

CD-1097 Transcription

Bayard Rustin memorial service. 1 October 1987.

M1:

*Gather out of earth-dust,
Cloud-dust,
Storm-dust, And splinters of hail,
One handful of dream-dust,
Not for sale.*

*Dear lovely death
That taketh all things under wing --
Never to kill -- Only to change
Into some other thing
This suffering flesh,
To make it either more or less,
But not again the same. [00:01:00]
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 are fair.
Wave of sorrow,
Take me there.*

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 [00:02:00] of despair and degradation. He dared to go out ahead, often alone, to show the way. He faced the dogs of danger with high courage and equanimity. His only weapons, love and

hope. 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. [00:03:00] 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 am about to deliver are the ones I hoped I never would have to make. 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, and intellectual of uncommon depth and courage. He was a gentle and special friend. And we will have to deal with his loss [00:04:00] in our own private way. But Bayard Rustin was also very much a public person. And though he may be gone, his spirit 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 extraordinarily difficult to capture the essence of so unique, complex, and eclectic a man, there were certain touchstones that anchored and informed his life and philosophy. One such was Bayard's steadfast commitment to social democratic principles, learned from A. Philip Randolph, Norman Thomas, [Mack Shactin?] and other giants of the movement for social and economic justice. All of Bayard's achievements as a civil rights leader, labor activist, and human rights advocate were rooted [00:05:00] in the tenets of social democratic 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, Bayard never abandoned the continued 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 has ever 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 Rustin has left a void in the movement for justice and progress, a void that will be virtually impossible to fill. [00:06:00] Because Bayard Rustin was unique, his life and work were the pillars of that movement. Civil rights, labor and 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 endeavors.

But before introducing them, I would like end with some personal observations. What made Bayard a special human being was his infinite capacity to respond to human suffering in a human manner. And that generosity of spirit was 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 [00:07:00], 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 need only recall 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 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 on 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 [00:08:00] 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.

M2:

Even to his adversaries, the news of Bayard Rustin's death came like a blow to the heart. He had a great many adversaries, opponents, antagonists. 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 [00:09:00] that he fought 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. 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. [00:10:00] 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. 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 [00:11:00] 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 and his example. And we pledge to Bayard's memory that we mean to keep it.

M3:

Bayard had a very profound moral and [00:12:00] 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 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,* [00:13:00] *eimatai?* And if not now, when?" Bayard clearly testified to, via presence here today -- Bayard was clearly rooted in *ani li*, in the passions, the oppressions, the anxieties as well of 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 [00:14:00] 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 the uniqueness of black suffering and the black exodus, to understand 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, [00:15:00] Nankai, north of Thailand, January

1978. The [Ochurn?], 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. 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 every 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 [00:16:00] 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, among tribes people, and as Leo and others here, [Liv Ullman?], others will remember, they had a friendship ritual. And here is this black leader out of the civil rights and labor movement of America, at a friendship ceremony with 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 hands, 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." [00:17:00] And a whole village of mountain tribesmen, 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 into detention camps in Brooklyn and South [Perlman?], 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 [00:18:00] the starvation of more than 1,200,000 black children who are starving of malnutrition, suffering from malnutrition in 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 in Europe during World War II under the Nazis, the suffering 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 of compassion for blacks and Jews and Vietnamese boat people and Haitians, whatever human beings [00:19:00] suffered the denial of the human dignity. And we trusted him, because on the things with 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 jury who were being denied their basic human rights, and civil and political and religious liberties, he was there. He was there for the black Jews of Ethiopia. He was there in 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." [00:20:00] And rabbis would pack off and go to prison in Birmingham for him, and 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 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 care of and raise and nurture 12 children [00:21:00], 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. 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 a Jewish memorial service could pay him is to offer up a prayer of 4,000 years. *"T'hanish ma'atot tzirurah bi'zror ha'chayyin.* May his magnificent soul be bound up [00:22:00] 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.

F1:

It's my pleasure to be with you all this evening, if only in spirit and song. I wanted just to say that when I first met

Bayard, I must have been in my middle teens. And he made a very big impact on my life. I had recently heard Dr. King speak. And then some friends had a gathering, and they said this man who was organizing in the south would be speaking, and I went. And I remember that he sat in the middle of the room and automatically [00:23:00] everybody sat around him, mesmerized by his stories. And he told about a woman who had been walking during the bus boycott, and to whom he had offered a ride. And she had said no, she was going to walk to freedom, and that stuck with me forever. And the other thing I remember about Bayard, and I was able to thank him many years later, when he and I marched in Thailand to the border of Cambodia on a different issue, but I thanked him for having inspired me at such an early age. And now in retrospect, I find that I do similar things to Bayard in many ways. One of them is to simply talk to people for a while, and then to simply sing, which is what he did. He sang, unaccompanied, sitting on the couch, with everybody around him. And I was very impressed. So I'm not on the couch but I am in my living room, and [00:24:00] again, I wish I could be with you, but in place of that, I will sing you a song.

