

FBI report: Emmett Till murder probe should focus on woman

Boy's 1955 killing sparked national outrage

By Holbrook Mohr
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JACKSON, Miss. — A recently released FBI report on the 1955 slaying of Emmett Till offered few surprises, even a recommendation to examine the role of a white woman who

allegedly was the target of the black teen's wolf whistle before his murder, a family member says.

The killing helped focus national attention on the plight of blacks in Mississippi and elsewhere in the South. However, those responsible for the 14-year-old's death were never brought to justice.

The FBI's much anticipated report, announced last week, said the statute of limitations for federal charges had passed. The case is now in the hands of District Attorney Joyce Chiles.

Chiles has not returned several messages left at her Greenville office. But Till's cousin, Wheeler Parker, said Tuesday that Chiles had confirmed to his family that the FBI recommended taking a close look at Carolyn Bryant, the wife of one of the alleged attackers.

"She's going to look at everyone involved, but Carolyn Bryant will definitely be on the list," Parker said. "You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that you have to look at her. Even

before the FBI did the investigation, Carolyn would be a person you have to ask questions or talk to."

Bryant is the wife of Roy Bryant, who along with his half-brother, J.W. Milan, confessed to the crime in a paid interview with Look Magazine shortly after being acquitted on murder charges in 1955.

They have since died, but Carolyn Bryant is still alive.

The reason Till was beaten and shot to death, differ. The teenager from Chicago was visiting relatives in the tiny town of Money in the Mississippi Delta in August 1955. Some say the youngster bragged about dating white women, while others say whistling at a white woman had sealed his fate.

Witnesses have said a woman's voice could be heard at the scene when Till was pulled from his uncle's home that hot summer night.

A telephone listing for Carolyn Bryant was disconnected when called by The Associated Press on Tuesday. She has declined interviews in the past.

The Clarion-Ledger newspaper said in a Tuesday story about the case that relatives of Carolyn Bryant, who now lives in Greenville, had said she had nothing to do with the killing.

His brutalized body, with a gin fan tied to his neck, was pulled from the Tallahatchie River a few days later.

Carolyn Bryant was reportedly investigated in the murder back in 1955 but never faced a jury.

Investigators with the U.S. Department of Justice, who reopened the case last year, have reportedly said that

Henry Lee Loggins, a black man who worked for Milan, has also been investigated. Loggins, 82, has denied any involvement.

Both Parker and his cousin, Simeon Wright, who was also with Till the night he was abducted, have said they didn't expect federal charges in the case so it was no surprise

when the FBI decided not to seek prosecution.

"We knew that there were no federal charges to be brought. Only state murder and kidnapping," Wright said last week. "It's up to Mrs. Chiles now and the state of Mississippi that's been given a rare chance to redeem themselves."

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