



American LGBTQ+ liberation from day 1 to Stonewall.

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Season 2, Episode 13: “Making This Movement Move”

Season finale

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For this episode, begin with posts starting October 13, 2020. (Click above.)

The original Mattachine Society jester logo is courtesy of ONE Archives at the USC Libraries.

This transcript includes text from real homophile-era publications, letters, organizational documents, et cetera. These texts contain **identifying terms** that may now be out of date.

AUDIO: typewriter

JAMES BALDWIN: And if the word *integration* means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it. For this is your home, my friend, do not be driven from it... You know, and I know, that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one hundred years too soon. We cannot be free until they are free. —James Baldwin, “My Dungeon Shook,” *The Fire Next Time*

HOST: **1955**. They’ve been waiting for a test case. 14-year-old Emmett Till was murdered at the hands of two white men, who were acquitted even though they admitted guilt. 15-year-old Claudette Colvin was arrested in Alabama after she refused to give up her bus seat for a white man. Colvin was reportedly a pregnant teenager, and unmarried—not the ideal candidate for a Movement because, of course, the white press would have used that information to smear her image. People working in the movement for racial justice were angered that young Emmett Till’s case received such a high level of attention and still his killers walked free. The Montgomery NAACP is ready to test the system like Claudette Colvin did, they’re ready for a test case, and suddenly, their secretary found herself right at the center of one.

Rosa Parks steps onto her bus.

She’s a seamstress and secretary for the Montgomery NAACP chapter. When she joined she was the only woman in the chapter, and so she filled the role of secretary. She has a history of activist work over the past decade or so, and has just finished a course in race relations in which she learned about **nonviolent civil disobedience**. She’s getting onto a bus driven by a man who, 12 years ago, had her pay, and get off the bus to reboard at the back door, only to abandon her on the side of the road in the rain. Now as the bus fills with white passengers, he tells 4 people of color to move to the back. Parks realizes this is her opportunity. There is this myth that Parks was just too tired to get up. She’ll later clarify: she was tired of giving in. She’s thinking of Emmett Till when the bus driver tells her to stand up and she says, “I don’t think I should have to stand up.” He says he’ll call the police and she says, “You may do that.”

Holding down people of color is all procedure for the white people involved—systemic racism—which is again proven when Parks asks the arresting police officer, “Why do you push us around?” and he says, “I don’t know, but the law’s the law, and you’re under arrest.” By simply sitting and resisting the system’s rule, Rosa Parks will change the rule. This method of activism has been carefully studied and taught, and will now bring new tactics to the Movement.

E.D. Nixon sees Rosa Parks as the test case they’ve been waiting for. He’s the local NAACP president and a member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a labor organization for African Americans. He says Parks is the perfect arrest: employed, married, willing to test segregation laws, “above reproach,” and most importantly, she’s someone who will anger the community into action. After her arrest and before her trial, E.D. Nixon organizes a meeting of

ministers at Martin Luther King, Jr.'s church. They name their group the Montgomery Improvement Association and chose their leader: Dr. King. On the night of Rosa's arrest, the Women's Political Council passes out flyers throughout Montgomery.

AUDIO: typewriter

JO ANN ROBINSON: Another woman has been arrested and thrown in jail because she refused to get up out of her seat on the bus for a white person to sit down. It is the second time since the Claudette Colvin case that a Negro woman has been arrested for the same thing. This has to be stopped. Negroes have rights too, for if Negroes did not ride the buses, they could not operate. Three-fourths of the riders are Negro, yet we are arrested, or have to stand over empty seats. If we do not do something to stop these arrests, they will continue. The next time it may be you, or your daughter, or mother. This woman's case will come up on Monday. We are, therefore, asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial. Don't ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday. You can afford to stay out of school for one day if you have no other way to go except by bus. You can also afford to stay out of town for one day. If you work, take a cab, or walk. But please, children and grown-ups, don't ride the bus at all on Monday. Please stay off all buses on Monday.

