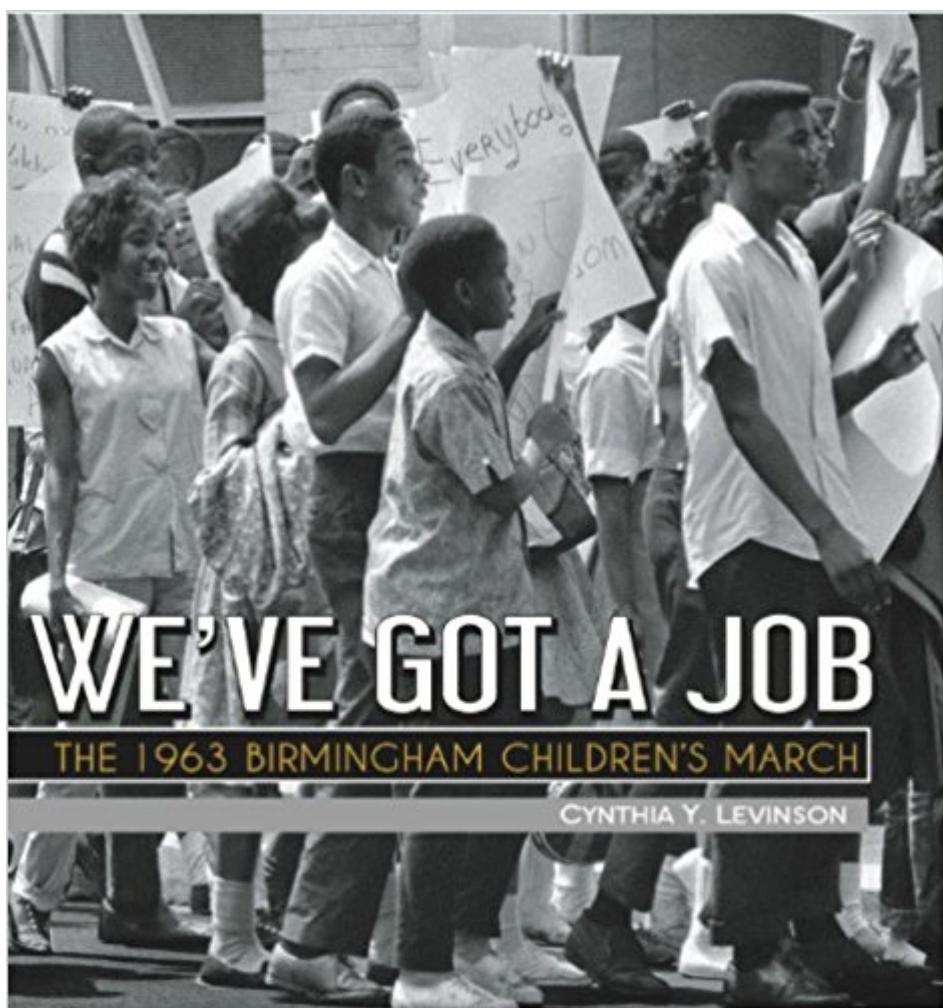


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# We've Got A Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March



## **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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Best Sellers Rank: #46,642 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 in Books > Teens > Social Issues > Prejudice #9 in Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > United States > 20th Century #46 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > 1900s

Age Range: 12 - 15 years

Grade Level: 7 - 10

## **Customer Reviews**

STARRED REVIEW Even with the many fine books out there about the role of young people in the Civil Rights era, this highlyreadable photo-essay will hold YA readers with its focus on four young people who participated in theBirmingham Children s March, set against the big picture of the fight against segregation and the roles ofadults. At nine, Audrey Hendricks was the youngest of nearly 4000 black children who marched,protested, and sang their way to jail, and she had the support of her church, teachers, and middle-classparents. Washington Booker lived in poverty in the projects; for him the police were the ultimate terror.Smart, academic James Stewart chose not to do sit-ins, but marching felt right. Arnetta Streeter went toyoung activists training. Important adult leaders on all sides are included in the story, from Martin LutherKing, Jr. and the Reverend Shuttlesworth to Bull

Connor, and Levinson points out not just the individuals with extreme viewpoints, but also the moderates who kept quiet about the insulting separate but equal policies. The format will hook readers with spacious type, boxed quotes, and large black-and-white photos on almost every double-page spread, from the horrifying view of the Klan marching with children to the young protestors waiting to be arrested. A fascinating look at a rarely covered event for both curriculum and personal interest. Chapter notes, a timeline, and a bibliography conclude. Hazel Rochman

