

VT-867 Transcription

Bayard Rustin Memorial Service. 1 October 1987.

Donald Harrington:

Gathered out of Earth's dust, flower dust, storm dust, splinters of hay, one hand full of dream [00:01:00] dust. Not the same.

Dear lovely death, the taker of all things under wing. Never to kill, only to change into some other thing this suffering flesh.

To make it (inaudible) us but not again the same. Dear lovely death, change is thy other name. Wave of sorrow, do not drown me now. I see the island still ahead somehow. I see the island and its sands out there. Wave of sorrow, take me there. [00:02:00]

Let us pray. Dear God, our Father and our Mother, source of all creation, we invoke your presence here and in our hearts as we gather to honor and give thanks for the good life of your child and son, our brother Bayard. He called and led us up out of the swamps of despair and degradation. He dared to go on ahead, often alone, to show the way. He faced the dogs of danger with high courage and equanimity. His only weapons love and hope.

[00:03:00] If he was afraid he didn't show it. We gather to thank you, dear God, for his life, his comradeship, his stalwart, unwavering leadership in the cause of human freedom and equality. Be with us and strengthen us, that we may have the courage to follow in his steps. Amen.

**Norman Hill:**

Good afternoon. My name is Norman Hill, president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, and I would like to welcome all of you to this special memorial tribute to Bayard Rustin. It would be fair to say that the brief remarks I'm about to deliver are the ones I'd hoped I never would have to make. [00:04:00] For I'm about to pay tribute to a man I loved and admired, who so many of us loved and admired, in the hope of putting his remarkable life, his innumerable accomplishments in some perspective. For all of us who knew and worked with Bayard, he was more than an inspirational leader, master tactician, an intellectual of uncommon depth and courage. He was a gentle and special friend, and we will have to deal with his loss in our own private way. But Bayard Rustin was also very much a public person, and though he may be gone, his spirits survives in his accomplishments, his words, his politics. Bayard lives on in the broad scope of his achievements, and in the indelible mark he left in the realm of human affairs, and it is in this arena that his legacy will endure. While it is [00:05:00] extraordinarily difficult to capture the essence of so unique, complex, and eclectic a man, there were certain touchstones that anchored and in formed his life and philosophy. One such [aspires?] steadfast

commitment to social democratic principles, learned from A. Philip Randolph, Norman Thomas, Max Shachtman, and other giants in the movement for social and economic justice. All of Bayard's achievements in the Civil Rights Movement, labor activists, and human rights advocate were rooted in the tenants of social democrat thought, an unshakeable belief in racial equality, a commitment to democracy, and to the role of the Trade Union Movement as a vehicle for justice. And Bayard understood that these principles were meaningless unless universally applied. He knew that they were as relevant in Bombay or Colonial Africa as in the United States. But for all his involvement in international affairs, [00:06:00] Bayard never abandoned the continue struggle of black Americans for social and economic justice. He was intensely proud of his blackness. He had a profound interest in black American history and African culture, and anyone who's ever heard his beautiful and heartfelt renditions of spirituals and freedom songs knows how deeply Bayard understood and loved who he was and where he came from. The death of Bayard of Rustin has left a void in the movement for justice and (inaudible), a void that will be virtually impossible to fill. Because Bayard Rustin was unique. His life and work bridged the pillars of that movement. Civil rights, labor in the advancement of democracy both here and abroad. That is why today's main speakers include distinguished

representatives who worked with Bayard in these key areas of his endeavor. But before introducing them, I would like to end with some personal observations. What made Bayard [00:07:00] a special human being was his infinite capacity to respond to human suffering in a human manner. And that generosity of spirit is even extended to many who had publicly rebuked him and later came to him for aid and advice. The nation has lost a fearless champion of the oppressed and downtrodden. Because of him, the world is a better place. But if Bayard were here today, he would tell us in no uncertain terms not to despair. So to truly honor him, we must keep on with the same enthusiasm, dedication, and optimism that kept Bayard Rustin young and always looking ahead to the next battle. But if we should ever get discouraged or tired, we (inaudible) only we call Bayard, tall, distinguished, and so utterly undefeated, and realize how he made us proud, gave us hope, and showed that the human heart does indeed have a limitless reserve of compassion [00:08:00] and perseverance. So Bayard is not really gone. When we look into the tragic eyes of a homeless and hungry child, we see Bayard. He is there alongside the Afghan refugees and all those displaced by tyranny. He is there shoulder to shoulder with a black South African miner, fighting for dignity and justice. When we see a Latin American peasant clutching a tattered ballot, waiting to cast a vote, Bayard is there as well. We find his spirit in

every picket line and in ghetto back streets. And we find him wherever blacks have achieved success and dignity and pride. We find him where workers have attained their rightful share of the American dream. And we find a little of Bayard in all of us, urging us to go on, to struggle for what we believe no matter what the odds until there is freedom and equality and brotherhood for all of mankind. So today is really a celebration. A celebration of all those things [00:09:00] Bayard gave to us and to the world. A celebration of the ultimate triumph of personal courage and commitment.

