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Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin (/ˈbaɪrərd/; March 17, 1912 – August 24, 1987) was an American leader in social movements for civil rights, socialism, nonviolence, and gay rights. He was born and raised in Pennsylvania, where his family was involved in civil rights work. In 1936, he moved to Harlem, New York City and earned a living as a nightclub and stage singer, and continued activism for civil rights.

In the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), Rustin practiced nonviolence.^[1] He was a leading activist of the early 1947–1955 Civil Rights Movement, helping to initiate a 1947 Freedom Ride to challenge, with civil disobedience, the racial segregation issue related to interstate busing. He recognized Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership, and helped to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to strengthen King's leadership. Rustin promoted the philosophy of nonviolence and the practices of nonviolent resistance, which he had observed while working with Gandhi's movement in India. Rustin became a leading strategist of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement from 1955 to 1968. He was the chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, which was headed by A. Philip Randolph, the leading African-American labor-union president and socialist.^{[2][3]} Rustin also influenced young activists, such as Tom Kahn and Stokely Carmichael, in organizations like the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

After the passage of the civil rights legislation of 1964–65, Rustin focused attention on the economic problems of working-class and unemployed African Americans, suggesting that the civil-rights movement had left its period of “protest” and had entered an era of “politics”, in which the black community had to ally with the labor movement. Rustin became the head of the AFL–CIO's A. Philip Randolph Institute, which promoted the integration of formerly all-white unions and promoted the unionization of African Americans. The Institute under Rustin's leadership also advanced and campaigned for (from 1966 to 1968) *A Freedom Budget for All Americans*, linking the concepts of racial justice with economic justice. Supported by over 200 prominent civil-rights activists, trade unionists, religious leaders, academics and others, it outlined a plan to eliminate poverty and unemployment in the United States within a ten-year period. Rustin became an honorary chairperson of the Socialist Party of America in 1972, before it changed its name to Social Democrats, USA (SDUSA); Rustin acted as national chairman of SDUSA during the 1970s. During the 1970s and 1980s, Rustin served on many humanitarian

missions, such as aiding refugees from Communist Vietnam and Cambodia. He was on a humanitarian mission in Haiti when he died in 1987.

Rustin was a gay man who had been arrested for homosexual activity in 1953 (which was criminalized in parts of the United States until 2003). Rustin's sexuality, or at least his embarrassingly public criminal charge, was criticized by some fellow pacifists and civil-rights leaders. Rustin was attacked as a “pervert” or “immoral influence” by political opponents from segregationists to black power militants, from the 1950s through the 1970s. In addition, his pre-1941 Communist Party affiliation when he was a young man was controversial. To avoid such attacks, Rustin served only rarely as a public spokesperson. He usually acted as an influential adviser to civil-rights leaders. In the 1980s, he became a public advocate on behalf of gay and lesbian causes.

President Ronald Reagan issued a statement on Rustin's death in 1987, praising his work for civil rights and his move towards neoconservative politics over the years.^[4]^[5]^[6] On November 20, 2013, President Barack Obama posthumously awarded Rustin the Presidential Medal of Freedom.^[7]

1 Early life

Rustin was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He was raised by his maternal grandparents (whom he believed were his parents), Julia (Davis) and Janifer Rustin.^{[8][9]} Julia Rustin was a Quaker, although she attended her husband's African Methodist Episcopal Church. She was also a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). NAACP leaders such as W.E.B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson were frequent guests in the Rustin home. With these influences in his early life, in his youth Rustin campaigned against racially discriminatory Jim Crow laws.^[10]

In 1932, Rustin entered Wilberforce University, a historically black college (HBCU) in Ohio operated by the AME Church. As a student at Wilberforce, Rustin was active in a number of campus organizations, including the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He left Wilberforce in 1936 before taking his final exams, and later attended Cheyney State Teachers College (now Cheyney University of Pennsylvania).