--Booklist **STARRED REVIEW** This chronicle of a pivotal chapter of the civil rights movement weaves together the stories of four black children in Birmingham, Ala., who were among some 4,000 who boycotted school to participate in a march to protest segregation. Before recounting that event, during which almost 2,500 young people were arrested and jailed, first-time author Levinson opens with intimate profiles of the four spotlighted children (drawn from interviews she conducted with each of them), along with descriptions of Birmingham's racist laws, corrupt politicians, antiblack sentiment and activists' efforts to fight all of the above. Readers also get an upclose view of such leaders as Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, who founded the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights; Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who advocated a nonviolent response; and James Bevel, a preacher who rallied the city's children and teens. Yet the most compelling component is Levinson's dramatic recreation of the courageous children's crusade and the change it helped bring about in the face of widespread prejudice and brutality. Powerful period photos and topical sidebars heighten the story's impact. Ages 10 up. Agent: Erin Murphy, Erin Murphy Literary Agency. (Feb.)

--Publishers Weekly **STARRED REVIEW** The author takes her inspiring tale of courage in the face of both irrational racial hatred and adult foot-dragging (on both sides) through the ensuing riots and the electrifying September bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church...A moving record of young people rising at a pivotal historical moment, based on original interviews and archival research as well as published sources. --Kirkus

**Publishers Weekly** **STARRED REVIEW** Triumph and tragedy in 1963 Birmingham, as children and teens pick up the flagging Civil Rights movement and give it a swift kick in the pants. Levinson builds her dramatic account around the experiences of four young arrestees including a 9-year-old, two teenage activists trained in nonviolent methods and a high-school dropout who was anything but nonviolent. She opens by mapping out the segregated society of Birmingham and the internal conflicts and low levels of adult participation that threatened to bring the planned jail-filling marches dubbed Project C (for confrontation) --Kirkus

Cynthia Levinson holds degrees from Wellesley College and Harvard University and also attended

the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs. A former teacher and educational policy consultant and researcher, she is the author of the award-winning and critically-acclaimed *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March*. She has also published articles in *Appleseeds*, *Calliope*, *Cobblestone*, *Dig*, *Faces*, and *Odyssey*.

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 Conner 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.

I really enjoyed reading this non-fiction book. I was hooked since page one, thinking it was like a short text book, since it's full of information. I strongly believe that this book should be read by every generation so that we can fully understand the events that led to the signing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. All I can say this book is it is a must read for everyone! As a future educator, I plan to keep this book available for my students. Personally I was astonished to read about children and teenagers protesting and marching to secure their freedom. Audrey, James, Washington, and Arnetta have changed my perspective by risking their own lives to protect adults who feared losing their jobs, or worse, their lives. Most of the personal stories are heartbreakingly sad, but can definitely influence, inspire and motivate future generations to prevent something like this from happening again. This is the kind of text that motivated me to pursue a teaching career, so that children are able to read and re-live an important part of history, and be able to learn the truth.

Oscar Wilde supposedly said, "Any fool can make history, but it takes genius to write it." While I don't necessarily agree with the first part, the second part absolutely rings true. After all, how do you make a story compelling when everyone already knows how it ends? Cynthia Levinson has proven her genius here, because she accomplishes that and so much more in *WE'VE GOT A JOB*. By

anchoring the events surrounding the 1963 Birmingham Children's March in the personal narratives of four of its direct participants, Levinson puts readers on the ground in Birmingham. We may know the final outcome, but we have no idea how we're ever going to get there, and this day-by-day account of the incremental progress--and setbacks--will keep readers turning the pages to find out what happened next. This is a nonfiction book with as much drama and pacing as *THE HUNGER GAMES*. I literally couldn't put it down, except for when I became too teary-eyed to continue reading, which happened often. There is so much to love about this book, but I think my favorite thing about it is how Levinson humanizes everyone involved. It's not as much a movement or an event as it is individuals, each with his or her own motivations, working with or against each other. I loved reading that even the revered leaders (for both sides of the issue) were hardly ever in agreement. Everyone involved was taking a chance, a risk, a guess as to what was going to work--or not. They were all fighting for what they believed in, each in his or her own unique way. Nothing was simple. Nothing was clear. I wholeheartedly think this book should be in every library, in every classroom, and in every home in America for its history as well as for its message for the future. Buy it, read it, recommend it, share it. The book also includes a table of contents, author's note, timeline, map, acknowledgements, extensive source notes, bibliography (recommended resources), photo credits, and a detailed index. Levinson also has additional info, lesson plans, discussion questions, curriculum guides, and more on her website ([...]).

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.

Great book about unheralded heroes of the civil rights movement: the children who protested and filled the Birmingham jails in order to bring the country's and the world's attention to the problems of segregation in Birmingham, AL. A very inspiring story of bravery, non-violence and faith. Arrived on time and in great shape.

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