

## Medgar Wiley Evers (1925-1963)

Medgar Wiley Evers was born on July 2, 1925 in Decatur Mississippi. In 1939 he, along with his brother Charles, joined the war effort. He served until 1945 in a segregated company in which the officers were the only white men.

After returning from war, he enrolled in the Alcorn Agriculture and Mechanical College in 1946. Medgar graduated from Alcorn in 1950. Before his graduation, he met a young woman named Myrlie Beasley. The couple was married on Christmas Eve in 1951.

Evers worked for an insurance company before his involvement with the NAACP. In 1954 he was named the Field Secretary for Mississippi for the NAACP. He became deeply involved in the Civil Rights Movement in his home state.

Also in 1954, after a call to help desegregate schools, Evers became the first black man to apply to the University of Mississippi. Though *Brown v. the Board of Education* ruled for public schools to integrate in May of the same year, Evers was denied admission to “Ole Miss” in September. Six years later, Evers helped James Meredith fight for admission to the same institution. In 1962, escorted by armed men, Meredith attended his first class.

Medgar Evers was part of organizing economic boycotts of downtown Jackson Mississippi. The boycotts were of businesses and firms that did not give the African American population due respect. Evers was also part of the voter-registration campaigns. This movement taught black voters the necessary skills to vote (reading and writing) and the correct answers to the voting registration form.

On June 12, 1963 Evers was shot in the back and killed. His accused murderer, Byron De La Beckwith was tried and released after two hung-jury mistrials. Beckwith was finally convicted in 1994 and sentenced to life in prison.