HOST: The next morning, Dr. King hosts a meeting at the church to strategize the boycott. Rosa Parks enters to a standing ovation. A peaceful protest is planned, and come Sunday, ministers at Black churches announce the boycott for Monday. The bus boycott on **December 5, 1955** is massively successful. A meeting follows at the Holt Street Baptist Church where Dr. King gives an impromptu speech, asking if the boycott should continue. Everyone supports him. Carpools are formed, Black cab drivers charge bus fare prices for Black passengers, many people walk, bike, or hitchhike to work, and the city immediately feels an economic punch. Within two days, FBI Director Hoover orders his agents to investigate Dr. King and seek—

AUDIO: typewriter

DIRECTOR HOOVER: "derogatory information"

HOST: Four Black Baptist churches and Dr. King's house are firebombed. Hundreds of angry people gather outside his house.

DR. KING: If you have weapons, take them home; if you do not have them, please do not seek to get them. We cannot solve this problem through retaliatory violence. We must meet violence with nonviolence. Remember the words of Jesus: "He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword." We must love our white brothers, no matter what they do to us. We must make them know that we love them. Jesus still cries out in words that echo across the centuries: "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; pray for them that despitefully use you." This is what we must live by. We must meet hate with love. Remember, if I am stopped, this movement will not

stop, because God is with the movement. Go home with this glowing faith and this radiant assurance.

HOST: As the boycott gains momentum, Dr. King and 88 leaders, including carpool drivers, are indicted for conspiring to interfere with a business, the city transit system. They turn themselves in. The story makes national headlines and brings the boycott widespread attention as Dr. King serves two weeks in jail.

AUDIO: writing

DR. KING: I was proud of my crime. It was the crime of joining my people in a nonviolence protest against injustice.

HOST: His strategy, one Rosa Parks practiced perfectly on the bus, isn't just instinct for them both. It was taught. Rosa Parks learned nonviolent civil disobedience in her social justice training classes. Dr. King learned it from **Bayard Rustin**.

Act 1

HOST: Bayard Rustin is a homosexual, socialist, pacifist man of color. To many Americans, he's their nightmare. His story is long and detailed before he's even approached by Dr. King to help with the Montgomery bus boycott. He was raised by his grandmother believing her to be his mother. She raised him as a Quaker and she was a member of the NAACP. And she was fine with Bayard's attraction to men. He attended a historically Black college, Wilberforce University, where he was expelled for organizing a strike. He went on to Harlem and became involved in defending and attempting to free the Scottsboro Boys, nine Black teenager accused of raping two white women—quite similar to the exonerated Central Park Five's case. Meanwhile, Bayard was in the chorus of a musical with Paul Robeson and sang in a band that performed in a nightclub in Greenwich Village. He began working with Socialist Party members such as Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters founder A. Philip Randolph and Fellowship of Reconciliation leader A.J. Muste. The Fellowship, which was an interfaith nonviolent peace organization, hired Bayard Rustin as their race relation secretary in 1941. Muste, Randolph, and Rustin met with President Roosevelt in the Oval Office to declare their intent to march on Washington if desegregation demands weren't met. Roosevelt issued an executive order, the Fair Employment Act, and the march was called off. Rustin's activism only grows larger: He fought to protect the property of Japanese Americans while they were imprisoned in camps during World War II (yes, putting people of color in camps seems to be an American tradition), he refused to give up his seat on an interstate bus and was beaten and arrested. Along with other FOR members, he was jailed for two years for being a conscientious objector, refusing to be drafted into the war. In prison, he organized protests against the segregated dining hall. And between many more arrests, Bayard recorded an LP on the Fellowship Records label.

AUDIO: "Jesus Walked His Lonesome Valley" from *Bayard Rustin Sings Twelve Spirituals on The Life of Christ*, 1952.

