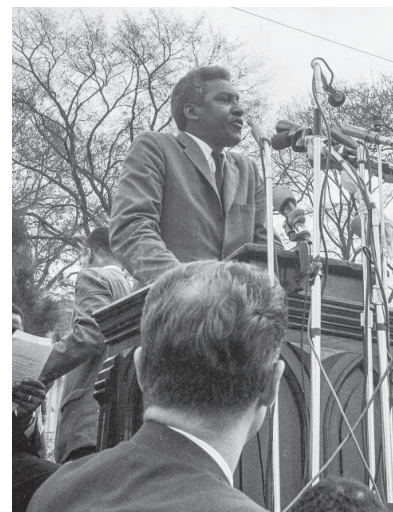


ACTIVIST ORGANIZER AGITATOR ADVOCATE LEADER
OUT GAY BLACK ORATOR VISIONARY PROUD CONFIDANT
PARTNER TRUTH-TELLER ACTIVIST ORGANIZER AGITATOR
ADVOCATE LEADER OUT GAY BLACK ORATOR VISIONARY
PROUD CONFIDANT PARTNER TRUTH-TELLER ACTIVIST
ORGANIZER AGITATOR ADVOCATE LEADER OUT GAY BLACK
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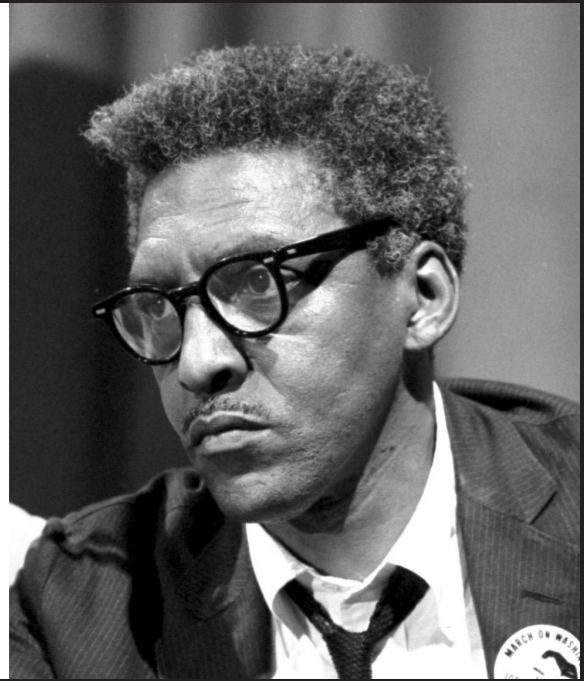


TRUTH-TELLER ACTIVIST ORGANIZER AGITATOR
BLACK AGITATOR ADVOCATE LEADER OUT
GAY BLACK ORATOR VISIONARY PROUD
CONFIDANT PARTNER TRUTH-TELLER
ACTIVIST ORGANIZER AGITATOR
ADVOCATE LEADER OUT GAY BLACK



BAYARD RUSTIN

“The proof that one truly believes is in action.”
- Bayard Rustin



GREETINGS!

This March 17th, as we celebrate the 109th birthday of civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC) invites everyone to learn more about his life and legacy.

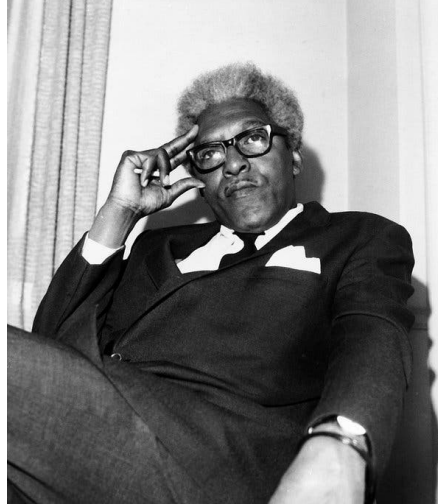
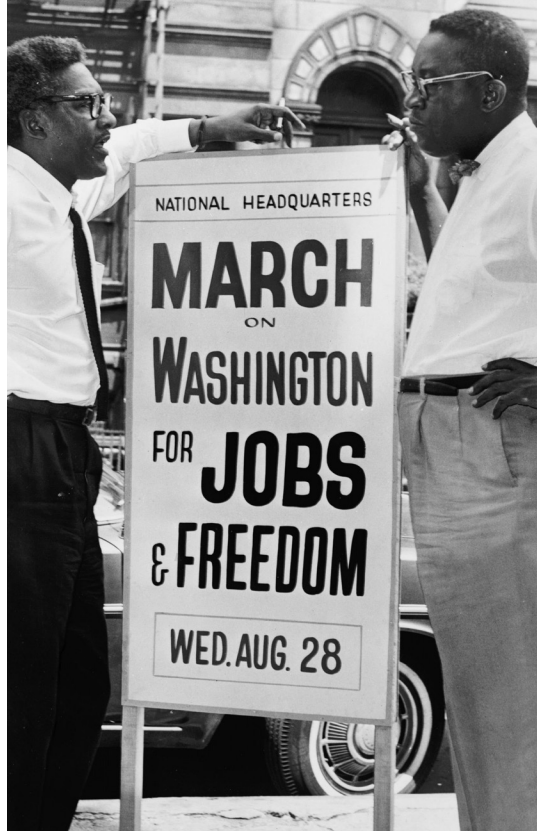
As a Black gay man, Rustin overcame countless obstacles to become the chief architect of many civil rights era protests including what is often referred to as the March On Washington. He is also responsible for introducing Dr. King to the non-violent teachings that helped define his civil rights leadership. Despite these and other crucial contributions, homophobia and racism have obscured much of Rustin's legacy, both then and now.

