

# **Bayard T. Rustin Papers**

## **A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress**



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CONGRESS**

**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.**

**1997**

**Revised 2010 May**

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LC Online Catalog record:

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Prepared by Kathleen M. Dondanville with the assistance of Joseph K. Brooks  
Revised and expanded by Joseph K. Brooks

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Bayard Rustin Papers

**Span Dates:** 1942-1987

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1963-1980)

**ID No.:** MSS77373

**Creator:** Rustin, Bayard, 1912-1987

**Extent:** 17,500 items ; 49 containers plus 1 oversize ; 19.6 linear feet ; 23 microfilm reels

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Location:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Summary:** Civil rights activist and author. Correspondence, memoranda, speeches, notes, reports, press releases, financial records, agendas, printed material, and other papers documenting Bayard Rustin's leading role as an activist in the African-American civil rights movement, advocate of international human rights and social reform, and pacifist.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### People

Azikiwe, Nnamdi, 1904-1996.

Begin, Menachem, 1913-1992.

Black, Hugo LaFayette, 1886-1971.

Bookbinder, Hyman Harry, 1916-

Carter, Jimmy, 1924-

Chavez, Cesar, 1927-1993.

Cleaver, Eldridge, 1935-1998.

DiGia, Ralph.

Height, Dorothy I. (Dorothy Irene), 1912-2010.

Hooks, Benjamin L. (Benjamin Lawson), 1925-2010.

Javits, Jacob K. (Jacob Koppel), 1904-1986.

Kaplan, Kivie, 1904-1975.

Kennedy, Edward M. (Edward Moore), 1932-2009.

Kennedy, Robert F., 1925-1968.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Meany, George, 1894-1980.

Moynihan, Daniel P. (Daniel Patrick), 1927-2003.

Muste, Abraham John, 1885-1967.

Nkrumah, Kwame, 1909-1972.

Norton, Eleanor Holmes.

Platt, Selma.

Poole, Anita.

Randolph, A. Philip (Asa Philip), 1889-1979.

Rustin, Bayard, 1912-1987.

Wiesel, Elie, 1928-

Wilkins, Roy, 1901-1981.

### Organizations

Fellowship of Reconciliation (U.S.)

Freedom House (U.S.)

International Rescue Committee.

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963 : Washington, D.C.)

Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

### Subjects

African American youth.  
African Americans--Relations with Jews.  
Anti-imperialist movements--Africa.  
Antinuclear movement.  
Black nationalism.  
Civil rights demonstrations.  
Civil rights.  
Convict labor.  
Election monitoring.  
Gays--Civil rights.  
Human rights.  
Labor unions.  
Pacifism.  
Poverty.  
Quakers.  
Race relations.  
Racism.  
Refugees--Haiti.  
Refugees--Indochina.  
Riots.  
School integration.  
Social problems.  
World War, 1939-1945--Conscientious objectors.

#### **Places**

Israel--Ethnic relations.

#### **Occupations**

Civil rights leaders.  
Pacifists.  
Social reformers.

## **Administrative Information**

#### **Provenance**

The papers of Bayard Rustin, civil rights activist and author, were presented to the Library of Congress between 1988 and 1994 as a bequest from Rustin via Walter Naegle, executor of Rustin's estate.

#### **Processing History**

The papers of Bayard Rustin were arranged and described in 1992. Additional material received in 1994 was incorporated into the collection in 1997.

#### **Additional Guides**

A description of the Rustin Papers appears in *Library of Congress Acquisitions: Manuscript Division, 1990*, pp. 31-34.

#### **Transfers**

Photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of these papers.

#### **Related Material**

Researchers using the papers of Bayard T. Rustin may wish to examine the Manuscript Division's related holdings. These include the papers of [A. Philip Randolph](#), [Kenneth Bancroft Clark](#), [Roy Wilkins](#) and the [records of the Brotherhood of](#)

[Sleeping Car Porters](#), the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#), the [National Urban League](#), the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and other civil rights organizations.

### Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Bayard Rustin is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

### Access and Restrictions

The papers of Bayard Rustin are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

### Microfilm

University Publications of America microfilmed the Bayard Rustin Papers before the collection was delivered to the Library of Congress and arranged by the Manuscript Division. A copy of this commercial microfilm edition is available for research use in the Manuscript Reading Room. A register of the microfilm is also available. To promote preservation of the originals, researchers are required to consult the microfilm edition.

### Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Bayard Rustin Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1912, Mar. 17	Born, West Chester, Pa.
1930-1931	Attended Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio
1931-1933	Attended Cheyney State College, Cheyney, Pa.
1933-1935	Moved to Harlem and attended City College of New York, New York, N.Y.; earned tuition by singing backup for Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter
1938-1941	Joined Young Communist League; recruited youths while touring with singer Josh White; broke with the league over political differences
1941	Youth organizer, A. Philip Randolph March on Washington First field secretary, Congress of Racial Equality
1941-1953	Race relations secretary, Fellowship of Reconciliation
1942	Went to California and helped protect the property of Japanese-Americans who were placed in work camps during World War II
1943-1945	Refused military service in World War II on grounds of conscientious objection; sentenced to twenty-eight months in Lewisburg Prison, Ashley, Ky.
1945	Chairman, Free India Committee

- 1947 Participated in the Journey of Reconciliation, the first freedom ride that tested the enforcement of a new law prohibiting discrimination in interstate travel; arrested in North Carolina and sentenced to thirty days on a chain gang
- 1948 Attended the World Pacifist meeting in India; met with Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders  
Helped organize the Aldermaston marches for the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament movement in England
- 1951 Went to West Africa and worked with future Ghanaian prime minister Kwame Nkrumah and Nigerian president Nnamdi Azikiwe on the Committee to Support Africa
- 1952-1953 Director, Committee Against Discrimination in the Armed Forces
- 1953-1955 Executive secretary, War Resisters League
- 1955 Invited by Martin Luther King, Jr., to assist in organizing bus boycotts in Montgomery, Ala.
- 1956 Devised organizational plans for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; became special assistant to Martin Luther King, Jr.
- 1957 Coordinated Prayer Pilgrimage to Washington for civil rights, Washington, D.C.
- 1958-1959 Director, Youth Marches for Integrated Schools
- 1963 Deputy director, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Washington, D.C.
- 1964 Director, New York City school boycott against decentralization, New York, N.Y.
- 1966 Received Eleanor Roosevelt Award, Trade Union Leadership Council
- 1966-1979 President, A. Philip Randolph Institute
- 1968 Director, Memphis sanitation workers' strike in support of the right to organize, Memphis, Tenn.
- 1971 Published *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago, Ill.: Quadrangle Books, Inc. 349 pp.)  
Received John F. Kennedy Award, National Council of Jewish Women
- 1975 Formed Black Americans to Support Israel Committee
- 1976 Published *Strategies for Freedom: The Changing Patterns of Black Protest* (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press. 78 pp.)
- 1977 Helped establish the Black Leadership Forum
- 1978 Chairman, Executive Committee of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
- 1979-1987 Chairman of the board, A. Philip Randolph Institute
- 1980 Received Murray-Green-Meany Award, A.F.L.-C.I.O.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Bayard Taylor Rustin (1912-1987) span the years 1942-1987, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1963-1980. The collection documents Rustin's role as a master strategist of social resistance movements and major figure in the front ranks of the civil rights movement, and highlights nearly five decades of activism for social reform and international human rights. The papers consist primarily of correspondence, memoranda, reports and drafts, press releases, financial records, agendas, schedules, notes, speeches and writings, and printed material.

Rustin's papers document his philosophy and strategy for conducting passive resistance movements and securing civil rights for African Americans. Correspondence, topical files, and writings reflect his adherence to three basic principles: a belief that racial progress could be achieved only in an integrated framework; a dedication to the tactics of nonviolence; and a conviction that broad, permanent change could be accomplished only through coalition politics. Whether because of his Quaker beliefs, his socialism, or his affiliation with organized labor, Rustin always aimed at broader social objectives than those sought by most leaders of the civil rights movement. Civil rights for American blacks, he argued, could be secured only as a part and consequence of wider and deeper social reform in the United States and throughout the world. Aspects of this world view are reflected throughout the collection. Included is material illustrating Rustin's struggle for the rights of other minorities and the poor in the United States and the disenfranchised people of Africa, India, Asia, and South America.

The [General Correspondence](#) series (1942-1987), consisting of incoming and outgoing correspondence between Rustin and social activists, political organizations, labor unions, friends, and colleagues, relates primarily to Rustin's speaking engagements, public appearances, and writings and contemporary social issues. Also present are numerous letters from friends and the public bestowing congratulations for Rustin's success in helping organize the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and other civil rights projects.

Correspondence reflecting Rustin's strategy for attaining civil rights for blacks is found scattered throughout the series. Most notable is correspondence between Rustin and African Americans, who, despite the passage of major civil rights legislation, were frustrated by the realization that unemployment among black youth was still high, black children still attended segregated schools, and ghettos were more crowded than ever. In these letters, Rustin articulates and defends his strategy against the militant, separatist, and nationalistic approach of leaders such as Eldridge Cleaver and Stokely Carmichael.