HOST: He and another FOR staffer organized the first Freedom Rides to test the new Supreme Court ruling that racial discrimination in interstate travel is unconstitutional. After another arrest, he served 22 days on a chain gang. Afterward, Bayard went to West Africa and India. He learned the strategies of nonviolent protest from Ghanaian and Nigerian leaders. And now, he returns to the U.S. with new ideas.

Pasadena, California, 1953 – two years before Rosa Parks's arrest. Bayard Rustin is arrested once again. It's a new charge for him: vagrancy and lewd conduct. Bayard was taken out of a parked car, where he was with another man. He pleads guilty to sex perversion, the charge for sodomy. He's registered as a sex offender. 60 days of jail later, he resigns from FOR under pressure. Another homosexual member of FOR in Berkeley is Gerry Brissette, who we met way back in the early episodes of season 1 as he pretty much single-handedly organized the Bay Area for the Mattachine. Gerry hears word of this Black social justice leader arrested on vagrancy and lewd charges. Gerry Brissette writes to the Mattachine Foundation asking what they can do to help him. The Mattachine does nothing for Bayard Rustin.

The Chicago Tribune announces,

AUDIO: typewriter

REPORTER: Morals Charge Jails Booster of World Peace,

HOST: mentioning that Rustin had recently spoken in Chicago at the Council of Foreign Relations's "Young Men's Luncheon Group," implying his homosexual intent to recruit youth. The *Chicago Defender*, an African American paper that circulates nationally, reports,

AUDIO: typewriter

REPORTER 2: Bayard Rustin Jailed on Morals Charge. Sexual deviates are often referred to as "queers."

HOST: Bayard joins the American Friends Service Committee to write a 71-page essay on pacifism and nonviolence. He writes this essay, "Speak Truth to Power: A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence," but he writes it anonymously, believing his sexuality will tarnish his reputation as the writer. This pacifist essay is hugely influential for the Civil Rights Movement. It's now, at the suggestion of A. Philip Randolph, after a very long career of protests and arrests, that Bayard begins assisting Dr. King in nonviolent protests. The Montgomery bus boycott is bringing the city's public transportation business to a near-crumble. Bayard advises Dr. King with several new tactics, including telling him to get rid of his guns. The boycott ends over a year later, when the Supreme Court rules that Alabama's bus segregation laws are

unconstitutional. It's just the beginning. Together, King and Rustin begin organizing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference three weeks later.

During the first few years of the SCLC's founding, they work to gain the support of Black churches. These churches risk vandalism and bombings by the White Citizens' Council and the Ku Klux Klan if they associate with Dr. King's group. But many ministers come aboard. Like Rustin's own story, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's legacy is long, detailed, and deserves its own podcast. Many leaders in the organization become concerned about Bayard's arrest record as a homosexual, and, of course, his past ties to the Communist Party. His record is hardly public, just mostly known in the civil rights community.

But by 1960, SCLC board member and U.S. Representative Adam Clayton Powell Jr. forces Bayard to resign. He threatens to discuss Bayard's morals charge in Congress, and even says he'll leak a rumor to the press that Rustin and King are having an affair if they don't stop their upcoming march at the Democratic convention in LA. Powell reports in a speech that Dr. King has—

ADAM POWELL: —been under undue influences ever since Bayard Rustin went to Alabama to help in the bus boycott.

HOST: Dr. King cancels the march. Bayard Rustin resigns. He says he can't allow his connection to the SCLC to be "used to confuse and becloud the basic issues." James Baldwin writes in *Harper's* magazine that for this, Dr. King "has lost moral credit in the eyes of the young."

King writes to Representative Adam Powell:

AUDIO: typewriter

DR. KING: How you could say the malicious things that the press reported last week concerning two of your best friends is still mystery to me. I have always vigorously defended you against your most severe critics even when they were NAACP officials. I have publicly supported you in your campaign... If I am captive of Bayard Rustin it is because he came to me so highly recommended by you. Because of my respect for you and your judgment I accepted him as one of my assistants. In spite of all I will hold nothing in my heart against you and I will not go to the press to answer or condemn you. I only hope that something within will cause you to publicly correct these false charges with as much vigor as they were made. May God ever bless you in your heroic work.

