

Hero Profiles

ROSA PARKS

(1913 – 2005)

Rosa Parks contributed greatly to initiation of the civil rights movement in the United States after refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama bus in 1955. These actions inspired the leaders of the local Black community to organize the Montgomery Bus Boycott which was led by a young Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The boycott lasted more than a year causing Parks to be arrested and lose her job. It ended only when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was unconstitutional. Over the next half-century, Parks became a nationally recognized symbol of dignity and strength in the struggle to end racial segregation. Parks died of natural causes on October 24, 2005, at the age of 92, in her apartment on the eastside of Detroit.



“Our freedom is threatened every time one of our young people is killed by another child... every time a person gets stopped and beaten by the police because of the color of their skin.

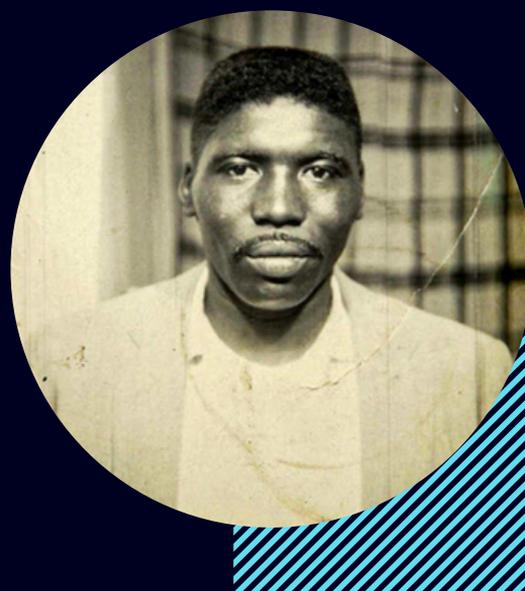
— Rosa Parks

JIMMIE LEE JACKSON

(1938 – 1965)

Jimmie Lee Jackson was a civil rights activist and the youngest deacon in the Baptist church. On February 18, 1965, while unarmed and participating in a peaceful voting rights march, he was beaten and shot by state troopers in Marion, Alabama. He passed away in the hospital eight days later. His death was the catalyst for the march from Selma to Montgomery just a month later.

"Jimmie Lee Jackson's death says to us that we must work passionately and unrelentingly to make the American dream a reality. His death must prove that unmerited suffering does not go unredeemed. We must not be bitter and we must not harbor ideas of retaliating with violence. We must not lose faith in our white brothers." - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



JAMES CHANEY

(1943– 1964)

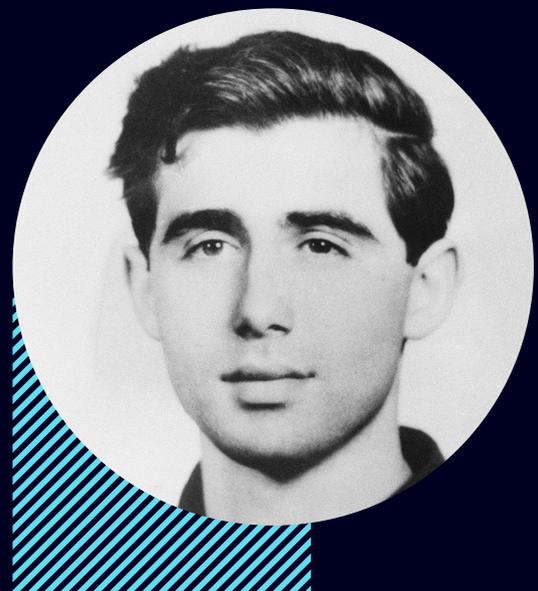
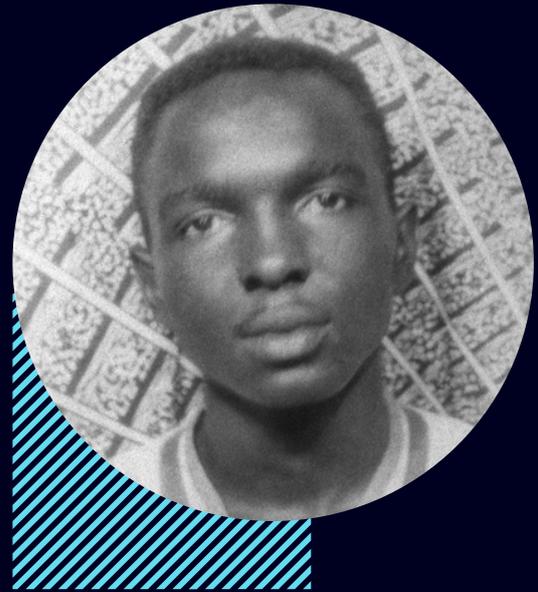
MICHAEL SCHWERNER

