

# A Life of Activism

After a 60-year career, most people would consider retirement. **David Hartsough, B.A. 1962**, however, has been a social activist for even longer than that, and he has no plans to slow down.

"I know people in all parts of the world who are struggling for a more peaceful and just world. So, I have a sense that we're all in this together," Hartsough says.

In an effort to share the stories and successes of the many nonviolent demonstrations throughout his life, Hartsough recently wrote *Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Act*, a memoir detailing his ongoing quest for a peaceful world.

Hartsough says he was greatly influenced by his father, Ray, a Congregational minister, while growing up in a Quaker household in Gilman, Iowa.

Through his father, he met civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy during the Montgomery Bus Boycotts in Alabama. He and his family went to Montgomery during the spring of 1956 where he saw firsthand how the South was deeply entrenched in segregation. He saw the dedication of those who would wake up an hour early to walk to work rather than ride segregated buses. He witnessed the effectiveness of nonviolence in the face of violent opposition.

When he met Bayard Rustin, another key player in the civil rights movement and the main organizer of the March on Washington in 1963, Rustin encouraged him to attend Howard University.

"That, for reasons I had no way of knowing, became one of the most important experiences of my life," Hartsough says. Before coming to Howard, he spent a year studying at Swarthmore College, trying to encourage the admittance of African Americans to that institution.

At Howard, Hartsough participated in a number of protests, beginning with sit-ins at Maryland stores that resulted in him spending weekends in jail. He would be released on Monday mornings just before he made his way to class. In June 1960, he joined other students in the sit-ins in Arlington, Virginia. Because anyone who challenged the law in Virginia faced threats of violence, the 12 demonstrators received additional nonviolence training beforehand. Within minutes of arriving at a drug store in Arlington, the lunch counter



Hartsough, third from the right, frequently participated in a number of protests and sit-ins.

closed. However, the store owner did not want to have the group arrested, so they stayed for two days waiting for something to eat.

Hartsough remembers the group being spit on and having lit cigarettes dropped down their shirts; some were punched in the stomach so hard that they would fall to the floor. One man even threatened Hartsough's life because of his participation. But the demonstrators ultimately influenced Arlington business leaders to change the law and allow all people at their eating establishments.

After graduating from Howard, he continued to be involved in nonviolent demonstrations all over the country and around the world. In a 1972 protest against U.S. bombing in Vietnam, he and other demonstrators blocked a ship in New Jersey that was being loaded with bombs. In the 1980s, Hartsough participated in demonstrations against U.S. support for wars in various Central America countries.

Recently, Hartsough has been involved in demonstrations like the Occupy Movement in San Francisco, Oakland and Washington, D.C. He has also protested against the wars in the Middle East, especially the Gaza Strip, which motivated him to start World Beyond War, a global movement to end all wars and encourage peace.

"We can change this," he says. "We in the peace movement need to realize that we are not a small segment in the population; almost all people in the world want peace and have discovered the power of nonviolence."

—Briahnnna Brown

