

Anne moody, coming of age in mississippi essay

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In the beginning I never really saw myself as a writer. I was first and foremost an activist in the civil rights movement in Mississippi. When I could no longer see that anything was being accomplished by our work there, I left and went North. I came back to see through my writing that no matter how hard we in the movement worked, nothing seemed to change; that we made a few visible little gains; yet at the root, things always remained the same; and that the movement was not in control of its destiny, nor did we have any means of gaining control of it.

We were like an angry dog on a leash that had turned on its master. It could bark and howl and snap, and sometimes even bite, but the master was always in control. I realized that the universal fight for human rights, dignity, justice, equality, and freedom is not and should not be just the fight of the American Negro or the Indians or the Chicanos.

It's the fight of every ethnic and racial minority, every suppressed and exploited person, everyone of the millions who daily suffer one or another of the indignities of the powerless and voiceless masses. And this trend of thinking is what finally brought about my involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, especially as it began to splinter and get more narrowly nationalistic in its thinking. Anne Moody (born September 15 1940) is an African American author who has written about her experiences growing up poor and black in rural Mississippi, and then joining the Civil Rights Movement, which fought racism against blacks in the United States beginning in the 1950s. Born as Essie Mae Moody, she was the eldest of nine children of Fred and Elnire Moody. After her parents split up, she grew up with her mother in Centreville, Mississippi, while her father lived in nearby <https://assignbuster.com/anne-moody-coming-of-age-in-mississippi-essay/>

Woodville, Mississippi. At a young age she began working for whites in the area, cleaning their houses and helping their children with homework for only a few dollars a week.

After graduating from a segregated, all black high school, she attended Natchez Junior College (also all black) in 1961 under a basketball scholarship. Then she moved on to Tougaloo College on an academic scholarship to get full degree. At Tougaloo she became involved with the Congress of Racial Equality, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. After graduating she became a full-time worker in the movement, participating in the Woolworth's lunch counter sit-in and the activity in Jackson, Mississippi.

She later worked for CORE in the volatile town of Canton, Mississippi. Anne Moody is a well-known contemporary black native Mississippian author. She has written biographical novels depicting life in Mississippi and the struggles of black people in the South. Many people can relate to her style of writing.

Her novels help people understand what life was like in the South before and during the civil rights movement. Anne Moody was born in Wilkinson County, Mississippi on September 15, 1940 to Fred and Elnire (Williams) Moody. She attended Natchez Junior College and completed her education at Tougaloo College.

Moody married Austin Stratus and had one child named Sascha. In 1969, Anne's marriage ended in divorce. Anne's popular autobiography *Coming of Age in Mississippi* is set in her hometown of Centerville, Mississippi. Anne

tells the story of her struggles and triumphs in this rural Mississippi town. She talks about racism from a child's perspective. Moody has never thought of herself as a writer, but rather as a civil rights activist. However, throughout Moody's life she has won many awards and honors for her literary accomplishments.

Coming of Age in Mississippi received the Brotherhood Award from the National Council of Christians and Jews and the Best Book of the Year Award from the National Library Association, both in 1969. She also received the silver medal from Mademoiselle magazine for her short story "New Hopes for the Seventies." Moody's other works include *Dial*, 1969, and *Mr. Death: Four Stories*. Moody also has sound recordings of her novel *Mr. Death* and her short story "Bobo." During Anne Moody's career she worked hard as a civil rights activist and worked for the Congress of Racial Equality.

Anne spoke and participated in many civil rights activities like the famous Woolworth luncheon sit-in and the March on Washington (when Dr. Martin Luther King made his famous "I had a dream" speech.). Reverend King and Anne Moody had a close professional relationship. Also in 1972, Moody was the artist in residence in Berlin, Germany.

Anne worked at Cornell University later as a civil rights project coordinator. Moody now lives in New York where she continues to write and serve her community as a Counselor for New York City's poverty program. Today she remains a more private citizen and rarely does interviews. Moody's works have interested people throughout the world. University students, as well as

high school students, have read these books as historical references because Moody's writing allows people to feel the time period.

In addition, they interest people because her writing helps the reader visualize the events that occurred in the 50's and 60's. While at Tougaloo College she worked with the NAACP, CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee), culminating in her personal involvement in the integration of Woolworth's lunch counter in Jackson, Mississippi. Eventually *Coming of Age* also gives the reader an indication of the motivations for the author's turn toward militancy and her eventual move to New York City, where she now resides. Moody herself has trouble with the identity of "writer": "In the beginning, I never really saw myself as a writer. I was first and foremost an activist in the civil rights movement in Mississippi. When I could no longer see that anything was being accomplished by our work there, I left and went North.