Documentation of Rustin's early struggles as a Quaker activist and an advocate for international human rights can also be found in the correspondence file. Included are letters from Abraham J. Muste, president of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), containing remarks on pacifism and the general goals of the FOR, received by Rustin during his imprisonment in Kentucky's Lewisburg penitentiary after refusing to register for the military draft in 1943. Copies of Rustin's replies, however, are nonexistent or missing from the collection. Also present are a few pieces of correspondence relating to Rustin's trips to Africa in the 1950s to assist Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and other African leaders in organizing nonviolent resistance campaigns against colonialism and nuclear weapons.

Frequent correspondents in the [General Correspondence](#) series not mentioned previously include Hugo L. Black, Hyman H. Bookbinder, Ralph DiGia, Kivie Kaplan, Selma Platt, and Anita Poole.

The greatest concentration of material in the Rustin Papers is found in the [Subject File](#) (1942-1987), which contains a large segment of records relating to Rustin's accomplishments in the civil rights movement during the 1960s. Among the topics covered is Rustin's role as deputy director of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Consisting of correspondence, financial records, fliers and handouts, mailings, manuals, logistical records, newsletters, and other material, these papers document his coordination of the march and his assistance in developing a broad program of demands. Rustin's planning helped lead to the passage of significant civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965. Telegrams pertaining to the march contain messages of support from members of Congress and other political and social leaders. The collection, however, contains little documentation of coordination between Rustin and A. Philip Randolph, chairman of the march, and sponsors such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young.

Other material documenting the civil rights movement includes items relating to Rustin's position as race relations director for the FOR. Correspondence and reports concerning the FOR's freedom rides are extensive. In 1947, Rustin and fifteen others rode buses in several southern states in order to test a new law that declared segregation of interstate travelers illegal. A result of the bus rides, which became known as the Journey of Reconciliation, was Rustin's arrest and sentencing to thirty days on a chain gang in Roxboro, North Carolina. His report to the FOR, entitled "Twenty Two Days on a Chain Gang," was published in the *New York Post* and the *Baltimore Afro-American* and eventually led to the abolition of chain gangs in North Carolina.

Other extensive civil rights topics cover Rustin's work with Randolph on the Freedom Budget, a ten-year program conceived by Randolph as a method of abolishing poverty in the United States, and other marches organized by Rustin, including the Prayer Pilgrimage to Washington in 1957 and the 1964 marches for integrated schools. Also included are comprehensive files documenting the Mobilization in Support of the Poor People's Campaign.

The [Subject File](#) also documents Rustin's struggle to improve relations between African Americans and American Jews and Israel. Black and Jewish responses to his articles critical of black leaders who supported the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) are of special note. Correspondence, memoranda, press releases, and other material relating to the activities of the Black Americans to Support Israel Committee, formed by Rustin in 1975, can also be found in the series. Supported by Shirley Chisholm, Lionel Hampton, Roy Wilkins, Andrew Young, and many others, the committee called for financial and military support of Israel by the United States, protested the actions of the PLO, and promoted Israel among black Americans. Also of significance is material documenting Rustin's interest in the Black Hebrews, a religious sect of black Americans who illegally relocated to Israel in the mid-1970s. Correspondence, memoranda, newspaper clippings, reports, and articles record Rustin's investigations into Israeli harassment of black tourists suspected of being members of the sect and the activities of Ben-Ammi Carter, leader of the Black Hebrews.

Material pertaining to Rustin's work with international human rights groups also makes up a significant portion of the [Subject File](#). Of particular interest is material documenting his assistance to Indochinese refugees in Thailand under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee, his observation of free elections in El Salvador, Grenada, and Zimbabwe with the Freedom House group, and his work with the Haitian Refugees Conference. Other notable items relate to his activities in Africa, though documentation of these projects, particularly his work in West Africa with Nkrumah and Azikiwe during the 1950s, is sparse.

The [Subject File](#) also contains material relating to a number of Rustin's other endeavors, including the Eldridge Cleaver Defense Fund, nuclear war protests, organized labor issues, and gay rights. Little documentation exists of his work as special assistant to King or of his trip to India to visit with Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian political leaders.

The [Speeches and Writings](#) file (1942-1987) consists largely of final drafts and printed versions of articles, reports, lectures, speeches, book reviews, eulogies, and other writings by Rustin. Rough drafts and notes can also be found. Rustin's orations and writings generally cover broad issues pertaining to the civil rights movement, including such topics as integration, racism, the alienation of black youth, black separatism, the race riots of the 1960s, and the 1963 march on Washington. Articles and speeches regarding Randolph's life and times are found scattered throughout the series. The file also contains copies of Rustin's columns published in the *New Amsterdam* newspaper and press releases written during his tenure as president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute.

Notable writings include articles from the 1940s and 1950s, many unpublished, describing the early civil rights movement in the South, eulogies given at services for Randolph and Muste, and the speech Rustin gave in 1958 at the Aldermaston marches for nuclear disarmament in England. Many of the articles and speeches in the file were published in journals, newspapers, popular magazines, and in Rustin's book, *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*.

