

Donate to the Emmett Till Interpretive Center



## **ETIC Staff Present at the Smithsonian**

Staff from the Emmett Till Interpretive Center recently attended and presented at a workshop in Washington, D.C. organized by the Smithsonian's Center for Restorative History. The conference, *Reckoning with Remembrance: The Work of Preserving Emmett Till's Memory*, gathered various people working to commemorate and honor the legacy of Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley. It offered participants (pictured below) the chance to learn from each other and strengthen their camaraderie.

"This event was first and foremost about honoring the family members, organizers, educators, and storytellers that have kept the legacy of Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley alive," said Dr. Dani Merriman, Director of the Center for Restorative History.

The two-day event was held in conjunction with the exhibit, *Reckoning with Remembrance: History, Injustice, and the Murder of Emmett Till*, running until September 15th at the National Museum of American History. Speakers included, among others, staff from the National Park Service; Dr. Orlando Serrano, the Elizabeth MacMillan Head of PreK-12 Learning for the Smithsonian; award-winning poet Sonia Sanchez; and James Scott, who discussed the links between incarceration, Emmett Till, and systemic injustice.



Jay Rushing (left) and Benjamin Saulsberry present "Emmett Till's Story" during the second day of the conference.  
Photo credit: Daphne Chamberlain

The second day of the conference gave ETIC staff the opportunity to present on their work to local educators. Benjamin Saulsberry, ETIC's Public Engagement and Museum Education Director, summarized the history of Emmett Till and the establishment of the Emmett Till Memorial Commission up through to ETIC's present work. Jay Rushing, ETIC's Youth Coordinator, presented on ETIC's youth programming and how to engage young people with the Till story while encouraging trust and a sense of community. Jessie Jaynes-Diming, ETIC's Special Projects Coordinator, gave a talk entitled "Sharing Emmett Till's Story through Walking Tours," in which she offered insight from her tour guide experience. Germaine Hampton, one of the Mississippi Delta Film Academy's instructors who also teaches history at West Tallahatchie High School, discussed how he uses journalism in the classroom to engage with the Till story.

"After two days of breaking bread and opening space to learn from our esteemed partners, we are left not only with practical tools for teaching and preserving this history, but also with a renewed sense of urgency and purpose," said Dr. Merriman.

"The most valuable part of the trip for me was to be in the same room with people who are working in the name of Emmett Till and others like him," said Jay Rushing. "Sometimes it can feel like we're working in silos, working alone. It was so valuable to speak about the work to a new audience in a way that was clearly appreciated."

ETIC staff are available to give talks and facilitate discussions in classrooms and other groups. Please [reach out to us!](#)

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## Remembering Dr. John Dittmer

*Dr. Daphne Chamberlain, Chief Program Officer for the Emmett Till Interpretive Center, shares a tribute to the late Dr. John Dittmer, one of her mentors.*

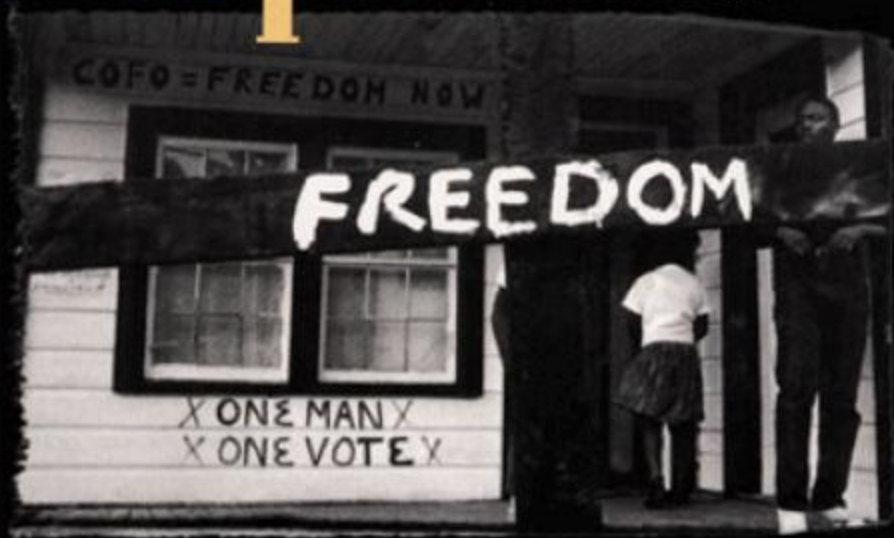
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On an eventful morning on the campus of historic Tougaloo College in February of 2001, I presented my senior thesis on the Poor People's Campaign of 1968 and Resurrection City. The room was filled with civil rights veterans, scholars, community members, faculty, administrators, and students. At the close of the session, a gentleman approached me to say that I did an exceptional job. I thanked him with awe. Without hesitation, I asked if he would sign my copy of *Local People* in which he wrote: "For Daphne Chamberlain - A student of great promise! Best of Luck, John Dittmer." Professor Dittmer remained a relevant part of my professional career and served as a source of encouragement for the following 20 years after that initial meeting.

On July 19, 2024, John Dittmer, author of *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* and *The Good Doctors: The Medical Committee for Human Rights and the Struggle for Social Justice in Health Care*, died after a brief illness.

# Local People

*The  
Struggle  
for  
Civil Rights  
in  
Mississippi*



**John Dittmer**

**WINNER OF THE BANCROFT PRIZE IN AMERICAN HISTORY**

Professor Dittmer was a dynamic scholar who dedicated his professional career to higher education, serving at institutions such as Tougaloo College, Brown University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and DePauw University. His seminal work on the Mississippi civil rights movement, *Local People*, was released in 1995. This work significantly contributed to revisionist history of the movement, focusing on the history from the ground up. Throughout his book, he referenced the impact Emmett Till's murder had on people in what was considered the most racially oppressive state during that time. Dittmer wrote: "Mississippi attracted young activists from all parts of the country simply because of its reputation. The lynching of Emmett Till in 1955 had made an indelible impression on black teenagers everywhere, and less than a decade later some of the most dedicated

had either come to or remained in the state to join the struggle against the forces of white supremacy.”

*Local People* won the 1995 Bancroft Prize in American History and inspired a new generation of eminent Mississippi civil rights scholars and others.

In our email exchanges, Professor Dittmer always closed with “Your Old Friend.” In closing, I say, “My Dear Friend.” The circle of scholars of Mississippi civil rights history has lost a mentor, friend, and colleague. And we will miss you.

## More News

### Emmett Till Exhibit at Smithsonian Closes September 15

*Reckoning with Remembrance: History, Injustice, and the Murder of Emmett Till* at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. will close next month on September 15th. Visit this powerful exhibit while it's still on display!



[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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