

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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MISSION US: "No Turning Back"

Excerpt from *Coming of Age in Mississippi*

*Anne Moody grew up in rural Mississippi as the daughter of two sharecroppers. She received a scholarship to go to a junior college and then went on to attend Tougaloo College outside of Jackson, Mississippi. While at Tougaloo she joined students who were engaged in the civil rights movement. Anne Moody wrote a memoir of her experiences, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, that was published in 1968. This excerpt describes a sit-in she took part in on May 28, 1963 at Woolworth's lunch counter.*

I told them that we were all students at Tougaloo College, that we were represented by no particular organization, and that we planned to stay there even after the store closed. "All we want is service," was my reply to one of them. After they had finished probing for about twenty minutes, they were almost ready to leave.

At noon, students from a nearby white high school started pouring into Woolworth's. When they first saw us they were sort of surprised. They didn't know how to react. A few started to heckle and the newsmen became interested again. Then the white students started chanting all kinds of anti-Negro slogans. We were called a little bit of everything. The rest of the seats except the three we were occupying had been roped off to prevent others from sitting down. A couple of the boys took one end of the rope and made it into a hangman's noose. Several attempts were made to put it around our necks. The crowds grew as more students and adults came in for lunch.

We kept our eyes straight forward and did not look at the crowd except for occasional glances to see what was going on. All of a sudden I saw a face I remembered — the drunkard from the bus station sit-in. My eyes lingered on him just long enough for us to recognize each other. Today he was drunk too, so I don't think he remembered where he had seen me before. He took out a knife, opened it, put it in his pocket, and then began to pace the floor. At this point, I told Memphis and Pearlina what was going on. Memphis suggested that we pray. We bowed our heads, and all hell broke loose.

Source: *Coming of Age in Mississippi*

Discussion Questions:

1. What did Anne Moody remember about the sit-in?
2. How did the scene change when white high schoolers came into Woolworth's?
3. How did the threat of violence impact the Tougaloo students?