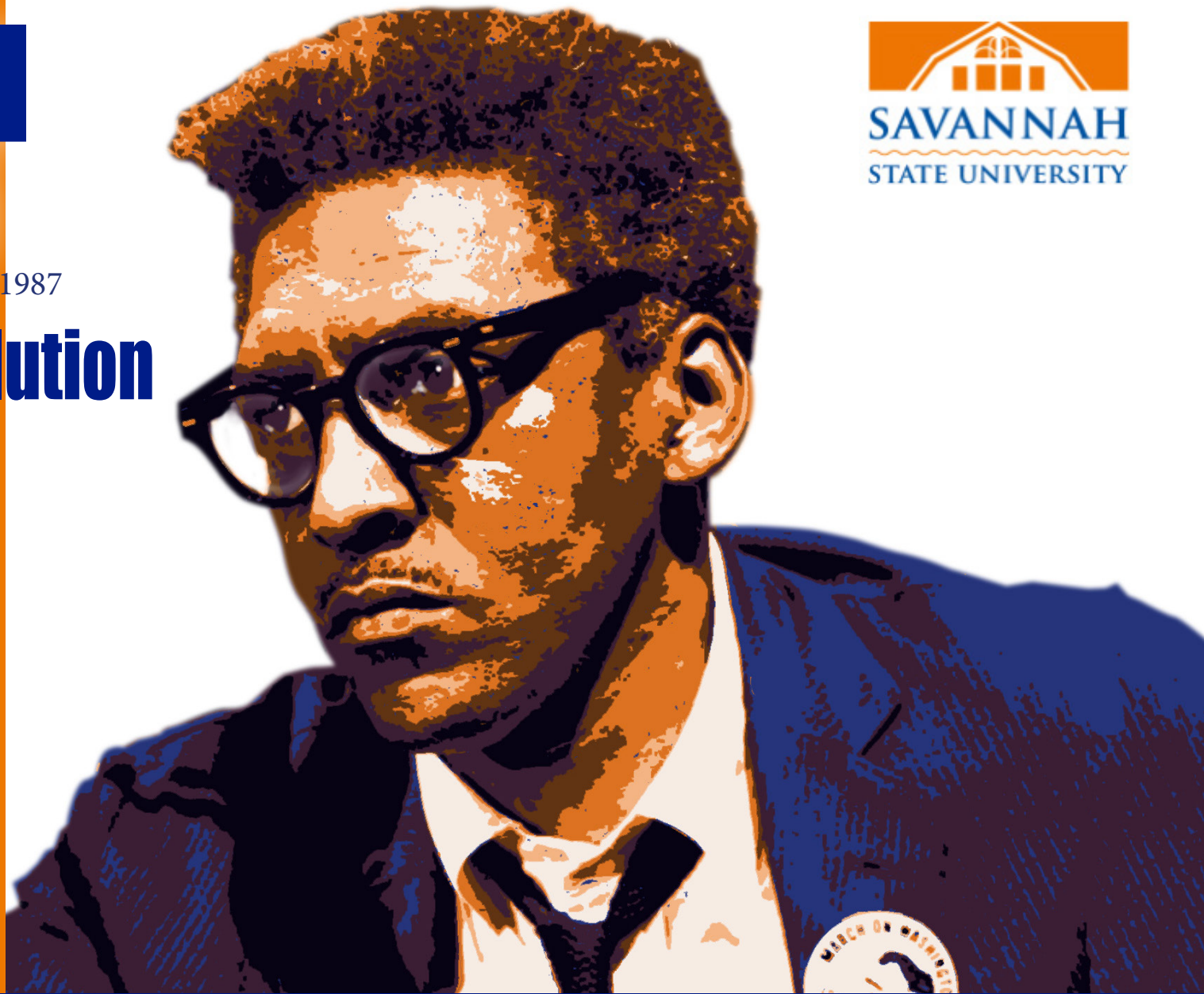


# Bayard Rustin

March 17, 1912 – August 24, 1987

## Conflict Resolution



“The only way to reduce ugliness in the world is to reduce it in yourself.” Bayard Rustin

**B**ayard Rustin, a civil rights activist, advisor to Dr. Luther King, Jr., was the primary organizer of the 1963 *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, a protest of racial discrimination and legislation for civil rights. He became adept at the **soft skill of conflict resolution** through his belief in pacifist agitation or utilizing means of talking through resolution to change societal patterns, and he became extraordinarily effective at doing so.

Born on March 17, 1912 in West Chester, Pennsylvania, Bayard Rustin and his 11 siblings were raised by their grandparents, who were Quakers. Rustin worked for a non-denominational religious organization, the *Fellowship of Reconciliation*, from 1941-1946. He also organized the *Congress on Rational Equality* in 1941 for the New York branch.

Recognized for his talents in conflict resolution, he became a close advisor to civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, and was the main organizer of Dr. King's *Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. As a strong advocate for non-violent resistance as well as a foundational strategist, Bayard's view on social justice played a role in his effectiveness in conflict resolution and ultimately, laid the foundation for significant change. Rustin's conflict resolution skills afforded him the ability to be an effective mediator between Malcom X and Dr.

Martin Luther King, Jr., reducing tensions and helping to unify both camps of social change to a common cause.

In 1964, Rustin orchestrated a protest in the form of a labor boycott to protest the racial inequalities in the New York City school system. From 1966-1979, he served as the president of the *A. Philip Randolph Institute* in New York City, a civil right organization. Shortly after that service, he became involved in the gay rights movement.

In addition to being highly effective in conflict resolution, he also shared his skills with others by providing training programs with them in order to build a strong community of activists with the skill of conflict resolution. Because of his dedication to non-violence, sharing those skills were critical at these high tension points in history.

After his death, he was awarded the *Presidential Medal of Freedom* in 2013.

Savannah State University offers classes utilizing conflict resolution through history and teaches techniques for engaging in conflict resolution effectively for the world at large. Highlighting and managing desired changes to societal practices is a desired outcome of that learning, as inspired through the examples in the life of Bayard Rustin.

**Scan the QR code to learn more.**



Connect for more



**REFLECT:**

How are you gaining the soft skill of conflict resolution at SSU in preparation for your future?