

## Birdie

Growing up, she was born in Amite County, Mississippi, in 1918, and never left. She was only able to go to school two days a week because the other days she had to help her mother pick cotton. Birdie was among the first three African Americans in the county to register to vote. During the summer of 1960, Birdie, with her sister Matilda and cousin Ernest, waited all day with civil rights leader Dr. Robert Moses on the Liberty Courthouse porch. Eventually each was allowed to enter individually and complete the form permitting them to vote. When they left the courthouse, a patrol car followed them and pulled them over as they reached the county line. Dr. Moses was arrested on vague charges. Using his one phone call allowed by law, he contacted the U.S. Justice Department, and the charges were dropped.

“My grandmother is a quiet, unassuming person. That may be the reason why I was a college student when I found out for the first time that she, along with my great-aunt and cousin, was one of the first African-Americans to register to vote in Liberty, Mississippi. At a time when blacks were being lynched for any reason or no reason at all, my grandmother risked her life to make our lives better. I am a beneficiary of her tremendous risk and sacrifice, and I am grateful to her beyond words. Somehow I don't think that I have ever told her thank you, so I will do it here. Thank you, Grandma, for making sacrifices so that your children and your children's children could have better futures. Thank you for your bravery in the face of tremendous danger. Thank you for demonstrating for me the importance of standing up for what you believe, taking risks, and living an honorable life. I credit my commitment to social justice to your influence, and I pray that my children and grandchildren will one day be as proud of me as I am of you. I LOVE YOU!”

Terrica, Civil Rights Attorney



Birdie – Civil Rights Activist

“We had hard times. We had to work and walk to school. Children now ride a bus and don't want to go to school . . . Children, you better get an education and vote!”