And now I'd briefly like to introduce today's programming. Our first speaker will be Vernon Jordan, former president of the National Urban League, who worked closely with Bayard over the years. He will followed Lane Kirkman, president of the AFL-CIO, whose working relationship with Bayard goes back over 20 years. There will then be a musical interlude by the Carr Hill Singers, followed by remarks by Phiroshaw Camay, general secretary of the national counsel of trade unions of South Africa, who go to know Bayard in the anti-apartheid struggle for worker and human rights in South Africa. Next, we have Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, director of international relations for the American Jewish Committee, who for years worked closely with Bayard in such issues as black-Jewish relations in Israel. He will be followed

by [00:10:00] Charles Bloomstein, who for many, many years was a close confidant and friend of ours, and is secretary of the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund. Following a tape of Bayard singing a spiritual, we'll hear from [Lee Roman?], well-known actress and vice president of the International Rescue Committee, who just several months ago accompanied Bayard to (inaudible) to monitor the plight of Cambodian refugees. She will be followed by Congressman John Lewis of Atlanta, Georgia, who as head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, personifies the young civil activists of the 1960s influenced by Bayard. Next, we will hear from DeWitt Luff, Bayard's cousin, who will be followed by the Carr Hill Singers. Brief remarks in the benediction will be delivered by Reverend Thomas Kilgore of the Second Baptist Church of Los Angeles, who worked with Bayard in the many civil rights projects Bayard organized with Randolph, and his [00:11:00] New York church was used for many planning meetings to launch the 1963 march on Washington. After the benediction we ask that you remain seated for a taped spiritual by Bayard. Now I'd like to introduce Vernon Jordan.

**Vernon Jordan:**

Bayard Rustin occupied one of the most unique positions of any civil rights leader of our time. Bayard Rustin was the consummate advisor to the entire civil rights leadership. From

A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, Martin Luther King, Jr., (inaudible), to John Lewis, Norman Hill, Ben Hooks, John Jacob, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Jesse Jackson, and countless others. We counted on [00:12:00] Bayard for intellectual firepower, for strategic thinking, for long-range planning for pragmatic idealism. Bayard was chairman of the ideas committed for all of us. Bayard captured the spirit of heated debates among us, and drafted sensible, sound statements of compromise and consensus. We each sought him out privately to ask his thoughts on our organizational agendas. Yes, Bayard Rustin, without staff, research assistants, interns, budget, or massive library was our intellectual bank [00:13:00], our [brookings?]. An intellectual bank for we all had unlimited accounts, and upon request for withdrawal were never told that we were overdrawn. But Bayard Rustin was more than that. In 1963 march on Washington, he demonstrated capacity some of us never knew he had. He proved to us and the nation that he was a first-class organizer, logician, tactician, mobilizer, peacemaker, strategist, and coalition builder as he led the Civil Rights Movement to one of its finest hours. And when the leadership and the movement [00:14:00] were on the horns of a dilemma, facing imminent defeat, our spirits low, our heads bowed, not knowing what next or which way to turn. It was Bayard's quiet eloquence, his inspiring words, his deep faith, his bright optimism that

lifted our hearts, expanded our minds, encouraged us, renewed us, and reinvigorated us to move onward and upward to another mountain. Bayard Rustin was not only one with us, but he marched with us, stood by us, and propped us up on every leaning side that he was for us a rock in a weary land, the shelter [00:15:00] in a time of storm. When hungry for ideas, Bayard fed us. When thirsty for tactics, Bayard gave us water. When naked for inspiration, he clothed us with philosophical underpinnings and insights. Bayard's lifetime devotion to the calls of civil rights invokes the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes who wrote that his life, his action, and passion, it is required of man to share the action and passion of his times at the risk of being judged, not to have lived. Bayard Rustin truly lived because he shared the action and passion of his times with us [00:16:00] and for us. And therefore Bayard has left us a legacy, an irrevocable legacy of caring, sharing, daring, leading, speaking, thinking, acting. And that legacy, the legacy of Bayard Rustin, not even death can take from us. Let us then honor the legacy, remember the legacy, and be worthy of it.