After completing an activist training program conducted by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC),

Rustin moved to **Harlem** in 1937 and began studying at **City College of New York**. There he became involved in efforts to defend and free the **Scottsboro Boys**, nine young black men in Alabama who were accused of raping two white women. He joined the **Young Communist League** for a small period of time in 1936, before becoming disillusioned with the party.^[8] Soon after arriving in New York City, he became a member of **Fifteenth Street Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)**.

Rustin was an accomplished tenor vocalist, an asset which earned him admission to both **Wilberforce University** and **Cheyney State Teachers College** with music scholarships.^[11] In 1939, he was in the chorus of a short-lived musical that starred **Paul Robeson**. Blues singer **Josh White** was also a cast member, and later invited Rustin to join his band, “**Josh White and the Carolinians**”. This gave Rustin the opportunity to become a regular performer at the **Café Society** nightclub in **Greenwich Village**, widening his social and intellectual contacts.^[12] A few albums on **Fellowship Records** featuring his singing were produced from the 1950s through the 1970s.

2 Political Philosophy

Rustin’s personal philosophy is said to have been inspired by combining Quaker pacifism with socialism (as taught by **A. Philip Randolph**) and the theory of non-violent protest, popularized by **Mahatma Gandhi**.^[8]

3 Evolving affiliations

Following directions from the **Soviet Union**, the **Communist Party USA (CPUSA)** and its members were active in the civil rights movement for African Americans.^[13] Following Stalin’s “theory of nationalism”, the CPUSA once favored the creation of a separate nation for African-Americans to be located in the **American Southeast**.^[14] In 1941, after Germany invaded the **Soviet Union**, **Joseph Stalin** ordered the CPUSA to abandon civil rights work and focus supporting U.S. entry into **World War II**. Disillusioned, Rustin began working with members of the **Socialist Party of Norman Thomas**, particularly, **A. Philip Randolph**, the head of the **Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters**; another socialist mentor was the pacifist **A. J. Muste**, leader of the **Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR)**.

The three of them proposed a march on **Washington** to protest racial discrimination in the armed forces. Meeting with President **Roosevelt** in the **Oval Office**, **Randolph** respectfully and politely, but firmly told President **Roosevelt** that African-Americans would march in the capital unless desegregation occurred. To prove their good faith, the organizers canceled the planned march after **Roosevelt** issued **Executive Order 8802** (the **Fair Employment**

Act), which banned discrimination in defense industries and federal agencies.

Rustin traveled to California to help protect the property of **Japanese-Americans** who had been imprisoned in **internment camps**. Impressed with Rustin’s organizational skills, **Muste** appointed him as **FOR’s** secretary for student and general affairs.

Rustin was also a pioneer in the movement to desegregate interstate bus travel. In 1942, he boarded a bus in **Louisville**, bound for **Nashville**, and sat in the second row. A number of drivers asked him to move to the back, but Rustin refused. The bus was stopped by police 13 miles north of **Nashville** and Rustin was arrested. He was beaten and taken to the police station, but was released uncharged.^[15]

In 1942, Rustin assisted two other staffers, **George Houser** and **James L. Farmer, Jr.**, and activist **Bernice Fisher** as they formed the **Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)**. Rustin was not a direct founder, but was “an uncle of CORE,” **Farmer** and **Houser** said later. CORE was conceived as a pacifist organization based on the writings of **Henry David Thoreau**. It was modeled after **Mohandas Gandhi’s** non-violent resistance against British rule in **India** and was influenced by his protege **Krishnalal Shridharani’s** book *War without Violence*.^[16]

As declared pacifists who refused induction into the military, Rustin, **Houser**, and other members of **FOR** and **CORE** were convicted of violating the **Selective Service Act**. From 1944 to 1946, Rustin was imprisoned in **Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary**, where he organized protests against segregated dining facilities. During his incarceration, Rustin also organized **FOR’s** **Free India Committee**. After his release from prison, he was frequently arrested for protesting against British colonial rule in **India** and **Africa**.