(1939– 1964)

ANDREW GOODMAN

(1943– 1964)

Three activists were associated with the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) and its member organization, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) who were abducted and murdered in Neshoba County, Mississippi in June 1964 during the Civil Rights Movement. The victims were James Chaney from Meridian, Mississippi, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner from New York City. They had been working with the Freedom Summer campaign by attempting to register African Americans in Mississippi to vote. They were arrested following a traffic stop for speeding outside Philadelphia, Mississippi, escorted to the local jail, and held for a number of hours. While leaving the jail, they were followed by law enforcement and others before their vehicle was eventually pulled over. The three were then abducted, driven to another location, and shot to death at close range. During the investigation of their murder, it emerged that members of the local White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the Neshoba County Sheriff's Office, and the Philadelphia Police Department were involved in the incident.



“The road to freedom must be uphill, even if it is arduous and frustrating.”

— Andrew Goodman

JIMMY LEE TRAVIS

(1942 – 2009)

Jimmy Lee Travis exemplified the courage and resolve of native Mississippians who fought back against Jim Crow in the 1960s. At the age of 20, Jimmy Travis became a full-time SNCC worker and joined Bob Moses in Southwest Mississippi. Travis and Moses attended a SNCC meeting in Greenwood where he noticed that an untagged white Buick was staking out the office. Suspicious of the car, the meeting was called off and Travis left the premises. The Buick trailed them as Travis employed all the tricks he learned while driving the dark highways of Mississippi to lose the Buick, but before he could, over a dozen bullets ripped through the car. Just missing his spine, a bullet was lodged in Travis's neck. Bob Moses recalled, "we all were within inches of being killed." Travis was rushed to the area hospital, where he was stabilized. "Jimmy was always willing to go anywhere or do anything to advance our struggle," remembered fellow Mississippian and SNCC activist Joyce Ladner. "Jimmy rode the dark highways, going to some of the most dangerous places in the country that just happened to be in our home state of Mississippi."



“Jimmy was always willing to go anywhere or do anything to advance our struggle...”

PAUL ROBESON

(1898 - 1976)

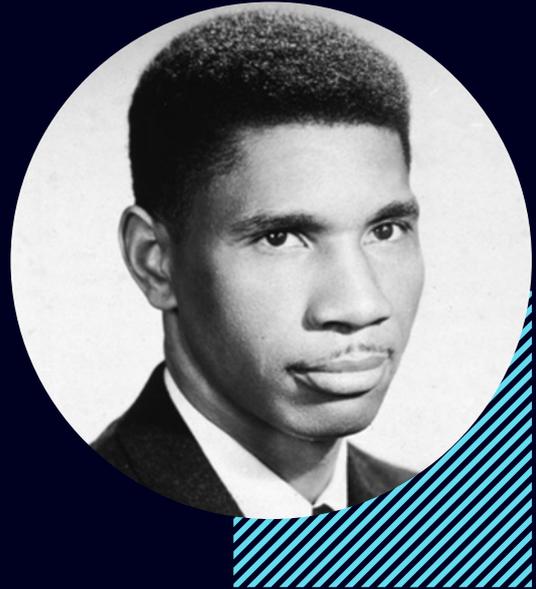
Paul Robeson was a famous African-American athlete, singer, actor, and advocate for the civil rights of people around the world. He rose to prominence in a time when segregation was legal in the United States, and Black people were being lynched by racist mobs, especially in the South. He was a public champion of the socialist experiment in the Soviet Union, a country that created hope among black people around the world when its constitution outlawed racism. "In Russia I felt for the first time like a full human being. No color prejudice like in Mississippi, no color prejudice like in Washington. It was the first time I felt like a human being."



