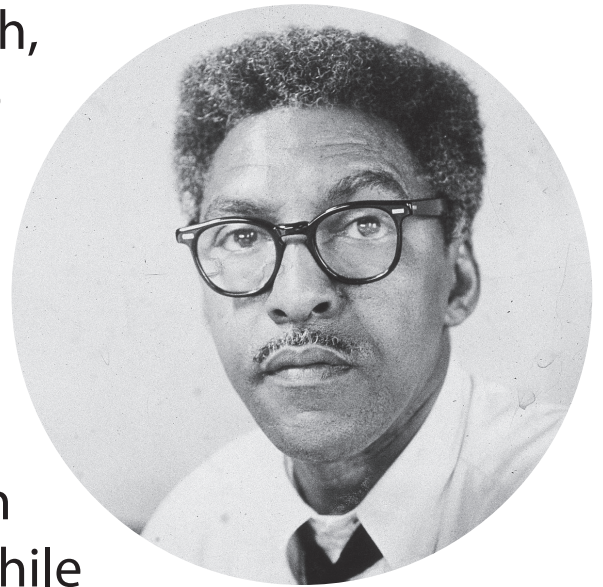


Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin was born on March 17th, 1912 in West Chester, PA. He was one of 12 children and was raised by his grandparents. His grandmother was involved in nonviolent racial justice work, which led to a visit by W.E.B. Dubois to his childhood home. Rustin finished high school in Pennsylvania and worked odd jobs while traveling. He ultimately spent five years at City College of NY but did not earn a degree. During this time he joined the Young Communist League at City College.



Bayard Rustin was against segregation and followed a Pacifist Agitation belief. He was dubbed “Mr. March on Washington” by A. Philip Randolph because he was instrumental in organizing the March on Washington in 1963.



Rustin was a close advisor to Martin Luther King, Jr. and was influential in the organization of MLK’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Black History

In 1941, Rustin organized a branch of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) in NY. In 1953 he was arrested in California where he was caught having sex with a man. He was charged as a sex offender and served 50 days in jail. After this, he took a less public-facing role for his own safety.



In 1964, Rustin directed a one-day student boycott of New York City's public schools in protest against the racial imbalances in that system.

Rustin served as president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute in NYC, a civil rights organization, from 1966 to 1979. Soon after, he became heavily involved in gay rights. He died on August 24, 1987 in NYC at the age of 75.

Bayard Rustin's activism has had a lasting impact on the world today. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013 by President Obama. He was keenly aware of the intersectionality of sexual orientation and race and of the need to fight on both fronts. In 2020 he was pardoned posthumously for his 1953 sex offender conviction.

