

41 Lives for Freedom

On the Civil Rights Memorial are inscribed the names of individuals who lost their lives in the struggle for freedom during the modern civil rights movement — 1954 to 1968. Between the first and last entries is a space that represents civil rights heroes who died before or after this period and others whose stories were not known when the Memorial was created.

The martyrs include those who were targeted for death because of their civil rights activities; those who were random victims of vigilantes determined to halt the movement; and those who, in the sacrifice of their own lives, brought a new awareness of the struggle to people all over the world.

May 7, 1955 Belzoni, Mississippi

REV. GEORGE LEE, one of the first black people registered to vote in Humphreys County, used his pulpit and his printing press to urge others to vote. White officials offered Lee protection on the condition he end his voter registration efforts, but Lee refused and was murdered.

August 13, 1955 Brookhaven, Mississippi

LAMAR SMITH was shot dead on the courthouse lawn by a white man in broad daylight while dozens of people watched. The killer was never indicted because no one would admit they saw a white man shoot a black man. Smith had organized blacks to vote in a recent election.

August 28, 1955 Money, Mississippi

EMMETT LOUIS TILL, a 14-year-old boy on vacation from Chicago, reportedly flirted with a white woman in a store. That night, two men took Till from his bed, beat him, shot him, and dumped his body in the Tallahatchie River. An all-white jury found the men innocent of murder.

October 22, 1955 Mayflower, Texas

JOHN EARL REESE, 16, was dancing in a café when white men fired shots into the windows. Reese was killed and two others were wounded. The shootings were part of an attempt by whites to terrorize blacks into giving up plans for a new school.

January 23, 1957 Montgomery, Alabama

WILLIE EDWARDS JR., a truck driver, was on his way to work when he was stopped by four Klansmen. The men thought Edwards was another man who they believed was dating a white woman. They forced Edwards at gunpoint to jump off a bridge into the Alabama River. Edwards' body was found three months later.

April 25, 1959 Poplarville, Mississippi

MACK CHARLES PARKER, 23, was accused of raping a white woman. Three days before his case was set for trial, a masked mob took him from his jail cell, beat him, shot him, and threw him in the Pearl River.

September 25, 1961 Liberty, Mississippi

HERBERT LEE, who worked with civil rights leader Bob Moses to help register black voters, was killed by a state legislator who claimed self-defense and was never arrested. Louis Allen, a black man who witnessed the murder, was later also killed. 1963

April 23, 1963 Attalla, Alabama

WILLIAM LEWIS MOORE, a postman from Baltimore, was shot and killed during a one-man march against segregation. Moore had planned to deliver a letter to the governor of Mississippi urging an end to intolerance.

June 12, 1963 Jackson, Mississippi

MEDGAR EVERS, who directed naacp operations in Mississippi, was leading a campaign for integration in Jackson when he was shot and killed by a sniper at his home.

September 15, 1963 Birmingham, Alabama

ADDIE MAE COLLINS, DENISE McNAIR, CAROLE ROBERTSON and CYNTHIA WESLEY were getting ready for church services when a bomb exploded at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing all four of the school-age girls. The church had been a center for civil rights meetings and marches.

September 15, 1963 Birmingham, Alabama

VIRGIL LAMAR WARE, 13, was riding on the handlebars of his brother's bicycle when he was fatally shot by white teen-agers. The white youths had come from a segregationist rally held in the aftermath of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing.

January 31, 1964 Liberty, Mississippi

LOUIS ALLEN, who witnessed the murder of civil rights worker Herbert Lee, endured years of threats, jailings and harassment. He was making final arrangements to move North on the day he was killed.

March 23, 1964 Jacksonville, Florida

JOHNNIE MAE CHAPPELL, who cleaned houses to help support her family, was shot by four white men as she searched for a lost wallet along a roadside. The murder occurred during an outbreak of racial violence in downtown Jacksonville. Her story was not known when the Memorial was dedicated.

April 7, 1964 Cleveland, Ohio

REV. BRUCE KLUNDER was among civil rights activists who protested the building of a segregated school by placing their bodies in the way of construction equipment. Klunder was crushed to death when a bulldozer backed over him.

May 2, 1964 Meadville, Mississippi

HENRY HEZEKIAH DEE and CHARLES EDDIE MOORE were killed by Klansmen who believed the two were part of a plot to arm blacks in the area. (There was no such plot.) Their bodies were found during a massive search for the missing civil rights workers Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner.

