



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, White House Council on Environmental Quality
Chair Brenda Mallory, and Congressman Thompson Visit Mississippi Delta Sites
Associated with Emmett Till's Life and Murder to Explore a National Park**

TALLAHATCHIE COUNTY, MS – On Tuesday, February 15th, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Brenda Mallory, at the invitation of Congressman Bennie Thompson, visited sites across the Mississippi Delta associated with Emmett Till's life and murder to gather local input on the creation of a National Park dedicated to Emmett Till and his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley. Sites visited included the Tallahatchie County Courthouse and Emmett Till Interpretive Center in Sumner, the Emmett Till Historic Intrepid Center in Glendora, the Tutwiler Funeral Home in Tutwiler, and Mound Bayou. At each site, Secretary Haaland and Chair Mallory met with and listened to local residents.

In 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Black child from Chicago, took the train down to the Mississippi Delta to visit family. On August 24, 1955, he whistled at a white woman in a grocery store. Three days later, he was abducted from his great-uncle Moses Wright's home and brutally beaten and murdered by a group of white men. His murder made international news, and over 100,000 people paid their respects to Emmett's body at his funeral at Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ in Chicago.

The trial at the Tallahatchie County Courthouse of J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant for Emmett's murder was described by journalist David Halberstam as "the first great media event of the civil rights movement." During the trial, Moses Wright stood to identify the murderers in court, one of the first times a Black person had accused a white person of murder in a Southern courtroom. The trial was courageously attended by Mamie Till-Mobley, Medgar Evers, Congressman Charles Diggs, and Dr. T.R.M. Howard. The jury of 12 white men found Milam and Bryant not guilty after deliberating for only 67 minutes. Several months later, they confessed to the murder and sold their story to a magazine.

Over the last 15 years, the Tallahatchie County Board of Supervisors and the Emmett Till Memorial Commission partnered to restore the courthouse to its 1955 condition during the murder trial to act as a site of conscience. In 2007, the courthouse was added to the National Register of Historic Places as the site of the Milam/Bryant murder trial. The restoration of the building was complete in December 2020.

The National Park Service invited members of the Till family to travel with them to visit these sites, including Rev. Wheeler Parker, Jr., Emmett Till's cousin and the last living eyewitness to his kidnapping.

“We want to thank Secretary Haaland, Chair Mallory, and Congressman Thompson for their trip to the Mississippi Delta to meet with the Till family to discuss the importance of the creation of a National Park that honors Emmett Till and his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, and that helps us to preserve their legacy,” said Rev. Parker.

“Our community has been working for the past fifteen years to tell the truth about what happened to Emmett Till and to work towards racial healing,” said Rev. Willie Williams, Chairman of the Emmett Till Memorial Commission. “We appreciate Secretary Haaland, Rep. Thompson, and Chair Mallory taking time to visit these sites across the Delta to see where this important American story took place. I think it was made clear today by a cross section of our community that there is a need to save these places and to add them to the National Park Service system.”

The Emmett Till Interpretive Center, in partnership with the Till family, launched an Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Park Campaign in March 2021 to support the creation of a National Park with multiple sites across the Mississippi Delta and Chicago. To learn more about the Till National Park Campaign, visit TillNationalPark.org.

About the Emmett Till Interpretive Center:

The [Emmett Till Interpretive Center](https://TillNationalPark.org) was formed to confront the brutal truth of the 1955 murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till in the Mississippi Delta and to seek justice for the Till family and Delta community. The Center aims to tell the story of Emmett Till and his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, as an act of restorative justice to create the conditions necessary to begin the process of racial healing in Mississippi and across the nation.

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