Just before a trip to **Africa** while college secretary of the **FOR**, Rustin recorded a 10-inch LP for the **Fellowship Records** label. He sang spirituals and **Elizabethan** songs, accompanied on the harpsichord by **Margaret Davison**.^[17]

4 Influence on the Civil Rights Movement

Further information: **African-American Civil Rights Movement (1955–1968)**

Rustin and **Houser** organized the **Journey of Reconciliation** in 1947. This was the first of the **Freedom Rides** to test the ruling of the **Supreme Court of the United States** that banned racial discrimination in interstate travel (*Irene Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia*). Rustin and **CORE** executive secretary **George Houser** recruited a team of fourteen men, divided equally by race,

to ride in pairs through Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky.^[18] The NAACP opposed CORE's Gandhian tactics as too meek. Participants in the Journey of Reconciliation were arrested several times. Arrested with Jewish activist Igal Roodenko, Rustin served twenty-two days on a chain gang in North Carolina for violating Jim Crow laws regarding segregated seating on public transportation.^[19]

In 1948, Rustin traveled to India to learn techniques of nonviolent civil resistance directly from the leaders of the Gandhian movement. The conference had been organized before Gandhi's assassination earlier that year. Between 1947 and 1952, Rustin met with leaders of independence movements in Ghana and Nigeria.

In 1951, he formed the Committee to Support South African Resistance, which later became the American Committee on Africa.

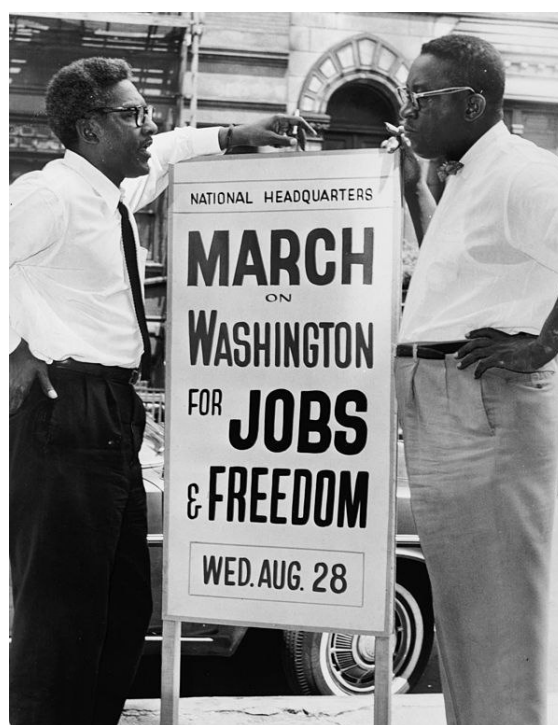
Rustin was arrested in Pasadena, California, in 1953 for sexual activity with two other men in a parked car. Originally charged with vagrancy and lewd conduct, he pleaded guilty to a single, lesser charge of "sex perversion" (as sodomy was officially referred to in California then, even if consensual) and served 60 days in jail. This was the first time that his homosexuality had come to public attention. He had been and remained candid about his sexuality, although homosexual activity was still criminalized throughout the United States. After his conviction, he was fired from FOR. He became the executive secretary of the War Resisters League.

Rustin served as an unidentified member of the American Friends Service Committee's task force to write "Speak Truth to Power: A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence,"^[20] published in 1955. This was one of the most influential and widely commented upon pacifist essays in the United States. Rustin had wanted to keep his participation quiet, as he believed that his known sexual orientation would be used by critics as an excuse to compromise the 71-page pamphlet when it was published. It analyzed the Cold War and the American response to it, and recommended non-violent solutions.