**Lane Kirkland:**

Even to his adversaries the news of Bayard Rustin's death came like a blow to the heart. He had great many adversaries, opponents, antagonists. [00:17:00] But I never heard him speak

of an enemy, and I don't believe he ever had one, no matter how intense the conflict, he never lost his sense of the human bond on which all hope for the resolution of conflict rests. The injustices that he found against were immediate and specific. But the justice that he fought for is timeless and universal. Although he gave his whole heart and mind to the causes that he fought for, no cause could ever limit or define him. He will, no doubt and quite properly, be remembered as the master strategist, and one of the three or four most inspiring leaders of the black civil rights revolution. [00:18:00] But as the editors of the *New Republic* pointed out, he devoted himself to the black struggle not because he was black, but because he believed it was right. Only on issues of right and wrong did Bayard ever take sides. He defended Israel, although he was not a Jew, against those who said that she and her people had no right to exist. He defended the boat people although he was not a Vietnamese or a Haitian, against those who said that they had no right to seek freedom or to find welcome. It was to defend the cause of right that he joined battles on behalf of black workers in South Africa, and marched on countless picket lines with American trade unionists. [00:19:00] To defend the right, he traveled the world on behalf of the helpless, the homeless, the poor, the exploited. And the greater the power he challenged, the stronger his voice became. He understood and he

taught that human freedom is a seamless fabric that all of us have to repair whenever and wherever it is torn. He understood and he taught that there are no black issues, no women's issues, no labor issues that are not a part of the same struggle for human justice. As we mourn all that we have lost in Bayard's death, we cherish what we have gained from his life [00:20:00] and his example, and we pledge to Bayard's memory that we mean to keep it.

(Carr Hill Singers sing [00:21:00] to [00:23:00])

**Phiroshaw Camay:**

It is with a sense of deep humility that is an act of faith that I represent the oppressed and exploited black workers of South Africa here today. Bayard Rustin is no more, but his deep faith that justice will prevail and freedoms in the third world can be won and attained, was not merely a symbolic gesture, but a deep commitment to humankind. Our first encounter with Bayard Rustin was marked with skepticism. In our youthful arrogance, we believed that here was another American visitor who had the solutions to our problems in apartheid South Africa. [00:24:00] As we grew to understand Bayard Rustin, we learned something of him as a campaigner and a fighter for freedom, indeed a true revolutionary. We learned that Bayard Rustin organized one of

the first organizations in the '50s against colonialism and apartheid, long before apartheid had become a popular issue in the US. Bayard Rustin never imposed his thinking on us, nor did he bring his understanding to imperialistically bear on us, but by a Socratic probing through questions and responses, he lead us to a deeper understanding of our own situation, and in that, we are truly grateful for his teaching and his patience. The last major discussion I had with Bayard was scheduled to last an hour, but we spent over three times that time together.

[00:25:00] He was deeply concerned about the increased violence in South Africa, the detention of trade union and community leaders, and horrified that children were being detained by the Pretoria Regime. Despite this hopelessly bleak situation, Bayard never lost hope. He asked questions and provided direction of how we may proceed. He recalled the fight of A. Philip Randolph and the challenge to President Truman to end military discrimination as quickly as possible. Again and again he stressed that the fight for liberty and justice, and the franchise for black South Africans could only be established with dignity through non-cooperation, non-participation, through passive resistance. He demonstrated through his own experience of the [00:26:00] 1963 march on Washington, that in our fight against apartheid South Africa we had to act and develop an intelligent and responsible strategy based on the product of

sound but principled political philosophy. Again and again he reiterated that we could achieve more by non-violent principles through a broad program of realistic political action to elicit a positive response. Bayard fully understood and accepted our position on the leadership of the black working class in our struggle. He agree that it was only through a positive consciousness that we could overthrow the yoke of race and class oppression. He stressed that even after liberation had been won in South Africa, the most important challenge to the trade union movement would be to keep the issue of [00:27:00] economic democracy before the whole population. He emphasized that the degree of success in the (inaudible) would determine finally whether the goals we fought for would be fulfilled in their entirety. Ten years ago this month, Steve Bantu Biko died in a prison cell in South Africa. To us who knew and worked with Steve Biko, his death was a blow to our struggle. He provided a revolutionary leadership which was the type of leadership that Bayard Rustin provided to all of you. In that type of revolutionary leadership, the genuine and deep concern for civil liberties and economic participation has become a watch word in South Africa. Bayard did this in a way which provided a focus and a direction for political action. [00:28:00] He helped channel rage into a positive force for liberation. His life is a

testament to achieving these objectives. In South Africa we would say "*Hamba Kahle, Bayard.*"