MEDGAR EVERS

(1925 - 1963)

Medgar Wiley Evers was an American civil rights activist in Mississippi, the state's field secretary for the NAACP, and a World War II veteran who had served in the United States Army. He worked to overturn segregation at the University of Mississippi, end the segregation of public facilities, and expand opportunities for African Americans, which included the enforcement of voting rights. Medgar Evers lived with the constant threat of death. Evers and his wife Myrlie had trained their children on what to do in case of a shooting, bombing or other kind of attack on their lives. In the early morning of Wednesday, June 12, 1963 after pulling into his driveway, Evers emerged from his car and was shot in the back. The bullet passed through his heart. He was taken to the local hospital in Jackson, where he was initially refused entry because of his race. He passed away less than an hour later.



I'm looking to be shot any time I step out of my car... If I die, it will be in a good cause. I've been fighting for America just as much as the soldiers in Vietnam.

— Medgar Evers

VIOLA LIUZZO

(1925 - 1965)

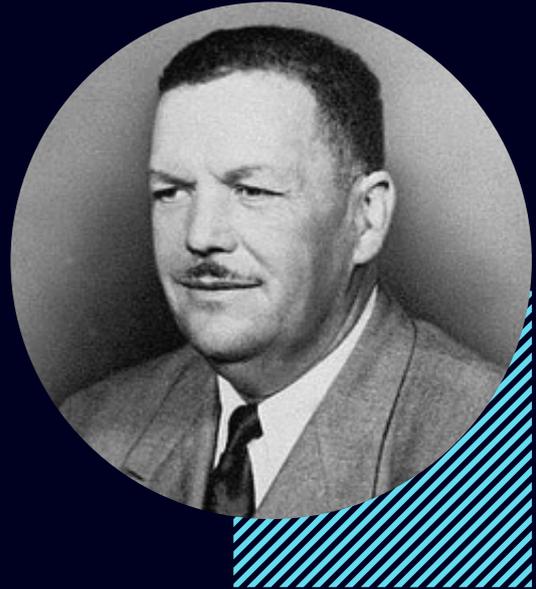
Viola Liuzzo was an American housewife and civil rights activist. In 1965 at the age of 39, while driving back from a voting rights march in Alabama shuttling fellow activists to the Montgomery airport, she was fatally hit by shots fired from a pursuing car containing Ku Klux Klan (KKK) members, one of whom was actually an undercover informant working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Liuzzo was the only white female protester to die in the civil rights movement. "We're going to change the world. One day they'll write about us. You'll see."



VERNON DAHMER

(1908 - 1966)

Vernon Dahmer was a leader in Civil Rights Movement and president of the Forrest County chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He was targeted for his work on recruiting African Americans to vote. On January 10, 1966, the Dahmer home was attacked by the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. The family woke to the sound of a shotgun being discharged and the sound of gas jugs being thrown through the windows. Dahmer and his family were able to escape their home however Dahmer later died in hospital due to smoke inhalation and severely burned lungs.