Martin Luther King Jr.

AUDIO: "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child" from *Bayard Rustin Sings Twelve Spirituals on The Life of Christ*, 1952.

HOST: Rustin is gone, though he advises Dr. King occasionally. The SLCL goes on to help Citizenship Schools, which teach adults literacy for voter registration, banking, and driver's license tests and, they also teach civil rights activism. The SCLC joins the protests in Albany and Birmingham. Although some clergy say the campaign in Alabama, which consisted of quite successful marches and sit-ins, was "unwise and untimely." In **April 1963**, Dr. King writes from his Birmingham jail cell,

AUDIO: writing

DR. KING: Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct-action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights.

AUDIO: desegregation protests in news broadcasts

HOST: On television, the nation watches as police bring out dogs and unleash firehoses on thousands of protesting schoolchildren. Roosevelt's executive order, back in 1941, is not as widespread in combating segregation as Bayard Rustin would have liked, and it certainly has done nothing to stop discrimination broadly across the nation. It was really just about preventing discrimination in the country's defense industries. In May of '63, there are bombings in the Birmingham residence of Dr. King's brother and the motel where King and other activists stayed while leading the protests.

Hoping to prevent more outbreaks, Attorney General Robert Kennedy contacts prominent Black – and gay – author James Baldwin, whose recent book *The Fire Next Time* urged action to be taken against racism. Kennedy asks Baldwin to assemble a "quiet, off-the-record, unpublicized get-together of prominent" people of color for a discussion. They gather in a Kennedy family apartment in New York City on **May 24**. Baldwin brings his brother, Lena Horne, Dr. King's advisor Clarence Jones, Lorraine Hansberry – lesbian writer of *A Raisin in the Sun* – Freedom Rider Jerome Smith, and actor Rip Torn, among a few other activists and performers. Attorney General Kennedy says the Justice Department has been supporting the civil rights movement. But Jerome Smith, the Freedom Rider who has been beaten and arrested in Mississippi, begins crying suddenly, saying,

JEROME SMITH: I've seen you guys stand around and do nothing more than take notes while we're being beaten.

HOST: Kennedy and Smith argue. AG Kennedy is shocked when Smith says he'd never join the military.

JEROME SMITH: You expect us to giddily go off to fight a war that's your war, that's unjust, unfair, and so dishonorable it should shame you. I wouldn't pick up a gun to fight for this country. I'd die first.

HOST: Kennedy says his family were immigrants from Ireland who were discriminated against, but they were able to overcome it. James and his brother David point out that their family has been in the country far longer and they are not a politically successful family. Lorraine Hansberry adds,

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: You've got a great many very, very accomplished people in this room, Mr. Attorney General. But the only man who should be listened to is that man over there,

HOST: Jerome Smith.

LORRAINE HANSBERRY: Look, if *you* can't understand what this young man is saying, then we are without any hope at all because you and your brother are representatives of the best that a White America can offer; and if *you* are insensitive to this, then there's no alternative except our going in the streets... and chaos.

HOST: After a few hours, the meeting ends with no successful outcome. Kennedy tells the *New York Times* about the discreet meeting. He's defensive. He orders FBI Director Hoover to up his surveillance of James Baldwin and tap the phone of Dr. King's advisor and attorney, Clarence Jones. They still want information of "a derogatory nature." Baldwin is labeled in the report as a "pervert" and "communist." Rip Torn is also watched. Clarence Jones sends a letter explaining his side of the meeting to the *New York Times* editor, and a copy of it to Robert Kennedy. As militant leaders like Malcolm X rise and violence across the country increases, President Kennedy becomes concerned with the nation's image abroad.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference's involvement in the Birmingham protests certainly grabbed his attention, as they hoped. He had only been discussing civil rights from a legislative perspective, but President Kennedy decides it's time to speak about it as a moral issue. It's time for him to give a speech. And then, on the news, **June 11, 1963**:

ARCHIVAL NEWS AUDIO: Reporter: *Governor Wallace, promising to stand up for Alabama and to preserve law and order, arrived. Not long after, the few students were brought on campus. They remained in the car while Deputy Attorney General approaches the door. Governor Wallace signaled them to halt"*

Two students who simply seek an education on this campus are presently on the campus. They have a right to be here protected by that court order.

George C. Wallace: *As Governor and Chief Magistrate of the State of Alabama I deem it to be my solemn obligation and duty to stand before you representing the rights and sovereignty of this*

State and its peoples. The unwelcome, unwanted, unwarranted and force-induced intrusion upon the campus of the University of Alabama today of the might of the Central Government offers frightful example of the oppression of the rights, privileges and sovereignty of this State by officers of the Federal Government...I, George C. Wallace, as Governor of the State of Alabama...do hereby denounce and forbid this illegal and unwarranted action by the Central Government.

Attorney: I take it from that statement that you are going to stand in that door and that you are not going to carry out the orders of this court. Those students will remain on this campus, they will register today, they will go to school tomorrow, they will go to school at this University.

HOST: The University of Alabama has been ordered by a judge to allow two Black students into the school, and when Governor George Wallace stands in the doorway to prevent from entering, President Kennedy calls for ABC, NBC, and CBS to clear time for him to speak at 8PM tonight. Against his staff's advice, the President has a speech composed in two hours and goes live from the Oval.

ARCHIVAL AUDIO: Reporter: *Now an address by the President of the United States, speaking live from Washington.*

President Kennedy: *Good evening my fellow citizens:*

This afternoon, following a series of threats and defiant statements, the presence of Alabama National Guardsmen was required on the University of Alabama to carry out the final and unequivocal order of the United States District Court of the Northern District of Alabama. That order called for the admission of two clearly qualified young Alabama residents who happened to have been born Negro.

That they were admitted peacefully on the campus is due in good measure to the conduct of the students of the University of Alabama, who met their responsibilities in a constructive way.

I hope that every American, regardless of where he lives, will stop and examine his conscience about this and other related incidents. This Nation was founded by men of many nations and backgrounds. It was founded on the principle that all men are created equal, and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened...

It ought to be possible for American consumers of any color to receive equal service in places of public accommodation, such as hotels and restaurants and theaters and retail stores, without being forced to resort to demonstrations in the street, and it ought to be possible for American citizens of any color to register to vote in a free election without interference or fear of reprisal.

It ought to be possible, in short, for every American to enjoy the privileges of being American without regard to his race or his color...One hundred years of delay have passed since President

Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet freed from the bonds of injustice. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this Nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free.

We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it, and we cherish our freedom here at home, but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is the land of the free except for the Negroes...

Now the time has come for this Nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or State or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them.

The fires of frustration and discord are burning in every city, North and South, where legal remedies are not at hand. Redress is sought in the streets, in demonstrations, parades, and protests which create tensions and threaten violence and threaten lives.

We face, therefore, a moral crisis as a country and as a people. It cannot be met by repressive police action. It cannot be left to increased demonstrations in the streets. It cannot be quieted by token moves or talk. It is time to act in the Congress, in your State and local legislative body and, above all, in all of our daily lives.

HOST: Kennedy proposes legislation to end discrimination. Dr. King is thrilled, and decides the SCLC's next action will focus pressure on Congress to pass that legislation. That night, coming home from listening to Kennedy's speech, Mississippi NAACP activist against segregation Medgar Evers is shot in his front yard, and dies soon after. The violence continues. The SCLC readies for their next action. It's time to march on Washington. Despite discouragement from some leaders, A. Philip Randolph knows the only logical choice of leadership to organize one of the largest nonviolent protests in the nation's history is Bayard Rustin. They get to work.

