

Ex-KKK leader guilty in 1964 killings

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22 June, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Ex-KKK leader guilty in 1964 killings

BNE: An 80-year-old former Ku Klux Klan leader, Edgar Ray Killen, has been found guilty of triple manslaughter over the mob killings of three civil rights workers in Mississippi, in 1964. Although he escaped charges of murder, he faces a maximum penalty of twenty years imprisonment, which means he will probably be incarcerated until his death. He was initially arrested for the murders 41 years ago but was released because of insufficient evidence. New evidence only recently came to light. The former white supremacist, now wheelchair bound, sank his head as the verdict was read and was consoled by relatives. The victims' relatives waiting outside the court greeted the ruling with cheers of jubilation that justice had finally been done.

Killen was convicted of organizing the lynch mob that ambushed and then beat and shot to death Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, white New Yorkers, and James Chaney, a black man from Mississippi. All were in their early twenties. Their bodies were found at a Mississippi roadside seven weeks after they were abducted. The three were on a campaign to encourage black people to vote in elections in America's southern states, which were deeply segregated at the time. The brutal slayings shocked America and galvanized the U.S. civil rights movement into fighting to end segregation. Their story was dramatized in the 1988 movie *Mississippi Burning*.

WARM-UPS

1. SKIN COLOR: In pairs / groups, talk about skin color - your own and your feelings about other colors. What prejudices exist towards other colors of skin in your country? Are you happy with your skin color? Has anything good or bad happened to you because of your skin color? What skin colors are there in the world? What words do you associate with each color?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Ku Klux Klan / manslaughter / mob killings / Mississippi / civil rights / white people / black people / segregation / racism / justice

3. KU KLUX KLAN: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the Ku Klux Klan. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

4. KKK TRIAL OPINIONS: To what degree do you agree or disagree with these opinions?

- a. An 80-year-old man in a wheelchair should not have to go to prison.
- b. Anyone guilty of any crime should always be brought to justice.
- c. Unsolved crimes committed more than 40 years ago should be forgotten.
- d. America's system of justice is fantastic – Mr. Killen's conviction proves this.
- e. America shows how people from all races can live together peacefully.
- f. All racial supremacy groups should be banned.
- g. Mr. Killen should have been found guilty of murder, not the lesser charge of manslaughter.
- h. The three young men who were murdered were martyrs and should have a national holiday named after them.

5. STEREOTYPES: Talk about the images people in your country have of different groups of people. Where do these images come from? How true are they? Talk first about the people in your neighboring countries.

You could also talk about the following people:

- 'white' people, 'black' people, 'brown' people, 'yellow' people, etc.
- Muslims, Jews, Christians, etc.
- English people, French people, Italians, Egyptians, Arabs, Iranians, Indians, Thais, Chinese, North Koreans, Japanese, Americans, Brazilians, Australians, Israelis, Bosnians, Albanians, etc.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A man killed 1,964 people. | T / F |
| b. An 80-year-old man faces up to 20 years in prison for a 1964 crime. | T / F |
| c. The man was also arrested for the crime 41 years ago. | T / F |
| d. The victims' relatives were jubilant at seeing justice done. | T / F |
| e. The KKK leader personally killed three men. | T / F |
| f. Two of the three murdered men were white. | T / F |
| g. The murdered men were encouraging black people to fight. | T / F |
| h. The murders energized the civil rights movement in America. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------|
| a. mob | elitist |
| b. incarcerated | energized |
| c. supremacist | joy |
| d. consoled | jumped |
| e. jubilation | imprisoned |
| f. ambushed | seized |
| g. abducted | killings |
| h. campaign | group |
| i. slayings | drive |
| j. galvanized | comforted |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| a. found guilty of | bound |
| b. incarcerated | mob |
| c. wheelchair | by relatives |
| d. consoled | in the 1988 movie |
| e. cheers | until his death |
| f. lynch | slayings |
| g. deeply | triple manslaughter |
| h. brutal | segregated |
| i. fighting to | of jubilation |
| j. Their story was dramatized | end segregation |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct space.

Ex-KKK leader guilty in 1964 killings

BNE: An 80-year-old former Ku Klux Klan leader, Edgar Ray Killen, has been found guilty of _____ manslaughter over the _____ killings of three civil rights workers in Mississippi, in 1964. Although he escaped charges of murder, he faces a maximum penalty of twenty years imprisonment, which means he will probably be _____ until his death. He was _____ arrested for the murders 41 years ago but was released because of insufficient evidence. New evidence only recently came to _____. The former white supremacist, now wheelchair _____, sank his head as the verdict was read and was _____ by relatives. The victims' relatives waiting outside the court greeted the ruling with cheers of _____ that justice had finally been done.