**“Darkness cannot drive out darkness;
only light can do that. Hate cannot drive
out hate; only love can do that**

— MLK

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

(1929 - 1968)

Martin Luther King was an American Baptist minister and activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the Civil Rights Movement from 1955 until King was fatally shot by James Earl Ray, Thursday, April 4, 1968. After emergency chest surgery, King later died at St. Joseph's Hospital. According to biographer Taylor Branch, King's autopsy revealed that though only 39 years old, he "had the heart of a 60 year old", which Branch attributed to the stress of 13 years in the civil rights movement.



EMMIT TILL

(1941 - 1955)

Emmett Till was a 14-year-old African American who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955, after being accused of offending a white woman in her family's grocery store. Several nights after the incident took place the husband and his brother of the woman abducted Till where they beat and mutilated him before shooting him in the head and sinking his body in the Tallahatchie River. His mother, Mamie Till Bradley made the decision to have an open casket funeral, exposing her son Emmett Till's bloated, mutilated body. Her decision focused attention not only on U.S. racism and the barbarism of lynching but also on the limitations and vulnerabilities of American democracy.



“Let the people see
what they did to
my boy.”

— Mammie Till

BRUCE KLUNDER

(1927 – 1965)

James Reeb was an American Unitarian Universalist minister, pastor, and activist during the civil rights movement in Washington, D.C. and Boston, Massachusetts. While participating in the Selma to Montgomery marches actions in Selma, Alabama, in 1965, he was murdered by white segregationists, dying of head injuries in the hospital two days after being severely beaten. Three men were tried for Reeb's murder but were acquitted by an all-white jury. His murder remains officially unsolved. “There were many people who seemed to feel that once we'd had the march on Washington and once we had the civil rights bill, things were just inevitably going to be easier, that somehow we'd done it. And I can say to you only that I think that this is the most dangerous kind of self-delusion, that we have not in any way done it.



HERBERT LEE

(1912 - 1961)

Herbert Lee was an American civil rights activist in Mississippi remembered as a proponent of voting rights for African Americans in that state, who had been disenfranchised since 1890. Lee became one of the voting rights movement's earliest victims of white violence. He was transporting cotton to a cotton gin near Liberty on the morning of September 25, 1961, when Mississippi state representative E. H. Hurst confronted him, armed with a pistol. In the presence of several witnesses, Hurst killed Lee in cold blood with a single gunshot to the head.



STOKELY CARMICHAEL

(1941 - 1998)

Stokely Carmichael was a civil rights activist, leader of Black nationalism in the United States in the 1960s and originator of its rallying slogan, "Black power." He was a key leader in the development of the Black Power movement, first while leading the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), then as the "Honorary Prime Minister" of the Black Panther Party (BPP). In 1998, Carmichael died of prostate cancer at the age of 57 in Conakry, Guinea. He had said that his cancer "was given to me by forces of American imperialism and others who conspired with them." He claimed that the FBI had infected him with cancer in an assassination attempt.



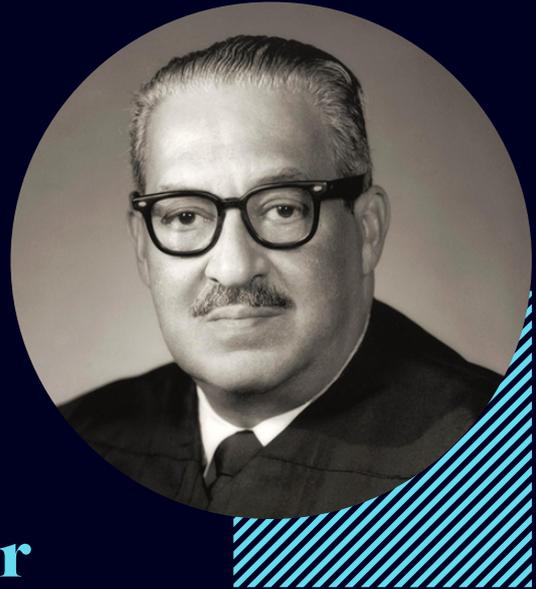
**“There is a higher law than
the law of government.
That’s the law of conscience.”**

— Stokely Carmichael

THURGOOD MARSHALL

(1908 - 1993)

Thurgood Marshall was an American lawyer and civil rights activist who served as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States from October 1967 until October 1991. Marshall was the Court's first African-American justice. Prior to his judicial service, he successfully argued several cases before the Supreme Court.