Rustin took leave from the War Resisters League in 1956 to advise Martin Luther King Jr. on Gandhian tactics. King was organizing the public transportation boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, known as the Montgomery Bus Boycott. According to Rustin, "I think it's fair to say that Dr. King's view of non-violent tactics was almost non-existent when the boycott began. In other words, Dr. King was permitting himself and his children and his home to be protected by guns." Rustin convinced King to abandon the armed protection, including a personal handgun.^[21] In a 1964 interview with Robert Penn Warren for the book *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, Rustin also reflected that his integrative ideology began to differ from King's, and that he believes a social movement "has to be based on the collective needs of people at this time, regardless of color, creed, race."^[22]

The following year, Rustin and King began organizing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Many African-American leaders were concerned that Rustin's sexual orientation and past Communist membership would undermine support for the civil rights movement. U.S. Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., who was a member of the SCLC's board, forced Rustin's resignation from the SCLC in 1960 by threatening to discuss Rustin's morals charge in Congress.^[23] Although Rustin was open about his sexual orientation and his conviction was a matter of public record, the events had not been discussed widely outside the civil rights leadership.

4.1 March on Washington



Rustin and Cleveland Robinson of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 7, 1963

Despite shunning from some civil rights leaders,

[w]hen the moment came for an unprecedented mass gathering in Washington, Randolph pushed Rustin forward as the logical choice to organize it.^[24]

A few weeks before the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in August 1963, Senator Strom Thurmond railed against Rustin as a "Communist, draft-dodger, and homosexual," and had the entire Pasadena arrest file entered in the record.^[24] Thurmond also produced a Federal Bureau of Investigation photograph of Rustin talking to King while King was bathing, to imply that there was a same-sex relationship between the two. Both men denied the allegation of an affair.

Rustin was instrumental in organizing the march. He drilled off-duty police officers as marshals, bus captains to direct traffic, and scheduled the podium speakers. Eleanor Holmes Norton and Rachele Horowitz were aides.^[24]

Despite King's support, NAACP chairman Roy Wilkins did not want Rustin to receive any public credit for his role in planning the march. Nevertheless, he did become well known. On September 6, 1963, Rustin and Randolph appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine as "the leaders" of the March.^[25]

After the March on Washington, Rustin organized the New York City School Boycott. When Rustin was invited to speak at the University of Virginia in 1964, school administrators tried to ban him, out of fear that he would organize another school boycott there.



Rustin, 1965

4.2 From Protest to politics

In the spring of 1964, Martin Luther King was considering hiring Rustin as executive director of SCLC, but was advised against it by an old activist friend of Rustin's, Stanley Levison, on the grounds of Rustin's growing devotion to the political theorist Max Schachtman. "Schachtmanites" were known to be an ideologically cultish group with ardently anti-communist positions and attachments to the Democratic Party and the AFL-CIO.^[26]

At the 1964 Democratic National Convention, Rustin became an adviser to the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), who were attempting to be recognized as the legitimate, non-Jim Crow delegation from their state. DNC leaders Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey offered only two non-voting seats to the MFDP, with the official seating going to the segregationist Mississippi regular delegation. Rustin, following a line set by Schachtman^[27] and AFL-CIO leaders, urged the MFDP to take the offer. MFDP leaders, including Fannie Lou Hamer and Bob Moses, angrily rejected the arrangement, and many of their supporters became highly suspicious of Rustin. Rustin did, however, ingratiate himself to the Democratic Party leadership.^[28]

After passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Rustin advocated closer ties between the civil rights movement and the Democratic Party, specifically the party's base among the white working class. With Tom Kahn, Rustin wrote an influential article in 1964 called "From protest to politics" that analyzed the changing economy and its implications for African Americans. Rustin wrote that the rise of automation would reduce the demand for low-skill high-paying jobs, which would jeopardize the position of the urban African-American working class, particularly in northern states.

