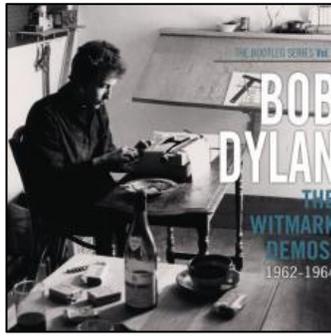


The Death of Emmett Till

Bob Dylan, 1963



'Twas down in Mississippi not so long ago
When a young boy from Chicago town stepped through a Southern door
This boy's dreadful tragedy I can still remember well
The color of his skin was black and his name was Emmett Till

Some men they dragged him to a barn and there they beat him up
They said they had a reason, but I can't remember what
They tortured him and did some things too evil to repeat
There were screaming sounds inside the barn, there was laughing sounds
out on the street

Then they rolled his body down a gulf amidst a bloody red rain
And they threw him in the waters wide to cease his screaming pain
The reason that they killed him there, and I'm sure it ain't no lie
Was just for the fun of killin' him and to watch him slowly die

And then to stop the United States of yelling for a trial
Two brothers they confessed that they had killed poor Emmett Till
But on the jury there were men who helped the brothers commit this
awful crime
And so this trial was a mockery, but nobody seemed to mind

I saw the morning papers but I could not bear to see
The smiling brothers walkin' down the courthouse stairs
For the jury found them innocent and the brothers they went free
While Emmett's body floats the foam of a Jim Crow southern sea

If you can't speak out against this kind of thing, a crime that's so unjust
Your eyes are filled with dead men's dirt, your mind is filled with dust
Your arms and legs they must be in shackles and chains, and your blood
it must refuse to flow
For you let this human race fall down so God-awful low!

This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man
That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robed Ku Klux Klan
But if all of us folks that thinks alike, if we gave all we could give
We could make this great land of ours a greater place to live

Emmett Till's death in 1955 inspired many people across the nation, including Rosa Parks... who 4 months later would refuse to give up her seat on a Montgomery Alabama bus to a white man. Many mark her act as the beginning of the modern Civil Rights movement. Others mark Emmett's death as the beginning. How do you define the beginning of the civil rights movement?

What did Emmett Till's death reveal about the South?

What Jim Crow law did Emmett break?

What happened to the two men who lynched Emmett?

What was Bob Dylan's motivation for this song, 8 years later?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2oTG8IH7IE&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khrKHpID5DM&feature=related>