



The Mississippi Department of Archives and History

# The Mudcat

The Mississippi History Newsletter for Students

Vol 1. No 1.

Spring 2013

## Medgar Evers: The Man in Mississippi

Medgar Evers is nationally known for his contribution to the fight for civil rights for African Americans. Medgar Wiley Evers was born July 2, 1925, in Decatur, Mississippi. Evers encountered **racism** at an early age and into young adulthood. In 1943 he enlisted in the US Army and served in Europe during World War II. While in the Army he experienced the **segregation** of African American troops from white soldiers.

Upon returning home, Evers began academic studies at Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College. In 1950, he met Myrlie Beasley and they were married in 1951. After college in 1952, Evers moved his family to Mound Bayou,

Mississippi, and began working for an insurance company. Soon he quit his job in insurance and went to work for the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** in order to work full time for civil rights.

As the first NAACP field secretary in Mississippi, Evers participated in many actions to secure equal rights and improve the quality of life for black Mississippians. He organized marches to draw attention to racial **injustices**, investigated racial violence, registered voters, and communicated with the national media about the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. On the evening of June 11, 1963, Evers was shot in the driveway of his



*Image by Richard H. Beadle with permission by Dr. Jeanne Middleton Hairston, courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.*

home and died June 12. At his funeral, mourners began to chant, "After Evers, no more fear!" His belief in the Civil Rights

Movement and his ultimate sacrifice inspired people across the world, a legacy that has continued to this day.



After the **assassination** of her husband in 1963, Myrlie Evers worked diligently for

*Crime scene photograph from the DeLaughter Photograph Collection courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.*

## Delayed Justice

justice. Despite strong evidence of his guilt, it took over thirty years to finally convict Byron De La Beckwith for the murder of Medgar Evers. After two hung juries

in 1964, an interracial jury convicted the white supremacist of Evers' murder in 1994 and sentenced him to life in prison; Beckwith died in 2001.

# Integration at Ole Miss



James Meredith walks to class on the Ole Miss campus escorted by US assistant attorney general John Doar (left) and US Marshall James McShane (right) in October 1962. Image courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History WLBT Newsfilm Collection.

Medgar Evers was also instrumental in helping James Meredith **integrate** the University of Mississippi in 1962. It was a challenging and dangerous time for Meredith, as his efforts to attend Ole Miss were met with riots

that resulted in many people being injured and two being killed.

Through it all, Evers and the lawyers of the NAACP stood by Meredith and helped him achieve entry into the university, a historic success that made a great impact on the Civil Rights Movement. Mere-

dith still lives in Jackson, Mississippi, and Ole Miss has since honored him with a bronze statue on the campus.

Tear gas cannister and container used during the 1962 riot protesting James Meredith and the integration of Ole Miss. Museum Division, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



## Keeping the Legacy Alive

*Myrlie Evers*

Myrlie Evers is perhaps best remembered as the wife of slain civil rights **activist** Medgar Evers. Yet Myrlie Evers is also a dedicated activist and author and has fought

tirelessly for the justice and **equality** of African Americans. She has diligently worked to seek justice for the assassination of her husband, an effort that took three

years and thirty years to achieve.

Evers went on to become the first African American woman to sit on the Board of Public Works in Los Angeles, California, and the first woman to chair the NAACP. She also wrote a book about her husband, *For Us the Living*, as well as a memoir, *Watch Me Fly: What I Learned on the Way to Becoming the Woman I Was Meant to Be*, that charts her journey from activist's wife to **activist**. Today, Evers is a distinguished



Myrlie Evers, courtesy of public Information office Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Myrlie Evers, Governor William Winter, and Reena Evers-Everette at the Old Capitol Museum, courtesy of Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



scholar-in-residence at Alcorn State University in Lorman, Mississippi, and remains an active member of the civil rights community.

# Investigate More

You can visit sites and museums across the state to learn more about Medgar Evers and his legacy.

## The Medgar Evers Home Museum

The home occupied by the Evers family from 1957 to 1964 is now the Medgar Evers Home Museum and is open by appointment to the public. Although the museum tells the story of life during a difficult era, it also serves as an example of the normal, equal, life that Medgar and Myrlie Evers dreamed of for themselves and their children. Operated by Tougaloo College, the Evers Home Museum is located at 2332 Margaret Walker Alexander Drive in Jackson, Mississippi.



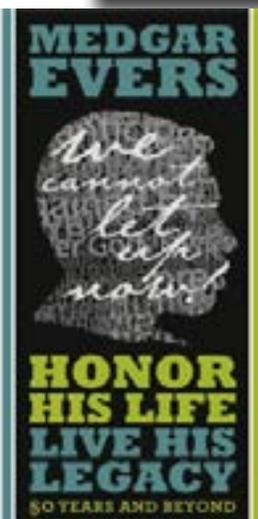
*Statue of Medgar Evers located near the Medgar Evers Library on Medgar Evers Boulevard (US-49 North) in Jackson, Mississippi.*



## Council of Federated Organizations The COFO Complex

COFO was established in 1961 by local and state civil rights leaders to coordinate the activities of various civil rights groups such as the NAACP, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Congress of Racial Equality. These groups then worked together on important issues such as voter registration.

Today the COFO building at 1017 Lynch Street, Jackson, Mississippi, is part of an education complex that focuses on civil rights and the Freedom Summer of 1964. Visit the website at <http://sites.jsums.edu/cofo/>



## The Medgar and Myrlie Evers Institute

The Medgar Evers Institute was founded in 1998 by Myrlie Evers with the goal of preserving the legacy of Medgar Evers' life and work. In honor of the fiftieth anniversary of his death, the Institute changed its name to the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Institute. Located in Jackson, Mississippi, the Evers Institute is planning a series of events in June 2013 commemorating Medgar Evers' death. Visit the Institute online at <http://www.eversinstitute.org/>

# Show What You Know!

## Word Search

Find the hidden vocabulary terms in the word search below.



### Vocabulary

**Racism:** the belief that one's own race is superior to others

**Segregation:** the act of separation, such as separating groups of people within one society

**Injustice:** an unfair act; violating the rights of others

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):** an organization founded in

1909 that works to ensure the "political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination"

**Assassination:** to kill suddenly or secretly, especially a politically prominent person

**Integrate:** to bring together as a whole; the opposite of segregate

**Activist:** someone who advocates vigorously for a cause

**Equality:** the state of being equal, such as in regards to value or rank

Racism  
Segregation  
Injustice  
NAACP  
Assassination  
Integrate  
Activist  
Equality  
Civil rights  
Medgar Evers  
Myrlie Evers  
James Meredith  
Discrimination  
Courage  
Dedication  
Determination

### Check your knowledge!

- ✓ Medgar Evers frequently participated in marches that drew attention to his cause. Do you have a cause that you would march for?
- ✓ What is the purpose of the NAACP?
- ✓ If you lived in a world segregated by race would you try to integrate a school like James Meredith did?
- ✓ There are sites all over Mississippi related to the Civil Rights Movement. Name one site in Jackson or your home town related to the movement.

### Create a Catfish Competition

How **would you like to see a catfish of your own creation on the cover** of the *Mudcat*? If you're an artist—or even if you're not!—**craft a cool catfish graphic**, send it in to the *Mudcat* and **YOUR catfish could win a coveted spot on the cover** of the next issue! Send all entries via mail or email to:

Outreach Programs Coordinator  
Museum Division, MDAH  
P.O. Box 571  
Jackson, MS 39205-0571  
Phone: 601-576-6997  
outreachprograms@mdah.state.ms.us

