

The Greatest Story Never Told

Stories from the Black experience to help you live your best life.



Remember **Emmett Till**, the 14-year-old boy who was lynched on his summer vacation in Money, Mississippi?

As chronicled in the film **Till**, before Emmett left for Mississippi, his mother sat him down and had “**The Talk**”.

We’re from Chicago, Mamie said. But I need you to know that Mississippi **is not** like Chicago.

You need to “**be small**” while you’re in Mississippi.

If you speak to a white person at all, **do it respectfully**.

Say, yes sir and yes ma’am.

If you bump into a white person accidentally, you need to **apologize quickly**.

If necessary, Emmett, I want you to **get down on your knees** and beg for forgiveness.

You need to **be humble** at all times.

Mamie Till was that serious because black people were being lynched and murdered in Mississippi on a regular basis.

And it didn't matter if you were a man, woman or **14-year-old child**.

In those days, "The Talk", could mean **the difference** between life and death.

Between existence and non-existence.

As Mamie reflected on the tragedy later, she realized that Emmett had never seen racial hatred before.

As an innocent, teenage boy, he just couldn't grasp **the life and death nature** of what she was trying to tell him.

For example, when she said, "be small", he smiled, stooped down, and playfully waddled around the room saying, you mean like this?

You can see it by clicking on the video below. Then continue scrolling to continue our tale.

[Mamie and Emmett Till – The Talk](#)

Even Mamie couldn't help smiling at that.

But all fun aside, she knew this was **no laughing matter**.

She was worried that Emmett **didn't understand** the danger, and asked his uncle and cousins to watch out for him while he was in Mississippi.

We all know what happened to Emmett.

He was taken out of his bed in the middle of the night, then murdered and mutilated by the **three-headed monster** of white supremacy, hatred, and violence.

But do you know **one of the biggest lessons** associated with the loss of this endearing, young boy?

In my humble opinion, it's the importance of imparting **survival information**.

Traditionally, African villages had several members that were important to the survival of the tribe.

The **medicine man** was one.

The griot, or **storyteller**, was another.

Hunters and **foragers** were others.

The griot was vitally important because they had the important job of **sharing survival information** with the rest of the tribe... especially the young.

They, and all of the griots that came before them, did this by passing down stories from **generation to generation**.

For tens of thousands of years!

Their stories contained **important intel** on how to survive.

Where to go and where not to go.

What to eat and what not to eat.

How to avoid being eaten yourself.

And so on.

This oral tradition was in place long before reading and writing were invented.

If you wanted someone to know something, **you had to tell them**.

And if you wanted them to remember it, you told them **in the form of a story**.

Think about all the stories you heard when you were a child.

The Tortoise and the Hare.

The Three Little Pigs.

The Boy Who Cried Wolf.

The Farmer with the Goose that Laid Golden Eggs.

Can you remember them?

Can you remember their lessons?

You probably do.

More to the point, have you survived trials in your own life?

If you have, then you've learned valuable lessons too.

Which means **you too have survival information** that needs to be shared with members of your tribe, especially the young.

The best way to do this is by sharing **your stories**, and **other stories**, that contain the survival information you want people you care about to know.

I often wonder if things would have been different had Mamie been able to share stories of **actual lynchings**.

Like the **young boys in the photo below** for instance. They're learning about lynchings at **The Lynching Museum** in Montgomery, Alabama.



I think the lynching stories these boys are learning would have **penetrated** Emmett's youthful innocence and helped him understand what could happen to him in Mississippi.

Yes, they would have been frightening.

But that's the point, isn't it?

They would have kept Emmett safe... because **he would have remembered them.**

In terms of material wealth, Black people have less of it than any other demographic group.

That's not because we are less than, mind you.

It's because, as Maya said... we've been plundered.

Said another way, **we wuz robbed.**

But **we do have wealth.** Just a different kind.

We have **experiential wealth**... a wealth that comes from centuries of struggling to survive a racism so evil... it makes what we're dealing with today look like a walk in the park.

The purpose of **The Greatest Story Never Told** is to **equip you** to share the stories of Black people who survived and thrived with folks in your sphere of influence.

Stories that will help them **(and you)** live your best lives.

And here's **the kicker.**

If you share powerful **stories** instead of lists of **do and don'ts**... it may help the people you love avoid missteps, mistakes, mishaps, and misfortune... things that ultimately sealed Emmett's fate.

Because, at the end of the day, **we remember stories**.

But lists... not so much.

And because, if we knew better,

We'd do better.

Are You a Sharer?

*It ain't no fun if the homies can't have none.
~ Snoop Dog*

If you are and **would like to share "The Talk" with a friend**, you can by copying and pasting the URL and passing it on.

Finally, thank you for taking this journey with your fellow readers.

It's just one part of the greatest story never told.

Our story... and your story.

If you have a survival story of your own that you'd like to share, send it to me at the email address below. I'd love to hear it.

Or, if you have comments, expressions, or feedback... feel free to hit me up at b.johnson@ethnicexpressions.com

Until next time,

Brian

