

The children bob moses led essay examples

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In the book *The Children Bob Moses Led*, Tom Morton is a white college student and volunteer, who naively yet idealistically embraces the can-do attitude of the 1960s and fights on the side of civil rights during the titular movement. One of the clearest and most politically intriguing statements made in the work is that of Hal Zizner, who asks Tom Morton "What do you do with your life; major in history or make history?" (Heath 47). This is meant to directly challenge Tom's motivations for becoming an activist and volunteer, as these two opposing ideologies are pitted against each other for relevance. On one end, Tom would be an academic, thoroughly studying history and understanding its contexts from a distance; on the other, Tom would be active in the political field, actually making choices and taking positions on the issues at hand. This choice is at the heart of the novel, and one that remains extremely politically relevant today.

In order to understand this choice, it is important to know the difference between the two options. What Hal means by 'major[ing] in history' is immersing oneself in the study of it without actually getting involved. This is presented as a bad idea, as Tom eventually becomes more and more active in politics, even in his small town. The first page of the book itself explores the idea of actually getting your hands dirty and letting life take you where you need to be; Heath himself takes the position that being active is better than dispassionately studying and analyzing the world around you; "at least I had not sat on the sidelines with the lip-service liberals; rather I had become my own contemporary and acted on my ideals." (Heath 1). In the book, it is presented as absolutely vital that we engage with our fellow human beings and their problems, allowing us to understand even more what they are

going through; " When people get to know each other, prejudice is broken down" (Heath 197). This can only be done by being active, not by observing what is going on around us without investment or involvement.

If I had to choose, I would have to fall along with Tom's eventual choice and get involved. While I do see a lot of merit to academic study of history - since it is necessary to learn in order to understand what came before us - we should not engage in that to the detriment of actually being part of it. The meaning of the sentiment Hal gives Tom is that we should make our own mark in the world and be a part of what is going on, rather than merely coldly observing it from a distance. While this may be more comfortable, it limits our ability to explore and engage with the world around us. To that end, I think it is far more important to make history than major in it. That being said, I think it is possible to do both - moderation of both disciplines can lead one to be a more well-rounded being, making informed decisions about how to become politically active.

Works Cited

Heath, William. *The Children Bob Moses Led*. Milkweed Editions, 1995. Print.