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Bayard Rustin, Civil Rights Organizer

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?We are all one. And if we don't know it, we will learn it the hard way."
~ Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin was a pacifist who worked behind the scenes to create the non-violent Civil Rights Movement alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In his early years, Rustin was a Quaker who organized Communist and Socialist political groups to fight for equal human and economic rights for all people, and African Americans in particular. He worked to protest the segregation in the military during World War II and to protect the properties of Japanese Americans who were jailed into internment camps during the war. In the late 1940s, Rustin traveled to India to learn nonviolent protest technique from Ghandi?s movement. When he returned to the United States, he taught what he learned to various pacifist civil right and anti-war groups, including Martin Luther King Jr. who was organizing the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Unfortunately, he was pushed to the background of the movement because he was out as a gay man and had previously been arrested for being gay, which at that time was a punishable offense.

In 1963, Bayard Rustin along with A. Philip Randolph, organized the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, which was where Dr. King gave his famous ?I Have a Dream? speech. Due to Rustin?s sexuality, the NAACP chairman did not want Rustin to be credited for organizing the march. After his success organizing the March on Washington, Rustin went on to organize The New York City School Boycott, write as a columnist for the AFL-CIO newspaper and served as a member of the Board of Trustees for the University of Notre Dame. He also worked with the LGBT movement and testified for New York State?s Gay Rights Bill. After he died in 1987, the New York Times published a quote of his stating '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.'

Bayard Rustin is one of the unsung heroes of the Civil Rights Movement and in the lesson of American history. He, like so many, has made invaluable contributions to the rights and equality of others. His story is now available to all California Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs through ?Brother Outsider?, a Youth In Motion Frameline film-partnered with GSA Network. Through Bayard Rustin?s own voice, writings and interviews, Frameline is able to tell the story of an openly gay man leading the fight of the Civil Rights Movement. The film includes curriculum and action guides to help students take action in their schools to create knowledge around his history.

Trailer to "Brother Outsider"

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