Does

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Racially motivated murder of young Black Americans across the United States is not a new or rare phenomenon. For too long this brutally fatal manifestation of the madness of American racism has persisted in the face of public horror and disgust.

Aug. 28 marked the 60th anniversary of the death of 14-year-old Emmett Louis Till, who was abducted, beaten and murdered near Money, Miss. for allegedly whis-



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not allowing her son's murder to go unnoticed throughout the nation and world. Sister Mobley was

She said, 'I wanted the world to see what they did to my baby.' And that is exactly what happened

ting at a White woman.

At the time, Mississippi led the nation in the number of lynchings, according to records kept by the *Chicago Tribune*.

The brutal death of the teenager visiting from Chicago served as inspiration for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which began in December 1955, four months after Till's death.

The current Black Lives Matter movement that continues to gain momentum and support throughout the nation also engenders vivid memories from the past.

The anniversary of Emmett Till's murder and the subsequent not guilty verdicts that were given to Till's confessed White killers stand as a painful reminder that systemic racial injustice in the U.S. has been a long-term reality for Black America.

We have to credit the raw courage of Emmett Till's beloved mother, Mamie Till Mobley, for

a strong mother and she refused in the face of enormous pressure to keep her son's casket closed at his funeral in Chicago.

Mamie Till Mobley resisted the advice of the funeral director and insisted that the casket carrying the badly mutilated body of her son remain open for public viewing.

She said, "I wanted the world to see what they did to my baby." And that is exactly what happened.

Jet magazine and hundreds of Black-owned newspapers across the country put the horrible picture of Emmett Till's crushed face on the front page of their publications.

Millions of Black Americans and others responded with calls

and demands for justice for Emmett Till and his family.

I had the opportunity on several occasions over the years to speak and meet with Mamie Till Mobley in Chicago and in New York City before she died in 2003. Sister Mobley was also a staunch civil rights activist and leader.

I remember that she once said to me, "We have to keep on fighting for freedom, no matter what obstacles that may put in our path. We have suffered too much to let anything or anyone take us backwards as a people."

Her words are still true and relevant today.

As we are now preparing for the 20th anniversary of the Million Man March: Justice Or Else! on October 10 in Washington, D.C., the legacy of Emmett Till and the piercing truth of the long life and struggle of Mamie Till Mobley still scream out to this day to demand justice and equality for Black America and all those who have been victimized and op-

pressed by racism and injustice. what happened to Emmett, you can connect the dots.... Our family, we had dealt with injustice for 60 years. We never had justice for Emmett Till's murder."

Yes, the dots are being connected. The Black Lives Matter is growing and the memory of what happened to Emmett Till serves as an important reminder.

Geneva Reed-Veal, the mother of Sandra Bland, the young Black American woman who was arrested in Texas and found hanged in a jail cell just a few weeks ago, was also at the Till's gravesite memorial.

The pain that the Till family still feels is the pain that the Bland family feels. This is pain that Black America feels.

Each generation of Black Americans has had to endure this pain, but at the same time continue to demand and struggle for racial justice, freedom and equality. Black Lives Matter. Emmett Till's life still matters.

'We have to keep on fighting for freedom, no matter what obstacles that may put in our path. We have suffered too much to let anything or anyone take us backwards as a people'

—Mamie Till Mobley

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Remembering the Full Scope of Katrina

There will be many remembrances written in light of the 10th anniversary of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. There are a few points I would like to add as we reflect on the scope and depth of catastrophe.

First, and not in order of importance, Katrina was not only a disaster for New Orleans, and not only for Louisiana, but was a Gulf Coast disaster.

Very little attention, for example, has ever been paid to the impact of Katrina on Mississippi. The devastation not only affected the lives of Gulf Coast Mississippi residents, but had a long-term economic impact on the region.

Second, the disaster, while a hurricane, was not entirely natural. This point covers several issues.

For example, while hurricanes are natural, the extent of this storm, and several other more recent storms, speaks to something called "extreme weather," which is a phenomenon that scientists almost universally agree is related to climate change.

Katrina was also not simply a natural event because of the failure of government to pay attention the necessary precautions essen-



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tial for a locale that is below water-level.

In the right-wing efforts to disempower and strangle government, the preparatory resources that were so important, were un-

The disaster was used as an excuse in order to rebuild the city in the image of those who always wanted to seize control of New Orleans

available.

Third, Katrina was about race and class. The poor and the Black were the principal victims of the disaster. T

he Black poor, specifically, were demonized during and after the

disaster, including the manner in which elements of the mainstream media portrayed Black people desperately trying to survive as nothing more than looters and thugs. Whites who did what they needed to do in order to survive were treated, by contrast, as heroes or survivors.

Fourth, Katrina was used as a means to restructure New Orleans in a way that served the interests of big business. In effect, New Orleans became an occupied city. The union of the teachers was literally destroyed in a reorganization of the city's education system,

should all remember the (lack of) response by the then Bush administration. There was no sense of an emergency. We may remember the words of former First Lady Barbara Bush suggesting that the evacuees were better off in the Houston holding zones than they had been in New Orleans. What did this say about how the former first lady saw the population? What did this say about those who said nothing in response to her remarks?

Katrina was also about the U.S.A. in that it was the canary in the coal mine. The disaster was extreme but it was a disaster representative of the collapse of the basic public infrastructure in the nation, not because there are no resources, but because the resources are to the benefit of the rich and powerful.

This 10th anniversary is a time for reflection but it is also a time for action against the very issues that contributed to the Katrina disaster, issues that remain very present in 2015.

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for example. This had nothing to do with the disaster but the disaster was used as an excuse in order to rebuild the city in the image of those who always wanted to seize control of New Orleans.

Fifth, Katrina was about the U.S. and what it values. We