Director Hoover's chief aides contact the New York Field Office, ordering agents to—

AUDIO: typewriter of course

FBI AGENT: —expeditiously prepare a current investigative report... Allegations have been made concerning former communist activities of this individual, together with allegations concerning morals charges.

Act 2

HOST: As steam picks up for the march coming in August, South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond enters Congress livid, shouting for 45 minutes about Rustin as a—

THURMOND: Communist, draft-dodger, and homosexual!

HOST: Senator Thurmond reads Bayard's entire Pasadena arrest for lewd-vagrancy into the Congressional Record. He even holds up the police booking slip from that day, which is difficult to find. Senator Thurmond then presents a photo, given to him by the FBI, of Rustin talking to Dr. King while King is in the bath. The implication here is obvious.

Sunday, August 11, just a couple days after Frank Kameny's appearance before Congress, the *Washington Post* reports:

AUDIO: typewriter

REPORTER 3: Organizer of District of Columbia March is Devoted to Nonviolence

HOST: The reporter gives Senator Thurmond's Congressional rantings a positive spin! She even lists Bayard's arrest record for racial justice activism. As other papers pick up the story, the information about Bayard as a homosexual becomes widely known. And because it's already so close to the day of the march, civil rights leaders must rally behind their march coordinator in support. A. Philip Randolph calls for a press conference:

A. PHILIP RANDOLPH: I speak for the combined Negro leadership in voting my complete confidence in Bayard Rustin's character. . . . I am dismayed that there are in this country men who, wrapping themselves in the mantle of Christian morality, would mutilate the most elementary conceptions of human decency, privacy and humility in order to persecute other men.

HOST: Randolph has such an esteemed reputation that journalists don't really ask any more questions about Rustin's sexuality. Randolph tells the *New York Times*,

ARCHIVAL AUDIO: A. Philip Randolph: *No force under the sun can stem and block or stop the civil rights revolution which is now on the way.*

HOST: NAACP chairman Roy Wilkins doesn't want Rustin to get any credit for the march. He says, "This march is of such importance that we must not put a person of his liabilities at the head." Still, Randolph keeps Rustin as his deputy. Rustin arranges for off-duty police at the march, bus captains to direct the traffic, and he plans the speakers. He meets with the National Park Service and local police, which reserves more than half of their forces for the march. The National Guard and firefighters are put on standby. Thousands of soldiers and marines are on call. Bayard Rustin speaks with all of these forces to be sure the protest is not violent. Jails move

their inmates to make room for mass arrests. Hospitals postpone elective surgeries to prepare for injuries. 100,000 people are expected to march.

August 28, 1963. 2,000 buses, dozens of trains and planes, and innumerable cars come to Washington, D.C. They march from the Washington Monument, peacefully carrying signs. The turnout is not only completely peaceful, but it's also double their expected number: more than 250,000 marchers.

Frank Kameny, Jack Nichols, and five other Mattachine Society of Washington members are in the crowd. They, of course, are not carrying signs for homosexual rights because that's not what this march is about. They listen intently as the speeches begin. 100 years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the leaders of this movement, including Bayard Rustin, stand under the Lincoln Memorial to begin the program.

AUDIO: archived clip from WGBH

GEESEY: This is George Geesey back in Washington as the Educational Radio Network continues its live coverage on the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Most of the activity at this point is centered on the Washington Monument grounds where there is a stage erected and a lot of Hollywood stars have come here to entertain what now is a crowd of about 50,000 people. Let's go now to our reporters at that area, and on the stage we have one of these entertainers. Let's listen.

DAVIS: This is Malcolm Davis from Site 3 on the stage. Right now, ladies and gentlemen, you're listening to Bob Dylan entertaining all the guests here. Bob Dylan.

