

While completing the research presented in this paper—to argue that Dana Schutz’s painting of Emmett Till exploited his death as a spectacle, effectively silencing the marginalized, Black narratives of Till’s death—I now have answers to many of the initial questions I asked upon entering this project, specifically concerning the ownership of memory with the Till case. I believe that the Black communities effected by the events of racism, discrimination, and racial division from which the painting evolved are the true owners of Emmett Till’s memory. The misinterpretation of shared racial experiences is obviously still hurtful today, as evident from the response to Schutz’s painting. I am concluding this project with ample knowledge to support a few key takeaways: bodies at risk are a potent source of power, white individuals have more claims of memory than marginalized individuals, and memory sites and artifacts have the power to be incredibly affective—emotional and meaningful. Although I have found clarity in many areas where I was once uncertain, there are still questions that I cannot answer. Presently, I feel the only appropriate way to conclude is to pose these questions rhetorically. By keeping these questions at the forefront of the public memory discussion, I believe we can transition into an era defined by public awareness, respect, and appreciation for rhetorical sites and artifacts of memory.

- I. Why do we need a painting of Emmett Till to remember him?
- II. Is there a single way to ensure proper interpretation of memory?
- III. Who decides whether or not destruction is the correct approach to oppressive art?
- IV. Does the retelling of a memory have the power to intentionally and unintentionally re-victimize?

I conclude with these questions, asking that as artists and individuals with the freedom of creativity we respect the ownership of memory and acknowledge how our actions may exploit or silence our marginalized neighbors .