

Racists murder black man in Texas

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A 49-year-old black man was murdered Sunday night by three white supremacists in the southeast Texas town of Jasper, 100 miles from Houston. James Byrd Jr., a father of three and a disabled worker, was beaten, chained to the back of a pickup truck and dragged two and a half miles down a country road. Byrd's mangled torso was found at the end of a bloody trail, his severed head, neck and right arm about a mile away.

Byrd was last seen walking home Saturday night from his niece's bridal shower. Byrd did not own a car and apparently accepted a ride from the three men. He was driven to an isolated logging road, beaten by two of the racists and chained to the truck.

Lawrence Russell Brewer, 31, of Sulphur Springs, and Shawn Allen Berry and John William King, both 23, of Jasper, have been charged with murder. The three, all with criminal records, are being held without bail.

Investigators said the men have ties to white supremacist groups. Two had been cellmates in a Texas prison and were covered with tattoos of the Aryan Brotherhood. One carried a lighter engraved with an emblem of the Ku Klux Klan.

Prosecutors, who said the murder was racially motivated, indicated Wednesday that they would probably seek the death penalty for the three men.

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