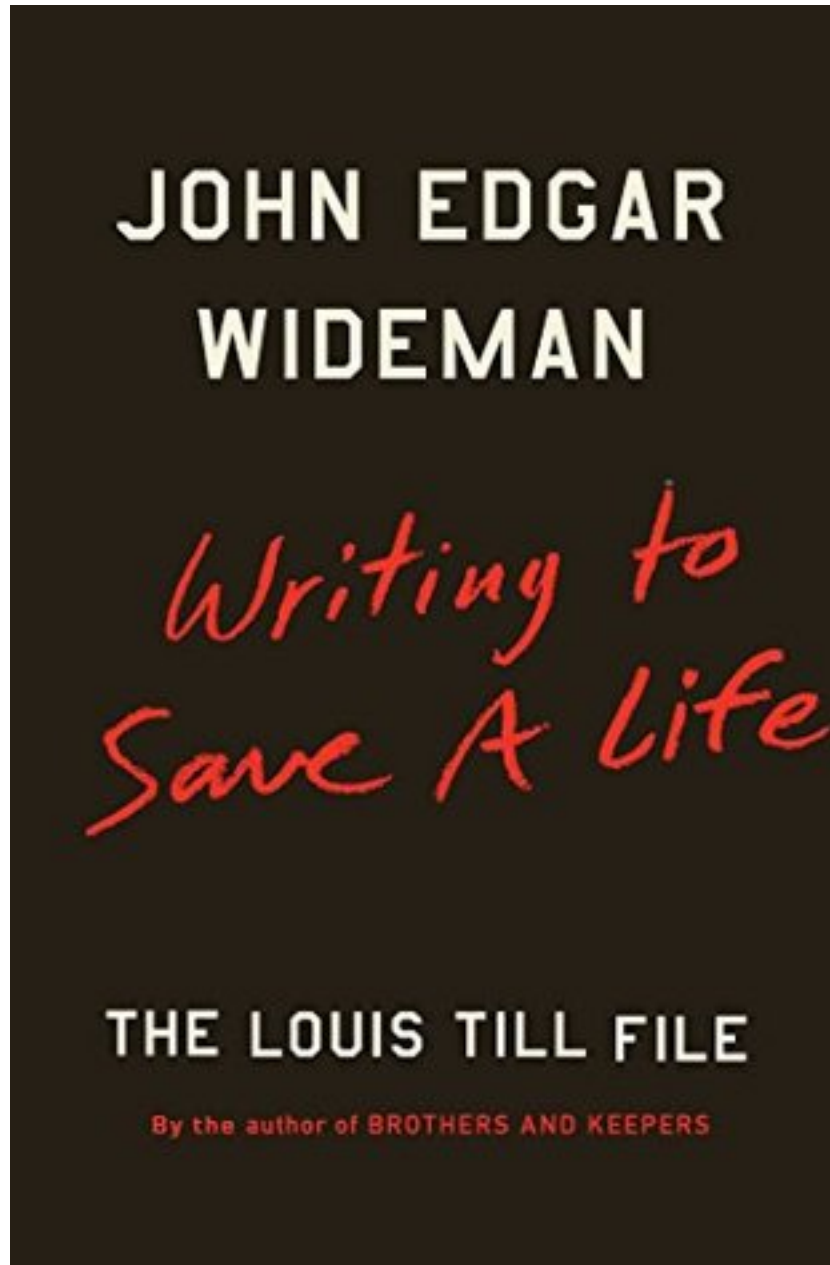


# Writing to Save a Life: The Louis Till File Book PDF Download



**By:**  
**John Edgar Wideman**

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### Andre

Who knew? When Emmett Till was brutally murdered in 1955, how many wondered where was his father? I had thought about that question upon learning the Till story, but never followed up. Well, apparently John Edgar Wideman was also intrigued about Emmett's father, Louis Till. This book is a result of that wondering, and like a great jazz band, the book is best described as an extraordinary example of improvisation. No melody, no straight rhythm, just a improvisational five star effort for the pros

