



Medgar Evers

July 2, 1925 to June 12, 1963

57 years ago Mr. Evers was assassinated. He 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.

In the spring of 1963, Medgar Evers, a NAACP organizer in Jackson, Mississippi, requested a meeting with the racist mayor of the town to address racial inequality issues. When the mayor refused to have a meeting, Evers and other activists organized sit-ins at the local Woolworth lunch counters. The sit-ins led to counter-protests and arrests. Many blacks were jailed. Evers organized efforts, including a benefit concert by well-known female black singer, Lena Horne, to bail the arrested people out of jail.

In June, 1963, President Kennedy, whose administration had been less than energized on the civil rights front, gave an assertive nationally televised speech on civil rights issues. On the night of the President's speech, Evers was shot in the back and killed in the driveway of his home. (van Rijn, Kennedy, pp. 98-99.) The accused killer, a white supremacist named Byron De La Beckwith, stood trial twice in the 1960s. Both cases ended in mistrials because the all-white juries could not reach a verdict. De La Beckwith was convicted in a third trial in 1994 and sentenced to life in prison.