

Activity Idea

AFRICAN AMERICAN AND BLACK HISTORY MONTH VIRTUAL FILM FEST:

Brother Outsider: the life of Bayard Rustin (documentary) **Viewer's Guide**

Rating: Unrated

Some disturbing and violent images and language. Recommended for adults.

Brother Outsider illuminates the life and work of Bayard Rustin, a visionary activist and strategist who has been called “the unknown hero” of the civil rights movement. A tireless crusader for justice, a disciple of Gandhi, a mentor to Martin Luther King Jr., and the architect of the legendary 1963 March on Washington, Rustin dared to live as an openly gay man during the fiercely homophobic 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Brother Outsider reveals the price that Rustin paid for this openness, chronicling both the triumphs and setbacks of his remarkable 60-year career.

Stream the documentary on Kanopy: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/lacounty/video/139631>

Check out documentary on DVD from LA County Library: <http://tinyurl.com/93cns35z>

MORE ABOUT BAYARD RUSTIN:

- LA County Library honors LGBTQ+ trailblazers: <https://lacountylibrary.org/pride/>
- Archives of Sexuality and Gender, Bayard Rustin historical news articles: <http://tinyurl.com/4unbexua>
- Bayard Rustin, Gay Civil Rights Leader, Pardoned in California (2020): <http://tinyurl.com/34ip5wep>
- *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen: A Biography* by Jervis Anderson: <http://tinyurl.com/4n644tx2>
- *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* by John D'Emilio: <http://tinyurl.com/2kk585tf>



- *Bayard Rustin: A Legacy of Protests and Politics* by Michael G. Long:
<http://tinyurl.com/yc7z7629>
- *Rustin* [film] (2023) Directed by George C. Wolfe
<https://www.netflix.com/title/81111528>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What does Rustin mean when he calls for a group of “angelic troublemakers” to confront society? Was Rustin himself a troublemaker? How?
- What is nonviolent direct action? Why is it effective? Can it still work in today’s world?
- How does the film illuminate Dr. Martin Luther King’s development as a leader? Does it change what you think about Dr. King? Why?
- Respond to the two debates in the film, between Bayard Rustin and Malcolm X, and between Rustin and Stokely Carmichael. How do these debates continue today?
- What was the goal of the March on Washington? What did the March accomplish? What do you think it would have felt like to be at the March on August 28, 1963?
- Why was Rustin under FBI surveillance? What does it mean to question someone’s loyalty as an American? Does that happen today? How?
- Why do you think Rustin has been hidden from history?
- What is your reaction to Rustin’s point that all people are connected?
- How is Rustin’s story a call to action for today? Which aspects of his story do you find most inspiring? What message do you take away from the film?

Source for Discussion Questions: <https://www.rustin.org/wpcontent/uploads/2022/03/guide.pdf>