June 21, 1964 Philadelphia, Mississippi

JAMES EARL CHANEY, ANDREW GOODMAN, and MICHAEL HENRY SCHWERNER, young civil rights workers, were arrested by a deputy sheriff and then released into the hands of Klansmen who had plotted their murders. They were shot, and their bodies were buried in an earthen dam.

July 11, 1964 Colbert, Georgia

LT. COL. LEMUEL PENN, a Washington, D.C., educator, was driving home from U.S. Army Reserves training when he was shot and killed by Klansmen in a passing car.

February 26, 1965 Marion, Alabama

JIMMIE LEE JACKSON was beaten and shot by state troopers as he tried to protect his grandfather and mother from a trooper attack on civil rights marchers. His death led to the Selma-Montgomery march and the eventual passage of the Voting Rights Act.

March 11, 1965 Selma, Alabama

REV. JAMES REEB, a Unitarian minister from Boston, was among many white clergymen who joined the Selma marchers after the attack by state troopers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Reeb was beaten to death by white men while he walked down a Selma street.

March 25, 1965 Selma Highway, Alabama

VIOLA GREGG LIUZZO, a housewife and mother from Detroit, drove alone to Alabama to help with the Selma march after seeing televised reports of the attack at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. She was driving marchers back to Selma from Montgomery when she was shot and killed by a Klansmen in a passing car.

June 2, 1965 Bogalusa, Louisiana

ONEAL MOORE was one of two black deputies hired by white officials in an attempt to appease civil rights demands. Moore and his partner Creed Rogers were on patrol when they were blasted with gunfire from a passing car. Moore was killed and Rogers was wounded.

July 18, 1965 Anniston, Alabama

WILLIE BREWSTER was on his way home from work when he was shot and killed by white men. The men belonged to the National States Rights Party, a violent neo-Nazi group whose members had been involved in church bombings and murders of blacks.

August 20, 1965 Hayneville, Alabama

JONATHAN MYRICK DANIELS, an Episcopal Seminary student in Boston, had come to Alabama to help with black voter registration in Lowndes County. He was arrested at a demonstration, jailed in Hayneville and then suddenly released. Moments after his release, he was shot to death by a deputy sheriff.

January 3, 1966 Tuskegee, Alabama

SAMUEL LEAMON YOUNGE JR., a student civil rights activist, was fatally shot by a white gas station owner following an argument over segregated restrooms.

January 10, 1966 Hattiesburg, Mississippi

VERNON FERDINAND DAHMER, a wealthy businessman, offered to pay poll taxes for those who couldn't afford the fee required to vote. The night after a radio station broadcasted Dahmer's offer, his home was firebombed. Dahmer died later from severe burns.

July 10, 1966 Natchez, Mississippi

BEN CHESTER WHITE, who had worked most of his life as a caretaker on a plantation, had no involvement in civil rights work. He was murdered by Klansmen who thought they could divert attention from a civil rights march by killing a black person.

July 30, 1966 Bogalusa, Louisiana

CLARENCE TRIGGS was a bricklayer who had attended civil rights meetings sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality. He was found dead on a roadside, shot through the head.

February 27, 1967 Natchez, Mississippi

WHARLEST JACKSON, the treasurer of his local NAACP chapter, was one of many blacks who received threatening Klan notices at his job. After Jackson was promoted to a position previously reserved for whites, a bomb was planted in his car. It exploded minutes after he left work one day, killing him instantly.

May 12, 1967 Jackson, Mississippi

BENJAMIN BROWN, a former civil rights organizer, was watching a student protest from the sidelines when he was hit by stray gunshots from police who fired into the crowd.

February 8, 1968 Orangeburg, South Carolina

SAMUEL EPHESIANS HAMMOND JR., DELANO HERMAN MIDDLETON and HENRY EZEKIAL SMITH were shot and killed by police who fired on student demonstrators at the South Carolina State College campus.

April 4, 1968 Memphis, Tennessee

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., a Baptist minister, was a major architect of the civil rights movement. He led and inspired major non-violent desegregation campaigns, including those in Montgomery and Birmingham. He won the Nobel Peace Prize. He was assassinated as he prepared to lead a demonstration in Memphis.