



Morris Dees

Morris Dees was a champion of resistance who helped poor black people with the civil rights law. When he was young he wanted to help a man by the name of Clarence Darrow. Clarence was a black man that had hit a curb or a hole and lost the control of his car when his steering mechanisms failed. He swerved and hit a median. He sat for a little while before returning to the road. As soon as he returned to the road a state trooper, stopped him and arrested him for drunk driving. Morris thought that was unfair and told his father, who told him to become a lawyer and do something about it. Morris took his dad's counsel and became a lawyer and fought for the rights of other people.

After he had earned his law degree he didn't practice law for a while. Instead, he ran his mail order business and took care of his family. In 1963, a bomb went off in a Baptist church. It killed four little girls. Morris tried to get his congregation to help them but because the girls were black they did not want to help at all. After trying to get his congregation to help, he was ostracized from the Baptist church. He then became concerned with civil rights and joined the Unitarian church.

In February, 1968, he was stranded at an airport because of a snowstorm. While there he read a book called Clarence Darrow's The Story of My Life. That made him stop and think just a little about what was happening: it also made him realize what he could do with his degree. He decided to practice Civil Rights Law. He said, "All the things in my life that had brought me to this point, all the pulls and tugs of my conscience, found a singular peace. It did not matter what my neighbors would think, or the judges, the bankers, or even my relatives." He helped the unfortunate black people who were being treated unfairly through the Southern Poverty Law Center that he set up to fight for justice for victims of hate and discrimination.