

**FARAH JASMINE GRIFFIN**

## **Mamie Till Mobley's Gift of Grace**

It is a terrifying truth, but Mamie Till-Mobley stands in an ancient line -- the mothers of slain children - reaching back through our tumultuous past and forward to into an uncertain future. Hers is an example that continues to inform our sense of public mourning. Her dignity, dedication, and fearlessness have taught many parents, especially Black American parents, a lesson they should not need: How to represent your dead child while resisting the forces of violence and repression that engulfed him in life and seek to define him in death. Her decision to have her son Emmett's brutalized body displayed in an open casket changed the course of our nation's history. The words accompanying that decision have become part of Movement history: "I wanted the world to see what they did to my baby." And yet, another sentence attributed to her best articulates her commitment and the values of the movement she joined and helped to shape. At her child's funeral, the grief-stricken mother asserted: "I don't have a minute to hate. I'm going to pursue justice for the rest of my life."

These words and the ethic contained within encapsulate much of Black America's Freedom Movement. It is also one of that struggle's greatest gifts to the United States: a gift of grace, which refuses to return the disdain and hatred with which we have been treated. It shapes a quest for justice that recognizes the humanity of our enemies. Mamie Till-Mobley refused hatred, but she also refused silence and complacency. Hers was a life devoted to seeking justice for her son, to creating a world where children would be free of violence at the hands of racists but also at the hands of their own community as well.

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