I came to see through my writing that no matter how hard we in the Movement worked, nothing seemed to change; that we made a few visible little gains, yet at the root, things always remained the same; and that the Movement was not in control of its destiny? '- nor did we have any means of controlling its destiny." Still, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* remains a classic in the literature of the civil rights movement. It has been consistently anthologized, and on its publication Sen. Edward Kennedy wrote "Anne Moody's powerful and moving book is a timely reminder that we cannot now relax in the struggle for sound justice in America." Moody has won awards or

been recognized by the International P. E. N. /Faulkner Awards and the National Council of Christians and Jews.

The reluctant writer is reportedly at work on a novel entitled *The Clay Gully*. Anne Moody was born on September 15, 1940 in Wilkinson County, Mississippi. She is the daughter of Fred and Elmire Moody, and the oldest of nine children.

Moody felt the pains of racism at an early age. She had to clean houses as a child to help her family to afford food and clothing. She attended segregated schools, where she received good grades.

After graduating from high school, Moody received a basketball scholarship to Natchez Junior College, which she attended in 1961. At Natchez, she became involved in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She went on to continue her education at Tougaloo College, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree upon graduation in 1964. After the lynching of Emmitt Till, Moody's civil rights activities intensified. In 1964, she served as a civil rights coordinator at Cornell University. She was involved in the famous Woolworth lunchroom sit-in and participated in the March on Washington, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Through her civil involvement, Moody developed a close professional relationship with Reverend King.

Moody married Austin Stratus and they had a child named Sascha; she was divorced in 1967. Although she was thoroughly involved in the civil rights movement, she broke away because she had doubts about the direction of black liberation. Moody later said, " I realized that the universal fight for human rights, dignity, justice, equality and freedom is not and should not be just the fight of the American Negro or the Indians or the Chicanos. It's the fight of every ethnic and racial minority, every suppressed and exploited person, everyone of the millions who daily suffer one or another of the indignities of the powerless and voiceless masses. " Moody describes herself as a reluctant writer. She says, " In the beginning I never really saw myself as a writer. I was first and foremost an activist in the civil rights movement in Mississippi.

When I could no longer see that anything was being accomplished by our work there, I left and went North. " Moody has two major published works, *Coming of Age of Mississippi* (1968), and *Mr. Death: Four Stories* (1975), as well as a number of uncollected short stories. In 1969, *Coming of Age of Mississippi* received the Brotherhood Award from the National Council of Christians and Jews and the Best Book of the Year Award from the National Library Association. Her short story, " *New Hopes for the Seventies*" received the silver medal from *Mademoiselle* magazine. Moody is most recognized for her autobiography, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, which examines the issues of the awakening civil rights movement, the youth movement and the emergence of her feminist consciousness.

This narrative depicts the lives of black people in rural Mississippi and the conflicts discrimination creates. It is a compelling story, reflecting the style of Moody's writing: angry, blunt, and incredibly powerful. Moody resides in New York and grants no interviews nor does she appear publicly. Little is known about the details of her life after her two main works, but she is currently working on a book entitled *The Clay Gully*. The well-written autobiography *Coming of Age in Mississippi* by Anne Moody is the story of her life as a poor black girl growing into adulthood. It depicts life in a rural Mississippi town during the civil rights movement of the 1940's and 1950's.

She overcomes obstacles such as discrimination and hunger as she struggles to survive childhood. The main character, Anne Moody, always sought a purpose for her life, while she struggled through life's hardships. The autobiography begins when Anne is four years old and portrays her life up to age twenty-four at the end of the book. As a very independent black woman with an abiding faith in God, Moody held her head high through her youthful trials and struggles. Anne Moody was a very private individual, keeping her emotions within her heart and allowing few people to know her true feelings. The withheld feelings often led to mental breakdowns.

Young Moody was not searching for love because she could care less if she found a husband. She had a personal mission throughout the entire book. She met and befriended many new and interesting people.

Although friendly and compassionate, Anne was somewhat peculiar. The story of her young life keeps the reader wondering about the source of her strength and stamina as she stood up for the causes in which she believed.

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As the story begins, Anne is a four-year-old child who watches her parents go to work everyday except Sunday for the man of the plantation. This young girl is innocent and naive, not seeing the bad things that are going on around her. George Lee, Anne's cousin, keeps her and her sister during the day.

One day Cousin George, a mean-spirited character with other things on his mind, sets the house on fire and blames it on Anne. Soon after this, Anne's father becomes tired of working as a sharecropper. He leaves his family and his responsibilities for a life of uncontrolled sex, gambling, and alcohol. Anne's mother is faced with raising and supporting two children as a single parent.

She was able to get a job in the city, and they moved with the help of other family members. While living in town, her mother met a man named Raymond. Unfortunately, Anne and Raymond never got along, and they encountered major problems.

