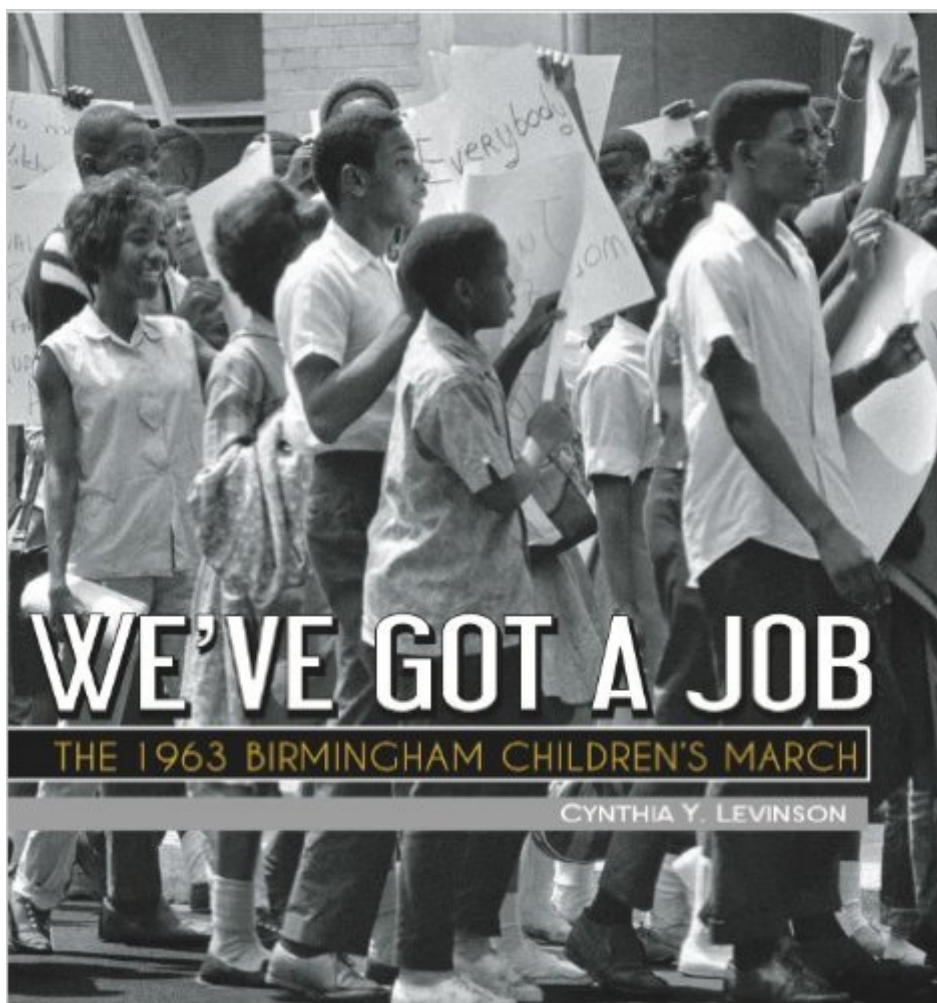


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# We've Got A Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March



## Synopsis

*We've Got a Job* tells the little-known story of the 4,000 black elementary-, middle-, and high school students who voluntarily went to jail in Birmingham, Alabama, between May 2 and May 11, 1963. Fulfilling Mahatma Gandhi's and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s precept to fill the jails, they succeeded where adults had failed in desegregating one of the most racially violent cities in America. Focusing on four of the original participants who have participated in extensive interviews, *We've Got a Job* recounts the astonishing events before, during, and after the Children's March.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (46 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #124,842 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #19 in [Books > Teens > Social Issues > Prejudice](#) #31 in [Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > United States > 20th Century](#) #111 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > 1900s](#)

Age Range: 12 - 15 years

Grade Level: 7 - 10

## Customer Reviews

By May 1963, African Americans in Birmingham, Alabama, had had enough of segregation and police brutality. But with their lives and jobs at stake, most adults were hesitant to protest the city's racist culture. Instead, the children and teenagers--like Audrey, Wash, James, and Arnetta--marched to jail to secure their freedom. At a time when the civil rights movement was struggling, Birmingham's black youth answered Dr. Martin Luther King's call to "fill the jails" of their city. In doing so, they drew national attention to the cause, helped bring about the repeal of the segregation laws, and inspired thousands of other young people to demand their rights. (Inside jacket of *We've Got a Job*) *We've Got a Job* tells a story about the civil rights movement few know. Each of the stories these four brave children tell are remarkable. That they took on this fight for

