

THINK-PAIR-SHARE ON BAYARD RUSTIN'S "MONTGOMERY DIARY"

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

This activity gives students the opportunity to examine a primary source and then discuss it with their classmates using the Think-Pair-Share strategy. For some helpful tips and insights on using this simple but effective teaching strategy in your classroom, [see this blog post from Cult of Pedagogy](#).

Liberation was a progressive, even radical, magazine published from 1956 to 1977. It was founded, edited, and published by David Dellinger (a leading pacifist and the oldest of the Chicago Seven charged during the Democratic National Convention in 1968), A.J. Muste (Executive Director of FOR from 1940-1953), Bayard Rustin, and others.

Rustin's "Montgomery Diary" appeared in the second issue (April 1956) of the magazine. The introduction to his article read:

Bayard Rustin has had many years of direct experience in racial conflicts in the South.

In 1946 he served a sentence on the chain gang in North Carolina for refusing to sit in the Negro section of a bus.

He had first-hand contact with the Gandhian non-violent resistance movement in India in 1947, where he went at the invitation of the Congress Party. He also visited Africa in 1953, to study the independence movements there.

LIBERATION asked him to go to Montgomery, Alabama, to report on developments in the bus boycott. He has just returned from a two weeks investigation.

Note that Walter Naegle, Bayard Rustin's partner, informed us of corrections to these dates. Rustin served his time on the chain gang in 1949, after being permitted to delay doing so until after his trip to India, which was in 1948. His trip to Africa was in 1952.

The cover story of *Liberation's* April 1956 issue was Dr. King's first nationally published piece, "Montgomery, Alabama: Our Struggle." Bayard Rustin ghost-wrote that article. Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" was first published in full in the June 1963 issue. It was also the first time that essay was published with the title we know so well today.

To see the cover of and Rustin's full piece from that issue of *Liberation*, [click here](#). It features beautiful artwork and would make a great visual aide to accompany this lesson. This scan, complete with the mark of a rusty paperclip, was shared with FOR by Walter Naegle.

BAYARD RUSTIN'S "MONTGOMERY DIARY"

Bayard Rustin was one of the founders and editors of a magazine called *Liberation*. When he traveled to Montgomery in February 1956 at the invitation of movement leaders, he reported on the boycott for the magazine. The excerpts below were published in its April 1956 issue.

DIRECTIONS

Read the following excerpts from Bayard Rustin's "Montgomery Diary" article. Then, **think** about the questions that follow the reading. (You can jot down some notes with your ideas). Your teacher will **pair** you up with a classmate, and then you will **share** your thoughts and responses with each other.

February 22

ONE HUNDRED leaders of the protest received word that they had been indicted. Many of them did not wait for the police to come but walked to the police station and surrendered. Nixon was the first. He walked into the station and said, "You are looking for me? Here I am". This procedure had a startling effect in both the Negro and the white communities. White community leaders, politicians, and police were flabbergasted. Negroes were thrilled to see their leaders surrender without being hunted down. Soon hundreds of Negroes gathered outside the police station and applauded the leaders as they entered, one by one. Later, those who had been arrested were released on \$300 bail.

February 27

I LEARNED this morning from reliable sources that there is some indication that the bombing of the King and Nixon homes was not the work of irresponsible youth or cranks, but had the support of powerful vested interests in the community. There is some evidence that even the dynamite used passed through the hands of some people in the community who should be responsible for the maintenance of order.

This afternoon I attended another meeting of the working committee, which has been up against great problems because the protest, originally planned for one day, is now running into the twelfth week. I am impressed with the seriousness and determination of these people. They are handling their money very carefully and anyone who contributes can be certain that the funds will be spent carefully.

Reverend Abernathy concluded the meeting with a statement which was unanimously adopted:

- 1) *We have all worked hard to make our protest known around the world.*
- 2) *We have kept our struggle Christian and non-violent and intend to keep it so.*
- 3) *Although many have been arrested, we continue our protest, for none of our actions has been illegal.*
- 4) *The car pool continues.*
- 5) *All who were arrested are out on bail thanks to our community's fine spirit.*
- 6) *We have received moral support and encouragement from all over the United States.*
- 7) *The NAACP will help us carry on the legal aspects of the struggle.*
- 8) *We shall have occasional days of prayer and pilgrimage.*
- 9) *We pray God for strength to carry on non-violently.*

As I watched the people walk away, I had a feeling that no force on earth can stop this movement. It has all the elements to touch the hearts of men.

1. What stories or incidents from the comic book do you recognize in Rustin's account?
2. What challenges does Rustin see the boycott facing?
3. How does he see them confronting those challenges and going forward?