NBJC is proud to have contributed to the Bayard Rustin centennial celebrations, where we partnered with the Obama White House and others for his posthumous Medal of Freedom ceremony. That was almost a decade ago. At NBJC, we are dedicated to elevating the voices of Black LGBTQ+/SGL people, families, and communities to bridge the gaps between the movements for racial justice and for LGBTQ+/SGL equity. Our constituency faces racism and homophobia, as Bayard Rustin did. His refusal to bow to those pressures is a model for our work today.

We hope that this digital resource inspires further investigation into how Bayard Rustin inspired and empowered generations of leaders, some like him, to fight racism, homophobia, and other forms of bias and oppression so that one day soon all Black Lives Matter!

In Love and Continued Struggle,

David J. Johns
Executive Director, The National Black Justice Coalition



OVERVIEW



Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the legacies of many brave leaders of the movement, such as Martin Luther King Jr., have been memorialized in history books. For others, however, it is necessary to work harder to amplify their voices and contributions as they are not as well known. One such civil rights leader to learn about this month is Bayard Rustin. Rustin was the strategic mind behind organizing not only the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, but also countless other protests against racial discrimination. As a Black gay man, however, Rustin was often relegated to the background and because of the homophobia at the time, his work was obscured and his legacy not as well remembered as other leaders. On Bayard Rustin's birthday, March 17th, 2021, it is important to raise awareness of his story—not only so he receives credit for his accomplishments—but also to address the stigmas against the Black LGBTQ+/SGL community that still persist. Additionally, his legacy as a Black gay man is inspiring for a new generation of Black LGBTQ+ people who are continuing to advocate for equal rights.

WHO IS BAYARD RUSTIN?

- **BAYARD RUSTIN WAS BORN ON MARCH 17, 1912** in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He was a leader in the movements for civil rights, socialism, nonviolence, and gay rights.
- **RUSTIN BEGAN HIS WORK AS AN ACTIVIST IN HIS YOUTH** by protesting discriminatory Jim Crow Laws, a set of state and local laws enacted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that enforced racial segregation primarily in the United States South.
- **RUSTIN BELIEVED IN COMPLETE DESEGREGATION** of schools, public transportation, and the workforce. As such, he organized several marches and bus rides to protest racial discrimination.
- **THOUGH AN INFLUENTIAL LEADER OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**, Rustin often worked in the shadows and did behind the scenes work as his identity as a Black gay man was seen as a liability in this time when being gay was still punishable.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- In 1941, Rustin worked with A. Philip Randolph and A.J. Muste to organize a March on Washington to protest racial segregation and employment discrimination. The three gave President Roosevelt an ultimatum: either ban segregation or there would be a march. President Roosevelt issued the Fair Employment Act that banned discrimination in defense industries and federal agencies. Randolph cancelled the March, much to Rustin's displeasure as the armed forces were still not desegregated; this would not occur until 1948.



- In 1942, Bayard Rustin took a bus from Louisville, Kentucky to Nashville, Tennessee to protest Jim Crow laws that required Black people to sit at the back of the bus. When confronted and asked to move from the front to the back, Rustin refused and stayed in the front the whole ride. This was also the moment that Rustin came out as a gay man as he recognized that he needed to come out or he would aid in the prejudice against LGBTQ+ people.
- In 1947, following the Supreme Court decision in *Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia* that declared racial discrimination in interstate travel unconstitutional, Rustin helped organize the Journey of Reconciliation. Rustin and a team of 14 participants rode on public transportation in pairs throughout the South. The participants were repeatedly arrested for violating the states' Jim Crow laws.
- Also in 1947, Bayard Rustin travelled to India to learn the tactics of nonviolent resistance directly from leaders of the Gandhian movement.
- In 1955, Rustin helped author "Speak Truth to Power: A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence," one of the most influential pacifist essays in the US. Rustin, however, chose to keep his contributions quiet, as he feared that his sexual orientation would compromise the pamphlet.