As Anne entered high school, she was a good student, excelling in all her classes. She was also well-liked by her peers and had the honor of being crowned homecoming queen. An outstanding athlete, she was a member of the basketball team and the tumbling team. Because of the problems between Anne and Raymond, Moody chose to move to Woodville to live with her father just before her senior year of high school. Anne's family was poor so she worked hard in the homes and businesses of white people to support herself and to put herself through college. Anne spent her summer vacations working in New Orleans and Baton Rouge where she lived with family members. Anne seemed to have few problems, but in reality, she had many

deep-seated problems. She wanted so badly to understand the discrimination of the era.

She also wanted the killing and raping of her fellow black friends to stop. She was always able to contain and conceal her emotions because of the fear of what might happen to her. After high school Anne moved to Natchez where she entered college at Natchez Junior College on a basketball scholarship. It was here at college that she encountered her first experiences with boys. While attending Natchez Junior College she also began to see her calling. The major conflict in this book is Anne versus herself and society because she struggles to change wrongs to rights. Anne struggled financially but managed to change some things at Natchez Junior College.

As Moody became consumed with her mission in life, she entered Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, to complete her college education. Tougaloo was an integrated college for blacks and whites (although very few whites were in attendance). However, she did have white teachers who had come to the South from the northern states. During her two years at Tougaloo, she became involved with the NAACP and CORE. She worked for the CORE in a number of places but was generally located in Canton, Mississippi.

Anne moved anywhere the CORE needed her. The autobiography ends as she is re-located in Washington D. C. The work is written in first person point of view. Anne is the narrator/ author.

The reader identifies with Anne because Moody helps them know exactly how she feels. The plot is mostly the internal struggle within Anne, but also

deals, of course, with her conflict with the society of the time. The author's purpose in writing this book was to help people understand her life.

The setting is significant because it sets the mood for the entire book. The people in this story are real people who give the reader insight into how uncaring people can be or how people are just too scared to show they care. However, the conflicts keep the story interesting to the reader. The title of this autobiography, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* explains what the book is about. This story is about growing up or coming of age (reaching adulthood) in Mississippi during a time of change and struggle. In conclusion, I enjoyed this book very much because it allowed me to understand an important historical event and to know what it felt like to be a civil rights activist. .

Anne Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi* gives the reader a better appreciation of the struggles and hardships people went through and overcame just to have some basic rights. *Coming of age in Mississippi* is filled with examples of the hatred that existed between blacks and whites in the 1960's and 70's. The main character experiences racism, but the end is filled with joy and peace. The main character is Essie Mae, who is really Anne Moody herself. She struggles through the difficulties of racism between the blacks and whites in a small town in Mississippi called Centerville. Her personality changes as her life progresses and the killing begins. Anne Moody is a smart, intelligent, black girl who sits proud on top of the world. This work has a setting that is in central Mississippi during the 1940's through 1960's.

It begins on Mr. Carter's plantation where Essie Mae and her family live.

Essie Mae's mama and dad work all the time on the farm, so Essie Mae and her little sister stay at home alone or her uncle George Lee stay with them.

George used to beat Essie while her mama and dad were gone to work at the farm. After a while Essie's dad and mama separated, and Essie and her mother moved several times into different homes. Essie's mother married a man named Raymond who was a soldier.

By this time Essie's mama had six children and another on the way. Anne was working for a white woman to help her family. She says, " Things seemed to get harder. Mama was always having another baby. Essie was making six dollars a week, and she tried to help her mother buy food so they wouldn't have to eat bread and water every day. As Essie and her family struggled, there was so much killing that Essie decided to spend the summer with her uncle in New Orleans, Louisiana. While in Louisiana she got a job at a cafe. She was only fifteen and a worker had to be eighteen.

However, she got the job, but she told one of her co-workers her age. The co-worker told the boss, and Essie got fired. Essie finds out that her name is not Essie Mae, but Anne Moody. People at school still called her Moody. After high school Anne attended Natchez college, she didn't like it because it was small-only three brick, one-story buildings. She played basketball like she did in high school. Anne moved on to Toogaloo College in Toogaloo, Mississippi.

There she joined the group SNCC that had been started in the Delta (Greenwood and Greenville). Moody visited Greenwood and became very active with the SNCC group. Soon she joined the NAACP and that is how she

became active in the movement. This story is written in first person point of view as the author is telling the story about her life..

The plot is uplifting because Anne goes through lots of things, but she manages to survive. Moody wrote this book to entertain but also to express her feelings about growing up in Mississippi in the 1940's. The theme is important as Anne grows up in Mississippi. The theme is about the hardship of life and how difficult life can be in the 1940's when there is lots of racism. In conclusion, I enjoyed this book very much and believe that many people today can relate to Moody's experiences growing up in southern Mississippi. I feel that she could influence a lot of people.