In Rustin's view, the needs of the African-American community demanded a shift in political strategy, where

the blacks would need to strengthen their political alliance with mostly white unions and other organizations (churches, synagogues, etc.) to pursue a common economic agenda. It was time to move from protest to politics, wrote Rustin. Rustin's analysis of the economic problems of the Black community was widely influential.^[29]

He also argued that a particular danger facing the African-American community was the appeal of identity politics, particularly the rise of "Black power" which he dismissed as a fantasy of middle-class black people that repeated the political and moral errors of previous black nationalists, while alienating the white allies needed by the African-American community. Historian Randall Kennedy has written that while Rustin had a general "disdain of nationalism" he had a "very different attitude toward Jewish nationalism" and was "unflinchingly supportive of Zionism."^[30]

Because of these positions, Rustin was criticized as a "sell-out" by many of his former colleagues in the civil rights movement, especially those connected to grassroots organizing. They charged that he was lured by the material comforts that came with a less radical and more professional type of activism. While biographer John D'Emilio rejects these assertions, Randall Kennedy has written that descriptions of Rustin as "a bought man" are "at least partly true."^[31]

"From Protest to Politics" was published in *Commentary* magazine at the behest of editor-in-chief Norman Podhoretz. Rustin remained intellectually and personally aligned with Podhoretz and *Commentary* for the next 20 years as Podhoretz and the magazine promoted the neoconservative movement. In 1985 Rustin publicly praised Podhoretz for his refusal to "pander to minority groups" and for opposing hiring quotas and black studies programs.^[32]

4.2.1 Influence on William Julius Wilson

See also: William Julius Wilson

Rustin's analysis was supported by later research by William Julius Wilson. Wilson documented an increase in inequality within the Black community, following educated Blacks moving into white suburbs and following the decrease of demand for low-skill labor as industry declined in the Northern USA. Such economic problems were not being addressed by a civil rights leadership focused on "affirmative action", a policy benefiting the truly advantaged within the Black community. Wilson's criticism of the neglect of working-class and poor African Americans by civil rights organizations led to his being labeled a neoconservative, although he identified himself as a Rustin-style social democrat. Wilson has served on the advisory board of Social Democrats, USA.^{[33] [34]}

His *The Truly Disadvantaged*, which was selected by the editors of the *New York Times* Book Review as one of the 16 best books of 1987, and received *The Washington Monthly* Annual Book Award and the Society for the Study of Social Problems' C. Wright Mills Award. In *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (1987), Wilson was one of the first to enunciate at length the "spatial mismatch" theory for the development of a ghetto underclass. As industrial jobs disappeared in cities in the wake of global economic restructuring, and hence urban unemployment increased, women found it unwise to marry the fathers of their children, since the fathers would not be breadwinners.

His *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, which was selected as one of the notable books of 1996 by the editors of the *New York Times* Book Review and received the Sidney Hillman Foundation Award. His *The Bridge Over the Racial Divide: Rising Inequality and Coalition Politics* reaffirms the need for a coalition strategy, as Rustin suggested.

In Wilson's most recent book, *More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City* (2009), he directs his attention to the overall framing of pervasive, concentrated urban poverty of African Americans. He asks the question, "Why do poverty and unequal opportunity persist in the lives of so many African Americans?" In response, he traces the history and current state of powerful structural factors impacting African Americans, such as discrimination in laws, policies, hiring, housing, and education. Wilson also examines the interplay of structural factors and the attitudes and assumptions of African Americans, European Americans, and social science researchers. In identifying the dynamic influence of structural, economic, and cultural factors, he argues against either/or politicized views of poverty among African Americans that either focus blame solely on cultural factors or only on unjust structural factors. He tries "to demonstrate the importance of understanding

not only the independent contributions of social structure and culture, but also how they interact to shape different group outcomes that embody racial inequality." Wilson's goal is to "rethink the way we talk about addressing the problems of race and urban poverty in the public policy arena."^[35]

4.3 Labor movement: Unions and social democracy

Rustin increasingly worked to strengthen the labor movement, which he saw as the champion of empowerment for the African-American community and for economic justice for all Americans. He contributed to the labor movement's two sides, economic and political, through support of labor unions and social-democratic politics.