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

Bayard had a very profound moral and spiritual bond with of all people, a first century rabbi named Hillel. Whenever we would come together, he would ask me to recite again in Hebrew Hillel's [00:29:00] core philosophy of human existence; "*Im ein ani li, mi li?*" "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" "*U'kh'she'ani le'atzmi, mah ani?*" "But if I am only for myself, what am I?" "*V'im lo 'akhshav, eimatai?*" "And if not now, when?" Bayard clearly testified to by a presence here today. Bayard was clearly rooted in *ani li*, in the passions, [00:30:00] the anxieties as well as the hopes of his own black people. He was a genius. I believe history will show in helping change the course of history in the liberation from oppression of his own black people. But he also felt with Hillel that if he was only for himself, what is this cause of justice and human liberation, and therefore he was capable, indeed his entire life was a testament out of the particularity and uniqueness of black suffering and the Black Exodus to understand [00:31:00] Jewish suffering and the Jewish Exodus, and the suffering of people in Thailand, in Vietnam, Southeast Asia and Africa and Latin America and elsewhere. I carry around as I think probably every one of us

who were blessed to have time together with Bayard in issues of common concern Nankai, north of Thailand, January 1978, Leo Cherne the chairman of the International Rescue Committee invited Bayard and 14 of us to look into the problem of the Vietnamese boat people to see what we could do to help to relieve their suffering. [00:32:00] And his black experience, my Jewish experience, the experience of the Christians who were with us, the common values and ideals we shared in terms of the ultimate commitment to the sanctity of every human life, of human being created as a child of God led us to join together to go through all of the islands of Southeast Asia to bring relief to the suffering of the Vietnamese boat people, hundreds of thousands of whom had been drowning in the South China Sea in the face of the indifference of much of the world. And in Nankai in that northernmost settlement in Thailand, the (inaudible) tribes people. And as Leo and others here, [Liv Ullmann?], others will remember, they had a friendship ritual. And here is this black leader out of the civil rights [00:33:00] and labor movement of America at a friendship ceremony where the mountain people of Nankai whom he had never seen before, who never knew who he was, engage in this ritual and wrap bands around his hand, bands of love and respect which he flowed toward them. And then after the ritual of friendship was over, Bayard began singing "We Shall Overcome." And a whole village of mountain

tribesman who didn't know the words, but who knew the melody, began singing "We Shall Overcome" with this Bayard Rustin, and with these Jews and Christians and black people from America. The images are multiple. They are his immortality going [00:34:00] into detention camps in Brooklyn and South [Krome?] in Florida to release 2,500 Haitian refugees who were suffering in unbelievable ways, and coming to Washington to demand their release and achieving their release. We both felt our exodus experiences together. This morning a group of Jews were meeting together with Ina Perlman of South Africa to do what? To discuss how we could join together in Operation Hunger to help relieve the starvation of more than 1,200,000 black children who are starving and suffering from malnutrition of the homelands of South Africa. How do we get there? Bayard Rustin came to us at the American Jewish Committee and said, "You will understand." You know what happened to your children [00:35:00] in Europe during World War II under the Nazis and the abandonment by the world, the spectatorship. There was such trust in the honesty and the truthfulness in this aristocrat of compassion, because that's what Bayard was; a natural aristocrat for compassion for blacks and Jews and Vietnamese boat people and Haitians. Whatever human beings suffered the denial of the human dignity. And we trusted him because on the things which meant so much to us in the Jewish community, on Israel, its democratic society,

its survival in the face of threats to its extinction, he was there. On Soviet Jewry who were being denied their basic human rights and civil and political and religious liberties, he was [00:36:00] there. He was there for the black Jews of Ethiopia. He was there, he had efforts to try to revise the meaning of the Nazi Holocaust and the magnitude of its trauma for us. He was always there, and we were always there when Bayard called on us. There were no deals, there were no trades, there were no backroom discussions. Bayard simply had to say, "This is important to me. This is real to me. I need your help," and rabbis would pack off and go to prison in Birmingham for him at for Martin Luther King because we knew that this was a great soul who had a soul for his people but a soul for our people and for all people. There is a Jewish [00:37:00] folk maxim that's really simple, almost naïve. But it really captures, for me, what Bayard Rustin meant to all of us in the Jewish community. The folk story says that one Jewish mother, especially Jewish immigrant mothers -- I'm sure it is true of Italian and Irish and other mothers as well. But one Jewish mother could take of and raise and nurture 12 children, but somehow in the modern world 12 children can somehow find it difficult to take care of one mother, and they put her in the old age home. Bayard Rustin had the capacity to care for his own and for all the children of God's human family. [00:38:00] His immortality rests in all of

those glorious pictures of this loving, caring, natural aristocrat of the mind and of the heart. The highest tribute of Jewish memorial service could pay him is to offer up a prayer of 4,000 years: *"tehei nishmato tzereurah bitzror ha-yahim."* "May his magnificent soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life." And may he continue to be a blessing for us and for all of God's children, forever. Amen.