Male speaker A: I now bring to you the Executive Director of the Committee for the March on Washington, the man who organized this whole thing, Mr. Bayard Rustin.

BAYARD RUSTIN: Ladies and gentlemen, I have come here to introduce to you two of the great, great heroes of this struggle. I want to introduce to you the woman who started our modern struggle for freedom because she got tired of indignity and Jim Crow and sat down. And, when Rosa Parks sat down, a revolution brought forth. Rosa Parks!

GEESEY: Bayard Rustin the 53-year-old leader we told you about who has been called by Martin Luther King a brilliant, efficient and dedicated organizer.

ROSA PARKS: Hello friends of freedom. It's a wonderful day and let us be thankful we have reached this point, and we go farther from now to greater things. Thank you.

BAYARD RUSTIN: And now I take great pleasure and pride in introducing to you a person who needs no introduction, Ms. Lena Horne.

LENA HORNE: Freedom!

BAYARD RUSTIN: *You can be sure she means every word of it.*

LENA HORNE: *I have nothing else to say.*

HOST: A. Philip Randolph introduces organizers and activists. Near the very end of these speakers, Randolph gives a final credit:

AUDIO: archived clip from WGBH

A. PHILIP RANDOLPH: *Another name is Bayard Rustin, Manager, Director, and a gifted young man. He has marvelous capacity for the organization of men. He and Cleveland Robinson did the real Jimmy Higgins work in making this movement move. I wanted you to know something about these names, and then they had about two or three hundred volunteers who worked zealously and religiously day and night to make this movement a success. I'm happy to tell you about this. And later on, Mr. Rustin will read the demands of our movement. At this time, I have the honor to present to you the moral leader of our nation, a great, dedicated man. A philosopher of a non-violent system of behavior, and seeking to bring about social change for the advancement of justice and freedom and human dignity. I have the pleasure to present to you, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

DR: KING: *I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history, as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation...* [fading out]

HOST: After Dr. King gives his famous "I Have A Dream" speech, together, Randolph and Rustin explain the goals of this massive event with a list of demands:

AUDIO: archived clip from WGBH

RANDOLPH: *A philosopher of a non-violent system of behavior in seeking to bring about social change for the advancement of justice, and freedom and human dignity. I want to introduce now Brother Bayard Rustin, who will read the demands of the March on Washington Movement. Everyone must listen to these demands. That is why we are here. And now, Bayard Rustin, deputy director of the March will read the demands.*

BAYARD RUSTIN: *Friends, at five o'clock today the leaders whom you have heard will go to President Kennedy to carry the demands of this revolution. It is now time for you to act. I will read each demand and you will respond to it. So that when Mr. Wilkins and Dr. King and the other eight leaders go, they are carrying with them the demands which you have given your approval to. The first demand is that we have effective Civil Rights legislation, no compromise, no filibuster, and that it include public accommodations, decent housing, integrated education, FEPC, and the right to vote. What do you say?*

[crowd applauds]

Number two. Number two. They want that we demand the withholding of Federal funds from all programs in which discrimination exists. What do you say?

[crowd applauds]

We demand that segregation be ended in every school district in the year 1963.

[crowd applauds]

We demand the enforcement of the 14th Amendment, the reducing of congressional representation of states where citizens are disenfranchised.

[crowd applauds]

We demand an Executive Order banning discrimination in all housing supported by Federal funds.

[crowd applauds]

We demand that every person in this nation, Black or white, be given training and work with dignity to defeat unemployment and automation.

[crowd applauds]

We demand that there be an increase in the national minimum wage so that men may live in dignity.

[crowd applauds]

We finally demand that all of the rights that are given to any citizen be given to Black men and men of every minority group including a strong FEPC. We demand.

[crowd applauds]

And now ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Randolph will read the pledge. This is a pledge which says our job has just begun. You pledge to return home to carry on the revolution. After Mr. Randolph has read the pledge, I will say, "Do you so pledge?" And you will say, "I do pledge."

