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 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.

Delayed Justice

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

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

Keeping the Legacy Alive

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 trials 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 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 Megar Evers Library on Medgar Evers Boulevard (US-49 North) in Jackson, Mississippi.](image)

**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/](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/](http://www.eversinstitute.org/)
Show What You Know!

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

Word Search

Find the hidden vocabulary terms in the word search below.

M Z R Q H M Y T I L A U Q E A A
E J A M E S M E R E D I T H S W
D N R A C I S M B V T H A S D S
G O D C Q J E C T R U T A J E K
A I E T U W G L O E K S N I T J
R T C I G U R V E D S H O D E M
E A X V H I E G I D F I C R C
V N Z I U O G E N F A B T F E M
E I R S Q A A A A T O E N A R I C
R M B T R P T P L A L O C T N I
S I Y U A I I T I G R L I Y Y A T
A R O B O A O R M P E G D H T S
H C Z N P F N A A C P E E U I U
M S X R L H I A U P U R D T O J
L I C I V I L R I G H T S M N N
I D A S R E V E E I L R Y M B I

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:

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