

# [When and its initial opposition to u.s involvement](https://assignbuster.com/when-and-its-initial-opposition-to-us-involvement/)

When the topic ofHuman Rights activists are in discussion, usually names such as Martin LutherKing Jr, Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela and Gandhi are mentioned. Today I would liketo speak about a man who has remained in the background, the ‘ invisible man’ ofhuman rights, Bayard Rustin.

Good Afternoon and thank you for inviting me tospeak at the 2017 National Conference of the United Nations Association ofAustralia. We join here today to celebrate the 71st anniversary ofthe founding of the United Nations and to discuss key identities of HumanRights. Today I will speak about a man who influenced many during his lifetime, and bring attention to his remarkable efforts acknowledging Human Rights.

\* Born in WestChester, Pennsylvania, on the 17th of March, 1912,  Rustin’s life was always one of complication. Until adolescence, he was raised to believe that his parents were Julia andJanifer Rustin, when these were actually his grandparents. The woman hebelieved to be his sister turned out to be his real mother.

His father, AchieHopkins was a West Indian immigrant.\* During his university years, he engrossedhimself in both the African American culture and also in Pennsylvania’s gaycommunities. Inspired by the party’s activism on behalf of black Americans andits initial opposition to U. S involvement in World War II, he also joined theYouth Communist League , but shortlylost faith in communism like many others and became an opponent to the notion. Rustin could have avoided the military draft by seeking conscientious objectorstatus, but refused to take part in the governments’s alternative serviceprogram.

For this act of refusal, Bayard was given more than two years infederal prison. After release, he landed a job on the field staff of aChristian pacifist group then later visted India and studied the works ofGandhi, a famous Indian civil rights activist. \*Many influenced Rustin on hisphilosphy, but the two most prominent people he honoured were Gandhi and A. PhilipRandolph which lead to his beliefs being a mix of non-violent resistance, pacifism and socialism, supported by a fight against racial discrimination inwar-related concription. \* Bayard Rustin wasmost famous for his efforts linked to Martin Luther King Jr. He was a mentor toKing and taught him about non-violent resistance and tactics of civildisobedience. He was a key organiser of the March on Washington for jobs andfreedom, where King, delivered his ‘ I have a dream’ speech to over 250, 000people .

(Biography. com , 2015). Healso assisted him in the creation of his own institution: the SouthernChristian Leadership Conference and with the boycott of segregated buses inMontgomery, Alabama 1965, after chaos rose when Rosa Parks refused to give upher seat on a public transit bus. Rustin also spoke at the march stating hisseven demands of equality, which included: the access of public accommodations, decent housing, integrated education, fair employment practices, the right tovote, no withholding of federal funds. \* Bayard Rustin’sefforts in Human Rights started in the 1930s after he moved to New York. He gotinvolved in pacifist groups and early civil rights protests.

In 1958, he was akey coordinator of the march in Aldermaston, England with 10, 000 attendeesprotesting against nuclear weapons. Inthe 1950s he worked alongside MLK Jr as an organiser and strategist. 1965, heand his mentor Randolph co-founded the A. Philip Randolph institute, labourorganisation for African American trade union members. Everywhere he went hewas invited to speak to the public about his beliefs and strategies. Later on, his writings about civil rights were published in the collection ‘ Down the line 1971.

‘ He was seen as the’perfect’ social activist, liberal scholar Paul Berman writes,” except for thesingle disabling quirk of his notoriously promiscuous homosexuality” (American Radio Works, 2017). His known sexual orientation causedstrain amongst peers and also caused many to belittle him and his efforts, butRustin’s boundless talent as an organiser made him too valuable to thecommunity to discard. He presented a speech at the Center for DemocraticInstitutions, he proposed for the Democratic Party in the United States to beopen to all faiths and colours. His personal life settled down during the1970s-80s. He committed to a long-term relationship, travelled and dwelt on hishobbies.

While doing so he campained for gay rights and against HIV-AIDS. \*  Throughout his lifetime, Rustin did whatever he couldto promote change in society. His personal motives can be clearly seen by hiswords,’ It is now concerned not merely with removing the barriers to fullopportunity but with achieving the fact of equality. ‘(From protest to politics, 1965). For his efforts in influencingsociety, he was punished and served many sentences in prison.

In 1943 he was arrested and sentencedto work on a chain gang for several weeks for taking part in the protestsagainst segregated public transport. He was also arrested for 60 days on moralcharge for publically engaging in homosexual activity. Despite this, hecontinued to live proudly as a gay man in a homophobic society. \* Bayard Rustin’slegacy still lives on today. Films, books and artworks reference his effect onsociety, and many awards are given to him in respect to his outstanding effortsin Human Rights. ‘ Several building and schools have been named after him as well as anumber of LGBT community programs and centers’ (Great Black Heroes, 2015).

A commemorative marker wascreated in his honour on the grounds of his high school in his hometown. Also, many universitiessuch as Harvard and Yale have awarded him honorary degrees which is highly regarded. He was inducted into the Legacy Walk, an outdoor public display inChicago that celebrates LGBT history and people. In 2013, he was announced into the US Department of Labour Hall of Honour andwas also awarded the most prestigious award given in the US, the PresidentialMedal of Freedom by President Barack Obama, recognising his efforts related tothe infamous March on Washington for jobs and freedom.\* Although Rustinwas initially just a background figure of Human Rights, people are now startingto recognise his significant effects on society and its changes to the way manypeople live. His actions inspired many other young activists such as MartinLuther King Jr and made pathways for many to advance with.

Without Rustin’sefforts, many aspects of society would be vastly different. His contribution toHuman Rights should not only be recognised but praised by society. It can beclearly seen why he should no longer be known as the Invisible man’. Thank youall for watching my presentation today and hope this speech is one you can allreflect on greatly.