*I am a poor pilgrim of sorrow.
And I travel this wide world alone.
But hopes have I for tomorrow.
I am trying to make Heaven my home.
Sometimes I'm tossed and [00:25:00] and I'm driven on,
Sometimes I don't know where to roam.
But I've heard of a city called Heaven*

*And I'm trying to make it my home."
Amen.*

M4:

I was privileged to be Bayard's friend for [00:26:00] 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 described. The point I'm trying to make is 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 and the A. Philip Randolph Education Fund. It isn't something I do often, but I've been thinking back to 1941 and 1942, when Bayard was a relatively young man, my age, a year older than I am. And the long-ranging discussions we had deep into the night on pacifism, and its ultimate triumph. And strange as it may seem, on Shakespeare. He was a favorite. [00:27:00] 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 Resisters League, both pacifist organizations. He was very lucky in both these organizations, were willing to give him leaves of absence, and also seconding 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 [Kahundi?], with [Incruni?], with [Nairari?]. And he worked with many men who later became leaders of the newly independent countries. It is my conviction that his stay in India had the most profound and lasting influence on him [00:28:00], and that he became, in many ways, a 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 nonviolent action. And incidentally, he never gave up his belief that every individual should have the right to be a conscientious objector.

Bayard's work with 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 from which he arose. 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 nonwhites in South Africa, for Solidarity in Poland, even for the black Hebrews in Israel. [00:29:00] 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 respected 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 latter, 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 knew him, each person might choose a different attribute. He had great joy in life. He was wise. He had an unerring sense of political strategy and tactics. [00:30:00] He was a great public speaker. He had extraordinary talent as an organizer. He had the ability to develop and to work in coalition with others who did not agree with him on all points. He had unflagging energy, which is what kept my nose to the grindstone. All these are candidates for his essence, including his very fine singing voice, which we're going to hear a recording he made next on the program. My own choice for his essence, indeed 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 stopping being raging about it. Every beggar he passed received a coin. He could not pass them by.

Even political opponents fallen on hard times could depend on Bayard for a helping hand, without recrimination [00:31:00]. Bayard could express love and affection. Through the years, through 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, but never wavered in 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 the strategic insight, the creative response, the proposal that made everyone seem it was quite obvious. His intuition was superb, so much so that I at least began to view it as expected. This was normal for Bayard, this was the mundane, the usual. [00:32:00] When he died, and the outpouring of tributes from the press came, I began to realize it was quite unusual. Bayard was an absolute unique person. And the world will miss him, and I will miss him, and you will miss him.

F2:

I knew a gentleman, 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, [00:33:00] and this is how it is. Because of all the events, and all the people that he touched, this is how it is. We can continue as if he is 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 could never stop 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. [00:34:00] One of the areas to which he devoted so much of his life was fighting for the refugees 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 [00:35:00] help and hope, whether they were in flight from (inaudible), or denied freedom in Afghanistan, or human rights in South Africa. He helped the Jews who sought release from imprisonment in the Soviet Union, the (inaudible) of

Poland, those seeking a safe and peaceful future, even as they were being uprooted in Salvador, and the victims of the 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 Indochina. 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 it from the US government that it resettle such a big number of those [00:36:00] Indochinese, he answered very simply. "If we do not have the humanity 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 Indochinese 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.

[00:37:00]Bayard, you never showed fatigue. In Thailand again, just a few months ago, you were the youngest of our mission for IRC. I see you at dawn, outside the hotel, waiting, having already been for a walk of the Bangkok streets, lifting your hat, saying, "Good morning." Pointing to the sun with your cane, 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 knew. Or you would sing. Walking in the burning heat did not faze you. Your head, always lifted high. [00:38:00] And then your indignation, and your sorrow, like when you saw the victims of a shelling in a refugee camp. Two little boys lying on an operation table, their stomachs in a plastic bag outside their body, their mother dead. Your indignation. Listening to men and women weeping 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 statements, so wise and firm, to the government officials, how you made them listen. You believed that there is no freedom [00:39:00] which is not freedom for all. 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 rabbit, 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 I sent you. Chicken George sent you." Because that was the name she knew you by. And your laughter, so unique. And your whole body happily part of this laughter. [00:40:00] The laughter of a free man who wanted

his freedom 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 gave more than your life. You provided a divine beacon. It is now our obligation to follow.