RANDOLPH: The pledge: May you stand. Standing before the Lincoln Memorial on the 28th of August, in the centennial year of emancipation, I affirm my complete personal commitment to the struggle for jobs and freedom for Americans...

BAYARD RUSTIN: *How do you pledge?*

CROWD: *I do pledge!*

RANDOLPH: *We have finished this great demonstration.*

HOST: The riots and violence the government expected and prepared for never come. It's entirely peaceful, just as planned. All those cops and soldiers lined up for nothing. After the program, the crowd disperses as many of the speakers—not including Rustin—head for the White House. Out on the empty National Mall, Bayard still feels the electricity in the air. Change is coming.

Jack Nichols, back at home, also feels it. Homosexuals will have to march for their freedom, too.

AUDIO: “Wasn’t That A Mighty Day?” from *Bayard Rustin Sings Twelve Spirituals on The Life of Christ*, 1952.

HOST: Despite the NAACP’s chairman’s hope for Bayard Rustin not to receive any credit for the march, *Life* magazine has other intentions. **September 6, 1963**, Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph appear on the cover of *Life* standing at the Lincoln Memorial. They’re captioned “The Leaders: Randolph and Rustin.” A photo of Rustin inside the issue is captioned, “Out of the shadows.”

Letters from friends, activists, and former teachers come to Rustin. He’s invited to speak all over the country. Dr. King begins to seek his advice regularly again. Bayard will later point out Senator Thurmond outing him in Congress as the best thing he could do for him. Just like Rustin’s work before Dr. King, his career in activism following the March on Washington is also long, detailed, and deserving of a television series.

His partner Walter Naegle will encourage him to take up gay causes in the 1980s. Bayard will go on to push the NAACP to dedicate resources toward the AIDS crisis. He’ll eventually testify for New York State’s Gay Rights Bill in 1986. To protect their partnership, Bayard will adopt his partner Walter, at 30 years old, as his legal son. In 2013, President Obama will posthumously award Bayard Rustin with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, an award established in 1963 by President Kennedy. Bayard’s award is presented to his partner Walter.

Bayard Rustin’s partner in the 1940s once said, “I never had any sense at all that Bayard felt any shame or guilt about his homosexuality. That was rare in those days. Rare.” In the 1960s, Rustin is not a gay activist. It’s relatively impossible. The early Mattachine Foundation wouldn’t help him, so how could he possibly join their cause? And James Baldwin isn’t even allowed to speak at the March on Washington, and Rustin speaking is controversial. One of Martin Luther King’s advisors, Stanley Levinson, who Bayard introduced to Dr. King, advises King that Rustin and Baldwin “were better qualified to lead a homosexual movement than a civil rights movement.”

But the Mattachine is too paranoid to even let former communists in, let alone a socialist, pacifist, former communist, Black, gay man. They barely even care about conservative gay women.

Though Bayard isn't a gay activist yet, he's an activist who inspires the gay movement. His efforts in organizing nonviolent resistance in marches, Freedom Rides, sit-ins, and other civil disobediences will be replicated by homosexual activists after the March on Washington in 1963. Rustin will say, "We need in every community a group of angelic troublemakers."

AUDIO: "I Know The Lord Laid His Hands On Me" from *Bayard Rustin Sings Twelve Spirituals on The Life of Christ*, 1952.

HOST: **August 30, 1963**, two days after the March. Director Hoover contacts Attorney General Kennedy.

AUDIO: typewriter

HOOVER: Homosexuals planning to picket the White House. Informant offered information that approximately 100 members of the New York City Mattachine Society, who will be joined by members of the Washington, D.C., Chapter of the Mattachine Society, plan to picket the White House on October 25, 1963. The sources indicated that the purpose of the demonstration is to protest the United States government's discrimination against homosexuals in federal employment.

HOST: Next season on *A Queer Serial*.