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February 14, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530-0009

Attorney General Sessions:

I am writing you today in the interest of justice. As you may know, I have long expressed an interest in the circumstances surrounding the murder of Emmett Till. My interest is not only personal but also because Emmett's mother, Mamie Till, was a longtime resident of my district which also serves as Emmett's final resting place.

My desire to see the truth come to light — a lifelong desire shared by Mamie — led me in 2004, to introduce H. Con. Res. 360. This resolution, which garnered 52 bipartisan cosponsors, called on the Department of Justice to investigate the murder of Emmett Till. I understand that in 2007, the Department of Justice determined that this case did not warrant federal prosecution due to the statute of limitations on any potential federal crimes.

Recent developments, however, lead me to believe that a reevaluation of that decision is warranted. History tells us that in 1955, despite compelling evidence to the contrary, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam were acquitted by an all-white jury of Emmett's murder. This acquittal was largely based on testimony given by Bryant's wife, Carolyn, who had accused Emmett of whistling at, grabbing, and threatening her. What history does not tell us — and what has only recently come to light — is evidence that, in 2007, Carolyn Bryant Donham "confessed that she had fabricated the most sensational part of her testimony."¹ In fact, when speaking of her earlier

¹ *How Author Timothy Tyson Found the Woman at the Center of the Emmett Till Case*, Vanity Fair (January 26, 2017) (online at <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2017/01/how-author-timothy-tyson-found-the-woman-at-the-center-of-the-emmett-till-case>)

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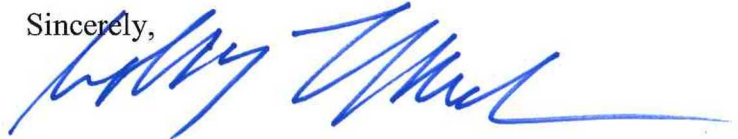
allegations that Emmett “had made verbal and physical advances on her,”² she is specifically quoted as saying “That part’s not true.”³

This revelation, I believe, merits a reevaluation of the Justice Department’s 2007 decision. At minimum, it is possible that false statements were made during the FBI’s investigation leading up to this report. Additionally, at a basic human level and in the interest of justice and historical integrity, society cannot allow such an egregious lie to go unpunished; especially when this lie led to the gruesome and horrific murder of a child. As Carolyn Bryant Donham herself said, “Nothing that boy did could ever justify what happened to him.”⁴

For these reasons, I strongly encourage you to reevaluate the potential for federal prosecution of any applicable crimes in this case. I look forward to your response to my request. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my Chief of Staff, Ms. Yardly Pollas, at (202) 225-4372.

As Mamie is reported to have said in 2015, “I hope he didn’t die in vain.” I wholeheartedly share this sentiment and I thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*