**Bayard Rustin: African-American leader in social movements for civil rights, socialism, nonviolence, and gay rights.**

**Bayard Rustin (**March 17, 1912,- **August 24, 1987)**

Rustin worked in 1941 with [A. Philip Randolph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._Philip_Randolph) on the [March on Washington Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_on_Washington_Movement) to press for an end to [racial discrimination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_discrimination) in the military and defense employment. Rustin later organized [Freedom Rides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_Riders), and helped to organize the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Christian_Leadership_Conference) to strengthen [Martin Luther King Jr.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King_Jr.)'s leadership; he taught King about non-violence. In 1963 Rustin served as principal organizer for the [March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_on_Washington_for_Jobs_and_Freedom).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayard_Rustin#cite_note-nps-1) Rustin worked alongside [Ella Baker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ella_Baker), a co-director of the [Crusade for Citizenship](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crusade_for_Citizenship), in 1954; and before the [Montgomery bus boycott](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montgomery_bus_boycott), he helped organize a group called "In Friendship" to provide material and legal assistance to people threatened with eviction from their tenant farms and homes.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayard_Rustin#cite_note-2) Rustin became the head of the [AFL–CIO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AFL%E2%80%93CIO)'s [A. Philip Randolph Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._Philip_Randolph_Institute), which promoted the integration of formerly all-white unions and promoted the unionization of African Americans. During the 1970s and 1980s, Rustin served on many humanitarian missions, such as aiding refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia. At the time of his death in 1987, he was on a humanitarian mission in Haiti.

Rustin was a [gay man](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gay_man) and, due to criticism over his sexuality, he usually acted as an influential adviser behind the scenes to civil-rights leaders. In the 1980s, he became a public advocate on behalf of gay causes, speaking at events as an activist and supporter of human rights.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayard_Rustin#cite_note-3)

Later in life, while still devoted to securing workers' rights, Rustin joined other union leaders in aligning with ideological [neoconservatism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoconservatism" \o "Neoconservatism),[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayard_Rustin#cite_note-4)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayard_Rustin#cite_note-5) and (after his death) President [Ronald Reagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Reagan) praised him.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayard_Rustin#cite_note-AP_Reagan_Praises-6) On November 20, 2013, President [Barack Obama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama" \o "Barack Obama) posthumously awarded Rustin the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_Medal_of_Freedom). **(read more):**

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