

When Andrew Goodman was born on November 23, 1943 our country was waging a war against racism and its twin evils, ~~racism~~^{oppression} and genocide. He grew up in an era that witnessed the slaughter of millions of Jews in Europe who were perceived as a despised minority, and the merciless attacks on political dissidents in our own country who were seen as threats to national security. All of his life Andy lived in an integrated community of white, black and hispanic families, and as a child he played in the streets and playgrounds with the children in the neighborhood. As a youngster he was aware of differences in culture, life style and comforts between himself and some of his friends, and asked many questions of his parents and teachers. He learned of the conditions of poverty and deprivation of his friends' parents - especially those who had come in large numbers from Puerto Rico in the 1950's looking for employment and a better way of life for their children.

As he grew into adolescence, Andy tried to understand the political and social forces which governed his life in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Why were people afraid to voice opinions if they represented a political minority? Why were some people sent to jail when they refused to give information about their friends? How did workers like coal miners live when they were dependent on large companies for loans to house and care for their families? Why were some Americans denied rights which had been granted to them under our Constitution? Andy asked questions, sought answers, and moved among people to learn about their lives in face to face encounters. At 15 he and a friend went to the coal mines of West Virginia; at 17 he traveled abroad and lived with families in farming communities of Western Europe; at 19 he taught in a camp for inner city children in New Jersey.

Andy's concern and sensitivity developed along with a zest for living and his many interests. He engaged in land and water sports, he studied clarinet at the Juilliard School of music, he was an ardent Brooklyn Dodger fan and one day, lost in fantasy while practicing his clarinet, it became a baseball bat, he Duke Snyder, and when he swung for the ball his "guaranteed unbreakable" clarinet broke into many pieces at his feet! But the theatre was Andy's great love. From his earliest years at the Walden School he participated in dramatic arts, he wrote a play which was performed at his high school graduation, majored in Dramatic Arts when he entered college (he later changed to Political Science) and acted with an Off Broadway repertory company. In the short span of his life, Andy drank deeply from the waters of our cultural heritage, knew the pain of those less fortunate than he, and gave so much of tenderness and caring to his family and friends.

When Andy heard about the Mississippi Summer Project, it was inevitable that he should decide to join with the other students who were going to help Black Americans register to vote, to teach children in Freedom Schools and work in community centers. Andy's closest friend, speaking at his funeral, said of him: "Andy's decision to go to Mississippi was the result of a simple ability to perceive and feel the reality of the social evil which pervades our society. And for Andy the step from conviction to action, made quietly but firmly, came naturally." All of us who knew and loved Andy were sure that he would be among those who reached out to help others. It was a quality he possessed from childhood. When he was six years old, Andy's father wrote:

"These are my children --- these my childlings!
Mine in the zest of their leaping eyes!

And Andy -- as the strength of my own excursions
Into the realm of jubilee and laughter
Into the peace of love and beloved
Into the frost of bruise and hurt
Into the fantasy of idols above him
Into the knowledge that good is for him
And from him flows a tide of belonging
That gives to the giver his own desirings.

Andy was born during a war that killed millions of people whose "crime" was to live out their religious, political and cultural beliefs. He was murdered along with his companions because they were part of a struggle to bring dignity and equality to Black Americans. By that act, the racists who feared and hated them hoped to hold back the progress toward justice and civil rights. But we who believe in the rights of all people know that there will always be an Andy Goodman, a James Chaney and a Michael Schwerner to keep the fight for justice and social equality alive.

Carolyn Goodman Eisner
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