- Rustin also worked with Martin Luther King Jr. to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) as well as a march outside of the Democratic National Convention, which upset Rep. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. He told them that if they did not cancel it, he would leak a fake story to the press that Rustin and King were having an affair. Because of this, King cancelled the march and Rustin left his position at the SCLC.

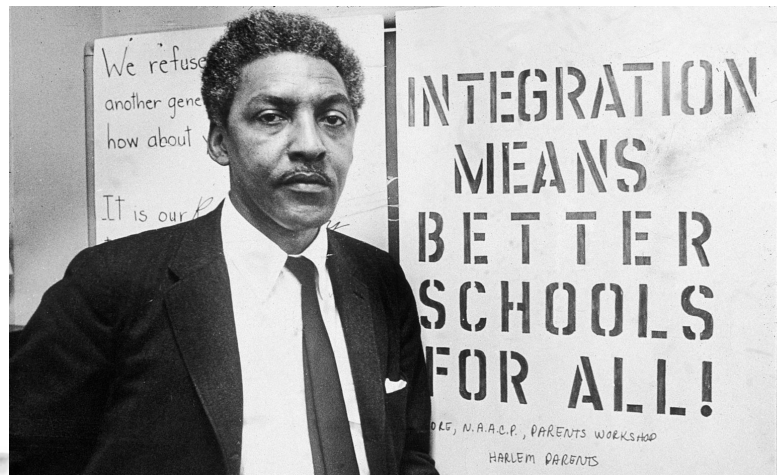


Rustin faced concerns that his orientation might negatively impact his critical work in the struggle for equality and civil rights

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS



- In 1963, Rustin helped organize the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Though Rustin was the logical choice to organize the March, many other civil rights leaders opposed his participation, such as Roy Wilkins of the NAACP who refused to allow Rustin to be at the front of the movement. He feared that Rustin's sexuality was a "liability" to this important movement. As such, Randolph became the march's director, with Rustin as his deputy. This setback did not stop him from successfully organizing and participating in the March.
- In 1964, Rustin organized a New York City School Boycott to protest the segregation that still existed in the schools. On February 3, 1964, over 400,000 New Yorkers participated in the boycott.
- In the 1980s, Rustin opened up about his sexual orientation and helped make the NAACP more aware of the AIDS crisis and its effect on Black gay men.

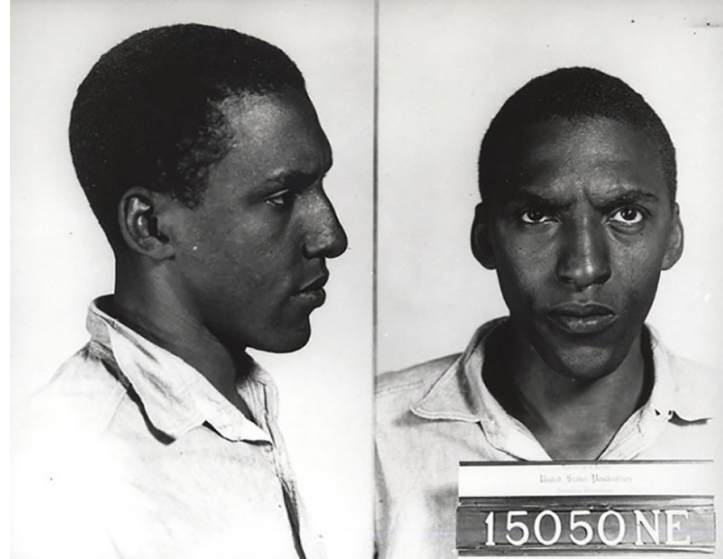


LIFE AS A BLACK GAY MAN

Despite landmark Supreme Court cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education*, which called for the desegregation of schools, segregation and racial discrimination was very prominent in the late 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, until 1968, Jim Crow laws legalized the marginalization of Black people by preventing them from voting, holding certain jobs, and getting an education, the effects of which are still seen today. Also at this time, Black LGBTQ+ people faced even more discrimination as LGBTQ+ people were considered mentally ill and were banned from working in the federal government. Additionally, most states had sodomy laws that criminalized same-sex relations. These circumstances made it very difficult for Black LGBTQ+ people. Despite this, leaders like Bayard Rustin emerged to fight for equal rights.

- In 1953, Bayard Rustin was arrested in Pasadena, California for sexual activity with another man. He plead guilty to “sex perversion” and spent 60 days in prison. Following his release, Rustin’s sexual orientation came to public attention for the first time. This greatly affected his participation in the civil rights movement. Recently, however, California Governor Gavin Newsom posthumously pardoned Rustin for this arrest.
- Bayard Rustin lived in a time before the gay rights movement. In his time, being gay was still criminalized and there was much prejudice against him even within the civil rights movement. His sexuality put tension on his relationship with A.J. Muste, who tried to change his sexual orientation.
- Following his arrest, Rustin stepped down from his position at the FoR.
- Bayard Rustin had to learn how to lead without drawing attention to himself, constantly navigating the homophobia present in society that threatened to destroy him and the movement for racial equality.