**Charles Bloomstein:**

I was privileged to be Bayard's [00:39:00] friend for some 45 or more years, and I want to talk about what that meant, and what Bayard was as a person. I'll have to bring in some of the activities that other people have describe that the point that I'm trying is just the human being behind Bayard. In addition to being his friend, I worked with him for the past 23 or 24 years, ever since the founding of the A. Philip Randolph Institute the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund. It isn't something I do often, but I've been thinking back to 1941 and two when Bayard was a (inaudible) to the young man, he's a year older than I am. And the long ranging discussions we had deep into the night on pacifism and its open to triumph, and strange as it may seem, on Shakespeare, he was a favorite. [00:40:00] Bayard had already begun working with Mr. Randolph, A. Philip Randolph, at that time, but he decided that he was an absolute pacifist and could

not register for the draft for World War II. And so he went to prison. After the war and after his prison sentence, he worked for the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resistance League, both pacifist organizations. He was very lucky and both these organizations were willing to give him leaves of absence, and also (inaudible) him to other work they deemed valuable. As a result, he spent months in India working for the Free India Committee. He worked in Africa with the countries there with [Kaundu?] with [Inkrumu?] with [Nairari?], and he worked with many men who later became leaders of their newly independent countries. It is my conviction that his stay in India had the most profound [00:41:00] and lasting influence on his, and that he became in many ways Gandhian in a very strong sense, despite the fact that ultimately he decided he was no longer an absolute pacifist, he never for a minute gave up his absolute conviction that viable social change can only come through non-violent action, and incidentally he never gave up his belief that every individual should have the right to be a conscientious objector. Bayard's work for civil rights was a stage in his development. Many people think of him as the 1963 march as the high point of his career. I think it was a platform on which he rose, and he became more concerned with human rights everywhere in the world, and with democracy and democratic values. So he worked for refugees in Southeast Asia and Africa, for non-rights in South

Africa, for solidarity in Poland, [00:42:00] even for the black Hebrews in Israel. Bayard was born black, illegitimate, in modest circumstances, never had a college degree, confessed to membership in the Young Communist League, was a homosexual, and was willing to take principled stands on issues knowing that these stands would be unpopular. But when he died, he was a respectful world figure. He had made it in the best sense of those words. Bayard was a lover of music and of history. His knowledge of the ladder, especially of American and black history, often stood him in good stead in political arguments. He also had impeccable aesthetic taste and was an insatiable collector. Never sold anything, only acquired.

What was the essence of his personality? Everyone who knows him might choose a different attribute. He had great joy in life. He was wise. [00:43:00] He had an unerring sense of political strategy and tactics. He was a great public speaker. He had extraordinary talent as an organizer. He had the abilities to develop and to work in coalition with others who did not agree with him on all points. He had unflagging energy which was what kept my nose to the grindstone. All these candidates for his essence including his very fine singing voice which we're going to hear a recording, you may, next on the program. My own choice in his essence and think what I now believe kept him going was

his limitless empathy for the suffering of individual human beings. Every homeless person he passed on the street aroused Bayard's rage at a society which could permit such conditions, and he never stopped being raging about it. Every beggar he'd passed received a coin, he could not pass them by. Even political opponents fought him on how times [00:44:00] could depend on Bayard for a helping hand without recrimination. Bayard could express love and affection toward the years to many projects and many, many people left behind, hundreds of lasting friendships. It's evident today in this audience, many of whom had not seen Bayard in years, who often disagreed with him brought another wave into their affection. Indeed Bayard was lucky in that he could love and did, and could accept love and did. He enjoyed life and the challenges it presented. I have sat through thousands of meetings and discussions with him over the many years. Inevitably, he always came up with a strategic insight, the creative response, the proposal to make everyone seem it was quite obvious. His intuition was superb, so much so that I at least to began to view it as [00:45:00] expected. This was normal for Bayard. This was the mundane, the usual. When he died and the outpouring of tributes from the press came, I began to realize it was an absolute unique person, and the world will miss him, and I will miss him, and you will miss him.

