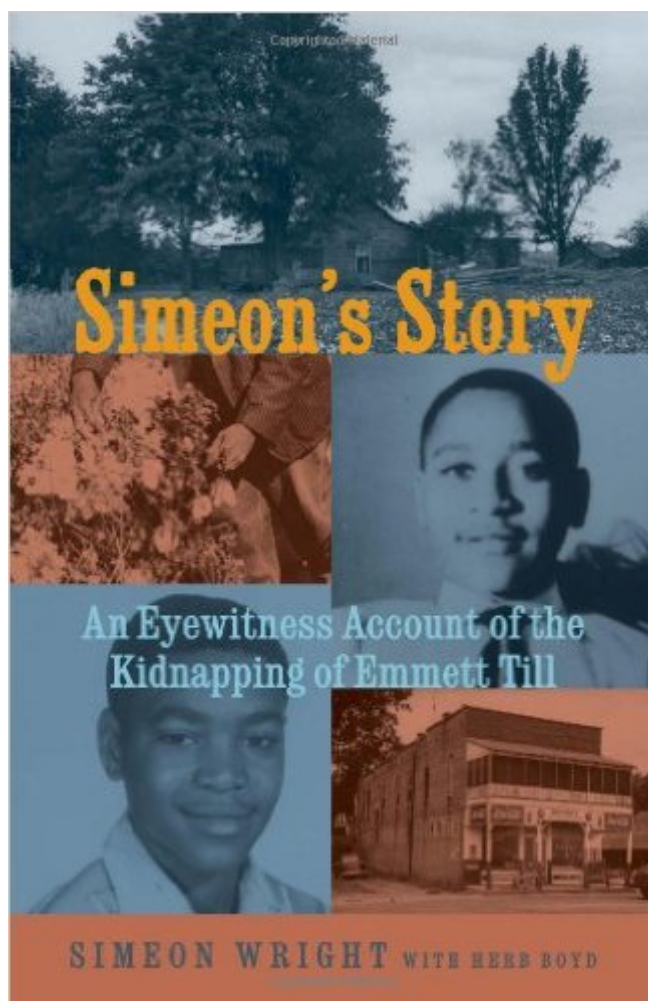


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Simeon's Story: An Eyewitness Account Of The Kidnapping Of Emmett Till



Synopsis

No modern tragedy has had a greater impact on race relations in America than the kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till. A 14-year-old black boy from Chicago visiting relatives in Mississippi in 1955, Till was taken from his uncle's home by two white men; several days later, his body was found in the Tallahatchie River. This grotesque crime became the catalyst for the civil rights movement. At age 12, author Simeon Wright saw and heard his cousin Emmett whistle at a white woman at a grocery store; he was sleeping in the same bed with him when Emmett was taken; and he was at the sensational trial. This is his gripping coming-of-age memoir.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

This is the best book to read on Emmett Till, to date -- whether you have read every other book on his story or if this is your first. I'm just about in the first group, having read most major books on the murder of this 14-year-old from Chicago that took place in 1955 in the Mississippi Delta. I became an initiate to the Emmett Till story after living in the Delta, near the location where Till was killed. I have been to the grocery store in Money, viewed the site of the shed where he was killed, seen where his body was dumped into the Tallahatchie River and have walked into the Sumner courthouse where the trial took place. Some older people still living in the Delta have shared details from a personal perspective, enriching this story for my benefit. But all of my questions were not

