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## Short Biography of Andrew Goodman 1943-1964

In 1943, when Andy was born, our country and its allies were waging a war against fascism and its twin evils, racism and genocide. He grew up in an era that witnessed the slaughter of millions of Jews, labor leaders and minority people in Europe all of whom were perceived as despised, and unfit to walk the earth with the pure so-called Aryan race. And here, in our own country, men in congress, business and even some in the academic community launched merciless attacks on political dissidents who were considered threats to our national security. Fear stalked the land and some frightened people gave testimony that incriminated friends in order to safeguard their own families and livelihood. Many others firmly stood their ground.

As Andy grew up, he had many questions to ask of his father, myself and his teachers. He learned of the poverty, the hopelessness and disappointment of the families, especially the recently arrived Puerto Ricans in the fifties who had emigrated to New York seeking employment and a better life for their children. We lived in neighborhood with these families and Andy befriended many of the children.

As he grew into adolescence, Andy tried to understand the political and social forces that governed his life in the late 1950s and early 1960s. 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 survive when they were dependent on large companies for loans to house and care for their families? Why were some Americans denied the rights and protections 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 close friend visited the coal mines of West Virginia; at 17, he traveled abroad to live with families in farming communities of Western

Europe; at 19, he was dramatics counselor in a summer camp for inner city children. Andy learned about people by working with them. Between semesters in college, he worked on a construction crew and as a helper to a United Parcel truck driver. Recently, the UPS created an Andrew Goodman/UPS Endowment Fund to document the History of Civil Rights in the workplace.

Andy's concern and sensitivity developed along with his zest for living and many interests. He loved land and water sports, studied clarinet, was an ardent baseball fan and one day, lost in fantasy while practicing his clarinet, his instrument became a baseball bat, he became a Brooklyn Dodger "star", Jackie Robinson to be exact, and when he swung for the ball, his "guaranteed unbreakable" clarinet broke into many pieces at his feet!

The theater was Andy's great love. He wrote a play which was performed at his high school graduation, majored in Dramatic Arts when he entered college (which he later changed to Political Science) and acted with an Off-Broadway repertory company. In the short span of his 20 years, Andy drank deeply from the waters of our cultural heritage, knew the pain of those less fortunate than he, and gave much tenderness and love to his family and friends.

When Andy heard about the Mississippi Summer Project, it was inevitable that he would volunteer to join with other students who were going to help Black Americans register to vote, to teach children in Freedom Schools and work in community centers. He, along with two other Civil Rights workers, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner, were murdered by the Klu Klux Klan in Mississippi.

A dear friend speaking at Andy's memorial service, 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."

The rest is history. But history is still to be made, and we must learn from our past or we are destined to move in circles, and not forward to create a richer and wiser future.

The Andrew Goodman Foundation continues to build on the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement. The foundation recently completed a documentary called *Hidden Heroes: Youth Activism Today* the purpose of this film is:

- To increase young people’s participation in programs and organizations designed to improve their own communities;
- To distribute the film to the academic world, churches, synagogues and the media to inform a national audience of many young people now organizing at the grassroots,
- To partner young activists and veteran civil rights leaders so they can educate one another and form new alliances that reflect civil rights as well as social and economic issues that concern us today.

I would like to conclude this sketch of Andrew Goodman’s life with the last verse of a poem written by Stephen Spender in 1938 and dedicated to the young men who fought with Spanish Republicans against the dictator Francisco Franco. They, the International Brigade, left their homes from all over the world to join the Spanish people. They were drawn to Spain, as young activists thirty-five years later were drawn to the South, because they believed in freedom and democracy. The title of the poem is: “I Think Continually of Those Who Were Truly Great”:

“Near the sun, near the snow, in the highest fields  
See how these names are feted by the waving grass  
And by the streamers of white cloud  
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.  
The names of those who in their lives fought for life  
Who wore at their hearts the fire’s center.  
Born of the sun they traveled a short while toward the sun  
And left the vivid air signed with their honor.”

The last two lines (with permission from the poet,) are engraved on Andy's tombstone:

“Born of the sun he traveled a short while toward the sun  
And left the vivid air signed with his honor.”

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