

to Africa!" They jabbed us as we passed and chided us for not fighting back. "What's the matter? You chicken?" they teased, trying to force the situation onto terms they were comfortable with—fists and fighting.

We weren't playing by those rules, of course, and that infuriated them even further. No sooner did we take our seats at the upstairs counter than some of these young men began pushing the group at the downstairs restaurant off their stools, shoving them against the counter, punching them.

We immediately went down to join our brothers and sisters, taking seats of our own. I was hit in the ribs, not too hard, but enough to knock me over. Down the way I could see one of the white men stubbing a lit cigarette against the back of a guy in our group, though I couldn't tell who it was in the swirl of the action.

I got back on my stool and sat there, not saying a word. The others did the same. Violence does beget violence, but the opposite is just as true. Hitting someone who does not hit back can last only so long. Fury spends itself pretty quickly when there's no fury facing it. We could see in the mirror on the wall in front of us the crowd gathered at our backs. They continued trying to egg us on, but the beating subsided.

At the same time, we would learn later, the same thing was happening in the other stores. Yellow mustard was squeezed onto the head of one black male student in Kress's while the crowd hooted and

laughed. Ketchup was poured down the shirt of another. Paul LaPrad, being white, attracted particularly brutal attention over at McClellan's. He was pulled off his stool, beaten and kicked by a group of young whites with the word "Chattanooga" written on their jackets—a reference to recent white-on-black attacks in that city that had followed a series of sit-ins there.

A television camera crew was at McClellan's, recording the scene as LaPrad's attackers spent themselves. It filmed Paul—bloody and bruised and silent—pulling himself back on his chair. When the footage aired that night on national television, it marked one of the earliest instances where Americans were shown firsthand the kind of anger and ugliness that the peaceful movement for civil rights was prompting in the South. Many viewers were sickened by what they saw. They would see more in the years to come.

We didn't sit there long before the police, conspicuous by their absence during the attacks, arrived. I didn't imagine they had come to arrest anyone for assault, and I was right. As the young men who had beaten us looked on and cheered, we were told that we were under arrest for "disorderly conduct."

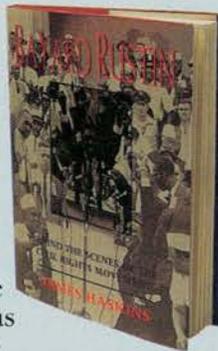
IT WAS strange how I felt as a large, blue-shirted Nashville police officer stood over me and said without emotion, "You're under arrest." A lifetime of taboos from my parents rushed through my mind as the offi-

Bayard Rustin: A Builder of the Beloved Community

BY JOHN LEWIS

IFIRST SAW Bayard Rustin the summer of 1959 when he was speaking at the Institute for Nonviolent Resistance to Segregation at Spelman College. This was the summer before a group of us in Nashville began our own nonviolent resistance with the lunch-counter sit-ins. But it was not until 1963, when I became chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and a founding chairman of the March on Washington, that I came to know and ultimately to admire Rustin.

Bayard was truly awesome. He was far more complicated as a person and an activist than any other civil rights leader I had known. A philosopher and sophisticated strategist, he had the capacity to analyze each situation objectively before reacting. Yet he had a strong and principled core. He was a brilliant organizer and a great show-



man, who was nevertheless content to help other leaders from behind the scenes. And he moved easily among grass-roots blacks, rich white Quakers, and everyone in between.

So imagine my surprise when I was asked to write about a children's biography of Rustin. I

didn't believe that his life and his ideas could be written about in a way that young people would understand. Happily, James Haskins' *Bayard Rustin: Behind the Scenes of the Civil Rights Movement* (Hyperion Books for Children, 1997) proves me wrong. Haskins does full justice to Bayard's pivotal role in the March on Washington, but he doesn't stop there. Young readers will also hear about Rustin's Quaker childhood in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and his early experience with the many forms that bigotry can take. They'll hear how he

adopted and practiced the Gandhian techniques of nonviolence, and how, in later life, he worked to help oppressed people all over the world, whether they were South African blacks suffering under apartheid or Cambodians being butchered by their own countrymen of the Khmer Rouge or Jews attempting to escape from Soviet Russia.

James Haskins has won the 1998 Coretta Scott King Award for this book, and he deserves it. To examine Rustin's life and work is to learn about virtually all of the major movements for social justice in the twentieth century. More important, Bayard's life will teach children a lesson that we cannot repeat too often—that all human beings deserve to be treated justly and that all oppression—even of one's enemies—must be opposed. As a bearer of that message, Bayard did more to create the beloved community than any other twentieth-century protest leader. □