

Emmett & Trayvon: Analyzing their Literal & Symbolic Relationship



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Abstract

The recent case of Trayvon Martin has sparked national public outrage and a sensational, overwhelming media response. The killing of the young African-American teenager has also garnered international headlines and created feelings reminiscent of those felt by African-Americans during the Civil Rights era. Many persons in the fields of media have declared the Martin case the modern day version of the 1955 Mississippi lynching of Emmett Till. Not only are these comparisons plentiful, they are widely accepted and have rebirthed the conversation of race relations in America. The following research explores the validity of these assumed connections and the media's responsibility in the portrayal of both young men through the analysis of newspaper articles, literary sources, and documentaries on the case of Emmett Till and the Civil Rights era. Overall, the cases of Trayvon Martin and Emmett Till are two cases that are embedded in the racial depths of America. To regress as far back as 1955 not only implies that America has not changed, but Black people themselves would also have to be in the same predicament as they were 60 years ago and this is simply not true. This assumption cannot be made and is in no way valid when the most powerful man in America, is in fact a Black man himself. While Trayvon and Emmett both represent something monumental, the symbolism in each case greatly differs. Trayvon Martin's case is not the modern day tragedy of Emmett Till, but a confirmation that racial profiling and the days of the late Rodney King may still exist.