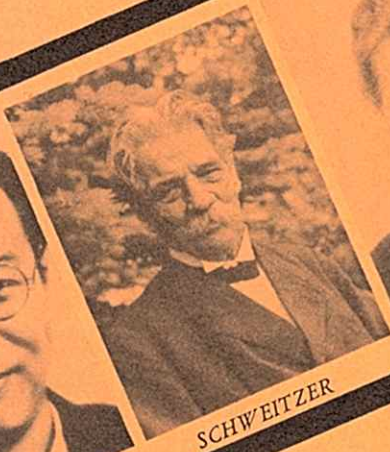


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# COURAGE IN BOTH HANDS



KAGAWA



SCHWEITZER



LESTER



GANDHI



LAUBACH

By

ALLAN A. HUNTER



and my two big steamer trunks were kept. These they had slashed open. The girls had pounced upon the evening frocks and were trying them on with shrieks of delighted laughter. Never have I seen happier faces than those of the two, who managed to pull the black chiffon and the powder blue lace gowns over their heads and smoothed and patted the fine stuff over their hips with work-calloused hands. The admiration in the eyes of their no less delighted countrymen, still gaunt and ragged in their sweat stained old clothes, was touching.

Perhaps I could have retrieved my belongings. To speak to the young people in English might have sufficed, for the Poles possess the finest courtesy in the world. But I did not want to, just could not spoil their pleasure. After they had left I went out. My costly linen lay scattered and untouched on the floor of the shed. They had taken along only that useless elegance. But perhaps it wasn't so useless after all. Had it not made someone happy after years of untold hardship?

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## *Chain-Ganger*



When Bayard Rustin came from another part of the country to the school in Pennsylvania he was 12 years old and not very robust, at least in appearance. Moreover, he had an accent that irritated the other boys.

"Come on and fight", they would challenge.

"You aren't going to hit me," he would answer. They didn't.

Why he had this kind of courage is puzzling. In part he got it from a relative who was brought up in a Quaker family. But to that

socially inherited respect for the other fellow along with the determination to stand your ground, he added something unique of his own.

Before long he was so husky, through training, that the other boys naturally did not pester him. As tackle on the high school football team he developed on his own a new idea; help the other fellow to his feet. It began apparently in a game when he was about to tackle an opponent but suddenly decided not to, since the fellow running with the ball had a sore knee. The coach was a little angry with Bayard for showing that peculiar kind of sportsmanship in that particular crisis in the game. The teammates, however, approved. Before he left high school Bayard had the satisfaction of seeing a tradition of his own invention taking root. After tackling a man you helped him on his feet again. That tradition probably still holds in his old school today.

His method of expressing good will is one of the socially useful contributions to our society. It is somewhat along the lines of Gregg's strategy defined in the second chapter of "The Power of Non-Violence", a chapter full of insights that now dominate Rustin's thinking. Before meeting a person he tries to get behind that person in imagination and for a moment *be* that person, looking through his eyes, thinking his thoughts and facing his problems. As a Negro he tries to put himself in the shoes of the white person opposing him.

Once he went into a restaurant, asking for a hamburger. It soon became obvious he was not wanted there. Nothing was happening. In time he got the attention of the woman proprietor. She agreed to his proposition: he would sit before a cold hamburger, refusing to touch it for ten minutes. If any one came in and objected to the presence of a Negro in her restaurant he would instantly leave without fuss.

It did not take many minutes for the woman's resistance to break down. She brought Bayard a hot dog that was definitely hot,—and coffee. Then she explained.

"You see, my patrons don't want Negroes here because they're dirty." (She didn't use the word "Negroes" but Bayard ignored the unconscious discourtesy).

He was tempted to challenge the adjective but, remembering, put himself in her place. "Yes," he agreed, "they are sometimes dirty. Maybe you would be if you didn't have a bath in your house. Did you know that among the Negroes in this town hardly any can afford such a luxury?" Bayard was careful about the statistics that need not be recalled here. The woman was dubious. She did, however, go to the trouble after he left of verifying what he had said. Finding him reliable in his facts, she became interested in the whole question of getting justice done to the Negroes in her community, not just vaguely but specifically with reference to housing problems. Today she is a real friend of people whom before she dismissed with a careless adjective and noun.

Gandhi's recommendation was: don't dangle people's sins in front of their noses. Point out to them some creative alternative they can start working on right away. This is Bayard Rustin's procedure. The other day he tried it in a Spokane hotel. As he was riding down in the elevator a white man turned to him and said, "Hey, boy, lace up my shoes." Bayard could have said in a superior tone "Whom are you talking to?" or "I'm not here to lace up your shoes." But that would only have stiffened the other's opposition.

So he leaned over, tied up the white man's shoes and smiled. The man who was accustomed to treating Negroes in hotels as servants reached in his pocket, took out 25 cents and offered it to Bayard.

"I'm sorry I can't take it," he said, "but I didn't lace up your shoes for money. I laced them because I felt you must be in need. Otherwise you would have laced your shoes yourself."

By this time the man was extremely red and apologetic. After a discussion he asked Bayard to his room to talk about racial problems. What did he learn? Not to be so patronizing? To stop asking other people to do what he could do for himself? Bayard doesn't know what the other man got out of the incident. He himself learned that when you try non-violence you have to accept inconvenience cheerfully; you have to be really humble.

To him non-violence is in the nature of things. It is the law.