He was the founder and became the Director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, which coordinated the AFL-CIO's work on civil rights and economic justice. He became a regular columnist for the AFL-CIO newspaper.

On the political side of the labor movement, Rustin increased his visibility as a leader of the American social democracy. He became a national co-chairman of the Socialist Party of America in early 1972. In December 1972, when the Socialist Party changed its name to Social Democrats, USA (SDUSA) by a vote of 73–34, Rustin continued to serve as national co-chairman, along with Charles S. Zimmerman of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU).^[36] In his opening speech to the December 1972 Convention, Co-Chairman Rustin called for SDUSA to organize against the "reactionary policies of the Nixon Administration"; Rustin also criticized the "irresponsibility and élitism of the 'New Politics' liberals".^[36] In later years, Rustin served at the national chairman of SDUSA.

4.4 Foreign policy

Like many liberals and socialists, Rustin supported President Lyndon B. Johnson's containment policy against communism, while making criticisms of the conduct of this policy. In particular, to maintain independent labor unions and political opposition in Vietnam, Rustin and others gave critical support to U.S. military intervention in Vietnam, while calling for a negotiated peace treaty and democratic elections. Rustin criticized the specific conduct of the war, though. For instance, in a fundraising letter sent to War Resisters League supporters in 1964, Rustin wrote of being "angered and humiliated by the kind of war being waged, a war of torture, a war in which civilians are being machine gunned from the air, and in which American napalm bombs are being dropped on the villages."^[37]

Along with Allard Lowenstein and Norman Thomas, Rustin worked with the C.I.A.-sponsored Committee

on Free Elections in the Dominican Republic, which lent “international credibility to a 1966 ballot effectively rigged against the socialist former president, Juan Bosch.”^[38]

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Rustin worked as a human rights and election monitor for Freedom House.^[39]

In 1970 Rustin called for the U.S. to send military jets in the fight against Arab states by Israel; referring to a New York Times article he authored, Rustin wrote to Prime Minister Golda Meir “...I hope that the ad will also have an effect on a serious domestic question: namely, the relations between the Jewish and the Negro communities in America.” Rustin was concerned about unity between two groups that he argued faced discrimination in America and abroad, and also believed that Israel’s democratic ideals were proof that justice and equality would prevail in the Arab territories despite the atrocities of war. His former colleagues in the peace movement considered it to be a profound betrayal of Rustin’s nonviolent ideals.^[40]

The plight of Jews in the Soviet Union reminded Rustin of the struggles that blacks faced in the United States. Soviet Jews faced many of the same forms of discrimination in employment, education and housing, while also being prisoners within their own country by being denied the chance to emigrate by Soviet authorities.^[41] After seeing the injustice that Soviet Jews faced, Rustin became a leading voice in advocating for the movement of Jews from the Soviet Union to Israel. He worked closely with Senator Henry Jackson of Washington, who introduced legislation that tied trade relations with the Soviet Union to their treatment of Jews.^[42]

Rustin maintained his strongly anti-Soviet views later in his life, especially with regard to Africa. Rustin co-wrote with Carl Gershman (a former director of Social Democrats, USA and future Ronald Reagan appointee) an essay entitled “Africa, Soviet Imperialism & the Retreat of American Power,” in which he decried Russian and Cuban involvement in the Angolan Civil War and defended the military intervention by apartheid South Africa on behalf of the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) and National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). “And if a South African force did intervene at the urging of *black* leaders and on the side of the forces that clearly represent the *black* majority in Angola, to counter a non-African army of Cubans ten times its size, by what standard of political judgment is this immoral?” Rustin accused the Soviet Union of a classic imperialist agenda in Africa in pursuit of economic resources and vital sea lanes, and called the Carter Administration “hypocritical” for claiming to be committed to the welfare of blacks while doing too little to thwart Russian and Cuban expansion throughout Africa.^[43]