(recording of Bayard Rustin singing [00:46:00]-[00:47:00])

**Liv Ullmann:**

I knew a gentle man. A proud man. A strong man. A unique man. I cannot understand that he is gone. A painful truth that he's no more there to be called upon, a man so full of life. No more to phone him, or to write him, to see him, to hug him. No more to hear his laughter. I knew a man, and this is how it is. Because of all the events and all the people that he touched, this is how it [00:48:00] is. We can continue as if he's still on call, because that is the inspiration he gave and left for all. Life is the sum of your actions. Bayard is still alive. Bayard, who never stopped growing. Bayard who demonstrated in speech and action human dignity, and a compassionate compulsion to assist those denied decency. Bayard, who never discharged his obligations to those who hurt. Bayard, who gave of himself so happily. One of the areas to which he devoted so much of his life was fighting for the refugees [00:49:00] who fled tyranny on the left and on the right in search of a sanctuary. Bayard wanted to offer this sanctuary to as many as possible. The International Rescue Committee was the fulcrum for much of this passionate preoccupation of his, a preoccupation which took him on repeated missions to four continents. In the lifetime of IRC, it is difficult to find anyone who, in a deeper sense, lived

more completely for the organization. I wish I could list all those to whom he devoted his efforts, and to whom he invariably brought help and hope, whether they were in flight from Ethiopia, or denied freedom in Afghanistan, [00:50:00] or human rights in South Africa. He helped the Jews who sought release from imprisonment in the Soviet Union, the Lech Wałęsa of Poland, those seeking a safe and peaceful future even as they were being uprooted in Salvador, and the victims of total dictatorship in Haiti, which was to become his last mission for IRC. There was one special group to which he particularly devoted himself; the refugees in Indo-China. On Bayard's return from his first trip to Thailand, he testified before a congressional committee, and when challenged why it was he was urging upon the US government that it resettled such a big number of those Indo-Chinese, he answered very simply. If we do not have the humanity [00:51:00] to assist these people, what reason do I have to believe as one who has devoted so much of his life to achieving full dignity to the blacks in America that we will not discharge that obligation as well. Representing IRC, Bayard Rustin persuaded President Carter to provide a welcome to 140,000 Indo-Chinese refugees in just one year.

The world has grown weary of refugees. Its interest in the starving and denied has flagged. Country after country has

dropped the gates. "Compassion fatigue" they call it. Bayard, you never showed fatigue. In [00:52:00] Thailand, again, just a few months ago, you were the youngest our mission for IRC. I see you at dawn outside a hotel waiting, having already been for a walk of the Bangkok streets, lifting your hat saying, "Good morning," pointed to the sun with (inaudible). The long car rides to the different camps, you gave us time. You shared with us wonderful tales of your life with Martin Luther King and Gandhi, and all the other people you know. Or you would sing. Working in the burning heat did not phase you. Your head always lifted high. And then your indignation and your sorrow like when [00:53:00] you saw the victims of shelling in a refugee camp. Two little boys lying on the operation table, their stomachs in a plastic bag outside their body, their mother dead. Your indignation. Listening to men and women weep, because they were denied resettlement. Enraged meeting a young woman, a victim of piracy, 12 days on the ocean. And when she came to the camp, of course she had no papers. And because of this, she was denied resettlement. The way you held her. Your statement so wise and firm to the government officials, how you made them listen. You believe that there is no freedom which is not freedom for all. [00:54:00] And always on any mission a few hours to buy gifts, most specifically to the one you loved the most, your adopted son Walter. On this last mission I remember you bought a China

rabbit for his collection, and you asked us, "Do you think Walter will like this?" And when we wanted to go and buy a rabbit as well, you said, "Well, just tell the lady in the shop Chicken George sent you," because that was the name she knew you by. And you loved her. So unique. And your whole body happily poured of this laughter. The laughter of a free man who wanted his freedom [00:55:00] to be everyone's freedom. Dearest Bayard, you gave your life in pursuit of the highest purposes that are encompassed in the word "human." You can gave more than your life. You provided a divine beacon. It is now our obligation to follow.