Adjust yourself to it and you'll be human,—and happy. Defy it and you have increasing insecurity, fear and destructiveness. But what does he mean by non-violence? He means, for one thing, the creative response you make to a fellow human being when you act on the assumption that all human beings are essentially one. When I harm you it isn't simply you I harm. I also and automatically harm myself. The emphasis in non-violence is not on justice but on love and methods that are consistent with love. Bayard Rustin is very clear that the end does not justify any means. "If an innocent Negro is being attacked by a guilty white man," he says, "my responsibility as an onlooker is never to try to establish justice for the Negro because in attempting to do that, I bring about greater injustice. Suppose I make the mistake of knocking the white man down. It may *look* as if justice has been done for the Negro. But it has not, for the white man only waits for a later opportunity. Then, maybe, he will threaten 10,000 Negroes; every Negro living in the town. And that violence on his part will be because of my effort to establish justice without love. My job therefore is to do what I can to change the white man by removing the cause of his fear. That will not be throwing away my own self-respect but affirming it." To be able to do that, however, requires training in non-attachment. That is not to say a girl shouldn't wear pearls or a man shouldn't have three suits. The idea is to keep yourself free to make moral decisions and you can't do that if you make an institution out of yourself thinking only of things, of keeping respectable and powerful. The fact has to be faced that it is a sort of

theft, holding on for example to a suit that hasn't been worn for six months when somebody else desperately needs it. To practice non-violence, you have to give up not only possessiveness but also self-righteousness. The roots of the evil you are out to overcome are not just out there. They are inside yourself and you have to say so. At the same time you have to look for and encourage the hidden good that is in the man you oppose.

Early in 1949, on a chain-gang in North Carolina, Bayard Rustin put this way of non-violence to a rigorous test. For 22 days he did hard labor on roads as punishment for challenging the local Jim Crow laws prohibiting Negroes from riding on the seats in buses reserved for white people. The Supreme Court of the United States had ruled that segregation on interstate buses was unconstitutional and Bayard was only doing what the constitution permitted. He found himself on the chain-gang nevertheless.

The white walking boss, "The Captain" had it in for this "smart Nigger those damn yankees spoiled." But Bayard stopped him one morning as the crew was shovelling dirt into a truck, asking if he might speak to him. "I know there are a great many differences in our attitudes on many questions," he said. "Yet I feel we can and should be friends. The first morning we met I failed to address you as 'Sir.' That wasn't out of disrespect. But if you feel it was I'm willing to apologize . . . I am willing to work as hard as I can. If I fail again at my work I hope you'll speak to me about it and I'll try to improve. I'm sure all the men really feel this way." Then Bayard took a long shot at the Captain's conscience. "I can't help trying to act on the basis of the Christian ideals I hold about people. I do, however, try to respect and understand people who differ with me."

The Captain stared speechless. After some moments he turned to the armed guard and said in an embarrassed tone, "Well, I'll be—." Later he said to one of the chain-gangers, "I'd rather he'd call me a dirty—— than to look me in the face and say nothin'." The contact with this Negro from the north who was always up to something different, by no means converted him. But obviously his mind was sprouting. Before Bayard's time was up this overseer who had seemed so hopelessly casehardened did for him an extraordinary thing: he treated the whole crew to soft drinks and cigarettes as if to say "I too am a human being."

The most spectacular results of Bayard's laboratory experiment were among his fellow prisoners. Shortly after arriving, his razor blades, razor, stamps and stationary, although carefully locked up, were stolen. That gave Bayard an idea. Why not from that time on put the cookies, dates, fruit juices, peanuts, etc., that his friends from outside were sending,—why not put it all into a "community kit"? The scheme worked. To be sure, four chocolate bars disappeared. But more and more the other prisoners entrusted their little luxuries to this pooled security. Strong boxes might be looted. It just wasn't the

thing to take anything from the common store.

Near the end of his second week, Bayard suggested that they have a party. Practically all the inmates thought this very impractical. "The fellows will behave like pigs," it was gloomily predicted. "A few strong people will get all the food."

Finally they suggested that he choose a committee. Bayard picked three men. They were supposed to be "the biggest thieves" in the prison camp. Now, it seemed certain, the party would be wrecked; those three would help themselves to everything before the party began. Even so, the boxes were handed over to their charge. For two days they guarded the refreshments. The outcome was startling. Everything was done in good order. Six candy bars were given by somebody to take the place of the four that previously had been lifted,—before the committee took over. What wasn't eaten at the party was returned to the community kit. One of the three Bayard had selected became a thoroughly capable member of the camp.

Bayard Rustin's summary is significant: "It was clear for all to see that the stimuli of expectancy, trust and responsibility had for the moment at least brought about the positive responses of faithfulness to duty, imagination and sharing."



## *A Korean Stands up to Aggression*

From Korea, April 4, 1950, an American, Albin Bro, working in our State Department, wrote enthusiastically about what he called the Village of Atomic Love. "During the last six months," Mr. Bro reported of that village, "the lives of many people have been transformed."

The vehicle of this transforming power was a Korean pastor. He had been devoting much of his life to helping the lepers in an island colony near Soon Chen. His two sons were killed in guerrilla action. The murderer was captured and brought to trial and sentenced to die. Before the court the pastor made a plea. He asked that the murderer, presumably a Communist, be handed over to him so that he could show the superiority of Christianity to communism.

The plea was granted. The Communist who had killed the pastor's two sons came to live in the pastor's home as a son.

But that is not all. The pastor's daughter later went to the murderer's home and village and lived among them as a daughter.

There *are* human beings single-minded or pure in heart enough to give their lives truly for others. This pastor was such a person. Months later, another group of Communists came to his village. As they approached, friends begged him to escape.