4.5 Gay rights

He also testified on behalf of New York State’s Gay Rights Bill. In 1986, he gave a speech “The New Niggers Are Gays,” in which he asserted,

Today, blacks are no longer the litmus paper or the barometer of social change. Blacks are in every segment of society and there are laws that help to protect them from racial discrimination. The new “niggers” are gays.... It is in this sense that gay people are the new barometer for social change.... The question of social change should be framed with the most vulnerable group in mind: gay people.^[44]

While there is a recurring tendency to describe Rustin as a pioneering “out gay man” the truth is more complex. In 1986, Rustin was invited to contribute to the book *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology*. He declined, explaining

I was not involved in the struggle for gay rights as a youth. ... I did not ‘come out of the closet’ voluntarily—circumstances forced me out. While I have no problem with being publicly identified as homosexual, it would be dishonest of me to present myself as one who was in the forefront of the struggle for gay rights. ... I fundamentally consider sexual orientation to be a private matter. As such, it has not been a factor which has greatly influenced my role as an activist.”^[45]

Rustin did not engage in any gay rights activism until the 1980s. He was urged to do so by his partner Walter Neagle, who has said that “I think that if I hadn’t been in the office at that time, when these invitations [from gay organizations] came in, he probably wouldn’t have done them.”^[46]

5 Death and beliefs

Rustin died on August 24, 1987, of a perforated appendix. An obituary in the *New York Times* reported, “Looking back at his career, Mr. Rustin, a Quaker, once wrote: ‘The principal factors which influenced my life are 1) nonviolent tactics; 2) constitutional means; 3) democratic procedures; 4) respect for human personality; 5) a belief that all people are one.’”^[47]

President Ronald Reagan issued a statement on Rustin’s death, praising his work for civil rights and “for human rights throughout the world.” He added that Rustin “was denounced by former friends, because he never gave up

his conviction that minorities in America could and would succeed based on their individual merit.”^[48]

Mr. Rustin was survived by Walter Naegle, his partner of ten years.^{[49][50]}



Rustin speaks with civil rights activists before a demonstration, 1964

6 Legacy

Despite the fact that he played such an important role in the civil rights movement, Rustin “faded from the shortlist of well-known civil rights lions,” in part because of public discomfort with his sexual orientation.^[24] However, the 2003 documentary film *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*, a Sundance Festival Grand Jury Prize nominee,^[51] and the March 2012 centennial of Rustin’s birth have contributed to some renewed recognition. The other significant factor was Rustin’s tilt towards conservatism in the late 1960s, which led him into disagreement with most civil rights leaders.

Rustin has been cited as an influential contributor to the neoconservative movement, beginning with his participation in the Coalition for a Democratic Majority in the early 1970s, an organization that helped revive the Committee on the Present Danger.^{[52][53] [54]}

According to Daniel Richman, former clerk for United States Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall, Marshall’s friendship with Rustin and Rustin’s openness about his homosexuality played a significant role in Marshall’s dissent from the court’s 5–4 decision upholding the constitutionality of state sodomy laws in the later overturned 1986 case *Bowers v. Hardwick*.^[55]

Several buildings have been named in honor of Rustin, including the Bayard Rustin Educational Complex located in Chelsea, Manhattan;^[56] Bayard Rustin High School in his hometown of West Chester, Pennsylvania; Bayard Rustin Library at the Affirmations Gay/Lesbian Community Center in Ferndale, Michigan; the Bayard Rustin Social Justice Center in Conway, Arkansas. In July 2007, with the permission of the Estate of Bayard

Rustin, a group of San Francisco Bay Area African-American LGBT community leaders officially formed the Bayard Rustin LGBT Coalition (BRC), to promote greater participation in the electoral process, advance civil and human rights issues, and promote the legacy of Mr. Rustin. In addition, the Bayard Rustin Center for LGBTQA Activism, Awareness and Reconciliation is located at Guilford College, a Quaker school.^[57] Formerly the Queer and Allied Resource Center, the center was rededicated in March 2011 with the permission of the Estate of Bayard Rustin and featured a keynote address by social justice activist Mandy Carter.^[58]