**John Lewis:**

Bayard Rustin. Oh what a life. We take pause to celebrate the life of a true American hero. A man whose lofty idealism and practical advice influenced some of the (inaudible) leaders of the century. A man who at that age of [00:56:00] 75 continued his pursuit of justice and peace with vigor and youthful energy, was a brilliant tactician, a teacher, and visionary human being totally committed to the building of an interracial democracy. A friend has died. A friend has left us. But the beautiful seed which Bayard planted in a live (inaudible) service, to fellow human beings have altered a course for human history. It was during 1955 and 1956 when I was only 15 years old, that I first

heard of Bayard Rustin. As the city of Montgomery, Alabama was transformed from (inaudible) of the Confederacy to the (inaudible) [00:57:00] of the Civil Rights Movement by the 1955 and '56 Montgomery Bus Boycott, Bayard Rustin gave counsel and support to a young, black Baptist minister Martin Luther King Jr. As deputy director of the 1963 march on Washington for jobs and freedom, it was my task to plan the logistics for the event, an event unparalleled in America history. The moving of a peaceful army of more than 250,000 people in and out of Washington in a single day. I would never forget the first meeting here in New York at the old Commodore Hotel, with Bayard, Martin Luther King [00:58:00] Jr., A. Philip Randolph, James Farmer, Whitney Young, and Roy Wilkins. A. Philip Randolph was considered, Mr. Randolph, we called him, the father of the march. He had personally chose Bayard to assume the responsibility of day to day organizing. In the 1963 meeting, he stated and made it crystal clear in no uncertain terms that he believed in Bayard's capacity and ability to do the job. In the two short months of organizing prior to the march on Washington August 28th, '63, Bayard demonstrated an amazing skill for detail. I recall on many occasions calling him from Atlanta [00:59:00] for information, could get an update, and found that on any given day, any given hour of the night, he could cite of status of organizing efforts and cities across the nation as

buses, trains, and airplanes were being chartered for the August 28th trip to Washington. While Bayard had a rare ability to cut through the mundane, no basic need on that day of the march was overlooked. From logistics to emergency healthcare, from food and water stations to portable toilets, Bayard demonstrated the basis of his reputation for being a great organizer and a great mobilizer. Bayard really was the cement which held the march coalition together. On the night before [01:00:00] the march, he came to my hotel room in the Capitol Hill hotel in Washington, saying, "John, we got a problem with your speech." He had come to personally inform me that the archbishop was refusing to give the invocation unless I toned down my speech. With the diplomatic skills abide and the persuasive reason of Mr. Randolph, an agreement of reconciliation was reached, and the archbishop delivered an invocation without incident. On that day, Dr. King's speech "I Have a Dream" captured the spirit of the march, imagination of the nation, and the attention of the world on that hot summer day in August 1963. But we all knew, [01:01:00] in the background, however, we knew Bayard's foresight and organizing ability has transformed what could have been a chaotic situation into an orderly, peaceful assembly. At the end of the long, hot day, it was finally Bayard's turn to address the sea of humanity, which had gathered at the Lincoln Memorial. The (inaudible) call from Bayard forced rain out over

the assembly (inaudible), as he read the demands and goals of the march. The crowd responded with one strong and mighty voice roving and ran and roving and their approval, and Bayard would answer back. Bayard inspired and influenced many of my colleagues and friends and coworkers [01:02:00] in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee during the '60s, with his intellect, his commitment, his dedication, and his sense of purpose, and sense of direction. This man that I struggled with, marched with, this man that I got to know as a friend, teacher, leader, and brother, was so sensitive and so caring. He was a beautiful man, so black and at the same time, so American, and so human. He was a citizen of the world. He personified the very best of humankind. He could speak, and the masses understood from his word that they were somebody. For helping to [01:03:00] envision a beloved community of peace and justice. For encouraging us to build a coalition of compassion and concern. For leading us in the search for peaceful non-violent solutions to human conflict. We all owe a collected debt of gratitude to Bayard. This afternoon, Bayard, I just want to say thank you. Thank you for demonstrating to us the differences an individual can make in creating a better world. Thank you for an example of a joyful, well-lived life of service to all humanity. Thank you Bayard.

**DeWitt Luff:**

[01:04:00] Every now and then our Father in heaven presents this world a bright light in the many shadows of concern of this world. Bayard Rustin was one of them. My name is DeWitt Rustin-Luff. I am privileged to not only have known him, to have been influenced by him, and to have been advised by him as a father figure and a friend, but also a member of his family. I am privileged to be permitted to represent our family who are able to be here and also those who are unable to be here. [01:05:00] Anyone who knew my grandparents during my formative years, and those who knew Bayard during his formative years will know the strengths of Ma Rustin and Pa Rustin. Ma Rustin was the orchestra of development, and Pa Rustin was the composer. All the children of Janifer and Julia Rustin were educated to the highest of each one's own merit, regardless of the sacrifices necessary. My remembrances of Bayard began before I can actually recall when I was quite young. But I can remember that great tenor voice which so few people have been allowed to enjoy and some of you today. More than he would have been, could have been an opera [01:06:00] or a concert singer. Bayard had such a diversity of talent that his athletic ability dating back in his school days in football and track, he could've carried force into possibility an athletic career. Intellectually, he exceeded many, but he never lost his touch of that common touch with a