Killen was convicted of organizing the _____ mob that _____ and then beat and shot to death Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, white New Yorkers, and James Chaney, a black man from Mississippi. All were in their early twenties. Their bodies were found at a Mississippi _____ seven weeks after they were abducted. The three were on a campaign to _____ black people to vote in elections in America's southern states, which were _____ segregated at the time. The _____ slayings shocked America and galvanized the U.S. civil rights movement into fighting to end _____. Their story was _____ in the 1988 movie *Mississippi Burning*.

light
mob
jubilation
bound
incarcerated
triple
consoled
initially
encourage
dramatized
brutal
ambushed
segregation
roadside
lynch
deeply

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'civil' and 'right'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT RACISM SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about racism.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| • former | • lynch |
| • workers | • twenties |
| • incarcerated | • roadside |
| • initially | • encourage |
| • light | • slayings |
| • jubilation | • dramatized |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What was your initial reaction to this headline?
- b. Were you eager to find out more about the headline?
- c. What did you know about this story before reading the article?
- d. What do you know about American civil rights in the 1960s?
- e. What do you think about white (or other races) supremacy groups?
- f. What do think of people who believe our skin color makes one person better than another?
- g. What kind of racism exists in your country?
- h. Are you proud of your race or country?
- i. Does your race have anything to be ashamed of?
- j. Why do groups of people choose to hate other groups of people because of their skin color, religion, social standing or language?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What did you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think an 80-year-old in a wheelchair needs to go to prison?
- d. Should society forget about crimes after 40 years?
- e. Does this trial prove American justice is fair and just?
- f. Should Mr. Killen have been found guilty of murder too?
- g. Should the relatives of the three murdered men receive compensation?
- h. Do you think racism will ever be completely eradicated in your country or in the world?
- i. What is the best thing we can do to help stamp out racism?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

RACISM: In pairs / groups, discuss whether situations similar to the following happen / could happen in your country. What penalties (if any) should be given? Add three more examples in the empty rows at the bottom of the table.

| SITUATION | YOUR COUNTRY | PENALTY |
|---|--------------|---------|
| A TV company only allows people of one skin color to read the news. | | |
| Police officers arrest an unusually large percentage of a certain race of people. | | |
| A shop customer uses a derogatory and racist term to a sales assistant of a different race. | | |
| Parents disown their child for dating someone of a different color. | | |
| Sports fans chant racial abuse at players who belong to a different race. | | |
| A bar / café refuses someone entry because of their nationality. | | |
| A landlord prevents someone from renting an apartment because of their skin color. | | |
| People wear badges or clothing with slogans that incite racial hatred. | | |
| A rock group produces a CD with lyrics full of racial hatred. | | |
| A politician makes a suggestion that people from other countries are inferior. | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Change partners and compare the penalties you decided with your previous partner(s).

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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BNE: An 80-year-old former Ku Klux Klan leader, Edgar Ray Killen, has been found _____ over the mob killings of three civil rights workers in Mississippi, in 1964. Although he _____, he faces a maximum penalty of twenty years imprisonment, which means he will probably _____ death. He was initially arrested for the murders 41 years ago but was released because _____. New evidence only _____. The former white supremacist, now wheelchair bound, sank his head as the verdict was read and was _____. The victims' relatives waiting outside the court greeted the ruling with _____ that justice had finally been done.

Killen was convicted of organizing the _____ and then beat and _____ Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, white New Yorkers, and James Chaney, a black man from Mississippi. All were in their early twenties. Their bodies were found at a Mississippi roadside seven weeks _____. The three were on a campaign to encourage black people to vote in elections in America's southern states, which were _____ at the time. The _____ shocked America and _____ civil rights movement into fighting _____. Their _____ in the 1988 movie *Mississippi Burning*.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the Edgar Ray Killen case. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. STAMP OUT RACISM: Create an information poster outlining your ideas to stamp out racism in your country. Show your poster to your classmates in your next lesson. Did everyone have similar ideas?

4. BACKGROUND: Find out about the background to the 1964 Mississippi murders. What civil rights did black people have / not have? Who were the political and civil rights leaders? What were the turning points? Who were the heroes? Tell your classmates what you found out in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

(If it's too difficult to find information on America in the 1960s, choose a civil rights story from your own / another country.)

5. MISSISSIPPI BURNING: Watch the video / DVD of the movie.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. T d. T e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

| | |
|-----------------|------------|
| a. mob | group |
| b. incarcerated | imprisoned |
| c. supremacist | elitist |
| d. consoled | comforted |
| e. jubilation | joy |
| f. ambushed | jumped |
| g. abducted | seized |
| h. campaign | drive |
| i. slayings | killings |
| j. galvanized | energized |

PHRASE MATCH:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| a. found guilty of | triple manslaughter |
| b. incarcerated | until his death |
| c. wheelchair | bound |
| d. consoled | by relatives |
| e. cheers | of jubilation |
| f. lynch | mob |
| g. deeply | segregated |
| h. brutal | slayings |
| i. fighting to | end segregation |
| j. Their story was dramatized | in the 1988 movie |

GAP FILL:

Ex-KKK leader guilty in 1964 killings

BNE: An 80-year-old former Ku Klux Klan leader, Edgar Ray Killen, has been found guilty of **triple** manslaughter over the **mob** killings of three civil rights workers in Mississippi, in 1964. Although he escaped charges of murder, he faces a maximum penalty of twenty years imprisonment, which means he will probably be **incarcerated** until his death. He was **initially** arrested for the murders 41 years ago but was released because of insufficient evidence. New evidence only recently came to **light**. The former white supremacist, now wheelchair **bound**, sank his head as the verdict was read and was **consoled** by relatives. The victims' relatives waiting outside the court greeted the ruling with cheers of **jubilation** that justice had finally been done.

Killen was convicted of organizing the **lynch** mob that **ambushed** and then beat and shot to death Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, white New Yorkers, and James Chaney, a black man from Mississippi. All were in their early twenties. Their bodies were found at a Mississippi **roadside** seven weeks after they were abducted. The three were on a campaign to **encourage** black people to vote in elections in America's southern states, which were **deeply** segregated at the time. The **brutal** slayings shocked America and galvanized the U.S. civil rights movement into fighting to end **segregation**. Their story was **dramatized** in the 1988 movie *Mississippi Burning*.