

Emmett Till in Different States: Poems, by Philip C. Kolin

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In Review



Emmett Till in Different States

By Philip C. Kolin
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Americans are still processing the 1955 murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till, the Chicago boy who was lynched while visiting relatives in Mississippi. These poems provide a wrenching retelling of the story that even after 60 years is as raw and

unresolved as ever. Philip C. Kolin gives a compelling voice to Emmett, his mother Mamie, his uncle Moses, and even the white woman who accused Emmett of whistling at her, thus fueling the hatred that led to Emmett's lynching. Then we watch as the murder of this child stretches to touch and contain Trayvon Martin, Mahalia Jackson, President Eisenhower, Martin Luther King Jr., and Raynard Jackson. Evoking the Song of Songs, the poem "Emmett Till's Sister" calls, "Arise, Brother / . . . The sun canters for your smile. / But men with ropes / dipped in bloodroot / have taken you off / into a wilderness of / silence."