



The Presidential Medal of Freedom

On November 29, 2013
President Barack Obama in the

East Room of the White house presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Bayard Rustin. The President's comments made to his partner, Walter Naegle and those gathered provided public recognition for the man for so long relegated to the "closet."

"Now, early in the morning the day of the March on Washington, the National Mall was far from full and some in the press were beginning to wonder if the event would be a failure. But the march's chief organizer, Bayard Rustin, didn't panic. As the story goes, he looked down at a piece of paper, looked back up, and reassured reporters that everything was right on schedule. The only thing those reporters didn't know was that the paper he was holding was blank. He didn't know how it was going to work out, but Bayard had an unshakable optimism, nerves of steel, and, most importantly, a faith that if the cause is just and people are organized, nothing can stand in our way.

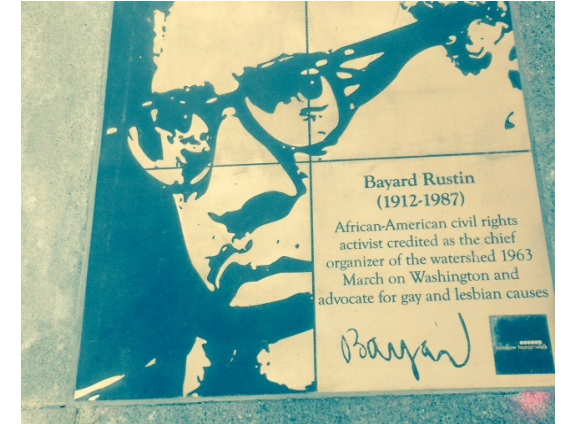
So, for decades, this great leader, often at Dr. King's side, was denied his rightful place in history because he was openly gay. No medal can change that, but today, we honor Bayard Rustin's memory by taking our place in his march towards true equality, no matter who we are or who we love. "

President Barack Obama

PLEASE WRITE A LETTER TODAY!

ENDORSEMENTS:

Boston City Council, Michelle Wu
Denver Mayor, Mr. Michael B. Hancock
City Council Of The City Of West Hollywood Resolution #14-4601
House Of Representatives, Texas, District 35- Lloyd Doggett
Covington, Kentucky Former City Commissioner, Shawn Masters
House Of Representative Utah Dist. 25- Joel K Briscoe
San Diego, CA Interim Mayor Todd Gloria
Lexington, KY Mayor Jim Gray
Colorado Governor John W. Hickenlooper
Colorado State House Representative Paul Rosenthal
Texas State Senator, Leticia Van de Putte
Texas House Rep., District 46, Dawnna Dukes
Tucson, AZ Mayor, Jonathan Rothschild
San Antonio, TX City Councilman, District 8, Ron Nirenberg



If you had been a bus captain en route to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in August 1963, you would have known who its organizing genius was, and you wouldn't have been surprised to see his picture on the cover of Life magazine a week later. Yet of all the leaders of the civil rights movement, Bayard Rustin lived and worked in the deepest shadows, not because he was a closeted gay man, but because he wasn't trying to hide who he was. That, combined with his former ties to the Community Party, was considered to be a liability.

Still, whatever his detractors said, there would always be that perfect day of the march, that beautiful, concentrated expression of Rustin's decades of commitment to vociferous, but always nonviolent, protest. It was, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, the "greatest demonstration for freedom" in American history. And it is why, on this 50th anniversary, I ask that if you teach your children one new name from the heroes of black history, please let it be Bayard Rustin.

~Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

SUPPORT THE BAYARD RUSTIN STAMP CAMPAIGN!

Early Life and Education

Bayard Rustin was born on March 17, 1912, in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He had been raised to believe that his parents were Julia and Janifer Rustin, when in fact they were his grandparents. He discovered the truth before adolescence that the woman he thought was his sibling, Florence, was in fact his mother, who'd had Rustin with West Indian immigrant Archie Hopkins.

Rustin attended Wilberforce University in Ohio, and Cheyney State Teachers College (now Cheney University of Pennsylvania) in Pennsylvania, both historically black schools. In 1937 he moved to New York City and studied at City College of New York. He was briefly involved with the Young Communist League in 1930s before he became disillusioned with its activities and resigned.

Political Philosophy and Civil Rights Career

In his personal philosophy, Rustin combined the pacifism of the Quaker religion, the non-violent resistance taught by Mahatma Gandhi, and the socialism espoused by African-American labor leader A. Philip Randolph. During the Second World War he worked for Randolph, fighting against racial discrimination in war-related hiring. After meeting A. J. Muste, a minister and labor organizer, he also participated in several pacifist groups, including the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Rustin was punished several times for his beliefs. During the war, he was jailed for two years when he refused to register for the draft. When he took part in protests against the segregated public transit system in 1947, he was arrested in North Carolina and sentenced to work on a chain gang for several weeks. In 1953 he was arrested on a morals charge for publicly engaging in homosexual activity and was sent to jail for 60 days; however, he continued to live as an openly gay man.

By the 1950s, Rustin was an expert organizer of human rights protests. In 1958, he played an important role in coordinating a march in Aldermaston, England, in which 10,000 attendees demonstrated against nuclear weapons.



Martin Luther King and the March on Washington

Rustin met the young civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1950s and began working with King as an organizer and strategist in 1955. He taught King about Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance and advised him on the tactics of civil disobedience. He assisted King with the boycott of segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama in 1956. Most famously, Rustin was a key figure in the organization of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, at which King delivered his legendary "I Have a Dream" speech on August 28, 1963.

In 1965, Rustin and his mentor Randolph co-founded the A. Philip Randolph Institute, a labor organization for African-American trade union members. Rustin continued his work within the civil rights and peace movements, and was much in demand as a public speaker.

We got a stamp for Harvey, now it's time for Bayard!



The International Imperial Court System under the leadership of City Commissioner Nicole Murray Ramirez launched a nationwide campaign to get the U.S. Postal Service to issue its first stamp in honor of an openly gay American Civil Rights Icon, Harvey Milk. The campaign took about six years with thousands of letters being written. The Harvey Milk Foundation and the National LGBTW Task Force became co-sponsors of the successful campaign. The Milk stamp was unveiled at the White House in 2014. Commissioner Ramirez and other members of the International Court Council were in attendance along with members of the Milk Family.

Please join the International Imperial Court System and the National LGBTW Task Force in our national campaign to get a U.S. Postage stamp issued in honor of civil rights legend Bayard Rustin!