great sense. Bayard had a great love for people, all people. He had studied under Mahatma Gandhi and learned and distributed to anyone who would listen the attitude of non-violent and passive resistance. I am one of his students. In fact, I may've been one of the earliest [01:07:00] sit-ins in this country. In the early '40s when I was a teenager in our hometown of West Chester, Pennsylvania, where there were no segregation laws written, there were unspoken laws professed by some people that caused discomfort for many others. Bayard and I entered a luncheon adjacent to a movie theater and requested service. We were not refused service, but neither were we given service. Bayard had instructed me prior to this encounter to not raise my hands or voice in anger, but to remain silently patient. This, however, angered the proprietor, and he then summoned the police, who requested that we accompany them to police headquarters.

[01:08:00] There we were asked not to do so again. We were not booked or charged with any crime and then released. After all, what charges could there be?

Now that his physical body is no longer with us, I have hopes as many others do that the work and goals he lived for will be continued. It won't be easy. It may require many to strive for what one man did so easily. Let's all remember Bayard.

(Carr-Hill Singers sing [01:09:00]-[01:10:00])

**Thomas Kilgore:**

I have been requested to ask you to remain seated following the benediction. It would be very appropriate that the last words [01:11:00] in this memorial service should come from Bayard Rustin.

I was asked to make brief remarks and give the benediction. It was a short distance for me to travel from Los Angeles, California to New York today to pay a memorial tribute to a friend who walked the long road for freedom and justice for almost a half century. It is significant that he started his eternal and final march just four days before the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the march on Washington, which he so masterfully directed. I first knew Bayard Rustin when he came to North Carolina in 1946 on a journey of reconciliation, and thereby tasted the cruel hospitality of a North Carolina chain gang for 30 days. I came to know him better [01:12:00] in 1957 when he and I worked together in directing the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. He so ingeniously took charge of the organizational details of that pilgrimage. From 1957 to '63, Bayard Rustin, Odell Young, Stanley Levison and I conducted a small office on 125<sup>th</sup> Street and raised

thousands and thousands to under guard the work of SCLC during that turbulent period. When freedom and justice were at peril, Bayard Rustin was there. In the '40s he helped to organize CORE and work closely with his mentor A. Philip Randolph to secure the executive orders to end discrimination in defense industries and in the armed forces. In the '50s and '60s he was involved in freedom movements, such as the Children's March on Washington, the massive New York City's [01:13:00] school boycott, and the triumphant march on Washington which he directed and which was without a doubt one of the finest hours in the Civil Rights movement. Bayard Rustin's concern for freedom and justice was not (inaudible). He knew that injustice in South Africa deluded justice everywhere. He believed in the sacred and intrinsic worth of all human beings. And as he sang with his beautiful tenor voice "Oh Freedom," he was wailing for non-violence, for freedom, for justice, and peace for the entire universe. Like Martin Luther King Jr. whom he advised and who depended heavily on his non-violent strategies, Bayard was not afraid to walk the keen edge that brought life and death so close together. And now that he is gone, this man, this [01:14:00] strange mixture of activism and balance, of controversy and consistency, of compassion and compulsion, and of impatience and hope, he is gone, but he has left a great legacy with us, for he understood the Old Testament prophet that said, "Our requirement is to do

justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God." And let us live within that legacy that he has left and continue to transmit to oncoming generations the kind of fortitude, the kind of activism, and the kind of love that Bayard Rustin so well demonstrated. And now to the benediction and I say the first part of it in the words of Khalil Gibran from his little booklet *The Prophet*. "If you would indeed [01:15:00] behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life, for life and death are one, even as a river and the sea are one. In the depth of your hopes and desires lie your silent knowledge of the beyond, and like seeds dreaming beneath the snow, your heart dreams of spring. Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity. And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may arise and expand and seek God unencumbered. Only when you drink from the River of Silence shall you indeed sing. And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb. [01:17:00] And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance." Thank you, oh Lord, for the life of your servant Bayard Rustin upon this earth, for all his contributions. Thank you, oh Lord, in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, in the name of the Holy Spirit, amen.

(recording of Bayard Rustin singing [01:17:00]-[01:20:00])

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