Much of Rustin’s work is forgotten in history and his story is not taught alongside the other leaders.

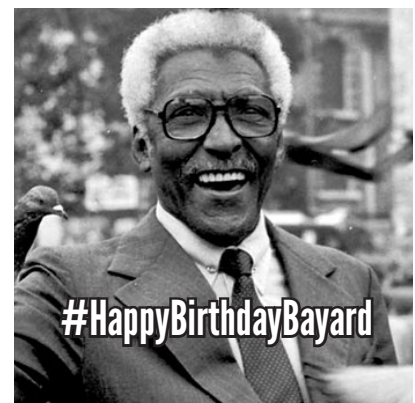


CALL TO ACTION

Bayard Rustin was a brilliant strategist and the mastermind behind many of the major protests and marches for racial justice in the civil rights movement. He was a Quaker dedicated to nonviolence and his effective strategies for organizing and advocating for civil rights can still be used today. On Bayard's Rustin 109th birthday, commit to taking the following actions:

- **USE YOUR VOICE.** Don't be afraid to speak up in the face of injustice. Rustin spent his whole life speaking out against racial injustice, and through this was able to bring about significant advancements towards racial equality, including the desegregation of the defense industries.
- **SUPPORT.** Use your voice to support policies that empower the Black LGBTQ+/SGL community, such as the Equality Act. The Equality Act was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives last week and now faces the hurdle of getting 60 U.S. Senators to also vote "yes." [Call your U.S. Senators](#) and ask them all to co-sponsor and vote YES on the Equality Act (HR5). You can learn more about the policies that we support in our [2021 Policy Agenda](#).
- **COLLABORATE.** Though Bayard Rustin was a brilliant organizer, he could not have done what he did alone. He had the help of other leaders, from Martin Luther King Jr. to A. Philip Randolph. Don't be afraid to reach out to friends or local community organizers when organizing and advocating for change. Also consider volunteering with civil rights organizations such as the NBJC that work on policy, research, and education as a way to end stigmas. Visit [nbjc.org](#) to learn more about upcoming actions and opportunities.
- **EDUCATE.** Host a community conversation over Zoom about the life of Bayard Rustin. Many people still do not know his story despite the fact he was a crucial organizer in the civil rights movement. Take this time to tell others about his story and encourage them to tell other people.
- **STAY WOKE.** Black LGBTQ+/SGL people still face unique racism and homophobia today that has yet to be resolved. [According to the FBI Hate Crimes statistics database](#), 55.8% of hate crimes in 2019 were motivated by race and 16.8% were motivated by sexual orientation. Violence and stigma against these communities still persist and it is important to recognize that in learning how to better support and empower this community.
- **LEVERAGE THE TOOLS PROVIDED BY SOCIAL MEDIA.** In the digital age, it is easier than ever to promote the story of Bayard Rustin to a large audience. Consider hosting a virtual screening of [Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin](#) to learn about his legacy. Contact your school or organization to promote the teaching of Bayard Rustin's story by sharing information via email or social media. Use the hashtag #HappyBirthdayBayard as you share more about Brother Bayard's story, celebrate his birthday and the contributions he has made to the current moment in the movement for Black lives. Please also encourage your friends and those in your networks to do the same.

#HappyBirthdayBayard



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#HAPPYBIRTHDAYBAYARD



March 17th would mark Bayard Rustin's 109th birthday!



Bayard walked so we could run. Get engaged with the movement.
Join our mailing list at nbjc.org to find out how!

Celebrate the life and legacy of
Bayard Rustin by sharing these
graphics on social media.

#HappyBirthdayBayard

On Bayard Rustin's 109th Birthday Commit to:

1 USING YOUR VOICE

Don't be afraid to
speak up in the face
of injustice.

2 SUPPORTING

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policies that empower the
Black LGBTQ+/SGL community,
such as the
Equality Act.

3 COLLABORATION

Don't be afraid to reach out to
friends or local community
organizers when organizing
and advocating for change..

2

4 EDUCATING

Host a community
conversation over Zoom about
the life of Bayard Rustin.

3

5 STAYING WOKE

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4

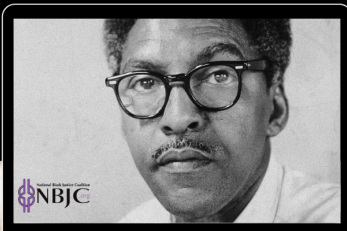


SCREENSHOT &
SHARE

#HAPPYBIRTHDAYBAYARD

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