M5:

Bayard Rustin. Oh what a life. We take pause to celebrate the life of a true American hero. [00:41:00] A man whose lofty idealism and practical advice influenced some of the moral leaders of this century. A man who at the age of 75 continued his pursuit of justice and peace with vigor and youthful energy. He was a brilliant tactician, a teacher, and a 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, and a lifetime of service to human beings, have altered the course of human history. It was during 1955 and 1956, when I was only 15 years old, that I first heard of Bayard Rustin. [00:42:00]

As the city of Montgomery, Alabama was transformed from the cradle of the Confederacy to the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement, by the 1955 and 1956 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 Bayard's task to

plan the logistics for the event, and event unparalleled in American 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, [00:43:00] at the old Commodore Hotel, with Bayard, Martin Luther King, 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 that 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 [00:44:00] an amazing skill for detail. I recall on many occasions, calling him from Atlanta, for information, to get an update, and found that on any given day, any given hour of the night, he could cite the status of organizing efforts in cities across the nation, as buses, trains, and airplanes had been chartered for the August 28 trip to Washington. For Bayard had the rare ability to cut through the mundane, no basic need on that day of the march was overlooked. From logistics to emergency health care, 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 [00:45:00] which held the march coalition together.

On the night before 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 of Bayard, and the persuasive reason of Mr. Randolph, an agreement of reconciliation was reached. And the archbishop delivered the invocation without incident. On that day, Dr. King's speech, "I Have a Dream," captured the spirit of the march, the imagination of the nation, [00:46:00] and the attention of the world on that hot summer day in August, 1963. But we all knew, in the background, however, we knew Bayard's foresight, and organizing ability, had 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 clarion call from Bayard's voice rang out over the assembled multitude as he read the demands and goals of the march.

Bayard inspired and influenced many of my colleagues and friends and coworkers in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the '60s, with his intellect, his commitment, [00:47:00] 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 depths of humankind. He could speak and the masses understood from his words that they were somebody. By helping us to envision a beloved community of peace and justice, for encouraging us to build a coalition of compassion and concern, for leading [00:48:00] us in the search for peaceful nonviolent solutions to human conflict, we all owe a collective debt of gratitude to Bayard. This afternoon, Bayard, I just want to say thank you. Thank you for demonstrating to us the difference 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 Rustin Luff:

Every now and then, our Father in Heaven presents this world a bright light [00:49:00] and a 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, but 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.

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. [00:50:00] 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 likely he could have been an opera 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 have carried [00:51:00] forth into possibly an athletic career. Intellectually he exceeded many, but he never lost his touch of that common touch. What a great sense of humor. 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 nonviolent and

passive resistance. I am one of his students. In fact, I may have been one of the earliest sit-ins in this country. In the early '40s when I was a teenager, in our hometown of Westchester, Pennsylvania, where there were no segregation laws written, [00:52:00] there were unspoken laws professed by some people; they caused discomfort for many others. Bayard and I entered a luncheonette 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. 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? [00:53:00] 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.

M6:

I have been requested to ask you to remain seated following the benediction. It will be very appropriate that the last words 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 [00:54:00] 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 twenty-fourth 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 in 1957 when he and I worked together in directing the Proud 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, [Ordell?] Young, Stanley Levison and I conducted a small [00:55:00] office on 125th Street and raised thousands and thousands of dollars to undergird the work of SCLC during that turbulent period. When freedom and justice were in peril, Bayard Rustin was there. In the '40s, he helped organize CORE and worked closely with his mentor, A. Philip Randolph, to secure 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 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 parochial. He knew that injustice in South Africa diluted justice everywhere. [00:56:00] 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 nonviolence, for freedom, for justice, and peace for the entire universe. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., whom he advised, and who depended heavily on his nonviolent 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 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 [00:57:00] 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'll say the first part of it, in the words of Kahlil Gibran, from his little booklet, *The Prophet*: "If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide onto 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 seas dreaming beneath the snow, [00:58:00] 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 mountaintop, then you shall begin to climb. 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 of 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. [00:59:00] Amen.

Bayard Rustin (recording):

*Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Nobody knows my sorrow.
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Glory hallelujah.
Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down.*

*Oh yes, Lord.
Sometimes [01:00:00] I'm almost to the ground.
Oh yes, Lord.
Although you've seen me going along so,
Oh yes, Lord.
I have my trials here below,
Oh yes, Lord.
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, [01:01:00]
Nobody knows my sorrow.
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen,
Glory hallelujah.*

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