

Donate to the Emmett Till Interpretive Center



## **ETIC Staff Attend the 2024 Monument Lab Summit**

Staff from the Emmett Till Interpretive Center attended the [Monument Lab Summit](#) in Philadelphia on July 18th and 19th. Organized around the theme "Past Is Presence," the summit brought together people from various fields and disciplines, all involved in the work of commemoration, public art, monument-making, and justice. Keynotes, panels, field trips, and workshops gave participants the opportunity to discuss and connect with colleagues, reflect on the challenges of the work, and imagine new possibilities. Presenters included, among others, Dr. Elizabeth Alexander, President of the Mellon Foundation; Dr. Salamishah Tillet, a Pulitzer Prize-winning critic for the *New York Times*; and Dr. Erica Armstrong Dunbar, a scholar specializing in the histories of African American women.

ETIC Executive Director Patrick Weems presented on a panel about addressing historical trauma through art and public memory as a pathway to healing and reconciliation.



From left to right: Michelle Browder, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Patrick Weems, and Arielle Julia Brown discuss what to do with the ghosts when making monuments.

Photo credit: Matt Switliski

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"I learned a lot," said Jessie Jaynes-Diming, Special Projects Coordinator for ETIC. "The dignitaries in attendance were great. I had great conversations. The support and being in a space with others of a similar mindset was rejuvenating and empowering."

"Attending the Monument Lab Summit in Philadelphia has been an incredibly inspiring experience," said Patrick Weems, ETIC's Executive Director. "It's a privilege to connect with fellow leaders dedicated to reimagining and recontextualizing public spaces. At the Emmett Till Interpretive Center, we are committed to preserving and amplifying the legacy of Emmett Till, and this summit has provided invaluable insights and collaborations to further our mission. Together, we can continue to foster education, healing, and transformation in our communities."

We're looking forward to exploring how the summit's lessons could apply to the work we do!

## **"Emmett's Photo" Dramatizes the Story Behind the Photos in Jet Magazine**

A play centering on the Emmett Till photos published in *Jet* magazine will be performed in Chicago in August. “Emmett’s Photo” is billed as “a reimagining of the moments that lead up to John H. Johnson’s decision to publish a photo of slain teen, Emmett Till, in a 1955 JET article.”

Tanikia Carpenter, the playwright, is a native of Chicago with roots in Mississippi; her grandparents moved to the city during the Great Migration. While Carpenter was on a tour of Black Chicago, the tour guide mentioned how pivotal (and fraught) Johnson’s decision to publish the photos was, and she recognized a story. She consulted Johnson’s book, *Succeeding Against the Odds*, and did research on other historical figures involved while still leaving room for imagination.

Ever since she learned about Emmett Till, another Chicago resident with Mississippi ties, she felt a connection. She briefly lived in Jackson and while there visited Money and the river site where Emmett’s body was recovered. She also lived in Woodlawn, regularly passing Mamie Till-Mobley’s house. “You don’t learn about Emmett Till and not feel some kind of way,” she said.

# EMMETT'S PHOTO

STAGE PLAY WRITTEN BY NIKKI CARPENTER



**MON**

**12 AUG 24**

Doors open at 5:45 p.m.

**REVA AND DAVID LOGAN  
CENTER FOR THE ARTS**

(Inside Theater West)

915 E 60th St, Chicago, IL 60637

**PAY WHAT YOU CAN**

Starring:

**Shariba Rivers, Demetra Dee, Jelani Julyus, Frederick Paul Williams, James Lewis.**

**DIRECTED BY QUENNA LENE**

Emmett's Photo is a reimagining of the moments that lead up to John H. Johnson's historic decision to publish a photo of slain teen Emmett Till in a 1955 IET article.



**CPI** 2024

**THERE WILL BE A TALKBACK IMMEDIATELY  
FOLLOWING THE SHORT PLAY.**



The play, which is directed by Quenna Lene, began life as a piece within *The Black Monologues*, a showcase Carpenter created for brief solo performances on the Black experience. Before long, she recognized it wasn't just a monologue but a full play. An invitation to participate in the Chicago Performance Lab gave her the opportunity to develop the play further.

The performance will be August 12th, 6 PM Central, at the University of Chicago's Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts. Attendees are encouraged to pay what they can. A panel/Q&A session will follow the play. The conversation will provide the audience a chance to ask questions and debrief about the heavy subject matter. The slated participants include Naomi Davis, CEO of environmental and social justice organization Blacks in Greens; Ollie Gordon, one of Emmett's cousins who lived in Till-Mobley's household; Pemon Rami, a professional of theater, film, and television who knew Johnson and Till-Mobley; Kathy Chaney, Executive Editor of YR Media; and Carpenter herself.

Carpenter has been pitching the play to other theaters in the hope of reaching a larger audience. "As storytellers we have a responsibility to seek the story behind the story," she said. "What if John H. Johnson refused to publish dear Emmett's photo? Would he have been another Black boy in Mississippi with a melancholy ending? I'm honored to be a carrier of the Till legacy and contribute to telling more of their story."

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## **Monuments & Justice Webinar Broadcasts on Till National Monument's One-Year Anniversary**

One year ago on July 25, 2023, using his authority under the Antiquities Act, President Joe Biden designated the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument. This designation includes Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ in Chicago, the Tallahatchie County Courthouse in Sumner, Mississippi, and Graball Landing on the banks of the Tallahatchie River in Mississippi.

Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ in Chicago is where Mamie Till-Mobley courageously held an open-casket visitation and funeral for her son. Tallahatchie County Courthouse in Sumner, Mississippi, is where the trial of Emmett Till's murderers took place and where they were acquitted. Graball Landing on the banks of the Tallahatchie River in Mississippi is where Emmett's body was discovered. This designation is a crucial step in helping to tell a more complete story of our nation's history.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's webinar, *Monuments & Justice*, on July 25 at 2pm EST will explore the architecture of monument-making, the need for ethnic and cultural representation, and the role of historic preservation in fostering healing from racial trauma and offering a path forward for reclamation and education. The webinar features Dr. Marvel Parker,

Executive Director of the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley Institute; Tiffany Tolbert, Senior Director of Preservation for the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund; Patrick Weems, Executive Director of the Emmett Till Interpretive Center; and Dr. Justin Hopkins, Psychologist at Hopkins Behavioral Health. Dr. Elizabeth Alexander, President of the Mellon Foundation, will moderate.

To attend, register now at <https://savingplaces.org/upcoming-webinars>.

REGISTER TO ATTEND

More News

Dallas Weekly Writer Visits Money, MS

Marlissa Collier writes for *Dallas Weekly* on a visit to Money, MS, where Emmett Till whistled at Carolyn Bryant. She reflects on the history of the Great Migration and how cultural norms do not easily shift, even over decades.



READ MORE

Register for August 31st Emmett Till Commemoration

The third annual memorial service for Emmett Till will be held on August 31st, 2024 in the Mississippi Delta. The program begins at 10 AM at Graball Landing and concludes with a luncheon in downtown Drew. If you plan to attend, please RSVP by August 16th on [our Eventbrite page](#).



RSVP HERE

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