

My Mantelpiece: A Memoir of Survival and Social Justice

Carolyn Goodman

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Carolyn Goodman's lovingly crafted prose not only tells her own story but also bolsters the story of her son Andrew's social activism.

Little has been publicized about Andrew Goodman, a participant in Freedom Summer in 1964 who was murdered for fighting against injustices in Mississippi. *My Mantelpiece: A Memoir of Survival and Social Justice* provides a meaningful look, from his mother's perspective, into who twenty-year-old Andy was and how he came to be in Philadelphia, Mississippi, face-to-face with the men who would murder him and his companions.

To provide a complete view of her son, Carolyn Goodman begins with her own youth, which was fraught with challenges, from molestation and neglect to grief brought on by her father's suicide just before she married Bobby, a civil engineer. Interesting details and well-placed, captioned black-and-white photos reveal Bobby and Carolyn's commitment to social causes—possible influences that led to Andy's early dedication to speaking out against injustices. He was also interested in drama and anthropology and was enrolled in Queens College.

Some chapters include a poem or a letter by Bobby, who died five years after Andy. These pieces allow him to be a part of the memoir, but they also capture the essence of Bobby's love for Andy, just as Carolyn's moving anecdotes do. With such well-crafted poetry and prose, Andy's personality becomes vivid and full of life.

My Mantelpiece is a cradle-to-the-grave biography, as Carolyn's life, from birth to dedicated mother, wife, and activist are presented up until her death at age ninety-one. This is all compelling and well written, but these details seem to pale compared to those few passages that capture the innocence of a mother's seemingly simple decision to allow her son the room to do what he believed was right, only to have that decision haunt her for the rest of her life. The powerful foreword written by Maya Angelou says it best: "You see, the mother of a black boy knows that when he leaves home, she may never see him again ... But the white mother didn't know that."

Readers interested in learning more about who Andrew Goodman really was and how his family worked for social justice will enjoy this book.

KAUVONIA HINTON (Summer 2014)

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