equality at such young ages, and made Birmingham change its racist behaviors and policies is astonishing. One of those children is Audrey. Her family was what many see as the typical American family. And today, they would be, but it was 1960 and they were black, living in a notoriously racist city in the South. There was nothing typical about Audrey's family. They were second-class citizens regulated to the back of the bus, and separate water fountains. Audrey heard the freedom fighters from the near daily meetings her parents hosted, and knew she had to help. Wash, short for Washington, lived in a tenement house with his sister and mother. He was afraid to do something as common as take a bath. In fourth grade, a teacher threatened to beat Wash. He ran. In seventh grade, he skipped more than he attended. Wash knew that his biggest threat were the police and Commissioner Bull Connor. James lived in a great house with a pool. His father was a doctor and his mother taught college English. James was a bright kid. He figured out early that he had to be careful whom he trusted. Light-skinned Arnetta endured teasing and name calling solely based on her skin color, even by the other black kids. Her father fought segregation hard and wanted to include Arnetta and her two younger sisters. Arnetta started a social club at school called the Peace Ponies. After hearing Dr. Martin Luther King speak, Arnetta and the rest of the Peace Ponies stepped up and the Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King called for peaceful demonstrations, sit-ins, and marches all to "fill up the jails." The author has dug up details few have been privy to and, while disturbing, they are enlightening. One or two are strange. For instance, some Americans believed the Russians were involved and trying to overthrow American democracy. There were not. The Ku Klux Klan was involved, as were some teachers, and white parents. The teachers and parents taught racist idiocy to their kids, saying blacks' blood is thicker and runs slower than whites, therefore they learn differently and needed segregated. I was four in 1963, so I have little first-hand knowledge. I know more about the Vietnam War and the killings at Kent State, than I do about a nearly 350-year fight against racism. Even fifty years beyond the 1963 marches, racism still exists. This book has shown me so much, opened my eyes wide, and increased the empathy I always felt about the cruelty of that era. Written for kids ages ten and up, anyone can read this and find something they did not know--unless they were actually in Birmingham, Alabama, and listened to Dr. Martin Luther King speak to those kids in the early sixties. I am not sure what to say other than this is a phenomenal book by author, Cynthia Levinson. *We've Got a Job* is the best book I have read this year. Granted, it is only February, but I honestly believe this one will stay in my top ten for 2012. The pictures are so good at capturing the day. The speeches, Point for Progress, and press statement, among other documents and quotes that line the sidebar. This book should be in every middle grade classroom and high school American History and Government classes. *We've Got a Job* is

exhaustively researched and expertly written. Children 10 and older can read this with understanding and adults can read this and learn something new from that era of their life. I can think of three wonderful things to do with this book. It can be a textbook and inspire a new generation, this time in integrated classrooms. This book is something adults need to read. We can learn things we did not know, correct some of the things we thought we knew but are false, and find courage within the pages to change for the best. *We've Got a Job* looks perfect on a coffee table, waiting for someone to open its pages and start a conversation. Without conversations, nothing can change for the good. Note: book received courtesy of the publisher.

All I can say is "Wow!" It is fabulous! The author has all the requisites for an outstanding nonfiction book - timeline, thorough index, etc. and it was clear she has done an incredible amount of very thorough research -- also that she is passionate about her subject -- it clearly shows. Loved the balance of the four young people she chose. Interesting to learn about Shuttlesworth and Bevel and their importance to the Movement. Also she showed King wasn't perfect as well as the Kennedy administration's reluctance to get on board and why. Liked the inclusion of the importance of the singing as inspiration. Liked that she included the part about the firemen refusing to turn the hoses on the people -- they weren't all monsters (except Connor, of course). I can't say enough about how wonderful this book is. Parts of it really gave me the shivers.

I stayed up all night to read this breathtaking, informative and inspirational book about the Birmingham Children's March in Birmingham, Alabama. This beautifully written and photographed book tells the story of the 4,000 children who integrated Birmingham after the adults, feeling frightened of violence and probable loss of livelihoods, stopped protesting with Dr. Martin King Jr. and other clergy. Facing violence, expulsion from school, threats to their parents' lives, and the killing of 4 little girls from a bomb planted at church by white supremacists, the children of Birmingham continued to march and protest until they won significant concessions from Bull Connor and the white power structure. It also frankly discusses the use of non-violent and violent tactics used by the Black community to protect themselves, a topic that is not often discussed. This book for older children, teens and adults inspires us to fight for what is right, and gives us courage for the journey.

Levinson has done an incredible job with this book. Not only does she give an account of the events leading up to and including the Children's March but she merges comments from some of the

participants. This is how narrative nonfiction should be done. The book is beautifully organized with complementary photographs. I almost felt like I was there while reading this book. I think what makes this account so powerful is the sense of immediacy that Levinson has created. It felt like it was happening as I was reading about it rather than almost fifty years ago. It was amazing to read about the courage of the children who participate, ages 9 to 18 with a few adults mixed in. The story in the prologue starts the book off with a bang. The idea of a nine-year-old child telling her parents that she wants to go to jail hit me hard. The descriptions of hundreds of children crammed into jail cells meant to hold many fewer occupants was also full of impact. I think the part though that really got me was when fire hoses were turned on the marchers. Clearly, the author has done her research, but more than that, she has made it understandable for the young reader. I highly, highly recommend this book for any reader who wants to see the power of unity or the power of children to make a difference. This would be a great book to use in teaching about civil rights or just plain courage.

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