

DOMINICAN SISTERS of SAN RAFAEL *present*



We can't keep sweeping issues of racism in America under the rug. Do Black lives really matter? We will view movies and documentaries that will challenge us to confront our understanding of our beliefs about racism.

Our first movie this season is *Did you Wonder Who Fired the Gun?* It is a story about the experiences of a grandson of a murderer and the experiences of the victim his grandfather murdered. The movie documents racism and violence including sexual violence against Blacks in Alabama in the 1940s. It can be digitally rented or purchased on Amazon, Apple TV or Kanopy. Questions that are in bold print will be discussed in further detail when we meet virtually.

Did You Wonder Who Fired the Gun? Study Guide (Season 2 Movie 1)

After the murder of Trayvon Martin, Travis Wilkerson looked at the racial discord and violence in the world around him and had the courage to examine his own legacy. This is the journey Travis Wilkerson takes to investigate his grandfather, Samuel Edwin Branch, a man who got away with murder and the man he murdered Bill Spann in Alabama in 1946.

1. **What facts did Travis Wilkerson discover about his grandfather, Samuel Edwin Branch? What facts was Travis able to learn about the murdered Black man, Bill Spann?**
2. After Travis Wilkerson visited his mom and his aunts, how did they describe their father (his grandfather), Samuel Edwin Branch?
3. How does Ed Vaughn, civil rights activist who was a contemporary of Dr. Martin Luther King describe his life experiences when he was growing up in Alabama?
4. How did Ed Vaughn describe Moody Hospital? What significance does Moody Hospital have regarding this story?

5. How did Travis Wilkerson feel or describe Branch's store (his grandfather's store) where the murder of Bill Spann took place?

6. Racism is learned early on in development, and children receive many messages about race and racism from a young age. What lessons/messages did Samuel Edwin Branch teach his children about "Whose Lives Matter"?

7. What did we learn about Rosa Parks in this documentary?

8. How did townspeople (black and white) respond to Travis's investigation into the murder of Bill Spann.

9. **What happened to William Moore in Attalla, Alabama? What bearing does this song have on Travis Wilkerson? Click on the link to see the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUqBhkGnu5o> (song lyrics are on the last page).**

10. **Travis Wilkerson compares his family story to Nelle Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*.**

- How did Travis compare these stories?

- Travis says that Atticus Finch is portrayed as a "Secular Saint." Atticus would go on to be named the top movie hero of the 20th century. What does Travis

Wilkerson want us to see as he challenges us to look at his family history and *To Kill a Mockingbird* through his lens in 2020?

11. Let’s look at three themes in this movie. List the details related to this movie and then compare it to life in America in 2021.

Whites kill with impunity.

<u>1946</u>	<u>2021</u>

Blacks have been the victims of violence (including sexual violence) from whites.

<u>1946</u>	<u>2021</u>

What did the media report or what evidence was recorded when there were crimes against Blacks?

<u>1946</u>	<u>2021</u>

Additional Information related to this movie

- *September, 2021 - Longtime KTVU anchor Frank Somerville has been reportedly pulled from the air "indefinitely" for wanting to point out that U.S. media often gives far more attention to tragedies involving white women than those of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). Verified sources said that Somerville was informed by station management the next day that he was being suspended over the disagreement; Somerville is the adoptive father of a Black teen daughter. [Click Here](#) to read more about this incident.*
- Travis Wilkerson is an American independent film director, screenwriter, producer and performance artist. [Click Here](#) to read what KQED said about this filmmaker.
- Phil Ochs – Philip D. Ochs was a singer, guitarist and songwriter. He took part in numerous anti-war protests. The FBI took notice of Phil in 1962. Notable songs he wrote for his 1964 album “The Early Years” include “William Moore,” “Ballad of Medgar Evers,” “Talking Vietnam Blues” [Click Here](#) to read more.

Phil Ochs – William Moore (1963)

*Walkin' down an Alabama road
Rememberin' what the Bible told
Walkin' with a letter in his hand
Dreamin' of another southern land
Walkin' down an Alabama road*

*And he went by the name of William Moore
Now what are you doing, William Moore?
Why the letter in your hand?
There is only one southern land
And he went by the name of William Moore*

[Chorus]

*What price the glory of one man?
What price the glory of one man?
What price the hopes
What price the dreams
And what price the glory of one man?*

*Remembering what his grandfather done
Fought for the South in '61
A hundred years have passed by since then
Now Moore is fighting for the South again
Remembering what his grandfather done*

*Remembering the time in World War Two
And the South Pacific Island that he knew
Remembering the young men that he killed
And the praying that the guns of hate be stilled
Remembering the time in World War Two*

[Chorus]

*And they shot him on the Alabama road
Forgot about what the Bible told
They shot him with that letter in his hand
As though he were a dog and not a man
They shot him on the Alabama road*

[Verse 6]

*Did you say it was a shame when he died?
Did you say he was a fool because he tried?
Did you wonder who had fired the gun?
Did you know that it was you that fired the gun?
Did you say it was a shame when he died?*

[Chorus]

*What price the glory of one man?
What price the glory of one man?
What price the hopes
What price the dreams
And what price the glory of one man?*

[Outro]

Walkin' down an Alabama road

**Challenge Question –Choose an action to confront racism.
Be prepared to share your plans and your discussions when we meet on Nov. 18, 2021.**

1. Interview your parents, aunts & uncles, or grandparents about what your family told them about Black people. What beliefs or practices did your family have about Black people? What did your family teach or tell you about racism? If your perception/belief about Black people or racism is different from your family's be prepared to tell us why.

2. You are invited to participate in a series of eight sessions by reading and discussing the book (*Collective Amnesia: American Apartheid* by Eugene D. Betit. This book helps us visualize the last four centuries of racism in the United States. The sessions will be Wednesday morning from 10:45am – 12:00 pm. First discussion is on 11/10/2021. Next discussion is 11/24/2021. It is not too late to join the discussions lead by Sister Barbara Green. See the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael webpage for your information <https://sanrafaelop.org/events/>

3. You are invited to participate in a series of eight zoom sessions on Monday afternoons at 4:30 on *White Fragility* by Robin di Angelo. First discussion is on 11/8/2021. Next discussion is 11/22/2021. It is not too late to join; the discussions will be facilitated by Ms. Maureen Burnett, Sister Barbara Green, and Ms. Sally Karste. See the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael webpage for your information <https://sanrafaelop.org/events/>