Prominent correspondents in the Rustin Papers, whose letters are primarily in the [Subject File](#), include Nnamdi Azikiwe, Menachem Begin, Jimmy Carter, Cesar Chavez, Eldridge Cleaver, Dorothy I. Height, Benjamin L. Hooks, Jacob K. Javits, Edward M. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, George Meany, Daniel P. Moynihan, Eleanor Holmes Norton, A. Philip Randolph, Elie Wiesel, and Roy Wilkins.

An [addition](#) to the Rustin Papers, processed in 1997, complements material in the [General Correspondence](#), [Subject File](#), and [Speeches and Writings File](#). Some of the additional correspondence is with family members. Other files in the addition document Rustin's working relationship with Martin Luther King, Jr., and other members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during the 1950s and 1960s.

The Oversize series consists of a scroll containing signatures of supporters of the 1963 march on Washington.

## Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in five series:

- General Correspondence, 1942-1987
- Subject File, 1942-1987
- Speeches and Writings, 1942-1987
- Addition, 1942-1987
- Oversize, 1963



## Description of Series

*Container*

*Series*

BOX 1-6

**General Correspondence, 1942-1987**

Incoming and outgoing correspondence and attached material exchanged between Rustin and social, political, and labor organizations, colleagues, friends, and the public.  
Arranged chronologically.

BOX 7-39

**Subject File, 1942-1987**

Correspondence, telegrams, memoranda, reports and drafts, agendas, schedules, financial records, notes, lists, press releases, newsletters, newspaper clippings, fliers and handouts, printed material, and other miscellaneous material relating to Rustin's endeavors as a civil and human rights activist.  
Arranged alphabetically by name of person or organization, topic, or type of material, and therein chronologically.

BOX 39-44

**Speeches and Writings, 1942-1987**

Drafts, copies, and printed versions of articles, book reviews, congressional testimony, eulogies, interviews, lectures, newspaper columns, notes, press releases, reports, speeches, and miscellaneous writings by Rustin. Related correspondence and memoranda are included.  
Arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.

BOX 45-49

**Addition, 1942-1987**

Correspondence, memoranda, reports, agendas, notes, press releases, newsletters, clippings, brochures, printed matter, and miscellaneous material.  
Arranged alphabetically by name of person or organization, topic, or type of material, and therein chronologically.

BOX OV 1

**Oversize, 1963**

Oversize material consisting of a scroll with signature.  
Organized according to the series, folder, and box from which the item was removed.

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<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
<b>BOX 1-6</b>	<b>General Correspondence, 1942-1987</b> Incoming and outgoing correspondence and attached material exchanged between Rustin and social, political, and labor organizations, colleagues, friends, and the public. Arranged chronologically.
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<b>BOX 2</b>	Jan. 1964-Dec. 1965 (15 folders)
<b>BOX 3</b>	Jan. 1966-Dec. 1968 (13 folders)
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<b>BOX 6</b>	Jan. 1982-Aug. 1987 (13 folders) Undated
<b>BOX 7-39</b>	<b>Subject File, 1942-1987</b> Correspondence, telegrams, memoranda, reports and drafts, agendas, schedules, financial records, notes, lists, press releases, newsletters, newspaper clippings, fliers and handouts, printed material, and other miscellaneous material relating to Rustin's endeavors as a civil and human rights activist. Arranged alphabetically by name of person or organization, topic, or type of material, and therein chronologically.
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## Subject File, 1942-1987

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<b>BOX 23</b>	Hate and crank mail, 1957-1986 Holocaust Holocaust Memorial Committee, 1986 President's Commission on the Holocaust, 1978-1987 (2 folders) United States Holocaust Memorial Council, 1980-1985 Honorary degrees Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass., 1985 Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 1980-1983 Haverford College, Haverford, Pa., 1985 New York University, New York, N.Y., 1982 State University of New York, Stony Brook, N.Y., 1982-1983 Hook, Sidney, 1982 Hot Line Cares, 1976-1987 Human Rights Conference, 1977-1978 India Gandhi, Mahatma, 1955-1968, 1986 Gandhi, Manilal, 1951-1952 World Pacifist Conference, 1945 Institute for Religion and Democracy, 1981-1984, undated International Conference on the Role of Co-operative and Public Economies in Democratic Societies, 1973 International Rescue Committee Citizens' Commission on Refugees, 1986 Lebanon, Sidon massacre, 1984
<b>BOX 24</b>	Refugees El Salvador, 1983-1984 (2 folders) Ethiopians in Somalia and Sudan, 1981-1985 Guatemalans in Mexico, 1983-1984 (2 folders)



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