answered until reading "Simeon's Story." Simeon Wright's book adds the missing parts. Wright was physically there in Money with his cousin as they walked into the Bryant grocery store and had contact with Carolyn Bryant. So when I picked up Wright's book and began reading, I couldn't put it down. Through his words, I could now close my eyes and be there with the two young men as events unfolded leading to the death of Emmett Till. So many new details and keen observations kept me reading; Wright offers the kind of first-hand details that breathe life into this key modern civil rights moment, the event that sparked Rosa Parks to take her stand. After turning the last page of "Simeon's Story," I now have a much better feel of who this young man was, how he approached life, and how he got himself entangled into such a mess that ended his life. I can better visualize what took place in the grocery store and then in the early hours of Aug. 28, 1955 when Till was kidnapped from the Wright's home. I felt the some of the terror that Emmett and the Wright family must have experienced that morning. And I better understand the current politics surrounding this cold case, since Wright has offered his explanation of today's politics surrounding the cold case initiative. It's a good thing that Simeon Wright waited to write his book. Otherwise, his critical assessment might have been lost amid the more historically expansive books written by important historians, journalists and others that have helped us understand the Till story and its place in the modern civil rights movement. Wright's book, written from his heart and coming to us so many years later, is our dessert.

SIMEON'S STORY by Simeon Wright is the gripping tale about the murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till in Mississippi in 1955, told by his cousin who was an eyewitness to the event. I had heard the Till name before, but knew little about what had actually happened . . . this book opened my eyes to the terrible injustice of the crime--especially since the killers got off free. It also gave me a greater appreciation of what it was like to grow as a black in the South:* Whites could beat us, even murder us, and nothing was ever done about it. It wasn't unusual for white men to hire black women as cooks or domestics and then force them into sexual relationships, which is nothing more than rape. Very little was said or done about this. We had no rights in court, and only the boldest of blacks dared to bring a lawsuit against a white person. Parts of Wright's account left me teary-eyed, including this passage:* August 28, 1955, had been the longest day of my life. It was the first day there was no laughter in our house. And I believe that unless you can laugh and hear laughter there, a house isn't a home. Lastly, I liked what the author had to say at the end of SIMON'S STORY:* In conclusion, here's my advice to aspiring writers, journalists, and future lawyers--or anyone planning on working in the communications field: if you want an accurate account of any story, go the primary

sources. They know what really happened. I was so moved by this story that I just rented a documentary, THE UNTOLD STORY OF EMMETT LOUIS TILL, to learn more about it . . . this film ultimately moved the U.S. Department of Justice to reopen the case in 2005.

Simeon Wright has written a brief, interesting, and informative account of the kidnapping and murder of his cousin Emmett Till. The book, only 137 pages long, can be read in one lengthy sitting. Simeon was there during the week Emmett visited relatives in Money, Mississippi, and he confronts distortions and misconceptions that have been accepted as gospel throughout the years mainly through the Look magazine article that came out following the infamous not guilty verdict against two domestic terrorists named Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam who had their small children along with them to the trial as if to demonstrate to the world their love of children. Wright also sets the scene as to what life was like for blacks in Mississippi during the mid-1950s. His mother moved to Chicago immediately after the murder of Emmett Till with the remainder of the family joining her following the farcical trial. All of us will be remembered for how we treat others, and Simeon Wright relates his thankfulness to his teachers and students in his new Chicago school for their acceptance of him as he adjusted to life in an environment totally different from rural Mississippi. This is an excellent book for young people to read regarding the Emmett Till case. It is written so young people can enjoy it, but adults can certainly learn from it as well. There are no profanities, and it is told by someone who was actually there along with Emmett Till during this time. If there is a complaint I have with the book it is that the few photographs are very small. Yes, we have come a long way since those Ozzie and Harriet days of the 1950s, but all we have to do is turn to the national news to realize we still have a long way to go. The mind of the bigot is like the pupil of the eye. The more light you throw upon it the more it will contract.

The most important thing that can be said about Simeon's Story is that it is honest. He doesn't try to lionize Emmett Till, or Mamie Till. More amazingly he doesn't spend vast tracts of text trying to demonize Bryant and Milam or the Sheriffs, or even the jury. There's a simple walk through the history of several weeks in the summer of 1955. He then combats the certain rumors that have arisen in the half century since the murder of his cousin Emmett Louis Till.

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