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A great blending of writing instruments to bring us the tragedy of Louis Till. Fiction crossing into non-fiction bumping against memoir, rolling into imaginative investigation, stepping on poetry while touching on history. Just wow! John Wideman manages to mix all these instruments and produce a wonderful composition. Louis Till along with another Soldier was hanged by the US military for rape and murder while stationed in Italy during WWII. Based on the file of Louis Till, which the author obtains under the freedom of information act, the evidence against Till was virtually non existent. "Privates Till and McMurray are sentenced to death on the basis of being the wrong color in the wrong place at the wrong time. Wrong color, wrong place, wrong time, a mantra. A crime that over the course of our nation's history has transformed countless innocent people of color into guilty people."

This is a masterpiece of writing. So, while Ms. Mamie Till mourned the loss of her husband, ten years later she would also mourn the loss of her son. And because we never hear Louis Till's side of the story, his silence speaks volumes and thus John Wideman writes to save his life. And if writing can indeed save a life, then there is no finer example than this.

## Michelle

Writing to Save a Life: The Louis Till File authored by acclaimed award winning author John Edgar Wideman is a powerful and necessary tribute to the largely overlooked historical Emmett Till case. In 1955, Wideman was the same age as Emmett Till (1941-1955), when he saw the shocking horror of the civil rights martyr pictured in a magazine. The American Civil Rights movement and protests increased following Till's brutal murder when his killer's were exonerated in a Mississippi court of law and s

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The story of Emmett's father, Louis Till, was recalled in narrative details of the truth obtained from meticulous research of military records, the author traveled to France to visit Till's gravesite at a military cemetery. In a lyrical fictional account Till's young life is observed, meeting and dating his wife Mamie Till, and the routine observations as a private in the Army. On June 27, 1944, near the Italian town of Civitavecchia, where American soldiers were camped nearby, sirens sounded a false alarm, gunfire erupted as searchlights scanned the dark night sky. During this time, two Italian women were allegedly raped and another shot and killed. Two "colored" American Army privates Louis (NMI) Till and Fred A. McMurray were court martialed and hung for these crimes on July 2, 1945.

The Till file is a disturbing haphazard inconsistent combination of documents in no chronological order, some were predictability missing. Wideman finds in the deafening silence of no statement given by Till at his execution, the fabrication of files layered with lies, a gross injustice and tragic loss of these innocent men. There was another true story, when the author returned to the site of his family heritage in Promiseland, S.C. The railroad tracks, the empty schoolhouse and vacant shanty's, the church where his grandfather preached, the graveyard where his people were laid to rest. The only thing that remained the same was his deepest unspoken fear of returning to the south.

John Edgar Wideman has written a dozen bestselling books including: Philadelphia Fire, Brothers and Keepers, Fatheralong, Hoop Roots and Sent For You Yesterday. He resides in both New York and France. \* Also by Mamie Till-Mobley: Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America (2005 re-issue)

## BlackOxford

I just ordered this book today. Read here for reasons to get it:

## Rebecca

\*2.5 stars

Part memoir, part stream of consciousness, part historical this book was kind of a mess. I had some high hopes for this book, but I was a bit let down!

Wideman shuffles back and forth between his own childhood and the shady history of Emmett Till and his mostly unknown father Louis. He waxes lyrical about the French coast, his fathers barbershop and a bunch of dead jellyfish. At points it was hard to follow the story.

He does bring up good points about the group in power, (in Louis Till

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He does bring up good points about the group in power, (in Louis Till's case-the military) will use certain parts of a story to their advantage to put someone away, or cause their death. He delves a bit into the indomitable love that a woman has for their child and the man she chooses to marry, in spite of that mans faults. Some bright spots, but too all over the place to give any higher of a rating.

## **Jim**

I saw John Edgar Wideman at the Chicago Humanities Festival, and immediately began reading his book, a meditation on Emmett Till and his father Louis Till and mother Mamie, as well as Wideman's own father and mother.

This is a mixture of investigation, memory and speculation, fiction and non-fiction. Beautifully written and truly thought provoking.