A biographical feature movie of Bayard Rustin was entitled *Out of the Past*.^[59]

A Pennsylvania State Historical Marker is placed at Lincoln and Montgomery Avenues, West Chester, Pennsylvania; the marker commemorating his accomplishments lies on the grounds of Henderson High School, which he attended.^[60]

In 2012 Rustin was inducted into the Legacy Walk, an outdoor public display which celebrates LGBT history and people.^[61]

Rustin was posthumously awarded honorary membership into Delta Phi Upsilon, a fraternity for gay, bisexual and progressive men.

In 2013 Rustin became an honoree in the United States Department of Labor Hall of Honor.^[62]

On August 8, 2013, President Barack Obama announced that he would posthumously award Rustin the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The citation in the press release stated:

Bayard Rustin was an unyielding activist for civil rights, dignity, and equality for all. An advisor to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he promoted nonviolent resistance, participated in one of the first Freedom Rides, organized the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and fought tirelessly for marginalized communities at home and abroad. As an openly gay African American, Mr. Rustin stood at the intersection of several of the fights for equal rights.^[63]

At the White House ceremony on November 20, 2013, President Obama presented Rustin’s award to Walter Naegle, his partner of ten years.^[7]

7 Publications

- *Interracial primer*, New York: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1943
- *Interracial workshop: progress report*, New York:

- Sponsored by Congress of Racial Equality and Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1947
- *Journey of reconciliation: report*, New York : Fellowship of Reconciliation, Congress of Racial Equality, 1947
 - *We challenged Jim Crow! a report on the journey of reconciliation, April 9–23, 1947*, New York : Fellowship of Reconciliation, Congress of Racial Equality, 1947
 - *"In apprehension how like a god!"*, Philadelphia: Young Friends Movement 1948
 - *The revolution in the South*", Cambridge, Massachusetts. : Peace Education Section, American Friends Service Committee, 1950s
 - *Report on Montgomery, Alabama* New York: War Resisters League, 1956
 - *A report and action suggestions on non-violence in the South* New York: War Resisters League, 1957
 - *Civil rights: the true frontier*, New York: Donald Press, 1963
 - *From protest to politics: the future of the civil rights movement*, New York: League for Industrial Democracy, 1965
 - *The city in crisis*, (introduction) New York: A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund, 1965
 - *"Black power" and coalition politics*, New York, American Jewish Committee 1966
 - *Which way?* (with Daniel Patrick Moynihan), New York : American Press, 1966
 - *The Watts "Manifesto" & the McCone report.*, New York, League for Industrial Democracy 1966
 - *Fear, frustration, backlash: the new crisis in civil rights*, New York, Jewish Labor Committee 1966
 - *The lessons of the long hot summer*, New York, American Jewish Committee 1967
 - *The Negro community: frustration politics, sociology and economics* Detroit : UAW Citizenship-Legislative Department, 1967
 - *A way out of the exploding ghetto*, New York: League for Industrial Democracy, 1967
 - *The alienated: the young rebels today and why they're different*, Washington, D.C. : International Labor Press Association, 1967
 - *"Right to work" laws; a trap for America's minorities.*, New York: A. Phillip Randolph Institute 1967
 - *Civil rights: the movement re-examined* (contributor), New York: A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund, 1967
 - *Separatism or integration, which way for America?: a dialogue* (with Robert Browne), New York,A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund, 1968
 - *The Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, an analysis*, New York, American Jewish Committee 1968
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8 See also

- American Civil Rights Movement (1896-1954)
- Civil resistance
- List of civil rights leaders
- Nonviolent resistance
- Timeline of the American Civil Rights Movement

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