“Racism separates, but it never liberates. Hatred generates fear, and fear once given a foothold; binds, consumes and imprisons. Nothing is gained from prejudice. No one benefits from racism.”

— Thurgood Marshall

SAMUEL YOUNGE

(1944 – 1966)

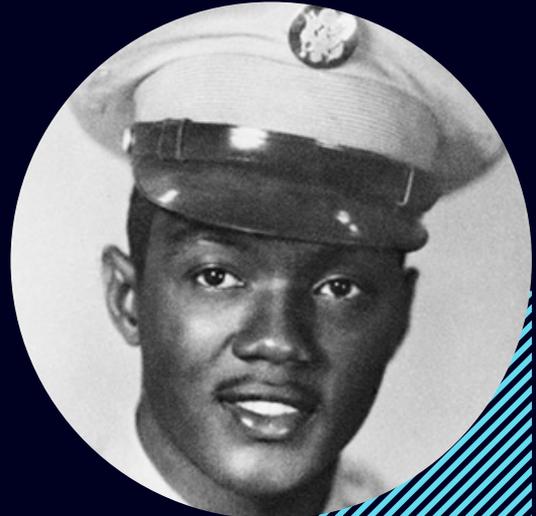
Samuel Leamon Younge Jr. was a 21 year old civil rights activist who was shot to death on January 3, 1966 when he attempted to use a whites-only restroom at a gas station in Macon County, Alabama. Younge was killed 11 years after and 40 miles from where the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott began. In the days following his death, thousands marched through the streets of Tuskegee in outrage over the treatment of blacks within the city. Despite the demonstrations, Younge's killer was found innocent by an all-white jury the following month. "This is an era of social revolution, In such revolutions, individuals sacrifice their lives." - Samuel Younge's Father



O'NEAL MOORE

(1931 – 1965)

O'Neal Moore was the first African-American deputy sheriff for the Washington Parish Sheriff's Office in Varnado, Louisiana. He was murdered on Wednesday, June 2, 1965, by alleged members of the Ku Klux Klan in a drive-by shooting, one year and a day after his landmark appointment as deputy sheriff. The police filed no charges due to a lack of evidence and witnesses. The prime suspect in the case died in 2003. After Moore's death, boycotts finally succeeded in forcing the integration of restaurants and theaters in the Washington Parish town of Bogalusa.



WILLIAM MOORE

(1927 – 1963)

William Moore was a postal worker and member of the Congress of Racial Equality, who achieved a level of notoriety for staging lone protests against racial segregation in an era when few white people supported such causes. On his last protest march, Moore wore a sandwich board that stated, "Equal rights for all & Mississippi or Bust". On April 23, 1963, Moore was found shot to death on U.S. Highway 11 in, Alabama. After stopping to rest on a concrete, roadside picnic table, he'd been shot twice in the head at close range. The gun was owned by a man named Floyd Simpson, a member of the local Ku Klux Klan chapter with whom Moore had argued earlier that day. No charges were ever laid.



LAMAR SMITH

(1892 – 1955)

Lamar Smith, a voting rights activist and veteran, was a martyr in the fight for civil rights. On August 13, 1955, Lamar Smith, 63-year-old farmer and WWI veteran, was shot dead in cold blood on the crowded courthouse lawn in Brookhaven, Mississippi, for urging African Americans to vote in a local run-off election. In September 1955, a grand jury composed of 20 white men declined to indict the three suspects for murder after witnesses failed to come forward to testify. No one was prosecuted for his murder.

