

CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION

Notice to Close File

File No. 144-40-1660

Date: DEC 28 2007

To: Chief, Criminal Section

Re: Roy Bryant
J.W. Milam – Subjects
Emmett Till – Victim.
CIVIL RIGHTS

It is recommended that the above matter be closed for the following reasons:

I. Synopsis of the Facts and Reasons for Closing

On August 26, 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old African American teenager from Chicago, Illinois was abducted while visiting relatives near Money, Mississippi, and was murdered. His body was discovered three days later in the Tallahatchie River. In September 1955, two local Mississippi men, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, were prosecuted by state authorities for Till's murder in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi. They were acquitted in a jury trial. Both men subsequently admitted to a journalist in an interview that was published in *Look Magazine* that they murdered Till. Milam and Bryant died in 1981 and 1994, respectively.

Karla Dobinski
Attorney

To: Records Section
Office of Legal Administration

The above numbered file has been closed as of this date.

12-28-2007
Date

Chief, Criminal Section

In 2004, several interested parties requested that the Department of Justice (the Department) consider whether any potential surviving subjects involved in the murder of Emmett Till could be prosecuted. After reviewing the information available in 2004, this office determined that there was no federal jurisdiction because the statute of limitations had run on any potential federal crime, thus barring federal prosecution. At the same time, the Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) decided to conduct a renewed investigation to assist local Mississippi law enforcement officials in determining whether there were any surviving perpetrators who could still be prosecuted under state criminal statutes.

Over the next two years, the FBI conducted a thorough investigation. The FBI obtained and reviewed historical records and interviewed the identified surviving witnesses. Additionally, the FBI conducted forensic analysis, including an examination of the exhumed remains of Emmett Till. Through that intensive investigation, the FBI discovered some new evidence. The results of the FBI's investigation are documented in a 135 page report, attached hereto:¹

That report, along with all the underlying evidence collected by the FBI, was presented to Leflore County District Attorney Joyce Chiles in 2006. Additionally, the results of the FBI's renewed investigation were carefully review by attorneys from the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division. No new evidence was developed that altered our previous determination that there was no federal jurisdiction because the statute of limitations had run on any potential federal crime applicable to the murder of Emmett Till.

On February 22, 2007, the District Attorney presented evidence to a Laflore County grand jury. Based upon that evidence, the grand jury declined to indict anyone for any criminal charge related to the homicide.

¹ XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX The FBI has a detailed, thorough report of its investigation into the death of Emmett Till. For the reader's convenience, here is the link to the FBI webpage that has a copy of its redacted report (in 2 parts): <https://vault.fbi.gov/Emmett%20Till%20>